

Basie SRPP Pre-Amplifier Kit

Introduction

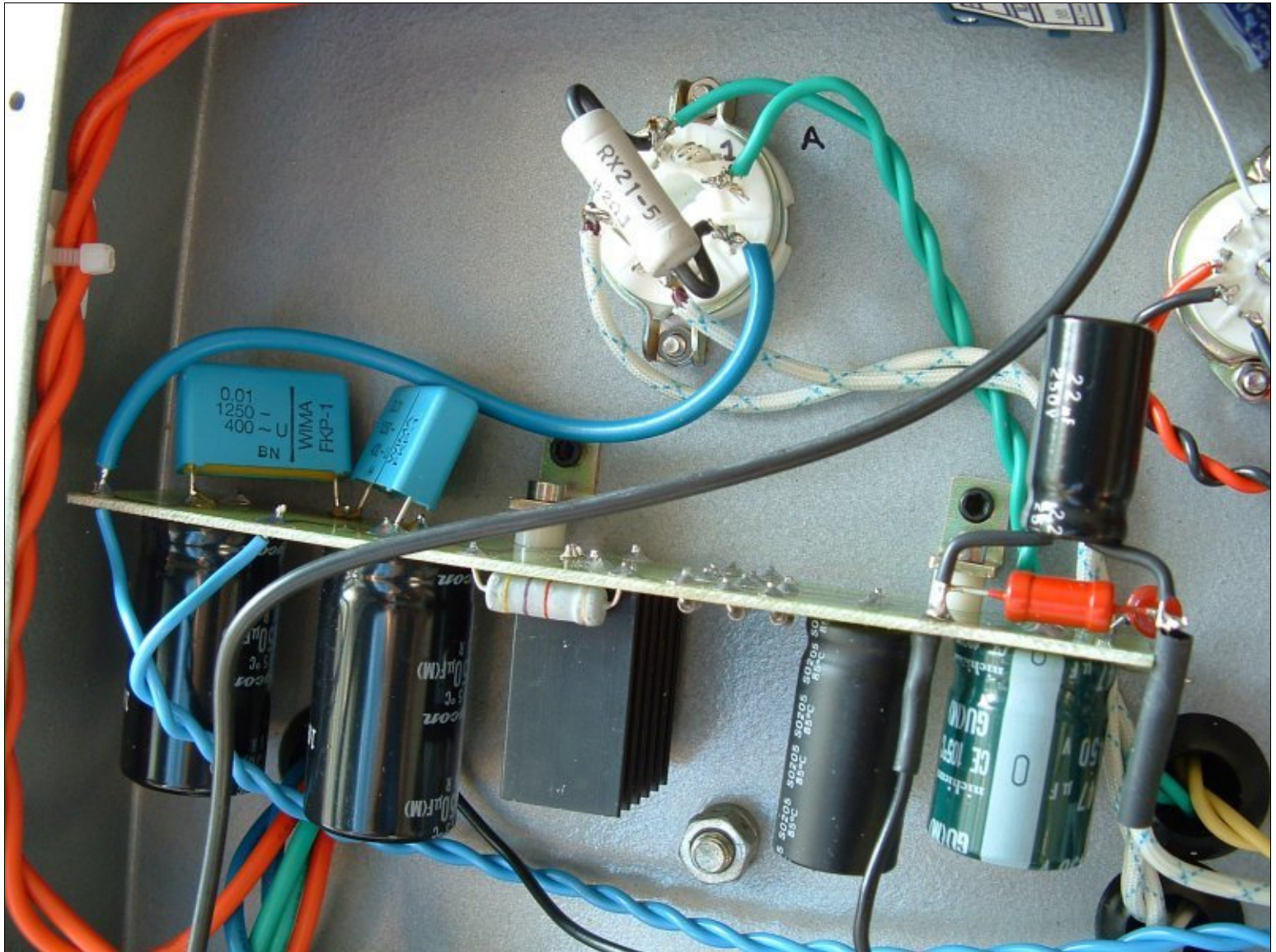
The Consonance Basie Pre-amplifier kit, available from DIY HiFi Supply in Hong Kong is a SRPP based unit with a cathode follower output stage. It uses one full 12AU7 per channel in SRPP mode and one half of a 12AU7 for the output stage for each channel. It is very versatile in that various types of tubes can be substituted for the 12AU7. It works well with a E80CC or a 12BH7 as the cathode follower output tube. It is also possible to tweak the original design so you can take the output from 2 possible places. The power supply is based around a valve rectifier stage with choke smoothing. The output is capacitor coupled. It is extremely well made and of robust construction like the Billie's and it complements the Billie very well. All the Consonance gear is very well engineered. It comes with a cherry wood front fascia and solid metal knobs.



The original Basie chassis as it arrives. The long PCB on the right is the HT supply and the short PCB on the left the heater supply. It comes with the PCB's, tube sockets, mains transformer and choke pre-assembled on the chassis. The rest of the wiring is all point to point hard-wired. The first main job is to sort out all the mains transformer and choke wires and fit any remaining hardware like the phono sockets and switches.



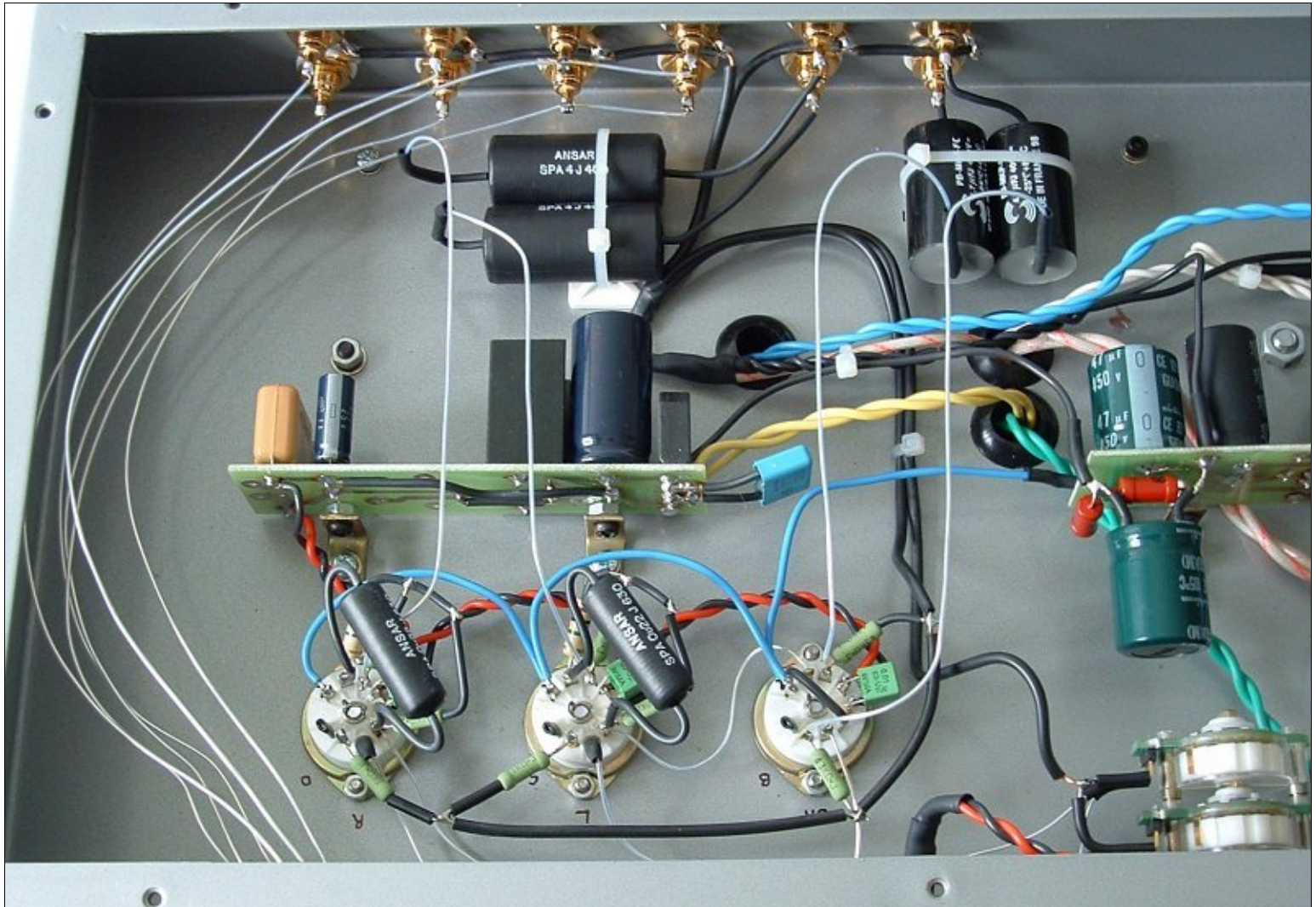
The Basie like the Billie uses a Valve rectifier. This gives a nice soft start. It comes with a 5Z4P tube but a GZ32 or 5V4 can also be used. This coupled with choke smoothing provides a highly filtered and stable power supply.



The Basie and Basie MkII Power Supply.



The completed Basie SRPP version using kiwami carbon resistors. There are a few other upgrades in this build that improve the unit performance.



The main circuit shown here. Note the 2 pairs of coupling capacitors on the output. One set takes the output off the cathode follower and the other set directly off the SRPP stage. Two amplifiers in one box.



The completed Basie, shown with a Mullard GZ32 rectifier, 2 Mullard CV4003 tubes for each channel and 1 taller E80CC as the output tube.

Sound

The standard SRPP based Basie build uses 3 ECC82 (12AU7) tubes. One tube for each channel in MU configuration and a single shared tube for the output stage as a cathode follower. Using 3 Mullard ECC82's initially produced closed and dark sound. Replacing the output tube for a 12BH7, which is a recommended change, made quite a difference. The sound was more open and dynamic. I used a NOS Brimar for this output tube. However, the downside was that the level of background detail was poor. The overall presentation was much better but analyse the sound for those background details and it was missing. This may have been that particular brand of tube which I very much suspected but I did not have any other brands available to test. I finally tried a Mullard E80CC in the output stage and this proved to be the best overall combination with the 2 ECC82's. In general both Mullard and Sylvania Brand tubes worked very well in this unit with a E80CC tube at the output providing further sonic gains. Maybe not the last word in musicality once compared to the Basie II but a well balanced sound, open, very dynamic and no serious flaws. The unit arrived without driver tubes so I can not comment on the quality of the chinese tubes supplied. I would highly recommend that the cathode follower tube be on the list of first upgrades though as this makes quite a difference.

Upgrades

The Basie has 2 sets of output sockets for Bi-amping. A modification can be made to one of the sets of sockets taking the output directly off the cathode of the top tube in the SRPP stage, completely by-passing the cathode follower. The second set of output sockets can remain un-modified and wired to the cathode follower as normal. The amplifier can now be used both in standard build mode (MU driver with cathode follower) but the 3rd tube can be removed and the unit used as a pure SRPP pre-amp if you wish. This is a very simple modification.

The SRPP stage on its own without the cathode follower is more analytical sounding and very clean. However it does lack some of the drive and weight when used with a good cathode follower tube like an E80CC. It is a little leaner sounding. In a dark sounding system or in a small room with bloated bass this can be a real advantage but not ideal for all setup's. This could be offset by replacing the output coupling capacitors by a quality paper in oil (PIO) types as these tend to sound richer and fuller than most plastic caps for example. The point to note is that it is easy to adjust this amplifier sound by tube choice and capacitors using it in a combination of ways to suit the rest of your system and tastes.

The Basie has been complimented by the MkII design. This new chassis has 4 small signal tubes and can now be built with a MM turntable stage along with 3 line level sources. However, it can still be purchased and built using just 3 tubes in SRPP/MU mode as here. The 4th tube socket is blanked off by a metal blanking plate in this case.

Conclusion

This is a very versatile pre-amplifier. It can be used in many circuit combinations and works well with various driver tubes other than the standard ECC82's types. You are not fixed to one circuit design if at a later date you decide to try new ideas since it is hardwired and not PCB based. A dynamic sound with the cathode follower. Use it without the cathode follower and it is a more open and analytical sounding unit that can bring out lots of detail if at the expense of a little weight. All this coupled with valve rectification makes this unit a bargain and it can put many commercial units to shame and betters the standard build WAD pre II and my SRPP WAD conversion by quite a way.

The Final Build With Tweaks

1 x E80CC Mullard Tubes in the Cathode Follower Stage

2 x CV4003 Mullard Tubes in the SRPP Stage

1 Mullard GZ32 Rectifier Tube

2 x Film-Foil 0.1uF Coupling Capacitors

2 x SCR 2.0uF Output Coupling Capacitors (AN Copper PIO should work well)

Solid Silver Wire for all Audio Connections Inside

DACT Stepped Attenuator Volume Control (Very Detailed)