

the Galaxy 34 as a power amplifier. Like most recent amps it has no tape loop, but there is a pair of record-out jacks, to let you record on tape or on your computer regardless of the setting of the amplifier volume control.

The Galaxy 34 comes with a heavy and well-built remote, but its back has to be removed with a screwdriver (included) to insert batteries. The supplied batteries had text entirely in Chinese, but their appearance suggested they were the common misnamed “super heavy duty” batteries, and we dumped them in favor of alkalines. We suggest you do the same.

The amplifier is designed for reasonably efficient loudspeakers, which fortunately are in vogue these days. We listened to it in our Alpha room, with its easy-to-drive Living Voice Avatar speakers. We compared it to our reference electronics: a Copland CTA-305 tube amplifier and a Moon W-5LE power amplifier. Those two units are linked by a cable which actually cost more than the whole Galaxy 34!

We anticipated that a small amplifier might have problems with high-octane percussion, and to check this out we put on the *Fantasy on a Theme by Haydn* (Norman Dello Joio, Klavier K11138). To give the amp an even break, we maximized its output by first listening in Ultralinear mode.

“This is very interesting,” said Albert. “Of course there’s less power available, but this amplifier has vigor, and the orchestra is detailed and energetic.”

“I like the word ‘vigor,’ said Toby. “The low end is surprising. There isn’t quite the same sustained energy, and the overall sound is less articulate, but the rich harmonics are actually better.” We noted the spaciousness, too, which was very good, though all of the instruments were a little more distant.

But what would happen if we downshifted into triode mode? We played the piece again, and we liked it even more this time. A few back-and-forth comparisons merely confirmed our initial impression. We decided we would do the rest of the listening in triode configuration. We would now be down to a (rated) 16 watts per channel, but we weren’t about to go easy on the amplifier. If it turned out



to have insufficient power for the typical music installation, well then, let the chips fall where they might.

Our second recording was an even tougher test than the first, including as it did a large pipe organ, captured in the higher resolution of SACD (the Bach *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*, Opus 3 CD22031). The big pipes came in with a convincing growl. Some notes blended together a little more than we would have liked, though Gerard found the smaller, high-pitched pipes to be the big surprise. Certainly there was some blurring of the music, and it could hardly have been otherwise. “It takes guts to reproduce the shock and awe of this music,” said Toby, “and in the final chord I was impressed...and even awed.”

And remember, we were still in triode mode!

But we weren’t about to let up on the pressure. We next turned to the 24-bit/192 kHz version of *Sweet Georgia Brown* from the Ray Brown Trio’s DVD-Audio version of *Soular Energy* (Hi-Res HRM-2011). Could the Galaxy 34 keep up with the thunderous bass work of Ray Brown?

Not quite, to be sure, because not many amplifiers can. Gerard commented that the harmonics of the bass were emphasized at the expense of the deeper fundamental notes, but Toby and Albert — without really disagreeing — found a lot to like. “It’s true that the bass is more like a cello,” said Albert, “but you hear everything it has to say.” Both thought the Galaxy 34 was in its element on this recording. “It’s more fun,” said

Toby. Gene Harris’s piano was lighter and seemingly faster, but without undue stress of the higher frequencies. If the bottleneck guitar’s tone was less pure than with our own amplifier, it remained light and quick.

The amplifier didn’t seem to be running out of breath on this very energetic recording, though we were still in triode mode.

We moved on to another SACD, and the Eric Bibb song *Good Stuff* from the album of the same name (Opus 3 CD19623). It’s less of a challenge than the preceding recordings, because it is less extreme in its dynamics, but on the other hand it is full of fine nuances that can be surprisingly fragile. The sad reality is that most economy amps, tube or solid state, don’t do well on this sort of music.

But we said “most,” and the Audio Space is clearly among the exceptions. “There’s less bottom end,” said Toby, “which is not a shocker” Added Albert, “The tone is less warm, but you can hear all the details, especially in the voice.” Indeed, with a little less low-frequency energy to overwhelm the voice, the words seemed easier to follow, which served well the many humorous touches (the song appears to be about cooking, but is actually about...something else). “The Moon amplifier is more ‘spacy,’” said Toby, “but this one is more harmonic.”

Impressed as we were with the amplifier’s talent for subtlety, we figured it would shine with our final selection. It was an old favorite from Margie Gibson’s *Say It With Music* album, namely *I Got Lost in His Arms*. Properly reproduced, this wonderfully-sung Irving Berlin