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07/09/2010

LIVING LEGEND: THE ZANA DEUX

A

s a headphone enthusiast, one of the gear that has ranked very high on my audition list is the Zana Deux. What an am The sight of the Zana is breathtaking, and it looks much bigger in person than it does on the pictures!



The design has a cool American vintage look to it. Instead of the regular anodized, hairline, or glossy finishing often found on a the Zana has sort of a semi crackle, very soft half round abrasive marks done very tastefully around the casing. All over the top you find metal screws protruding for securing tube sockets and other things to the chassis that reminds me heavily of hot rod american cars.



The Zana runs very hot when in operation, and there are some vents on the top and on the sides to help with air circulation on inside. The entire Zana Deux chassis is a heat sink. The massive 6C33C-B power triodes is a main source of the heat, it seems, spreads some of the heat through the sockets and to the chassis. After roughly 30 minutes of heat up time, the Zana's top panel really hot. Touching the top panel feels as hot as the heatsinks on the 4-channel Beta22 amplifier. As for the 6C33C-B tubes, it probably close to touching a soldering iron. Craig told me that the metal film, paper, polypropylene coupling caps sound best v warm.

The volume and input selector knob is shamelessly plastic. Probably unacceptable to other amps selling at the \$2,000 range, but the Zana is able to pull it off. Even the headphone socket has a super stiff clamp to it, heck Craig probably used one of those super Neutriks that is designed for professional mixing consoles. On a regular amp, I would be complaining that the headphone socket clamps too hard, but this is the Zana, and that seems to be a part of its attitude. On the front panel is found the words "Zana Deux" written in a gray color serif font, and on the top panel, a plate with the klunky looking Eddie Current logo. What a design! When product designers are trying to make their stuff look like Murcielagos, the Zana looks back to the great American design such as '67 Mustang.

On the back panel I found three sets of inputs! A nice feature that seems to be rare in today's amps. Also included is two sets of preamp outs — another nice feature. The connector for the umbilical cable that connects the amplifier chassis to the PSU uses black industrial plastic Amphenol connectors. You locate the orientation notch on the cable, plug the cable in the socket, and turn the screw-in safety lock. The cable won't come off even if you pull the amp by the end of the cable. Then, on the other side of the cable is the same heavy-duty 24-pin Amphenol connector for the PSU box that houses a big oversize toroid (by headphone amplifier standards). The PSU box looks plain business in matt black, yet it has the same abrasive marks finishing found on the amplifier chassis. The Zana is one of the most beautiful amplifiers I have ever seen.

The Zana uses two 6D22S rectifier tubes (Sovtek or Svetlana, same tube despite the different name), one Tung Sol 6SL7 drive and two 6C33C-B power triodes. According to Craig Uthus (the man behind Eddie Current), there are three different 6C33C-B factories, and the amp is shipped with tubes from the same factory, matched for a close manufacturing date. The 6SL7 is the tube I want to do tube rolling with. I'm still in the honeymoon period and would hate to have the beautiful sound changed to something that may not be so balanced as this one. The 6D22S rectifiers have the cathode plate on the top part of the tube, and there is a porcelain cap to connect the cathode plate to the pin jacks next to the tube socket, otherwise there will be no power for the amplifier circuit. The power supply box runs a wire to the amplifier box (through the umbilical cable) where the power switch is located. My version ships with a toroidal transformer, but later versions ship with an EI core made in California.

During this opportunity I would also recognize Craig Uthus not only as a superb amplifier designer and builder, but also in customer service and support. From the first time I received this amplifier, I have been emailing with Craig back and forth with long questions just about any topic that I can think of regarding the Zana, and he's been very helpful in answering my questions. If you're interested in acquiring the Zana, you need to ask Craig (cuthus@charter.net) on when he'll plan another batch of Zana Deux builds and put your deposit then. However, Craig does build some extra units during those production runs, and if you're lucky you may be able to get one ASAP!

(#1) (#2) (#3) (#4) (#5)

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6 COMMENTS

JULY 2, 2011

REPLY(#COMMENT-1)

ALBERT

Hi Mike, do you think the ZD fall into lush-tubey-sounding amp? Does it have wide & deep soundstage and great attack/PraT? Cheers.

JULY 4, 2011

REPLY(#COMMENT-1)

ANONYMOUS

Hi Albert,

It's not too lush-tubey, though it is very analog sounding.

The soundstage is not so wide, but the depth is the best I've heard on any amps. Likewise soundstage imaging, three dimensionality and ambiance is also the best — better even than the Manley Stingray or the Beta22.

The only amp that I've heard that has better the ZD's soundstage is Manley's Neo-Classic 300B amp.

The attack is there, but not too sharp as most solid states are. The PRaT is also there and among the better ones among tubes, but not as much as say the Burson amp.

OCTOBER 2, 2013

REPLY(#COMMENT-3

CHUCK77

Mike, do you know of any difference between the Zana Deux and the Zana Deux SE? Most interested in learning about any so differences and suitable headphone impedance for each. Which one sounds better in your opinion?

Thanks!

OCTOBER 2, 2013

REPLY(#COMMENT-36173

MIKE(HTTPS://WWW.HEADFONIA.COM)

I haven't listened to the SE, chuck so I can't comment on that, sorry.

OCTOBER 4, 2013

REPLY(#COMMENT-3

CHUCK77

No problem Mike. I just sold the Bottlehead Crack and picked up a Zana Deux Transformer. Extremely happy and patiently awaiting its arrival!

OCTOBER 7, 2013

REPLY(#COMMENT-36283

MIKE(HTTPS://WWW.HEADFONIA.COM)

Crazy! I miss mine.

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my DAP is FiiO X1. thanks

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Hi Sir, I have Sony xb50ap. that is good for me. Bass & Sound clarity. But FH1 is how much better than the sony? pls reply me.. Thanks..

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BERKHAN

Review: FiiO FH1 - All About The Tone

<https://www.headfonia.com/review-fio-fh1/#comment-82076>

I can't recommend a specific cable for that, you should do a research and pick one

5 [\(https://www.headfonia.com/q-a-new/\)](https://www.headfonia.com/q-a-new/)
JONATHAN

Q & A - NEW <https://www.headfonia.com/q-a-new/#comment-82075>

Hi, am getting a Shanling M3s but would also like to play the music through my Mission bookshelf speakers, so would I just get a little amp like this https://www.amazon.com/Audio-Amplifier-Receiver-Integrated-Speakers/dp/B06XZL2PQD/ref=sr_1_12_sspa?s=electronics&ie=UTF8&qid=1524128965&sr=1-12-spons&keywords=amp+fosi&psc=1...

6 [\(https://www.headfonia.com/review-fio-fh1/\)](https://www.headfonia.com/review-fio-fh1/)
ALBERTO MARTINEZ

Review: FiiO FH1 – All About The Tone

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-fio-fh1/#comment-82072>),

*Thanks for recommendation, I will go with IT01. Only one last thing, which MMCX balanced 2.5mm TRRS cable do you recommend for IT01, as it's not included as stock?
Cheers*

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-64-audio-a18t-18-ba-orchestra/>),

7 LINUS

Review: 64 Audio A18 t – 18 BA Orchestra!

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-64-audio-a18t-18-ba-orchestra/#comment-82071>),

Tough question, but I'd say Fourté is a tad ahead.

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-64-audio-a18t-18-ba-orchestra/>),

8 MFHRAPTOR

Review: 64 Audio A18 t – 18 BA Orchestra!

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-64-audio-a18t-18-ba-orchestra/#comment-82068>),

Which of the two 64 Audio flagships has a more open sound and greater headroom, A18 Tzar or Tia Fourte?

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-campfire-audio-andromeda-topping-maker-game/>),

9 OHM IMAGE

Review: Campfire Audio Andromeda – Topping The Maker Game

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-campfire-audio-andromeda-topping-maker-game/#comment-82067>),

I have to stay firm in my conviction against straight plugs. Too many players are long/large, and for pocket use, or even in-hand use, a straight plug may prise the...

(<https://www.headfonia.com/review-campfire-audio-andromeda-topping-maker-game/>),

10 STEVENSWALL

[Review: Campfire Audio Andromeda – Topping The Maker Game](https://www.headfonia.com/review-campfire-audio-andromeda-topping-maker-game/#comment-82064) (<https://www.headfonia.com/review-campfire-audio-andromeda-topping-maker-game/#comment-82064>),

"Why has much of the rest of the market gone for pocket-unfriendly straight plugs?" Straight plugs are very pocket friendly... Provided DAP and smartphone makers put the headphone jack on...

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my DAP is FiiO X1. thanks

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