

Greetings! It has been some time since I have written any review or contributed to any forum. Now I have come across something that is worth an audition in any system. The NEW Allnic L-10,000 OTL/OCL Line-stage. This is my first experience with a transformer-less and capacitor-less component. Having once owned the entire Allnic line-stage product line and now familiar with their new/current line and the significant jump in performance the last couple of years, I feel it is important to give my impression of each and post links to some current reviews. While my impression remains subjective and always evolving, there remains insight. Allnic gear is a significant investment and not one to take lightly. The economics alone makes it somewhat difficult to demonstrate units side by side.



The L-10,000, while not by any means inexpensive, to realize the true potential of the benefits associated with this circuitry I had to reconfigure some aspects of my system.

The Allnic L-10,000 OTL/OCL contains a more complex wiring system than the new Allnic L-8000 DHT, thus involving a circuit board and necessitating a somewhat higher price point. The clarity presented with this line-stage demonstrates how a preamp can really be the limiting (read detrimental) component in the signal pathway. The L-10,000 is a single ended designed circuit, meaning in order to run balanced outputs, there exists a small insulation transformer, which separates the ground from the cold signal. The output from this line-stage is 20V, so even when you need to run long distances - for me 31 feet, a well shielded unbalanced cable performs without issue. This level of potential also has a secondary benefit for low output wattage, single stage class A amplifiers that only boost an already strong and very clean signal. This gives much greater headroom and overall dynamics. Dynamics and clarity are the L-10,000's strengths.

This preamp also has a low 200 Ohm impedance output and, therefore, plays well with most if not all amplifiers on the market. Using the unbalanced output avoids the introduction of a transformer, boosts performance and creates an ethereal presentation that is otherwise lost on the balanced outputs. I asked Kang Su Park why bother having balanced outputs? Consumer demand.

Trying to eliminate any confounding influences, I inquired with my source component manufacturer, Collin Shin of Waversa Systems. He stated the output stages are of comparable sonic qualities. I then used the same brand and model cable, Antipodes Reference, between my sources and the L-10,000. However, the balanced XLR cable was 3 meter and the unbalanced RCA cable was 1.5 meter. The single-ended input to the line-stage improves sound significantly—much more open, airy, with a deep soundstage. This difference in clarity is not subtle, which demonstrates to me that ideally, to be most synergistic, different pieces of equipment should be of the same circuit topology. In other words, use single-ended circuit design components with single-ended cabling throughout the signal path.

Even with the standard tubes, there is no warm-up required. What the L-10,000 pre-amp offers is bar none the greatest improvement to my system since this journey started in 2012, L-4000, L-3000 mkII to L-5000 DHT to L-10,000. This upgrade tops any dac and other component upgrade. The clarity and presentation are on such a high level that every family member took notice.

Regarding tube influence in the signal path: 12AU7>>300Bb>>6AN8, the latter had only one manufacturer and supply is plentiful. Another advantage here is 12AU7s are not expensive, with the rarest, most coveted tube costing me \$200 –but what a difference with RT 12AU7WA Black Plate. Oh my, super quiet, super refined, sooooo delicious. This one does no wrong at all, period. These are pretty much neutral, with a lot of special thrown in: air, density, energy, dimension, and super wet sounding. To me: deep, soulful, sultry, passionate.

I switched from Russian stock tubes to Kron 300Bs and did not observe much improvement. However, I do notice a deeper and tighter bass. Seems for my L-10,000 changing the 300B tubes had limited benefit. I have interest in the anticipated release of Western Electric 300B re-issue but production remains forever delayed. I know in this line-stage David Beetles was not super impressed with Takatsuki TA300B, which is a proven spectacular tube. I speculate this may be more to do with the circuit design of the L-10,000. Because of the wide variation of presentation, the adventure in tube rolling may pay dividends most by investing in the cheaper 12AU7s.

From my personal life story, I can never pinpoint the moment I found love, yet I certainly noticed the moment it ends. Once my system had great emotion but then was lost for many years. This left me somewhat frustrated and disenchanted in the hobby. It was one unexpected day I received a phone call from David Beetles of Hammertone excited about his 'holy shit' moment, and unlike finding love, I too shared this moment. Finally, there exists a tonality and subtleties with deep intricate layering presenting great emotion long missed and in reality never experienced to date! With great appreciation of Kang Su and his team at Allnic Audio Labs, I agree this unit is a keeper!

The L-10,000 was the single, best, most unexpected improvement in my system, ever. I would argue that, the same as with gear with transformers, the L-10,000 will age like wine and will continue to evolve for the better. Right out of the box, though, you will grin as I did and be forever grateful.

The L-8000 DHT as stated below has advantages over its predecessor, the L-5000 DHT, in that the overall circuit is dead silent with your ear to the speaker (as is the L-10,000 OTL/OCL). I found the DHT tubes at one time challenging and with some nurturing was able to attain a quiet circuit. The L-5000 DHT was not a unit you pull off your rack, take across town and place in your friend's system. My kids when younger discovered and enjoyed speaking to the NOS 3A/109B DHT tubes and hearing their voices amplified from the speakers. These days my tubes hear only words of appreciation.

The L-8000 DHT is a point to point wired circuit, robust and without fuss. Like the L-7000, there's proven reliability. The L-10,000 by its nature presents the recording with unforgiving clarity. If the analog or digital recording is compressed with limited dynamics, the overall presentation is apparent and sometimes perhaps irritating. This is where I give a nod to the L-8000 DHT. All music, regardless of the recording, is somehow forgiven and sounds sublime. With a less forward presentation, increased layering, and overall emotion, this unit may indeed be the sweet spot of the entire product line.



At the time I was upgrading to the L-10,000 DHT, Gerry Simon was upgrading from his Allnic L-5000 DHT line-stage to the new L-8000 DHT. Since he has a more intimate experience with this unit, on request, he wrote this summary:

The L-5000 was the world's first commercially produced, pure direct-heated triode preamplifier, and it was a remarkable product. I owned mine for the better part of a decade and at no point had the desire to change it for something else. Every time I turned on the system, I marveled at the absence of noise coming from my 96dB efficient speakers when there was nothing playing (even with the volume control cranked up far beyond the level at which I set it for high volume listening); the incredibly deep, wide and high soundstage; marvelous detail; and life-like dynamics (with the Allnic A-6000 300B SET monoblocks).

Then KS Park issued the new L-8000 DHT preamp, the successor to the L-5000. Knowing Mr. Park's capabilities, and despite my contentment with the L-5000, I decided to sell it and acquire the L-8000. This was a bit of a "leap of faith"; I was not sure what the improvements, if any, would be. However, one thing that attracted me was that the L-8000 used K.S. Park's newly developed constant impedance attenuator. Discussing the L-8000 with Dave Beetles also clarified that in addition to the new volume control, the L-8000 had upgraded transformers and a change in the voltage regulation circuit from the 6AK6 tube to the more stable and reliable 5654 – not that I ever had problems (to my knowledge) with the 6AK6 tubes in all the years I owned the L-5000.

The L-8000 turned out to be a clearly significant upgrade to the L-5000. It's also silent through my system, and everything else is, simply, better. Tonal balance and dynamics at all volumes are maintained. This translates to more lifelike sound with greater dynamic contrasts and zero listening fatigue at any volume. Music is even "richer", with even greater layering, body, image specificity and air than had the L-5000. Those who have used the L-5000 know that even with the breakthroughs in reduction of microphonics that K.S. Park made with the L-5000, the attenuator's motor could induce a low level "ring" or "zing" through the speakers as it ratcheted from high to low and vice-versa. Interestingly, and I am not sure why, my L-8000 does not do this. I know other L-8000 users have commented that they still get that "zing", but they have very different systems from mine. It may be related to the trio of Nordost Titanium Sort Kones I have under my L-8000, which drain vibration from the chassis very effectively. Otherwise, the L-8000 is in the same location as the L-5000 had been. The L-8000 is also just as sensitive to changes in associated equipment, including cables, as was the L-5000.

In any case, I am completely happy with the L-8000; simply, it provides more of all the excellent performance characteristics that the breakthrough L-5000 possessed in my system. Every time I sit down to listen to music, no matter how hard I try, I cannot do anything else at the same time for long. The L-8000 is the heart of a machine that demands the music be given full attention. I imagine that, once again, I won't be considering another preamplifier for a very long time.

The L-7000, L-8000DHT and L-10,000 OTL/OCL line stages come standard with Kang Su Park's inhouse design 61 step constant impedance bridge type attenuator which negates the sweet spot commonly found on the preamplifier volume control creating uniform presentation especially in dynamics.

While the L-7000 with the constant impedance attenuator is by no means a trivial investment, it is the least expensive of the three mentioned today. It has become the most popular and widely respected piece. Admittedly, my personal experience with this unit is the least of the three. It is by no means nonexistent. The redesign rests mainly in using the much loved DHT 300b tube as a voltage regulator in the power supply. To my knowledge this is unique to the industry.



From Anthony Kershaw L7000 review. "As Park says:

The 300B has justly won the reputation for being a superb output tube in single-ended amplifiers. But it will take some rethinking to imagine this great tube in a non-audio role. The benefit the 300B brings to as a voltage regulator is its ability to pass a fair amount of current at low cathode-to-plate voltages. Kang Su explains that 'the voltage regulation of the transformer is the percentage change in the output voltage from no-load to full-load. To get the best performance out of your transformer, you need the lowest possible voltage regulation. The voltage regulation of Allnic's power supply circuit is under 1%. It yields an improved power transfer and lower regulation factor, resulting in increased current speed and better dynamics."

The second major change in circuit design in comparison to the L-3000 mkII is the evolution of the output transformers. By my estimation, even the economical L-1500 hotrodged with the L-7000 transformers available through Hammertone Audio outperforms the L-3000 mkII. L7000 has a more robust power supply compared to L-1500 providing an improved overall performance.

The 61-step constant impedance attenuator fundamentally solves sound distortion caused by impedance of the volume stage negating the commonly observed sweet spot where we are presented with optimal dynamics and imaging.

The L-7000 maintains the complete transparency and neutral presentation that are universal across the Allnic product line, shining with a smooth presentation and superb dynamics. It conjures a balanced, wide and deep soundstage and improved separation with micro detailing of the individual instruments and voices.

Part of what drives us is innovation and discovery. The now commonly spoken saying "everything matters" likely holds true. As I have discovered, with a pleasant surprise, the often overlooked or at least less considered preamp actually plays a monumental role in the overall performance of our system. It's certainly a component to command our significant attention. Composed of complete circuit redesigns, the modern Allnic line-stages have achieved a class of their own and perform beyond any of their predecessors. Their dead silent transformer based and OTL/OCL direct heated triode circuit design are monumental achievements with capabilities that are best understood, and appreciated, when finally heard in our own system.

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