

## A CLASSIC THAT JUST GOES ON



I would like to share with those who currently own a Valve Audio product, may have had one in the past, or are considering one in the future, my experience with one of these products.

I met Schalk Havenga in 2004 when my business got involved with the redesign of his website at the time. Since I was also into things hifi, in 2005 I purchased a Valve Audio Predator integrated amplifier. In 2007 Schalk convinced me to upgrade to a more current specification. This unit has been in my possession ever since. The period 2009 to 2022 saw me working overseas for extended periods and I would be home for only two months each year. During this time hifi took a back seat and when I came home for the winter period, there were just too many things that had to be done to spend time with my music and the system. Now that I have been home permanently for almost two years, my interest has picked up again. I recently purchased a Linn Sondek LP12 turntable, the second one I have owned. I also “got back” into vinyl, but nearly on the scale I was in the mid-2000’s.

I noticed that the system sounded a bit “off” but attributed this to increasing years and decreasing ability to hear and listen well, the latter with which my wife agrees. Nevertheless, at the same time the volume pod on the Predator started acting up, as many volume pods eventually do on all amplifiers. I asked Schalk to take a look at it for me. On delivery, he opened the unit and proceeded to do much more than what I had asked for. He blew out the accumulated dust with his compressor, wiped off the internals, cleaned the connectors, and cleaned the volume pod. He then put the unit on one of his test machines and showed me that one of the valves was not performing as it should. Given that none of the valves had ever been replaced, it was understandable. Schalk promptly replaced the valve, tested it again to ensure it worked properly, closed the unit, replaced the screws with new ones, and I left.

Back home, I plugged in everything again – a mission most of you can attest to. I let the unit warm up for a while, but I was not ready for what I heard next. It was as if I had received a new unit. It sounded amazing and even a standard CD I put in the player sounded out of the ordinary. My son, a very casual listener at best, remarked that the system sounded fabulous, way better than ever before. I must state that I have never been one to ooh and aah about individual products in a system. Now though, I knew that the only change to the system was my quick trip to Schalk’s place and the work he did on the unit. I could thus evaluate the system before and after based only on the amplifier.

I reported back to Schalk and thanked him for the incredible care he took in doing something as simple as cleaning a volume pod, and commented on the positive result this task has had. I really do not need anything else again. The Predator remains the heart of my system. Sure, the replaced valve and the cleaned volume pod will have had a lot to do with it, but what I genuinely appreciate is the personal care Schalk Havenga puts into every product that leaves his workshop, and every product that is returned for service, which does not happen often as these units are robust and just go on.

In an industry where the focus is mostly only on selling a product to make money and make space for the best new thing in the shop, it is comforting to know that there are still a few individuals for whom the product they sell is not about making big bucks and move on but building a relationship with the client and their trust in the product. If you do not yet own a Valve Audio product, I recommend you arrange to view one, firstly to marvel at the exceptional build quality, and then listen to it, for the sublime sound quality. Together, they offer you a product second to none.

Thank you Schalk!