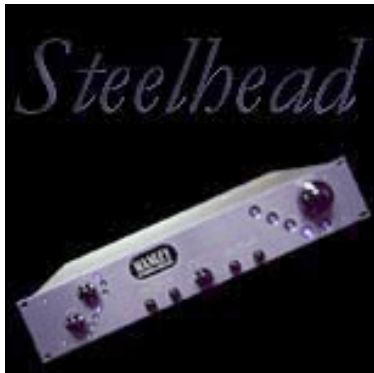


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AUDIO REVIEWS

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FEBRUARY 2006



MANLEY LABS STEELHEAD

Reviewer: Jeff Day

Vinyl: [Garrard 301](#) with [Cain & Cain maple & walnut plinth](#), Denon 103 phono cartridge, *Miyabi 47 MC phono cartridge* [in for review], *Miyabi Standard MC phono cartridge* [in for review], [Origin Live Silver Mk 1 tonearm](#) [on loan from Origin Live for the Garrard Project – thanks guys!], *Origin Live Silver Mk 2 tonearm* [in for review], *SME 3012 vintage tonearm* [on loan from Jonathan Halpern of Tone Imports – thanks Jonathan!], Pete Riggle Audio VTAF (Vertical Tracking Angle on the Fly), [Auditorium 23 moving coil step-up transformer for Denon 103](#), [on loan from Jonathan Halpern of Tone Imports], *Tom Evans Audio Design Groove Plus phono stage* [in for review], [Fi Yph phono stage](#), *Manley Steelhead Version 2 phono stage* [subject of this review], *The Cartridge Man Isolator* [in for review]

FM source: Vintage early 1960s Scott 370 FM vacuum tube tuner supported by Yamamoto ebony audio bases from Venus HiFi, [Magnum Dynalab ST-2 vertical omnidirectional FM antenna](#)

Digital sources: Meridian 508.20 CD player used as a transport with the Audio Logic 2400 vacuum tube DAC crunching numbers, [Superscope PSD340 Music Practice Tool & CD recording system](#)

Preamplifiers: [Tom Evans Audio Design Lithos 7 Vibe with optional Pulse power supply](#)

Integrated amplifiers: [Almarro A205A EL84 SEP](#); *Almarro A205A Mk2* [in for review] [Sonic Impact Class T](#); [Sonic Impact Super T](#)

Amplifiers: [Fi 2A3 single-ended triode monoblocks](#); [Tom Evans Audio Design Linear A power amplifier](#)

Speakers: Avantgarde Duo 2.1, [Omega Super 3 & matching Skylan Stands](#)

Cables: [47 Laboratory OTA cable kit interconnects](#) between DAC and preamplifier, Nirvana S-L interconnects between preamplifier and amplifiers, 47 Laboratory OTA speaker cables between amplifiers and speakers; 47 Laboratory OTA wiring harness to connect the Duos midrange and tweeter horns and woofer module, [Nirvana Transmission Digital Interface](#) [on loan]; Cardas Neutral Reference digital cable; 47 Laboratory OTA digital interconnect; *Auditorium 23 speaker cable* [on loan from Jonathan Halpern of Tone Imports]

Stands: [McKinnon Bellevue Symphony media cabinet in walnut](#), Atlantis Video Reference equipment rack, Billy Bags 2-shelf rack

Power line conditioning: none

Room size: 20' L x 17' W x 17' H

Review component retail: \$7,300



EveAnna Manley

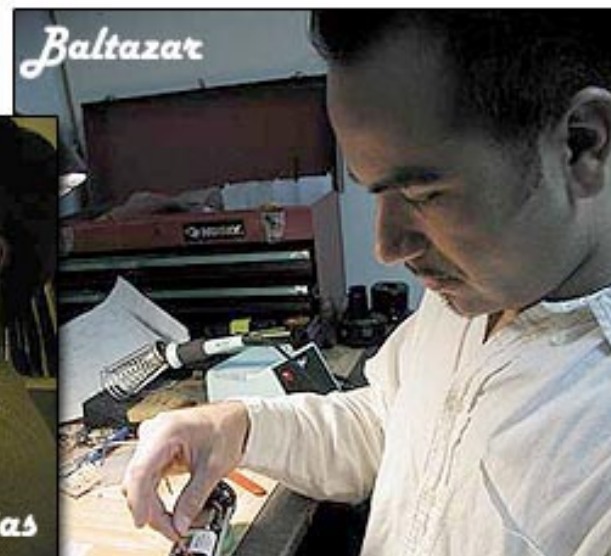
If you've had your ear to the audio door for even a little while over the last few years, you've probably heard the buzz about the talented & charismatic EveAnna Manley who has taken Manley Laboratories, Inc. to new heights of success through launching innovative designs for HiFi hobbyists within her Manley Labs product line *and* has achieved notoriety in the pro-market studio segment by resurrecting the legendary Langevin gear name while introducing new cutting edge and much heralded products under its banner. EveAnna came by her vacuum tube smarts just like everyone does, by rolling up her sleeves and getting out the soldering iron and building gear. As a result and over the years, EveAnna has gained hands-on knowledge in every aspect of the manufacturing stages of tube gear at Manley Laboratories.





EveAnna's merry band of HiFi warriors

EveAnna is not alone in her passion to build the world's best HiFi and studio gear; she's joined by a merry band of HiFi warriors who help her bring the Manley Laboratories and Langevin products to customers. When you check out the Manley Laboratories website, you get a real sense of a family-style organization of passionate enthusiasts who love what they do. Baltazar Hernandez is EveAnna's most senior member of the Manley group and has been a part of the firm since its inception. Says EveAnna, "Baltazar's talents are key to improving existing products and prototyping new products, and he hand-builds every single Manley microphone that ends up in the hands of an appreciative customer." Saulo Montalvo is the team member responsible for mechanical assembly, quality control and assurance for many of the firm's products. His brother Ramiro is an expert wireman who builds some of the more complex products like the Manley Mixers and the WAVE vacuum tube preamplifier and DAC combo. Elias Guzman is the resident printed circuit board god who founded the PCB facility that EveAnna wooed into becoming part of Manley Laboratories. Elias makes all of the PCBs and does all the product silk-screening as well as providing his leadership abilities and business wisdom to the team. Superstar Canadian pro-studio man & Thailand aficionado Craig Hutchison -- Hutch for short -- is EveAnna's chief designer.





Hutch has worked with the best in the music and film industry for years and back in the day was the man who created the *Electric Church*, Jimi Hendrix's famous tour truck. Hutch brings to the team an intimate knowledge of what it takes to succeed in the studio world and applies his talents to building the big custom mastering projects and other advanced electronic design work that the pros need and want. One of Hutch's most sensitive instruments is his ears, which he uses to fine-tune the studio gear for the best performance - the ear knows! That's a sample of the many talented members on EveAnna's team but there are too many to list here so if you want to know more about her merry band, you can read about it [here](#).



Parts Central



Machine Shop

Circuit Board Ville



Tranny Pand

Manley Labs



Manley Town

As a result of the hard-working and innovative Manley team, business has been thriving and Manley Laboratories now resides in an 11,000 square foot facility 35 miles east of Los Angeles in Chino/California. The Manley production facility contains a machine shop, a printed circuit board facility, a transformer winding facility, an engraving facility and a silk-screening facility. The Team does all the design, research and development, hand assembly, testing & quality control processes that make Manley Laboratories and Langevin products the excellent products they are.



Manley & Langevin product lines

For preamplification duties, the Manley line of HiFi equipment includes an interesting, unique and innovative range of products like the \$1,880 Shrimp 5-input line preamplifier, the \$7,300 Steelhead phono preamplifier, the \$5,250 Neo-Classic 300B line preamplifier (300B fans take note!), the \$7,500 Wave DAC-preamplifier combination and the \$900 Skipjack RCA switch box that allows you to add additional RCA inputs to any preamplifier or integrated amp.

For amplification duties, there is the \$2,200 Stingray integrated EL84 40W amplifier, the \$7,200 Neo-Classic 300B switchable single-ended or push-pull monoblock amplifiers, the \$2,500 Mahi monoblock amplifiers (a monoblock version of the Stingray recently reviewed by Paul Candy), the \$4,250 Snapper 100W EL34 monoblock



amplifier, the \$9,000 Neo-Classic 250 250W EL34 monoblock amplifiers and the \$12,000 Neo-Classic 500 KT90 monoblock amplifiers (which looks similar to the Neo-Classic 250 and, yup, cranks out 500 watters). Notice the aquatic theme running through the names of the gear: Shrimp, Steelhead, Skipjack, Stingray, Mahi and Snapper. Man(ley), I'm ready for a seafood feast!

The Manley & Langevin line of pro studio equipment includes Manley rack-mount tube mixers in various incarnations depending on the studio's need, Manley & Langevin microphone preamplifiers (drool!), Manley Tube Direct interfaces for warming up the sound of those not-so-warm sounding sources, Manley & Langevin equalizers, Manley & Langevin limiters and compressors, combination units that combine things like mike preamplifiers and limiters and Manley & Langevin microphones (double drool!).

I don't know about you but I think the Tube Direct and equalizers might make for some very, very interesting crossover products into a HiFi rig. An equalizer in a HiFi rig could address many 'philes' tonal balance issues and get them to a place of sonic and musical satisfaction to get off the "let's change the equipment to get a sound I like' merry-go-round" once and for all. Makes you wonder why more enthusiast HiFi manufacturers don't offer equalizers but of course it may be because some of them *don't* want you to get off that equipment merry-go-round.





EveAnna's place

Okay, so EveAnna makes lots of cool gear but it's not just about making gear for EveAnna cuz she also likes to crank them tunes on her home HiFi rig! EveAnna's living room system will make a lot of music lovers and audiophiles drool: Up front, EveAnna uses a VPI TNT HR-X turntable, Lyra Helikon cartridge and today's Manley Steelhead phono stage as her analog source. For digital duties, EveAnna uses the remote-operated Manley WAVE 24/96 DAC & vacuum tube preamplifier combination and a McCormack UDP-1 universal disk player. For amplification, she uses the 100-watt EL34 based Manley Snapper mono amps to drive her Tannoy Westminster or Tannoy Churchills, all tied together using various cables such as Kimber Select, Kimber Illuminati, Van den Hul MCD III Mk. 2, Stereovox IC, Coincident IC and so forth. That sounds like one fun and musical HiFi rig and being a big fan of Tannoys, I'm especially impressed.

