

The first time I encountered ME amplifiers was way back in the early 80's. I had an electronics shop at the time and was getting ready to close the store when a man wandered in and introduced himself as Peter Stein. He said he was on his way back from a Hi Fi show in Adelaide and wondered if I would like to listen to his range of amps. Next thing I knew we had a meal and set up an ME 850 power amp and ME 25 Pre Amp in my lounge room. I was in my twenties at the time and didn't have much of a system. My pride and joy was a pair of KEF 105 Reference monitors which were hooked up to this beast of an amp.

My first reaction was "My god I have a different set of speakers" The sheer presence and accuracy of the ME850 was breathtaking. With a massive damping factor and what seemed to be unlimited current, my Kefs reached their maximum potential. Tight accurate Bass, clear surgical midrange and crisp highs. It was everything I wanted but couldn't achieve with my little NAD 2030. I asked Peter the price and realised it would be a while before I could afford equipment of this quality.

As years went by, it was 2000, I was older and finally had the money together to buy my ME 25 Pre Amp and ME 550 power amp. I took a loan out and matched the amp with a set of Klipsch Horns. They were massive and needed to be mounted in corners of the room. Given their efficiency (105db per 1 watt) the ME 550 drove the speakers effortlessly. One thing you notice listening to horn speakers is they are revealing of any defects in the amplifier and pre amp. I wasn't disappointed, the bass tight and responsive, razor sharp midrange and crisp accurate highs. The only nagging issue was harshness on higher volumes.

Its now 2015 and I decided to replace my ME550 amp with the all new ME 580 amp and a pair of Klipsch P39F speakers. The speakers are 4 ohm with horn tweeter, Tatrix horn midrange and three 10" transmission line bass drivers. You need one hell of an amp to drive what is at times a difficult load; I wasn't disappointed.

So what can I say about the ME 580 amp? It is a logical progression in a line of amplifiers that are renown for reproduction that can only be described as the closest thing you will get to audio perfection. You don't hear the ME580, you hear music, it fills your lounge room, a presence and soundstage that sounds like the whole damn band has set up in your home for a private concert.

As I said earlier I use horn speakers and my nagging issue was 3rd order harmonic distortion, which becomes annoying at high volume levels. I have valve power amps that have cost me \$22,000 a pair to get around the harshness you can encounter with solid state amps. So how did the ME 580 stack up? It wiped the floor with them! The ME 580 is the first solid state amp I have ever heard that has no detectable third order harmonic distortion. They are razor sharp in accuracy, so clean it's like pure air and bass so solid and tight it like you are actually there. There are very few amplifiers that disappear, you don't hear them, you hear the sound in all its glory. Taken out of your lounge chair and transported to the studio, the concert hall or the dance party.

I have owned ME amps for 16 years now and can recommend the ME 580 amplifier as one of the most outstanding amplifiers I have ever heard.

Written by John Hart – Broken Hill, NSW – 26-MAR-16

