

# Golden lights

Rafael Todes goes all Gallic as he is bewitched by a new valve integrated amplifier from across the Channel.

**A**s we all know, looks aren't everything – especially in the world of hi-fi components.

There's no end of storied products down the years that have looked – on the outside at least – a touch, well, utilitarian would be the word (think the likes of the NAD 3020 or original Naim Nait, for example).

So when something comes along that makes you go 'Wow!' as soon as you lift it out of the box and then continues to beguile once it's pressed into service, it deserves to be welcomed.

So, say a big hello to the Jadis I-35 integrated amplifier because it fulfills both those criteria.

Firstly, it looks superb. The family-owned Jadis company has been hand-building valve amplifiers in the Languedoc-Roussillon region

of southern France since 1983 and it's fair to say their products have a distinctive, luxurious look that sets them apart from the crowd.

The main chassis is a combination of chromed steel with gold knobs and faceplate adorned with the scripted Jadis logo and weighing in at a hefty 31kgs.

It's a look that exudes quality without being overstated – just what you'd want from a £5500 amplifier.

Controls consist of volume, balance and input selector, along with an on/off rocker switch. A remote control is optional.

The valve complement includes five small-signal tubes – the central one being a 12AU7 dual triode that provides line-level gain for both channels of the active pre-amp stage. Two other 12AU7s serve as left and right channel phase splitters for the push-pull power section with a pair

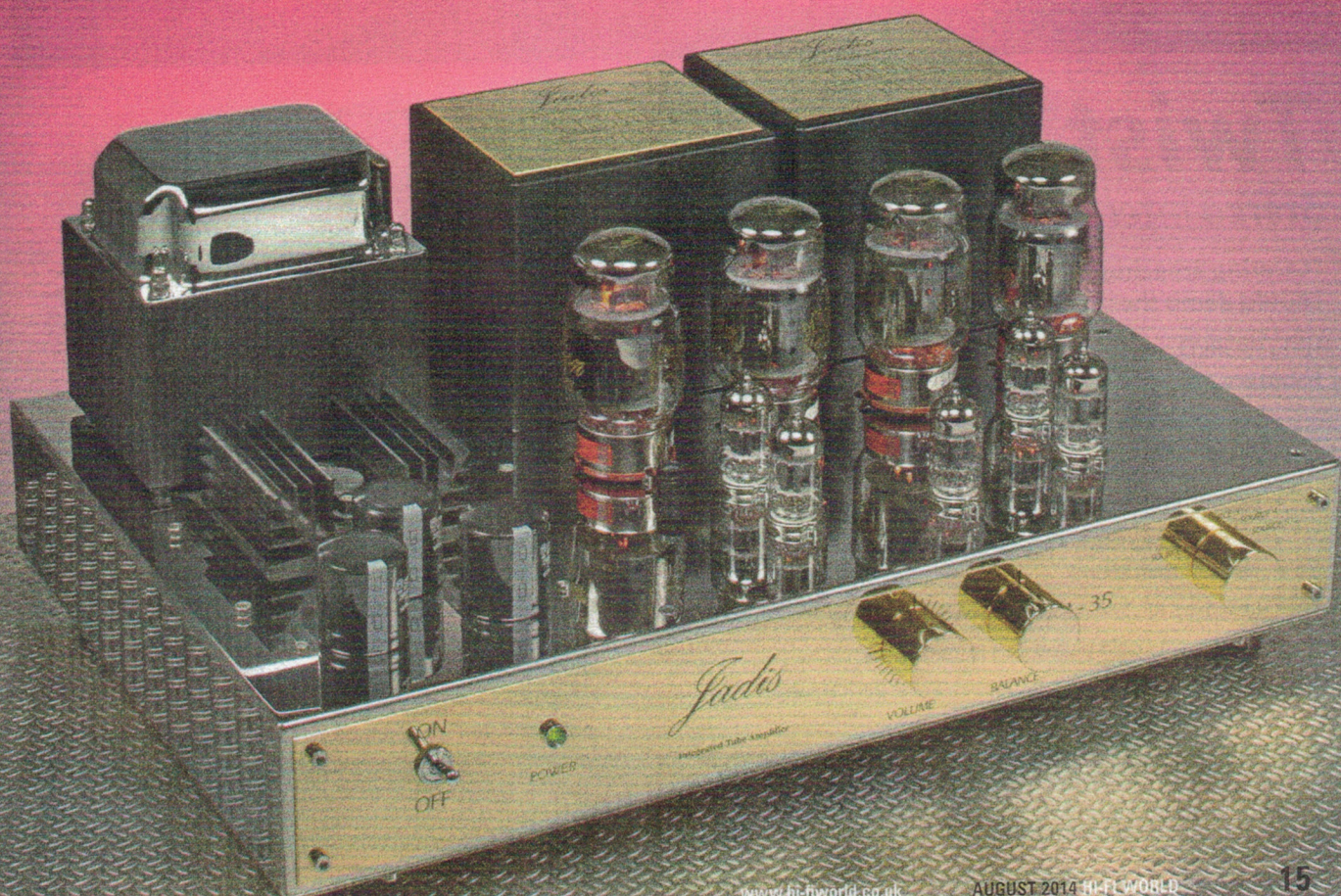
of 12AX7s driving the power tubes.

In our review sample the output section was fitted with KT88 tubes, but customers can also specify the more powerful and relatively new KT120 valves if they wish – see our box-out at the end of the article for more on this topic.

The push-pull output stage is biased to Class A and uses auto-bias, giving a claimed 30 Watts-per-channel of power. The output transformers are of Jadis's own design and hand-wound in-house.

Round the back are five line-level RCA inputs (there's no phono stage) as well as two sets of 'speaker binding posts' – which is where things get slightly unusual.

Despite a circuit diagram on the top of the output transformers indicating 4 and 8 Ohm 'speaker taps' are available, as is customary on valve amplifiers, this is, in fact not the case.







*The left and right loudspeaker output sockets are paralleled, so give the same output.*

Instead the two sets of loudspeaker outputs in fact run in parallel – with Jadis saying the I-35s “load impedance is pre-adjusted in the factory for loudspeakers from 4 to 16 ohms”.

Our Measured Performance revealed the amplifier's output transformers are most likely power matched for 10 Ohm loads. In fact power output dipped appreciably into 4 Ohms.

As most 'speakers these days use bass drivers of around 4 Ohms careful matching is going to be critical to getting the best out of the Jadis.

Also worth noting is that the I-35 inverts signal polarity – so for optimum sound quality the speaker connections should be swapped black for red and red for black on each channel (but you may not hear any difference – see our Letters this month for more about 'absolute phase').

A steel mesh valve cover screws to the chassis to protect those

glowing tubes from inquisitive little hands or wandering pets – but, as with most tube amplifiers, the Jadis really does look better without it in situ.

Slide the unit into your rack and fire up those KT88 tubes and the Jadis conveys an undeniable pride of ownership – one which is only heightened as you begin to listen to the performance.

## SOUND QUALITY

Slotted into my system and warmed up nicely, the Jadis immediately gives a good impression of itself.

Playing the Decca Solti recording of Mahler's 9th Symphony, Scherzo. I am impressed with what the Jadis integrated is doing to the sound.

It has good control over the orchestral textures – the violins are sweet with good weight to them and there is a beautifully classic valve twinge to the proceedings.

Where my reference VAC PHI200 monoblocks have more of a matt finish, this is veering towards gloss. It's an attractive sound, engaging and intensely coloured like a saturated colour photograph.

As a listener I'm sitting halfway back in the concert hall with the Jadis. It means I'm not getting the intense detail the VACs provide which makes me feel I'm on stage with the performers.

But the Jadis sound is one I suspect will make for an easier listen for many.

**Two top panel adjusters alter 'filament tension' – heater volts – to aid valve matching.**

It is simpler to get a perspective of the whole performance from this slightly more distant vantage point and the I-35 has the ability to bring the performance together into one seamless whole.

Yes, some amplifiers will give you more detail and a brighter spotlight on individual performers – but the Jadis has an easy, graceful sound that concentrates on the musical whole.

The Jadis also had more than enough power to easily drive my resident B&W 802Ds. It may not be the most powerful valve amplifier about but it coped well here.

However, although big, the B&Ws are relatively benign with a 90dB sensitivity and 8 Ohm nominal impedance. Switching to a pair of the impressive MCRU No127s (see review this issue) and the Jadis struggled a little more. Yes, it could go loud with ease (the MCRUs are even more sensitive than the B&Ws) but the No127s 4 Ohm impedance saw the sound start to harden as the volume knob was turned towards the 12 noon position. The sound never became offensive – but there was the sense that the Jadis was starting to run out of breath.

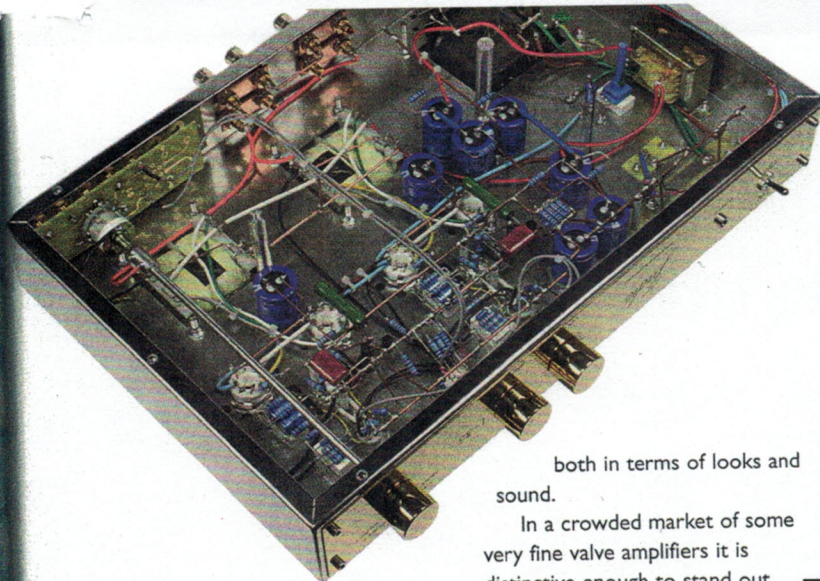
Back on the 802Ds and things returned to normal. Sound staging was impressive – with good right to left separation, although the Jadis didn't have quite the front to back resolution of my VACs.

The bass is also fairly tight by the standards of most valve amplifiers I have heard. It isn't gut-wrenching in the manner of a megawatt transistor amplifier but is present and correct with good definition. I wonder if perhaps they are putting beauty above truth?

Turning to a favourite Mozart piano concerto – No 18 in B flat major by Barenboim with the Berlin Philharmonic – and the orchestra has a rich tone which is both fulsome







both in terms of looks and sound.

In a crowded market of some very fine valve amplifiers it is distinctive enough to stand out and offer real value for money.

and very appealing.

There's just a hint of the amplifier straining in the loud orchestral tutti and I miss a little of the subtlety of orchestral interplay as the sense of the platform on which the musicians are performing is a bit more crowded than usual.

There is undoubtedly more jumble than I hear through my VAC amps with the dialogues between soloist and orchestra seeming to have less sense to them. This music is testing the amplifier's command, and revealing holes in its defences.

Having said that, the Jadis costs a quarter of the price of the VACs – and its level of detail is exactly what you would expect from an amplifier in its price range.

On a more mundane level, there is slight sonic leakage between inputs, which could cause a problem if you use several on at any given time.

I would have also appreciated a remote control as standard – not optional – at this price point, at least for volume if not for input.

And while the Jadis certainly looks the part with its distinctive blend of polished steel and gold detailing, why oh why make the decision to place three utilitarian capacitors and a heatsink to the left of the valves – spoiling what is, after all, any tube amplifier's shop window?

I like the sight of glowing valves as much as the next man. I can see the reasoning behind the looks, appreciate the bling factor of the silver and gold – but why the capacitors?

But those gripes aside – and, yes, I am being a little picky here – Jadis have produced a very attractive amplifier in the shape of the I-35,

fulsome.

Indeed the Jadis goes about its job with aplomb giving a rich, velvety sound that is typically valve-like and never less than musical.

The main drawback is its lack of 4 and 8 Ohm 'speaker taps which sees a dip in power into lower impedances and means potential buyers will need to take special care in loudspeaker matching.

## REFERENCE SYSTEM

VAC PHI200s  
B&W 802Ds  
Townshend Audio Isolda speaker cables  
Esoteric K-05 CD player  
PS Audio P10 mains rebuilder

## KT88, KT120 OR KT150 POWER TUBES?

KT88s are robust, sound good and cost little – around £40 each.

KT120s are a modern upgrade of the KT88 (bigger anode) needing more heater current: they are a plug-in replacement if this is available, as it is on the I-35. KT120s are robust, inexpensive but can sound clanky. KT150s are a new upgrade of the KT120 designed to sound good – but they cost £200 apiece!

Because the I-35 can run KT120s it can run KT150s too – at a price. However, the amplifier's power output will not change by using these higher power valves; more HT is needed.

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Power measured 29 Watts into 8 Ohms (2% distortion). This is the sort of power auto-bias provides when running KT88s conservatively (low-ish anode volts) to conserve their life. So valve life should be long, but power is not high.

Jadis say the I-35 is factory set to suit 4-8 Ohm loudspeakers (internally it can be wired for 4-8, 8-10 or 16 Ohm loads) but it best matches 8 Ohms; with 4 Ohms power dropped to just 12 Watts

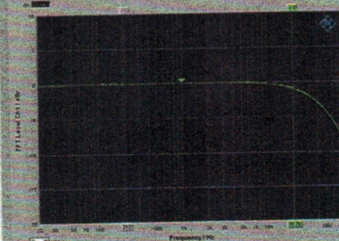
(2% distortion). The secondary needs a dedicated 4 Ohm output so it better suits modern 4 Ohm loudspeakers, which most are (i.e. their bass drivers are 4 Ohms).

Distortion levels were a little high, measuring around 0.7% at low signal levels, rising to 1% near full output and 4% at 10kHz near full output. Third harmonic dominated but other higher components were obvious. Bass stayed clean and relatively distortion free, however, so bass quality is likely to be good. Damping factor of 5.6 suggests reasonable speaker control.

Sensitivity was high at 150mV, so the I-35 will go loud quickly as volume is increased. Frequency response covered the audio band, treble rolling off smoothly above 20kHz, as is common with valve amplifiers.

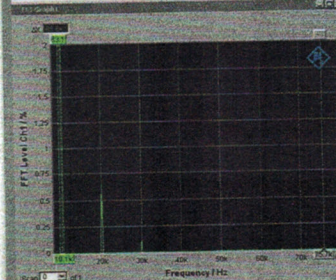
The I-35's output transformers are not ideal for 4 Ohm loudspeakers. This under-utilises the KT88s that in the right environment can produce 40 Watts. Otherwise, measured performance was good, rather than exceptional. **NK**

## FREQUENCY RESPONSE



## DISTORTION

THD (%)	0.6886 %	2.2262 V	10.000 kHz
ON	OFF	OFF	OFF



Power	28watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-20kHz
Separation	65dB
Noise	-85dB
Distortion	0.7%
Sensitivity	150mV
Damping factor	5.6

## JADIS I-35 AMPLIFIER £5500



**EXCELLENT** - extremely capable

## VERDICT

Lovely classic valve sound, but a bit short of power

## FOR

- seductive valve sound
- chrome and gold finish
- can use KT120s or 150s

## AGAINST

- no remote control
- poor 4 Ohm matching

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