搶先試聽

勞斯萊斯級的耳朵享受

AudioValve RKV Mark II

耳機擴大機

專利線路全真空管OTL差動放大，6.3mm立體耳機插座×2，使用真空管PCL 805×4，每聲道輸出功率3W，頻寬15-100kHz，阻尼因數3600，失真0.002%，最大輸出電壓80V。尺寸360×200×120mm，重量10kg。進口總代理：典立(03-2127378)。

文｜劉名振

焦點

①特殊專利線路，OTL放大，以穩定的性能提供長時間的真空管壽命。②聲音豐潤帶著高貴的光澤、音場寬大。③低頻細節豐富又有控制力，是示範級的表現。④驅動力極強，可展現耳機真正實力。

建議

①阻抗在100歐姆以下的耳機，建議搭配同廠的Impedancer使用。②搭配越高級的耳機，越能欣賞本機的音質優點。③此耳擴聲音太美太舒服，沒有任何刺耳失真，用家請注意控制音量，以免聲音太大傷害聽力。

RKV Mark II的背板只有兩組RCA輸入端子。為什麼要兩組呢？原來這兩套端子是完全並聯的，只要其中一組當作輸入，另外一組就可以作為錄音輸出或是接到前級、綜合擴大機上。面板有兩組耳機插孔，原廠建議不要同時插入兩組低阻抗耳機。

我對耳機擴大機一向有點疑慮：二十年前，音響界根本沒有耳機擴大機這東西，而在錄音室內，我也沒看到錄音師鑑聽時使用耳機擴大機。我們真的有必要捨棄音響器材上的耳機插座不用，而去買耳機擴大機嗎？AudioValve認為耳擴是有必要的(理所當然，不然怎麼會生產耳擴呢？)：因為現代的訊源如CD有著極大的動態變化，而動態的變化在驅動耳機時就是電壓的變化，一般擴大機內的耳機輸出，根本無法應付巨大的電壓變化，因此無法反應訊源或是錄音中的優秀表現。

使用特殊真空管

既然耳機擴大機的設計目標很明確，那麼AudioValve設計者Helmut Becker就開始研究：什麼是最佳的電壓放大元件？那當然是真空管。真空管的限制又是什麼？要能夠輸出足夠的電流，這樣才能應付較低阻抗的耳機。第一代的RKV在1984年誕生，當時就找到了特殊的PCL 805真空管，這是當年給電視用的五極管。

RKV Mark II採用無輸出變壓器的OTL全真空管差動放大線路。少了輸出變壓器的影響因素，真空管的表現就很重要了。為此RKV Mark II用上了AudioValve特別為之申請專利權(編號DE 3200 517)的特別線路。Helmut Becker認為這線路確實的反應了四十年來音響技術的進步，因為在供電處使用運算放大器，訊號路徑上又完全是真空管放大，等於是取真空管與電晶體兩方最佳的技術結合而成。這線路以運算放大器構成的直流伺服線路供電，會隨著每根管子的狀況自動調整。原廠宣稱即使在真空管壽命到達盡頭前一刻，這個線路仍會讓它很正常的工作。

有細節與控制力的低頻

以往本刊常告訴大家應該要「以耳機為師」，但是要能「為師」的耳機再生其實並不容易，畢竟耳機沒辦法像大型喇叭那般發出震撼我們身體的低頻能量。以我使用多年的Sennheiser HD-580(阻抗300歐姆)試聽，透過RKV Mark II再生出來的低頻絕對是肥美豐潤又充滿控制力與細節，與聆聽大型喇叭的感覺已經非常接近。

與我自己的Graham Slee Voyager攜帶式耳機擴大機比較，我可以第一時間斷定RKV Mark II更好聽。但是這好聽是從何而來？是比較多的細節嗎？我快速的在兩台耳機擴大機中切換，並不覺得它們在細節表現上有任何差異。但在長時間的聆聽後，我開始發現RKV Mark II的優點：它的聲音有種寬大、飽滿、穩健的基礎，這種寬厚又輕鬆的特質，讓人聽了非常舒服，一點壓力也沒有。另外，RKV Mark II的聲音有些許溫暖、金黃色的光澤，並不會讓人覺得是古董管機的聲音，但是這一點點的溫暖與光澤，就讓弦樂聽起來更有質感、吉他聽起來更有彈性。

驅動力極強

將耳機換成Beyerdynamic DT 990 Pro(250歐姆)後，兩台耳擴之間的差異更明顯：Graham Slee Voyager需要將音量轉到九點鐘方向以後才有足夠的增益，而且驅動起來聲音也不夠豐滿；但是換RKV Mark II上場後，聲音變得大開大闔、動態、穩定性都是第一流的，這才彰顯出這款旗艦耳機的身價。至於兩款低阻抗的耳機，AKG K240 Studio(55歐姆)與Grado SR60(32歐姆)表現算中規中矩，不過與參考耳擴之間的差異就沒有那麼明顯。AudioValve對低阻抗耳機(100歐姆以下)的搭配方案是請用家選購Impedancer阻抗匹配器，面板上有切換旋鈕，可以從8歐姆到64歐姆作四個檔次的切換，面板上還有喇叭輸出端子，可以驅動一些很高靈敏度的喇叭！

雖說RKV Mark II的身價不低，但依照我自己的經驗，好的耳機器材一用十幾年也不會壞，更不會落伍，是個非常保值(而且必要)的投資。在我所聽過的耳機重播器材中，它絕對是最頂尖的選擇。音響迷們應該沒有不疼愛自己耳朵的吧？使用RKV Mark II，就等於給耳朵勞斯萊斯等級的至高享受。

A ROYAL TREAT FOR YOUR EARS

AudioValve

RKV Mark II

The Earphone Amplifier

Patented circuitry, full vacuum tube OTL differential amplifier, 6.3mm stereo earphone inlet * 2, vacuum tube PCL805 * 4, output power per channel 3W, bandwidth 15~100KHz, damping factor 3600, distortion 0.002%, maximum output voltage 80V, size 360 * 200 * 120mm, weight 10kg. Imported by Dean Lih Audio Company Ltd. (03-2127378).

FOCUS

1) Special patented circuitry, OTL amplifier, stable and long lifetime vacuum tube. 2) Opulent sound carrying the luster of nobility with broad sound field. 3) Base frequency with detailed characteristics and controllability, a demonstration of high performance. 4) Strong drive to present a realistic earphone power.

SUGGESTIONS

1) For earphones with impedance lower than 100 Ohms, use the matching impedance provided by the original manufacturer. 2) For best sound effects, use high quality earphones. 3) This earphone amplifier brings out the most beautiful and comfortable sound without distortion. So please properly adjust the volume control to avoid too loud a volume that may damage your listening pleasure.

On the RKV back panel, there are two sets of RCA terminals. Why two sets? This is because these two terminal sets are connected in parallel. When one terminal is used as the input, the other terminal can then be used for recording output or connected to the front amplifier. The panel has two earphone inlets. The manufacturer recommends that simultaneous use of two low impedance earphones is to be avoided.

I have always had some doubts about the earphone amplifier: 20 years ago, there was no such thing as an earphone amplifier. Nor in a recording room I saw the sound man use such a device. Is it really necessary to buy an earphone amplifier and discard the traditional earphone equipment? AudioValve does think the earphone amplifier necessary or it would never be put into production. The modern audio signal source such as CD has wide dynamic range which is in fact the voltage range that drives the earphone. Earphone output from an ordinary amplifier cannot handle the wide range of voltage variation and hence fail to respond or give good performance.

USE OF SPECIAL TUBES

Targeting at the earphone amplifier, the AudioValve originator Helmut Becker set out his research. What would be the optimum voltage amplifier element? It is without doubt that the vacuum tube is the ultimate candidate. What is the limitation of a vacuum tube? We need to output sufficient current for a low resistance earphone. The first generation RKV was born in 1984. Then, the special PCL 805 pentode for TV use was employed.

Next, the RKV Mark II adopted the OTL full vacuum tube differential amplifier circuit without output transformer. For this special purpose, AudioValve filed the patent rights of the circuitry (No. DE 3200 517). Helmut Becker considers this as a breakthrough of the 40 year progress in audio technology. Using the Op Amp for power supply coupled with complete vacuum tube amplifier for the signal path provides optimal combination of the vacuum tube and transistor technology. The circuitry uses the DC servo Op Amp network for power supply which automatically adapts to the routing conditions. The manufacturer claims that this circuitry will function normally throughout the lifetime of the vacuum tubes.

A BASE FREQUENCY WITH EVERY DETAIL AND CONTROLLABILITY

We used to give advices on the earphone. Nonetheless, an earphone can never produce a heart-rending base energy like a large speaker. Testing an RKV Mark II on Sennheiser HD-580 (300 Ohm resistance) which I have used for years, I can feel the base frequency copiously reborn with every characteristic detail and controllability. The feeling becomes very close to the effect of a large speaker. Comparing to my Graham Slee Voyager, a portable earphone amplifier, I can instantly discern the superiority of RKV Mark II as I can feel a better listening. Where does this better listening come from? More characteristic details? I quickly switch between the two earphone amplifiers. I find not much difference in the characteristic details. But after long listening, I start to pick up the merit of RKV Mark II as its sound is broader, fuller, and more stable. There is the characteristic of thickness and relaxation that makes you feel very comfortable without any pressure. Also, the sound from the RKV Mark II possesses some warmth and luster of gold, yet without any antique tube noise. It is the warmth as well as the luster that brings out the quality of the string instrument. It provides more elasticity to the guitar sound.

VERY STRONG DRIVE POWER

If using Beyerdynamic DT 990 Pro (250 Ohms), the difference becomes more pronounced. For Graham Slee Voyager, the volume must be turned to the 9 o'clock position to have more amplification gain and yet the sound drive is still not full enough. If changed to RKV Mark II, the sound becomes fully open and the dynamic state and stability are of first class. This brings out the real value of the flagship earphone device. As to the two low resistance earphones of AKG K240 Studio (55 Ohms) and Grado SR60 (32 Ohms), the performance can perfectly meet the standard requirement. But in reference to the earphone amplifier, the difference is not so obvious. To match the AudioValve with low resistance earphone (under 100 Ohms), we recommend the use of impedance matching device with a panel switchable between 8~64 Ohms in four divisions. The panel also should be provided with a speaker output terminal so that it can drive high sensitivity speakers.

Indeed the RKV Mark II is quite expensive. However, according to my experience, a good earphone device can last for a long time and will never be outdated. Therefore, it is definitely a worthwhile and necessary investment. The RKV Mark II is absolutely the top choice of all the earphone devices. I believe that an audio fan should value their ear highly. Using the RKV Mark II is a royal class enjoyment.

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