

## Sweet and airy: Circa 1974

### Audio Research D-76 all-tube 75-watt stereo power amplifier restoration/evaluation project.

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The early 75-watt series amps penned by Bill Johnson encompass the D-75 in 1972, D-75 A in 1973, D-76 in 1974 and the D-76 A in 1975-6. They represent a continuing refinement in resolution, dynamics and bandwidth as the series progressed. Compact, reliable and available not rarely but occasionally on the used audio market, they are a great value. Nothing touches them for a total several-thousand dollar investment in terms of realism, collectability and value retention. And they are built like proverbial military bricks. That is why steadily over the years, when one of these changes hands, it often arrives at our doorstep for full restoration. I had the opportunity to purchase a clean D-76 example from an old friend and want to share with you the process performed and sonic results.

My unit arrived with all original tubes, still measuring in fairly strong condition, including GE 6550 output and regulator tubes, Amperex 12AX7 and RCA 6FQ7 small tubes. These were measured, cleaned with Pro-Gold and retained for the rebuild. The main bulk supply electrolytics were tired and replaced with six modern low-ESR capacitors. Another large multi-section cap and a handful of other small electrolytics were also changed out. The old nickel-plated RCA input jacks were swapped for our current production style gold-plated jacks (highly recommended), and the old feet and line fuse were replaced with fresh ones. The circuit, its wiring, the carbon-composition resistors and orange-drop coupling caps were left untouched –fully stock. Note that the L and R input volume pots may be bypassed for a slight improvement in purity on all the amps in this series.



Expecting and it delivers Midrange Magic in spades. Relaxed, breathy vocals are silky with purity and dimensionality off the charts. Palpability is this amp's calling card. Not as extended on the top end or bottom, not as dynamic (smaller power supply) as our current designs. However, this all-tube design with 600v supply operation provides a gorgeous rendition of all well-recorded acoustic music in particular. It more than holds its own against anything from that era.

The meter-free minimalist front panel, old-school handles, grey-anodized chassis and big pilot light complete the whole retro vibe. It comes with a sturdy black-anodized highly-open perforated top cage. But since I love looking at all those tubes, it runs in topless, glowing glory.

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