

How to become an hi-end guru

a practical 7 rule guide for all the self acclaimed hi-end internet gurus out there

I've underlined in the text the typical guru's expressions, search for them when you read an audio review, or articles in guru's home pages. Needless to say that I'm not encouraging those practices, I'm all against them and I think World will be a better place without those people.

Yes, I'm racist. I think that hi-end gurus should be re-educated.

1) How to build hi-end audio devices.

It's very important for the popular internet guru to be alone when designing audio amplifiers. Team work isn't so appreciated from the hi-end people, they will think you had to make compromises. Instead, hi-end audio is *all against compromises*. A fuse on the mains line makes the amp safer? Let's remove it, it's *in series with the signal chain*. Do I have to spend money to make my amplifier safer, to make my loudspeakers a bit easier to handle, to make my cables pass CE certification (or other equivalent U.S. counterpart)? Nah, better spend money on *critical tuning and optimization*.

But how to design them? First of all, *all the best in audio has already been designed and built, most of all in the '20s or '30s*. So no need to spend time on designing things. Just cut and paste together something that will reasonably work, and you can call yourself an *audio designer*.

Of course, *simplicity is better*. If you can have better results with two amplification stages, just use one, and to compensate for the lack of input sensibility (for example) just say "*my amps are made to go with my preamplifiers. Just buy both amps and preamps*", and then design an high gain line preamplifier. No matter if that particular amp cannot be used with other audio chains: the respected hi-end guru only wants to sell *whole audio systems*, not a single device. Because a single device is all there, and can be evaluated in comparison with equivalent units from other manufacturers, instead a whole audio reproduction chain is more difficult to evaluate.

Simplicity is better because you can sell 3000\$ amps that are worth 50\$ in parts, instead of 150\$.

Particular care has to be taken if the internet guru has some kind of technical background: especially when he's an engineer. It's well known that for money, man is likely to do everything. Even throw away all the knowledge he's been taught. Even Science, Physics, Math, Electronics. All to be thrown away to follow *the Trend*. It's known that *Trend* is the God of all the gurus, and they prey him with some strange esotherical rituals that are mostly unknown.

So if you want to become a guru, and you're an engineer, be prepared to say some silly things just to sell amps, be prepared to *lie*, to say things that cannot be proven with measurements or other serious tests. *The ear is the only judge: I'm not interested in how things works* (ehm, if you aren't, why did you spend your youth on electronic engineering books?), *I'm only interested in good sound*.

But... what sound? Many hi-end gurus haven't listened a real live concert in all their life. I can say this for sure, just go to some hi-end festival and hear the music that those systems are reproducing. Is it real? A sax or a drum **really** sounds like this? All this "sweetness", "detail", "soundstage" is **really** there to be heard during a live performance?

Or maybe the sweetness is there to mask recording defects and improper designed audio devices?

And... how they can reach "good sound" if they don't know how things works (since they're not interested in it)? Mystery.

2) The no - nfb connection.

Ah, negative feedback. Please take note here: if you want to sell amps (no matter how they sound) it's extremely important that you state everywhere that *my products are absolutely class A and without every form of negative feedback.*

That is what the hi-end people search, and if the hi-end people search those words, you have to say them. Without them, you can't acclaim yourself an hi-end guru. Even cables, even line preamplifiers, even turntables, even cd players, even some loudspeaker manufacturers do this (!!!), *absolutely zero feedback.*

But... why not negative feedback? Good amps have been built with negative feedback, and those which sound bad, are bad amps not because they use nfb, but because they have had bad designers.

This is where the hi-end guru falls. He can't understand nothing about electronics and he can't implement well a negative feedback loop. So, he simply choose to *avoid it.*

So it's fundamental that your statement of "*zero feedback at all*" has to be everywhere: you can even say "*even zero local feedback*". Yes sure, and then use cathode followers (100% local feedback, as thought by even the worst electronics book), feel free to use triodes (they have rp, internal dynamic plate resistance, a form of feedback).

There can't be such a thing like an electronic device (or an audio amplifier) without negative feedback. Because in reality, feedback is everywhere, even built in the components (such as triodes, well loved by hi-end gurus, who like to put 300B even in loudspeakers if they could, but they don't know how to implement a good amp with 300Bs).

I know a guy that bypasses with capacitors the emitter current sharing resistors in output stages of solid state amps, to avoid "*local negative feedback*". Usually this kind of madness is followed by mythical sound descriptions, "*a sound that has air, better detail and instrument separation*".

Since the guru has, most of the time, no electronic knowledge (or if he's an engineer, he's a bad one, that knows nothing, that's why he has become an hi-end guru), he can't design amps and properly use nfb. In his youth he probably built some amps and wanted to try negative feedback, he wasn't successfull because when the electronics teacher explained

that part he was listening to "*a sound that has air, better detail and instrument separation*".

So what to do with a thing that I don't understand? Simple, avoid it, and say "*negative feedback is bad in all of its forms*" just because you aren't good enough to understand it and to use it.

3) Hi-end loudspeakers.

The best loudspeaker for the hi-end guru of course is the fullrange single driver. Not for some sonic or technical reasons: but because as already said, you can sell 3000\$ speakers that have only a single 50\$ driver, instead of two 30\$ drivers. That's a net 10\$ gain.

Of course the best hi-end speaker *must have high price* (more on prices later). A popular method is to stick a Ciare CH250 (a beautiful 50euro speaker) in some sort of cabinet (of course you have to built it *by ear*, no calculations are allowed, or you aren't a hi-end guru) and sell it for insane prices. How many hi-end speakers are built this way? Go search the net, or go to some hi-end meeting, you will see many systems with \$20 - \$50 drivers in them. Just ask:

Q: Hello! Where do you buy your speaker's drivers? Where are they from?

A: *My drivers are all custom built and carefully designed with hours and hours of deep listening tests.*

Translation: I bought this lot of fullrange professional PA drivers for cheap, and now I'm trying to make money with them. Aside from the "no nfb" claims, the best way to identify a hi-end guru is asking if his drivers are custom made. If he says "yes" you can be sure he's an hi-end guru.

Hi-end audio is all about the "chain" concept: you make your amplifier to mask your preamplifier defects, and of course speakers are made to mask amplifier defects. You want to spend less money on the output transformers in your amplifier? Just use less iron, no matter if they won't go deeper than 70Hz. Because your loudspeaker are already incapable of doing better.

And if you ask why:

Q: Sorry, those speakers can't go deeper than 70Hz. I don't like them, I can't listen to rock&roll with them.

A: *You can't understand nothing about hi-end audio, and the fact you're listening to popular rock&roll music proves this fact. That's not hi-end music.*

Translation: hi-end music is all the kinds of music that don't put in evidence hi-end systems defects.

4) Cables cables cables cables.

So, following the "chain" concept, the hi-end guru has to make his own cables. Of course they have to be designed to mask other system's defects. You can't understand a thing about digital electronics and you've made the worst DAC on earth? Tame its high frequency shrillness with some high capacitive cable. The hi-end people won't discuss.

You did an error in the loudspeaker box dimensions, and now the reflex duct cannot be tuned properly (as always, the hi-end guru knows nothing about speaker design)? Simple, just use the thinnest speaker cable you can find for cheap, that has high resistance, to raise the Q of your speaker system (thus remedy your errors in speaker design), wrap in some colorful shrink tubing and sell it for 1000\$/mt.

Do you think that there's research on cables from the hi-end gurus? Sometimes they claim absurd physic theories to prove their argumentations. Do you **really** think that the hi-end guru can create new physic theories with household tools? Like "*electrons move faster in my speaker cables*" or "*in my amps the current flowing is less subject to the variations imposed by Jupiter crossing the orbit of Saturn*". Don't laugh, I've read them countless times.

5) Parts. What is high end and what isn't.

Hi-end parts:

- ? those with an high price. No matter why, but high price.
- ? those with "silver" in it.
- ? the ones that other gurus use.
- ? '20s - '30s old worn out parts, *because they knew electronics better than now, that's why they used 300Bs.*
- ? but the most important hi-end parts are cheap surplus, relabeled things, fake parts. Too many fakes out there, and everyone that has built a transistor amp knows the problem of counterfeit transistors. If they did this with a 0.5\$ transistor, why they wouldn't do with a 500\$ hi-end silver wound 300B output transformer?

If you use those parts, you can be pretty sure you will sell hundreds of amps.

6) Prices.

This is simple: in the hi-end market everything is as good as it costs. The pricier, the better.

Of course a 30000\$ tube amp MUST sound better than a 300\$ NAD reciver? Or not?

Or not.

Just put a price tag on your products: independently from the price, hi-end people will still buy. **Because the pricier the better.** No matter how it sounds.

7) Conclusions. How to sell amps:

- a. say everywhere that everything that comes from your hands *"is class A and has absolutely zero feedback, even local"*.
- b. use the highest price tag you can put. If the price tag is too short then use longer price tags to accomodate the additional zeros.
- c. put together simple schematics, old cinema or phonograph amps are very good for this. And remember to get wrong the biasing of the stages, because people like 2nd harmonic distortion, because they haven't listened live music in their whole life.
- d. sell this simplicity in schematics as *"accurate developing, long listening tests to select the better parts, ability to extract the best from low parts count"*.
- e. subscribe to newsgroups, forum and bulletin boards, and have no fear to make your funny guru claims there. If you say that Ohm's Law doesn't have nothing to do with hi-end audio, and someone says no, attack him and say that *"you are not enough expert to talk of those things"* even if he's an electronic engineer.
- f. if you are an engineer, discard everything you know and don't be afraid to lie, to say wrong things to argument your stupid ideas. The worst guru's enemy is the electronics book.
- g. don't publish information about your products: frequency response, damping factor, power consumption, etc etc. You are allowed to publish only characteristics that have the following words in them: *single ended, triode, absolutely without negative feedback, silver, paper in oil, custom wound*, etc etc.
- h. build a cult following your ideas: make brain washes to some selected hi-end people that have the precise objective to praise you on the popular message boards and forums.

With those simple rules you can be pretty sure to sell any audio device.