



ELECTROCOMPANIET EC 4.7/AW-120DMB

SOUND ■■■■ **VALUE** ■■■■ **£3,250.00** **CONTACT** 01756 795333 www.electrocompaniet.com **GEE** 2 year

Norwegian brand that first surfaced back in the 1970s, UK distribution has been a bit haphazard down the years, but speaker specialist Castle Acoustics has recently taken on the brand. This pre-/power combination consists of the curiously named EC4.7 preamp (£1,000) and 120DMB power amp (£2,250), the combined price placing it right at the top of our group. Both units are decidedly wide and deep, and although both fascias share the same width, they differ in both height and depth, which looks a little strange.

Both have thick Perspex fascias, which appear a tad old-fashioned to these eyes, but at least confer an element of individuality. The handful of buttons (there are no knobs) are gilded, and feedback is provided by blue illuminated legends hidden behind the fascia. I particularly like the volume indicator, a blue LED mounted on the edge of a rotating disc attached to the motorised potentiometer; I rather dislike the input labels, which cannot be changed and seem an odd selection. 'Tuner' and 'CD' I'll go for, but instead of 'vinyl' or 'TV' you get 'tape', 'DVD' and 'VCR'. There's neither a mono button nor an earthing point here, while the CD input is balanced XLR, with adaptors supplied for unbalanced phono connection.

Although you can operate this amplifier from the preamp front panel using up/down buttons for volume and input selection (or vice versa – I guess you get used to it!), you're more likely to use the very neat little remote handset. This sits comfortably in the hand and handles only the key tasks of volume, mute and input selection with clarity and without fuss, unencumbered by 'system' control buttons.

The preamp handles just line level signals, with a choice of six input pairs. Like the CD input, the pre-/power link is also

via balanced XLRs, but this is no headache when using the pair together. The power amp, described as a double-mono balanced FTT design, has plenty of muscle, its output rated at 120 Watts per channel into 8 Ohms, 200 Watts into 4 Ohms, and 350 Watts into 2 Ohms.

SOUND QUALITY

Having found some of the solid state amps a trifle disappointing compared to their thermionic competition, the Electrocompaniet did much to restore my faith in transistors, or at least demonstrate pretty clearly that the implementation is at least as important as the technology.

This is a quite delightful sounding amplifier, and while it does possess something of the solid state 'character', that's maybe because it doesn't have the sort of euphonic quality that valve amps seem to have as a matter of course.

There's just a hint of texture thickening through the mid-band, but it's hardly distracting, and the first and lasting impression is of a beautifully neutral and delicate sounding amplifier which doesn't emphasise any particular part of the audio band, and which shows fine consistency and time-coherence across a wide bandwidth and dynamic range. Dynamics themselves might have more vigour and expression, and the bass could perhaps be a little more assertive, but in truth these are mere nits rather than real criticisms.

CONCLUSIONS

My only quibbles with this amplifier are over the bulk of the units and the slightly perverse input labelling icons on the pre-amp. Sound quality is outstanding by any standards, so a Best Buy rating seems mandatory, even at this high price.

TYPE: TRANSISTOR AMPLIFIER

"THESE AMPLIFIERS DID MUCH TO RESTORE MY FAITH IN TRANSISTORS"

The Electrocompaniet has one of the simplest, and most stylish, remotes in the test.

