Decided On A New Phono Stage...
Goodbye Hagerman....Hello Liberty Audio

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My previous phono stage was a Hagerman Coronet II with some parts upgrades. A nice tube phono stage, but it needs a step up transformer to run LOMC carts. Also I found the tonal balance not to be as even as I would have liked, although it was pleasant to listen to.

I decided I wanted a SS phono stage, and I did listen to one of the battery powered ones out there. But in the end I am buying a Liberty Audio B2B-1 phono stage. Liberty is actually a factory direct line of PBN Audio.

What's interesting is the B2B-1 is the same basic circuit as the two PBN phono stages. But the unit is stripped down, after all the two PBN phono stages are significantly more expensive than this one. This is a dual mono design, which includes two torrodial transformers in the power supply. Also a direct coupled output stage, and makes liberal use of JFETS throughout the circuit.

Tonally the B2B-1 is remarkably even, and the noise floor is extremely low. Great low level detail, and excellent layering to the sound stage. Capable of recreating large dynamic swings, but also does the low level dynamic contrasts very nicely also. While it doesn't possess tube warmth, I really don't believe this piece has any significant flaws.

This one is a keeper, and sets the foundation for analog playback in my system.

Mr. Pig

Couple of interesting things. The entire thing is built of domestic parts, except for the circuit boards. The B2B-1 is assembled completely at PBN. Even the case is is one piece of metal that is folded and welded in all four corners. Of course the top plate bolts on. Makes the Hagerman chassis look like a piece of junk, but its just a basic Hammond chassis. While a deceptively simple looking component, the thing is really put together well.

I personally like the space/layering/soundstage the Liberty offers, and its ability to resolve detail without being analytical. Also the bass response is stupendous, its quite amazing what it does in this regards.

Mr. Pig