Valves or Tubes?

PARADOXICALLY, THE 'VALVE AMPLIFICATION COMPANY' IS ACTUALLY AN AMERICAN OPERATION. RAFAEL TODES AND MARTIN COLLOMS TRY OUT EXAMPLES OF ITS LESS COSTLY STEREO AND MONOBLOCK AMPLIFIERS

Rafael Todes heard about these Kevin Hayes designed amplifiers, built in Florida USA. He borrowed one, then a second, and was so fascinated by their sound quality that he wanted to share the experience. Was that singular vitality and vivacity that he had heard an illusion, down to synergy in his particular system, or could it be repeated in another context?

While researching VAC (the Valve Amplification Company), I noticed the individualistic approach of its founder and designer, and was further intrigued by the company website's discussions on the merits of amplifier technologies, the relevance of measurement results, and the designer's approach. Hayes' research goes right back to the early Bell labs and General Electric days of valves, and later references are made to such luminaries Williamson, Moir, and Langford Smith. He has worked through the whole gamut of circuit configurations, of negative feedback and

measurement results, ending up committed to putting sound quality and load drive consistency ahead of low distortion. Hayes himself has a long and distinguished track record, rarely needs to cultivate publicity, and is proud of the fact that customers normally come to VAC through personal recommendation.

Although some monstrously large designs may be seen in the VAC catalogue, this *Phi 200* is a fairly straightforward single chassis stereo power amplifier with a nominal output of 100W/ch. It's designed to work with both balanced and unbalanced inputs (switch selected on the top of the chassis). Another switch reconfigures all the connections for mono working, which will deliver twice the power into a lower impedance. (This will of course require two units and the space to accommodate them.) Correct biasing is simple to achieve *via* screwdriver-accessible slots on top of the chassis, and set by adjusting them