

# BRYSTON B100 SST HIGH-END AMPLIFIER'S SOUND MORE THAN JUSTIFIES ITS PRICE

It may not seem spectacular on paper but this superb Canadian amp combines a remarkably involving sound with massive construction, says Andrew Everard

The Bryston may look minimalist – even the remote control handset is a rather pricey, if beautifully-made, option – but in fact it's a very flexible product

HOW MUCH WOULD you expect to pay for a 100W-per-channel integrated stereo amplifier? Well, the days of the budget Japanese mass-market models with huge power figures – often the result of some very creative measurement techniques – may be over but you can still buy NAD's C372 for £500, claiming 150W a side, while the same money will also get you the excellent Marantz PM7200KI at 95W per channel in its Class AB mode.

Where, then, does that leave the Bryston B100 SST? Here we have a 100W-per-channel stereo amplifier with a £2850 price-tag, and at first glance it's not exactly dripping

with features. It's line-level only, and converting it from manual operation to remote control with a Bryston handset adds £450 to the price. Just to make things slightly more complex, there are also two variants on the B100 theme: one offers a moving-magnet phono stage, the other an onboard digital-to-analogue converter, complete with four inputs. The former version, the B100-P, is £3300 without the remote, and the B100-DA is £3850, again without the handset. Add the digital module and you can switch between digital and analogue input with a fascia button.

As an alternative to spending the extra money on the Bryston remote, which is admittedly a thing of (rather functional) beauty, being made of metal and feeling reassuringly solid in the hands, owners of Pronto-type remote control handsets can download a control set to those devices from the main Bryston website, [www.bryston.ca](http://www.bryston.ca).

Indeed, the B100 is clearly made with whole-house integration in mind: it has 12V trigger connections, the pre-amplifier and power amp sections can be split, and there's even a pass-through mode for use when the amp is connected to a surround-sound processor – and extra power amps for the surround channels.

So the B100 is undeniably flexible, but what else does it have to justify the price? The answer starts to become clear when you unbox the amplifier and take a closer look. For a start, Bryston build-quality is legendary and this one, with a smart new styling job, is no exception – it's what allows the company to offer a remarkable 20-year warranty on its products, which is way beyond the norm in the audio industry.



## Do you live in GUILDFORD ?...

... or Addlestone, Aldershot, Ashford (Middx), Ashted, Bagshot, Basingstoke, Bracknell, Camberley, Chertsey, Cranleigh, Dorking, Epsom, Esher, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Frimley, Godalming, Hartley Wintney, Haslemere, Hook, Horsham, Liphook, Kingston, Leatherhead, Molesey (East & West), New Malden, Odiham, Petersfield, Reading, Redhill, Reigate, Richmond, Shepperton, Sunningdale, Virginia Water, Walton on Thames, Wentworth, West Byfleet, Weybridge, Windsor, Woking, Wokingham, Yateley?

**Nobody else** in these areas stocks all the following major brands: AMX, Anthony Gallo Acoustics, Arcam Diva & FMI, B&W, Barco, Castle, Celestion, Creek, Crestron, Cyrus, Denon, Epos, Exposure, Genelec, Harman Kardon, ISOL-8, Iso-Tek, Kef (inc. Reference), Lexicon, Linn Products (inc. Knekt), Loewe, Lumagen, M J Acoustics, Marantz, Meridian, Michell, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Naim, Pioneer, PMC, Primare, PROAC, Project, Pure, QED (Systemline), Quad, Rega, REL, Rotel, SIM2, SME, Stands Unique, TAG McLaren, Trichord, Wharfedale, Yamaha & Top Tape (including CDR, DAT, MD).

We also sell projectors, screens, scalars, plasma displays and televisions, and can offer specialist room acoustics services.

Visit us first and you won't need to go anywhere else, we have superb demonstration rooms, for both HI-FI and Home Cinema where you can decide in comfort, and we will deliver and install (part exchange is also possible). We can survey, design, pre-wire, deliver, install and commission multi room audio and video systems.

**Complete service** - We are the only outlet in the area to offer the complete service. As well as stocking selected items from the above manufacturers we are able to service and/or repair all of the brands that we sell.

Now Showing:  
The Best  
AV Room  
Guildford Has  
Ever Seen

**PJ HI-FI**  
Guildford's only REAL Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Shop

We are at 3 BRIDGE STREET, GUILDFORD (by the traffic lights - opposite Wetherspoons)

01483 504801 • 01483 304756

[www.pjhifi.co.uk](http://www.pjhifi.co.uk) • [info@pjhifi.co.uk](mailto:info@pjhifi.co.uk)

Mastercard • Visa • Open Monday - Saturday 9am-6pm (Later by appointment)

Visit our  
website  
for great  
bargains



While the outside of the amplifier is impressive – not least because it weighs a substantial 13kg, or around 30lb in old money – what's going on under the lid is even more striking. There are three power transformers in there – two for the analogue sections of the amplifier and one for the digital operation of the volume control, which is an analogue device driven digitally, and the optional digital section. The analogue and digital sections also have entirely separate ground paths, to minimise interference, and the dual-mono design of the amplifier is revealed by the use of new computer-modelled heat-sinks on the sides of the enclosure, and the rear-panel layout, which separates left and right channel inputs.

What's more, every Bryston model undergoes extensive testing between manufacture and dispatch, running for 100 hours at full output under load on a one-hour-on, one-hour-off cycle designed to run it in, and of course show up any likely to fail prematurely. That way the amp not only comes ready for use straight from the box, but also ready to last for many years.

### Performance

Having reviewed Bryston products in the past, I thought I knew what to expect of the B100: a big, powerful sound, with a real impression of having plenty in reserve, allied to excellent detail and resolution across the frequency range. The amplifier didn't just live up to those expectations, but comfortably exceeded them: this is a very important piece of audio equipment, with standards of performance that make the price-tag seem not just sensible but something of a bargain.

The power output is, as mentioned, 100W per channel, but this doubles as impedance halves, making the B100 an ideal amp to drive demanding speakers. With more benign loads, these characteristics simply guarantee massive dynamic ability, even if you like very high basic playback levels. If you're labouring under the misapprehension that a huge orchestral sound requires an amplifier of huge physical size as well as considerable power, the relatively slimline Bryston will put you right, and do so while running cool and evenly, not heating the whole room.

But more striking than the power and control of this amplifier is its transparency, which is what makes it truly world-class. There are very few amplifiers at any price level so able to tell you what your CD player is truly delivering, and while those readers with an elderly but originally expensive player might want to consider the DAC option for the amplifier as an option, connect this amp between a high-quality CD player and revealing full-range speakers and you are truly in for a treat.

The optional digital-to-analogue converter is also of a very high standard and more than a match for many a high-end CD player of the past, with a fine combination of detail

and air in the sound without any hint of artificiality or digital edginess. I also had good results when running a variety of sources in through the optical and electrical inputs on offer, from a digital radio tuner and a professional CD-R deck to a personal MiniDisc player and the digital output from my Sky+ set-top box. In each of these cases the sound was preferable to that using the component's own output stages, suggesting a very high-quality conversion system can work miracles with sources such as these.

But it's with CD from a top-notch player that the Bryston really shines, and whether with the analogue output from my Sony reference CD player or the Naim DVD5, that mixture of power and control was always enticing. Admittedly there was some system synergy going on here, as the amplifier was driving my PMC OB1 speakers – PMC distributes Bryston in the UK and the companies have a close working relationship – but these speakers are hardly forgiving of less than accomplished amplification, and they really shone on the end of the B100.

Look beyond the purposeful styling – you probably wouldn't call the B100 pretty – and delve into its abilities, and this is clearly a very special integrated amplifier, delivering the kind of performance most would associate with pre-amp/power amp combinations at the same price, or indeed considerably more. And when the flexibility is taken into account, the case becomes even stronger: this is simply one of the finest integrated amps you can buy. ☺

### Bryston B100 SST

**Type** Integrated stereo amplifier

**Price** £2850

**Options** Remote handset £450, mm phono stage £450, digital-to-analogue converter £1000

**Power output** 100W per channel into 8 ohms, 200W per channel into 4 ohms

**Inputs** seven line, phono version substitutes one of these with mm phono in, digital version gives two electrical and two optical inputs, power amp input

**Audio outputs** Tape out, pre-amp output, one pair of speakers, headphones

**Other connections** RS232 for computer/multiroom control, 12V trigger, infra-red receiver input

**Other controls** Balance left/right buttons, analogue/digital mode selector, mute, switch to separate pre-amp and power amp sections

**Accessories supplied** Mains cable

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.1x12.1x40.6cm, 48.2cm in optional 19in rack-mount version

**Made by** Bryston Ltd, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

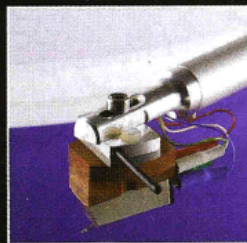
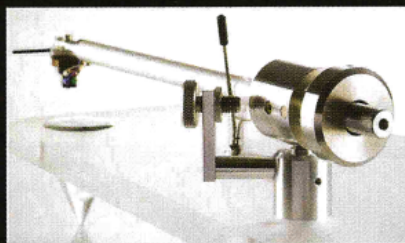
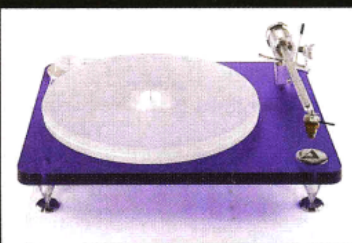
**Distributed by** PMC Ltd, 43/45 Crawley Green Road, Luton LU2 0AA

**Tel** +44 (0)870 4441044

**web** www.bryston.ca

www.pmccloudspeaker.com

It's not the smallest of integrated amplifiers, but at the same time the Bryston B100 SST isn't exactly a monster, and yet proves capable of truly massive dynamics and exceptional refinement. The secret? Extremely high-quality internal layout and construction, which extends to a dual-mono operation



AUDIO REFERENCE

SUPPLIERS OF FINE AUDIO EQUIPMENT

0 1 2 5 2 7 0 2 7 0 5

WHAT HI-FI?  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
CLEARAUDIO EMOTION PACKAGE  
TURNTABLES



### The audio bargain of the century..

The Clearaudio Emotion Turntable package including Satisfy Tonearm and Classic MM Cartridge all for just: £655.00. Optional Blue acrylic for £710.00.

info@audioreference.co.uk www.audioreference.co.uk