



Audio Key **REVIEWS!**

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LYRIC AUDIO

Ti 100 MkII

SET INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

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LYRIC TI 100 MK II SINGLE-ENDED AMP - REVIEW

Every audiophile/music lover will now and again have a musical bender. Bender? It's that period or those periods where our audio system(s) suffers a 'music-out' greatly diminished high-fidelity (basement fidelity) or, perhaps, no fidelity at all.

My musical bender came just after the Dot.com crash. Yes, I was still in IT at the time and working to build a new bioinformatics company. This dictated two things frugality and focus and these two things in tandem really don't allow for a highfalutin' lifestyle, audio system included, at least, not at first.

Thus my system at the time was rather comical. It consisted of two fit-in-the-palm-of-your-hand, single-ended-triode (SET), monoblock amplifiers (2 Watts), their cousin a fit-in-the-palm-of-your-hand, passive preamplifier, and a CD player whose make I cannot remember. The speakers were two massive 5'8" monoliths, with multiple drivers three 12-inch bass drivers per side, two-6-inch midrange drivers and a single 1-inch tweeter. The sound of the system was abysmal as the 'monoblock' amps could not drive the speakers. Yeah, there were certainly laughs, but when you're a dyed-in-the-wool music lover, one does what one needs to do to have music. Had those tiny SET amps been allied with appropriately efficient speakers, it may well have been an easier time of things and a dose of musical bliss every now and again. Alas, it was not.

Everything changes. Fast forward through a number of audio systems, some SET based with appropriately efficient speakers, and many non-SET based, to arrive finally in the present. In truth, I still also hold a sweet spot for SET amplifiers and integrated amps, though the appropriate speaker has always been an issue. That is until now and the review of the Lyric Audio Ti 100 Mk.II SET integrated amplifier.

REFRAIN: Unlike most reviews, this review will be non-sequential, as it will start with how the equipment actually sounds and not the process of physically "undressing" it and/or laying out its various accoutrement, specifications, etc. Think of this review then, as a non-linear movie *Memento*, *Kill Bill*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Eternal Sunshine of the*

Spotless Mind, The Queen's Gambit, In the Shadow of the Moon, etc that, likewise, starts at the end and winds its way to the beginning.

THE SOUND

Equipped with the Tong Sol KT170 tubes, the Lyric Audio Ti 100 MkII was paired with the Verity Audio Otello and the Vivid Audio Kaya 45. The Ti 100 MkII drove the 93dB sensitive Otello speakers with level ease yet, interestingly, it also drove the 86dB sensitive Kaya 45s exceptionally well and with less apparent power. In truth, the Kaya 45s proved the optimal match for the Lyric and would be used for the balance of the review.

SET amplifiers historically have driven speakers identified as less efficient than 88dB poorly and with much clipping distortion, breakup, etc. which would result in a poor showing and a thumbs down for the system in question. Suffice to say that that experience of the Lyric Ti 100 MkII with the Kaya 45s was rather astonishing given its 86dB efficiency.

I was truly stunned at just how precisely the Lyric Ti 100 MkII was able to discern/parse tone and timbre and texture unlike any other integrated amplifier I had reviewed or owned. And with its rather stellar accompaniment (see "System"), listening was on an entirely different level than anticipated and/or imagined via the 86dB efficient Vivid Audio Kaya 45s. Tomasz Stanko's *Selected Recordings* (ECM) played on and the blatt of Tomasz's trumpet was in-room real, as were all percussions. The drum kit's cymbals were also real and present as the various notes rode an ambient airwave of music that was mesmerizing and very distracting. I would often stop just to listen instead of taking notes for the review. This is something that often occurs when exceptional music is played through exceptional components.

SETs are well known for their timbral/tonal beauty and their outstanding transparency and resolution. But what they have lacked, more often than not, is power. Power sufficient to enable speakers to voice aloud what SET amps whisper into their 'ears'. There was no such problem with the Lyric Ti 100 MkII. The music rendered was taut, energetic, bereft of distortion, noise, or any signs of clipping the point where an

amplifier is heard to run out of power. And cowbell was clearly cowbell in all of its metallic, tonal/timbral, and ambient splendor, as was every other instrument and voice via the Lyric.

The Lyric Ti 100 MkII's volumetric cube its soundstage is very broad, deep and high, and sports tight positioning and spacing of performers along with immaculate layering. The combination renders a holographic sense of space and performers in that space as corporeal, real. Choose your venue intimate or concert or arena and sit back and enjoy. Remember, this is SET and SET on mad relative power! Beautiful!

The balance of the reference system was the Grimm Audio MU1 Streamer, the Silent Angel Bonn NX Network Switch, the Silent Angel Genesis GX Word Clock, Bricasti Design M1SE DAC, Mola Mola Tambaqui DAC, Audionet PRE G2 Preamplifier and Audionet AMP Monoblock Amplifiers, Verity Audio Otello Speakers, Vivid Audio Kaya 45 Speakers, TORUS POWER AVR Elite, and Kubala Sosna cabling.

BASS

A perennial favorite for determining bass impact, despite the recording's noted and rather 'interesting' reduction in volume level, which must be adjusted for listening/reviewing, is Eiji Oue's "Infernal Dance of King Kashchey" (*Stravinsky*, Reference Recording).

The "Infernal Dance of King Kashchey" rolls in ominously accompanied by a deep rumbling that betrays the massed tympani soon to explode with room-shaking bass! Understand, again, that this is a 20 Watt/Ch SET integrated tube amplifier and should, by no means, elicit this kind of bass reproduction. Yet, the various strikes of the seven assembled tympani are resounding and, as mentioned above, room shaking! Your speaker's mileage will vary.

The Lyric's ability to lead the Kaya 45s directly to the Holy-Bass-Head-Grail is both astounding and consistent, across all musical faire. The bass infused tracks of Kandace Springs' *Indigo* are tight, deep, dynamic, and electric! And whether upright bass/double bass, bass drum, or Taiko drum, the notes are always deep, resonant, tight, and beautifully resolved. Yikes!

MIDRANGE

I cue an old treasure *Ella & Louis: Unforgettable Tunes* (Stars Evens Digital) and the Lyric Ti 100 MkII recreates a 60 year old performance with such outstanding technical prowess transparency, resolution detail, layering, blistering transients naturalness, musical beauty, and elegance sufficient to leave this reviewer completely agog. Ella's voice is rich, elegant, crystal clear yin to Louis' deeply textured, gravel-rich vocalizations yang. And their voices are palpable/in-room, via the Lyric across the songs "Cheek to Cheek, Makin' Whoopee, Summer Time, They Can't Take That Away, April in Paris, Comes Love" to name a cherished and in-heart few. However, as too much time has been dedicated to merely listening and not taking notes, a replay is in order. There are few amplifiers of any type that can conjure the kind of captivating and deeply immersive listen that the Lyric is capable of and has just performed. And this remained true across all of my listening/reviewing favorites Voces8 (*Lux, Enchanted Isle*, Decca Music Group), Joan Shelly (*Joan Shelly, No Quarter*), Brad Meldau (*Songs: Art of the Trio, Vol. 3*, Warner Music), Elina Duni Quarter (*Partir, Lost Ships*, ECM), etc.

TREBLE+

On *We Three* (Prestige) the collaboration of Roy Haines, Phineas Newborn and Paul Chambers in "Reflections" rolls up and Roy Haines' drum kit is alive and well, in-room and stage right at Casa Heartsong. And, in truth, 'palpable' seems droll in comparison to the beautifully corporeal, transient-quick, transparent, eerily 'there' drum kit, its cymbals air-splashing and ambient rich. "Say 'hello' to the treble heights for me, will you?" And it did. Folks, the Lyric Ti 100 MkII has knocked it out of the park and anyone wandering by Casa Heartsong would easily assume that "K" has picked up a new drum kit. "And he's very good!" And we mustn't forget the tactile, textured licks and strums of Chambers' upright bass, while Phineas, stage left, tickles keys, as he flicks sweat across my carpet. Or so it seems. And once again this was true across a wide array of treble tracks Dave Brubeck Quartet (*Time Out*, Columbia Legacy), Hilary Hahn (*Bach: Violin Sonatas Nos 1 & 2; Partita No. 1*, Decca), etc. Got to love SETs.

FUNCTIONALITY

The Lyric Ti 100 Mk.II is a Class A single-ended triode integrated amplifier. Outfitted with the Tung-Sol KT170 tubes it delivers 20 Watts into 8 Ohms. The Ti 100 Mk.II sports five RCA inputs, speaker posts for 4 and 8 Ohms, a feedback selector, and can be tapped for a Pre-Out and/or a Fixed Out. The Ti 100 Mk.II also has a remote that controls volume, input selection, and mute.

The Lyric Ti 100 MkII weighs in at over 60 lbs which speaks to its rather robust output transformers. The Ti 100 MkII at 20 Watts/channel was easily able to power the 6 Ohm, 87dB sensitive Vivid Audio Kaya 45s to levels possibly necessitating neighborly calls to local peace officers. And the Ti 100 MkII was never overly warm and certainly never hot. Most importantly, you'll want 100 hours before any serious listening takes place, though it will be absolutely musical in the interim.

THE SPECIFICATIONS

LYRIC AUDIO Ti 100 MkII Integrated

Power:	2x 20W (KT170) / 2x 20W (KT150) / 2x 18W (KT120) / 2x 8W (KT88) / 2x 7W (EL34)
Distortion:	<3%
Output Impedance:	4 & 8 Ohms
Signal to Noise Ratio:	95db
Mode:	Single Ended Class A Ultralinear
Frequency Response:	15 Hz to 30 kHz (-1 dB)
Inputs :	5 Lines
Input Impedance:	100 kOhm
Input Sensitivity:	240mV
Cabinet:	Black or Silver brushed aluminum
Dimensions:	440 x 382 x 223mm (17.4 x 15 x 8.8 inches)

Weight: 30 Kg (66.2 lbs)

CONCLUSION

The tone and timbre of the Lyric Ti 100 MkII brings both naturalness and spot on realism to bear with regard to, literally, any instrument it renders, in addition to accuracy. In this respect it is the place where natural and beautiful and high fidelity find great synergy.

Further, the voice of the Ti 100 MkII proved incisive, transparent, detailed and wonderfully (otherworldly) musical. There were also times when I questioned not only its SET roots but its listed power ratings, as the dynamics, its control of speakers (even inefficient speakers - 86dB), and its ability to drive things well into the sub-bass region went far beyond what it should have been able to do on paper. Twenty watt SET integrated amps don't move the kind of air or drive the bass the way the Lyric Ti 100 MkII does. Or, at least, they're not supposed to.

There was immediate magic from the Ti 100 MkII, though this was purely from a musical perspective, which was immersive in the extreme. However, after about 100 hours the magic suffused to all aspects of the Lyric Ti 100 MkII's performance. This was easily witnessed, as it followed an exceptional pair of 200 watt/channel, solid state monoblock amplifiers with dedicated preamplifier with relatively minor lessening in overall performance. Remarkable!

Yes, I curate those products, which are generally well researched, so as to meet my rather demanding expectations/criteria. Those products that do not meet those expectations are not engaged with or are sent back and never referred to again. There have been quite a few such products. The Lyric Audio Ti 100 MkII is, of course, not one of those products as it has easily met our criteria for the DIAMOND AWARD, our highest award, which reflects on its excellence.

Pros: Incredibly musical(!), transparent, resolving, detailed, and powerful (especially at its rated 20 watts!). Also quite affordable relative to what it does in direct comparison to its much more expensive competition, which starts at double its price.

Cons: None.

REFERENCE SYSTEM

- Grimm Audio MU1 Streamer
- Silent Angel Bonn NX Network Switch
- Silent Angel Genesis GX Word Clock
- Mola Mola Tambaqui DAC
- Bricasti Design M1SE DAC
- Audionet PRE G2 Preamplifier
- Audionet AMP Monoblock Amplifiers
- Verity Otello Speakers
- Vivid Audio Kaya 45 Speakers
- Tri-Art Audio OPEN-5 Speakers
- Kubala Sosna Cables/Wires
- Silversmith Audio Fidelium Speaker cable
- RSX MAX Power Cords
- TORUS POWER AVR Elite power conditioner

COMPANY

LYRIC AUDIO

<https://www.lyric-audio.de/>

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