

Tuberville

This is a cautionary tale for lovers of single-ended triode tube amplifiers—probably just 2% of *Stereophile* readers. But hey, we know.

A certain importer of tubed gear called me, breathless, about a new mesh-plate 2A3 tube. Would I like to try a few in my Sun Audio SV-2A3 amplifier?

Sure, why not? I anticipated no problems—my Sun SV-2A3 has proved very tolerant of various tubes.

I installed the mesh-plate 2A3s and turned on the Sun. All seemed fine, and I finished my Wheaties. About 20 minutes later, when I returned to the music room, one channel was dead. What to do?

I phoned Artie Dudley: Whom to see about getting a single-ended-triode tube amp repaired?

Artie to the rescue: "Some of the recent directly heated triodes, great as they are, draw more filament current than old-style tubes, and the regulators in the heater supplies of your amp may not be able to pass as much current as

"BLACKIE IS THE BEST
TUBE GUY I **KNOW,**"
DECLARED AD.

the filaments are trying to draw. What likely happened is that the regulator blew. No big deal.”

He recommended Tubesville, in Manhattan, run by Blackie Pagano. “Blackie is the best tube guy I know,” declared AD. “You should see some of the custom amps he builds.” Blackie also repairs and builds guitar amps.

I’d wanted to have some work done on my Sun SV-2A3 anyway, so I took it down to Tubesville, in Union Square. I asked Blackie about bypassing the line-level gain controls and installing Cardas RCA input jacks and speaker binding posts.

Good idea, said Blackie. "But if you like the sound of the amp as it is—or was—you might not want to change too many things. I could substitute this or that, but you might end up with a different amp and less to your liking."

Words of wisdom.

"The circuit of the Sun Audio SV-2A3 is about as simple as an amplifier circuit gets," Blackie declared. "That's probably why you like the sound."

I glanced at the project Blackie was working on: a custom-built pair of 300B monoblocks. "I do like working with the 300B output tube," he said.

I began to drool...

Lesson learned: Next time someone wants me to try out a set of tubes, they can supply the amp as well.

My advice to you is to contact your amp's manufacturer before trying new tubes. Ask their advice. They may have tried the very same tubes. And remember that tube-amp manufacturers typically reject up to half of the tubes they test.

Thanks, Blackie. Thanks, AD.

Now I'm going to see what's being broadcast this afternoon from Budapest. 