

Soundbites - TJ Full Music Valves

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TJ Full Music Valves

12AU7 and 12AX7 – £74 per matched pair

The TJ factory in Tianjan province is a private enterprise (no state involvement) and the owner, Mr. Liu Zhensheng, is a veteran of the tube industry, having worked for the Peking Vacuum Tube factory for many years. He graduated from University in 1955 in vacuum tube technology and holds a number of patents in that field. He is responsible for the design and manufacturing process of all the TJ valves.

The TJ 300B Premium Mesh Anode valves already have a following in the UK and many would say they are second only to the Western Electric 300B. TJ have now started producing driver valves and have added the 12AU7 and 12AX7 (ECC82 and ECC83 respectively) to their catalogue. These new TJ 12AU7s and 12AX7s, with their gold-plated pins and box anode design, have been favourably compared with other premium valves such as Siemens and Telefunken – and they have a price tag to match!

I tried both types of valve in various pieces of equipment, including a preamp, a phono stage and a CD player, and compared them with equivalent Siemens, Telefunken and my old favourites NOS Old Shield Mullard valves. When first fitted, the TJs seemed a little bass-light. However, after a 24 hour running in period, the bass reappeared in full and was extremely extended and well-controlled.

It was evident from the start that the TJs produce masses of detail with no strain or unpleasant edge to the sound. Following a session involving frantic valve-swapping, it became clear that the TJs reproduce music with incredible accuracy and clarity. For example, on one particular recording that included a flute duet, with the TJs it was clearly evident that there were two distinct instruments playing, whilst with the other valves, the flutes tended to merge together. Overall, the sound balance with the TJs was more accurately focussed, natural sounding and realistic.

In my opinion, the TJs are absolutely superb and fully justify their price tag. When the cost is assessed against the life expectancy of around 10,000 hours for a valve of this type, it is an extremely worthwhile investment. The TJs outperform the competition in terms of realism and tighter control in the lower registers. It was as though the system had a firmer grip on the recordings when the TJ valves were fitted. They are the best of the best!

These valves are available in the UK from HiFiCollective who can be contacted by telephone on +44 (0)1908 217202, by email at info@hificollective.co.uk or visit their website at <http://www.hificollective.co.uk/>. Alternatively, contact DIY HiFi Supply in Hong Kong via their web site at <http://www.diyhifisupply.com/>.

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