

PBN Olympia Mini

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What's a show without PBN ?

Last year it was the Olympia AX power amp. A beautiful amplifier from all viewpoints, but it was expensive at \$20,000. This year Peter introduced the Olympia Mini (\$8,500), a scaled down and more affordable version of the amplifier that was so impressive at last year's show and later in my home.

My audition of the Mini lasted about 5-10 minutes, but I'm not unfamiliar with the sound of PBN amplifiers, or Erno Borberly designs for that matter. I therefore feel safe in saying that this may be the most believably dynamic and natural sounding amp in the entire PBN line up (maybe anyone's line up).

The big Olympia had a sense and feeling of magnificence and majestic power about it, but my ears are telling me that this little version has more dynamic energy and spontaneity than just about anything available including its Big Brother (the Maxi?). It seemed quicker and, let's say, more responsive in a natural way than the larger amp. Which is not to criticize the Olympia, as much as it is to heap great praise on the smaller Mini.

I'm not sure of the upgrades made to the Mini, if any, but it has come to mind that it is possible that an optimum size may exist for a power amplifier and a power amplifier circuit. All of which may explain why some lesser priced and lower powered amps in a line up sound so freaking good.

The Mini is an all FET design putting out 160 wpc. The output section contains 16 closely matched FET devices per channel mounted on a PCB. In its purely differential mono mode, it will produce close to 600 watts, though one will need a fully differential preamp to go mono.

After we completed our audition, my son made one of his rare pronouncements saying, "That sounded really good, dad." Considering everything he had heard over the prior three days and said little – I figured the PBN room must have indeed been as good as anything at the show.