

Ayon Titan Evo Monoblock Amplifiers

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March 10, 2018



The word Titan brings a whole lot of imagery to mind for most people. Titan Missile; the king of all intercontinental ballistic missiles. Capable of delivering multiple nuclear warheads to other continents within a matter of minutes. Clash of the Titans; Gods at war using their giant minions to battle. It invokes the image of wide open space that is infinite in size. Titan-ic; the biggest ship of its time and engendered to be fail-proof... wait that isn't a good analogy for this review.

One thing most will agree on is that Titan means big, imposing, powerful and at the top of the food chain!

Where the Ayon Titan Evo most immediately live up to the moniker is in their size and weight. I arrived home from being on the road to two extra large boxes taking up a whole lot of real estate in my listening room. One thing I have learned about Ayon is that they over pack everything. This was no exception. Double thick boxes, form fit thick custom foam and incredible hefty amplifiers. I have warned readers that if you are ordering a pair of mono block Ayon amps it is a good idea to have another person to help you unpack and hoist these things. If you are a 26 year old gym rat perhaps you can handle them alone. For a 63 year old senior with back issues that is a no no. I have never had an Ayon product delivered that had any damage from shipping though a few times things have arrived with holes in the box there was never any damage to the contents.

Once out of the box and positioned where they would stay it was time to insert the tubes. Ayon matches the tubes not only for impedance but matches and numbers them for specific receptacles. That is serious attention to detail. The amps are only PSET Triode Pure Class A. The PSET amp does not split the signal; a superior more stable signal.

As with everything Ayon the build quality is exquisite. From the thick CNC machined aluminum casing to the heavy chrome transformers with their own protective socks these things scream Rolls Royce quality (yes Rolls Royce still means unparalleled quality in automobiles and awesome aircraft engines). The chassis is rugged, the fit and finish is as good as it gets and the on/off switches still take a Sherpa guide to find the damned things! Can't we just put them on the back for the love of all things decent! Once loaded with their tubes the Titans are huge and drool inducing. This is manly on a scale Tim the Tool Man would be proud of; grunt inspiring like a blender powered by a V-Twin! (Apologies to the female readers who can lift these things by themselves for the politically incorrect statement that these are manly.)



Still only red logo lights - seriously for this kind of money a little choice might be nice

Ayon's newest monolithic amplifiers are aptly named. The Titan is every bit the large, imposing beast that its name implies! Not just in size and weight but also in delivery of sonic pleasures. Easily delivering size and scale to satisfy any enthusiast in just about any room. An audiophile would definitely expect that in a pair of amps costing what these do. That being said I will get it out up front... They deliver that huge amounts hands down. If all you are interested in is large amps that deliver huge impact, grunt, scale and earth shattering sound then you can't go wrong. If you are someone who simply wants amps that represent the best of the best then the review is over! If you want something to impress the beejeesus out of your audiophile friends and claim king of the hill bragging rights this will be easy... BUY THEM! Good news! There are two of these beasts to wrestle!

As usual for my readers here are the specs for those who love the techno wizardry straight from Ayon:

Vacuum Tubes

The choice of signal and power tubes have a significant influence on the sound and hence on the inspiration and joy of listening. This is not only the decision between good and bad tubes but finally the interaction of the different types of tubes and their combination that are used in the various Ayon amplifiers. Today only few manufacturers still produce tubes for pure audio amplification; one of them is Ayon Audio with its outstanding single-ended triode power tubes (AA32B-S, AA52B-S and AA62B) based on the WE 300B

Tube Complement

- 3x AA62B 1x AA20B
- 2x 6SN7

Signal Path

We believe that the simplest circuits work best together with the shortest signal path. That is why our SE-Triode amplifiers to date have used single-ended pure class-A circuitry. The shorter the signal path is, the less possibility of sonic degradation from various sources, including the wire itself. Even on the circuit boards, the copper traces are kept to a very minimum length. The completely redesigned circuit board provides a more straightforward and direct approach to the signal paths.

- Logical sequenced soft-start power up for extended tube life
- Tube and electronic protection circuit system
- 0dB negative feedback (of any kind)
- DHT
- Ultra short signal path
- Simplest direct circuit path for purest musical sound and high reliability
- No solid state devices in the signal path
- High current and low impedance design that operates tubes in the best areas their curves
- Minimal discrete wiring for optimum signal propagation
- No followers or buffers in the signal path
- High quality parts throughout

Power Supply

Single ended amps are more susceptible to power supply aberrations than push-pull amplifiers. The power supplies have been further refined with new components and enhanced AC line noise filtration. Separate power transformers, chokes and filters provide total isolation

between the input and output stage which makes this a pure power source and it is a critical attribute for a single-ended amplifier. We also use electrolytic capacitors with much larger storage capacity to make up for the loss in filtering when using resistors in lieu of inductors.

- 3 separate low noise - insulated power transformers
- Power transformers are encased, excellent damped and RFI/EMI shielded
- Innovative power supply provides a high speed energy delivery on transients
- Special choke filtered power supply for Ayon AA82B
- Dual choke for pre and driver stage
- Tube regulated power supply (Ayon 5U4G-Mesh)
- Separate and isolated power supplies over each stage of amplification
- Separate high current filament-regulators for pre and driver tubes
- Regulated DC filament supplies with soft start
- AC power line filter to avoid noise and hash from entering into the unit.
- High capacitance energy storage.
- Current in-rush limiting
- Auto sequencing - Power on cycle completes in 1 minute

Dual Grounding System

The modification of the grounding topology leads to increased rejection of noise from the power supply and other areas. The dual grounding topology used in all of our amplifiers is quite unique to the whole hi-end tube amplification industry. Such extensive topology provides for quieter backdrop for which the music can unfold in its entirety. It further establishes the quick and controlled bass response and the full bodied expression of the high frequency. The ground leg of the signal has not been neglected and given meticulous attention in its implementation. The importance of proper grounding cannot be over emphasized.

- Ground switch
- Central one-point star earth grounding
- Dual grounding system (switchable)

Output Transformer

The super-wide bandwidth output transformer's major strength is that it can deliver the current in the bass, while at the same time maintaining the speed in the high frequencies, dramatically improving the square wave response of the amplifier. The effect is a much more natural and relaxed sound with much better clarity, resolution and fluidity.

- Super-wide bandwidth high performance output transformer
- High efficiency with low insertion loss for optimal current and voltage transfer
- Multiple tight layering and coupling for extended frequency response
- Output transformers are sealed with an anti-resonance compound material

Components

The type of parts used therefore must have a synergistic relationship to the circuit they are

placed in. It is this relationship of which type of part to use where, that ranks our products apart from the mass.

- Selected, premium quality passive components used in all applications
- High speed & high quality audiophile grade coupling capacitors
- Special tube sockets with beryllium - copper spring pins, custom made by Ayon
- WBT/Germany - binding posts
- WBT/Germany - input jack
- Neutrik/Swiss - XLR chassis connectors
- Special isolated - internal wiring
- Silver-copper matrix - internal signal cable
- Gold-plated industrial grade PCB

Mechanical Construction

The high grade aluminum chassis impart a richer, more lustrous tonality with a cleaner background and less hash and grain. All brushed anodized anti-vibration-resonance and non-magnetic chassis's are fully hand assembled to insure the highest level of craftsmanship.

- Improved heat ventilation chassis
- Improved heat ventilation chassis
- Backlit "ayon" logo
- All front & rear panel descriptions are engraved
- Ground switch
- AC phase polarity control indicator
- Bias analog-instrument with mV scale
- Chassis finish: black / chrome"

Yeah! What they said.

Okay, for the rest of you lets get down to the things that really matter to us as audiophiles beyond spec, size, and scale. The name Titan does not invoke visions of small scale and intimacy. You don't immediately think of uber detail, of low level listening that makes you wonder why they needed to be so big to deliver all this small scale micro detail and delicacy but that is what they are capable of doing in a way that totally shocked me. The grand scale, impact and earth shattering and thundering capability to move a house an inch or two on its foundation, providing your speakers can generate the low frequencies, is resident in these beasts and is a no brainer. You look at them and automatically assume the obvious. It is what they deliver in low level resolution and detailed presentation of intricacies that totally astonishes the listener.

During my listening sessions I ran these puppies through a plethora of platter spinning, reel running and CD tracking. I used two different turntables with different cartridges, a reel to reel running at 7.5 IPS and a CD player. The musical selections ran from Led Zeppelin through Zubin Mehta! I threw everything I had and could find through these amps. As I said the requisite massive sound stage, depth and breadth of which is as good as I have ever

witnessed was all there in grand scale. Height and pinpointing as much as the source material allowed was spot on.

One of my all time favorite recordings to test this aspect is Pink Floyd's "Dogs" as performed on Roger water's live CD *Live in the Flesh!* (2000 CD Columbia 501137 2/EAN 50997501137210). I have spoken of this many times in reviews but when as system produces exceptional sound staging you will hear barking dogs as though they are behind you. In truly stellar systems they will seem to be behind you and to the right and definitely in the distant corner of the listening room. In the ultra rare systems, that 1%, those dogs will seem to be not only behind you and to the right but also apparently coming from the neighbors back yard. This has happened in my listening room with only three system configurations that I can recall. This was the case with the Titans inserted into the system. This is an effect that actually sends chills down the spine. The first time I experienced it I almost called my neighbor to ask why his dog was barking out back at midnight! When listening to any system I am looking for goose bump moments. They were abundant in my system with these amps.

While listening to Steely Dan's *Aja* (ABC Records AA-1006 from 1977) I was taken aback by the all the subtlety that I was given. Many people think that at the end of this recording session Steve Gadd had given his best drum performance to that point. When listening to that particular part of the track during this session I became convinced that it may have been his best recorded performance ever. It is hard to quantify a musicians restraint or wild abandonment accurately but suffice it to say that both were present in his drum breaks. Steve's interesting syncopation, restrained and then explosive percussion work are the perfect counter point to Wayne Short's exquisite, dynamic solo and marks for me the highlight of the songs second half. The slam of the kick drum was always delivered with the requisite air moving punch and cymbals attacked and decayed as if they were sizzling right in my room and not emanating from a recording. I have listened to this track hundreds if not maybe a thousand times in the thirty years I have owned it. This may have well been the best of all of those sessions and listening to the track! That is saying some mighty high praise here.

Normally people will associate Led Zeppelin with heavy metal music. Perhaps that is accurate as one of the pioneers in the genre' but they will miss a significant catalog of Folk, Orchestral, and Celtic influenced songs that are the ones I seemed to gravitate towards the older I get.

Led Zeppelin III (Atlantic SD7201 my reference copy being from Classic Records and is the 200 gram version item number QUIEX SV-P) was a watershed album nicely balanced between the various genres. "The Immigrant Song" and "Celebration Day" were typical Zep fair and almost downright bombastic. Other bits included "Gallows Pole" a traditional folk song arranged by Plant and Page and a solid good showing! My favorite song of the album and one of my all time favorite songs is "That's the Way". A song about a forbidden friendship. It was the first time I really understood what a dynamic and broad sweeping vocalist Robert Plant was. Not just a wailing banshee of a rock God but a very intuitive singer who brought a range and depth to this song in a way no one else could have done it. The performance is one that in the right system and right room brings you so close to the mental images that you feel the pain and sadness down to your very soul. The range of dynamic swing in his voice can be felt as

well as heard and I found myself more than ever really feeling his pain. Truly presented as well if not better than I have ever heard it. Smooth deliver, pinpoint accuracy in the stage with perfect height and depth but most importantly a sense of ultra intimacy. Wow!

From Earl Klugh's *Finger Paintings* (Mobile Fidelity UHQR MFQR 1-1025 serial number 741) The opening track "Doctor Macumba" is a very festive and busy tune. With a lot of keyboards, percussion, and bass infused Latin pop going on it is easy for an acoustic guitar to get a bit lost or over powered. When you consider this was the dawning of the modern soft jazz age it was a break through album in 1977 and to date one of my all time favorites. The system delivered Earl's nylon string guitar with incredible detail, keeping it front and center while allowing the more gentle attack and decay of nylon strings (vs electric and thus more both and sizzling) to take center stage and balance the busy work in the supporting music. So well was this track presented through the Titan's that I played it a few times just to be sure I wasn't imagining the improvement.

Zubin Mehta is a legendary conductor of Western classical music and is currently the director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. I decided to listen to the recording of "Someone to Watch Over Me" from the soundtrack of *Manhattan* with Zubin conducting the New York Philharmonic Orchestra through a beautiful instrumental version of that song. For me it is one of the most relaxing and liting orchestral pieces I have ever listened to. It put me into such a relaxed state I though a coma was imminent. The subtle weaving of the strings with woodwind instruments is delicate yet strongly presented. What I really loved with these amps is the way the delivered the dynamic swings of the string ensembles but also let the delicate swells of other instruments ebb and flow through the piece. It presented an appropriately wide and deep soundstage that gave the sense of an auditorium with a full orchestra in my somewhat narrow but deep room (18' wide by 33' deep). The 24 foot ceilings allow for a deeper and broader sound stage than a 10-12 foot ceiling for sure but the amps used the space to full advantage. Truly a remarkable rendition of this classic tune.

I am certain that a good deal of this sonic goodness comes from the WE300 based tube—the AA62B! 300Bs have always been lauded for their ability to deliver sonic detail and delicacy in any application. They generally have not been known for massive grunt. A trade off many audiophiles will gladly make because after all detail and a lot of it is what separates tubes and generally high end audio from just running with a massive powered solid state unit for maximum grunt and decibels. What these amps do is provide plenty of both due to the AA 62B tube, a 300B on steroids. That does not come without a price but the ticket is well worth the bucks if you have them.

I have come to appreciate just how good Ayon products are; the line has something for everyone and I have yet to be in the presence of any of their gear and not been pleased and impressed because I have always been presented with quality and sonic delivery that made for a very good value at all levels for the asking price. The Titans are no exception to the Ayon rule. Definitely the pinnacle of their line the amps and they hold that distinction with well deserved pride and honor. If you are looking for a high end, top of the line set of monoblock

amplifiers to live out the rest of your life with you might be able to find some others that will please you but I seriously doubt you would find any better at any price. If that sounds like where you are in your audio journey I suggest you run to audition a pair!

Ayon Titan Evo Monoblock Amplifiers

Retail: \$57,000 pair

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