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PrimaLuna Prologue Two

by Jimmy Hughes

To tell the truth, I didn't know what the PrimaLuna Prologue Two cost when I first got it out of the box; I simply connected it up and listened. Certainly there was nothing about the finish, build quality, or sound that indicated a low price; indeed, quite the opposite – it looked and sounded expensive, and seemed solid and well built.

Literally, from the first few notes, I was hooked. The improvement was obvious. Even my wife commented on the sound – and that's interesting because I hadn't told her I'd changed amps, nor had I asked for comments; it was a spontaneous reaction. The sound was rich, full and weighty. The bass seemed unusually deep and powerful, while the treble sounded silky smooth yet at the same time very crisp and 'present'.

The other quality apparent was power - lots of it. Now, some valve amplifiers have limits in terms of their absolute loudness. Certainly, valve amps tend to have a lower wattage. But output power as measured, and output volume judged subjectively aren't necessarily the same thing. We've all heard massively endowed Mega-Watt amps that haven't actually sounded powerful unless played loudly.

With a number of valve amplifiers, high output is sacrificed for higher quality. By choosing certain valves, or adopting particular circuit configurations, a designer may choose sound quality over output. And in many ways it's a very acceptable trade off; I'd always prefer an amplifier than offered outstanding sound quality and reasonable output over

one that sounded inferior but could play louder.

The point about the Prologue Two is – you don't need to compromise. This is an amp that sounds gutsy and powerful at medium and low volume levels, but is capable of playing quite loudly should the music demand it. Using Impulse H1s

(sensitive, but not massively efficient) I could generate volume levels that bordered on uncomfortable – both for me and my poor neighbours!

However, the fact that the amp produces a big sound at medium volume levels, means you don't have to play music at anti-social levels to create a proper sense of presence and excitement. Subjectively, the Prologue Two sounds loud when it isn't.

This is interesting; because the basic sound is actually very smooth and refined, the Prologue Two is not creating a big sound through lack of refinement. It's genuine quality that's responsible for the difference.

When I realised how reasonably priced the amplifier was, I was shocked and pleased in equal measure. And while I'm not saying it's likely to see off all its more expensive competitors, for many the difference in price will not be easy to justify. It would be better to put the money saved buying the Prologue Two towards a superior CD player or speakers. Either that, or spend the cash saved on music.



Price: £999

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