

# Book Review

## The Collector's Vacuum Tube Handbook

By Larry Lisle

What's a UV876 tube good for? How about an L10 or SO27? If you had looked at *The Collector's Vacuum Tube Handbook* before the flea market, you might be the only one there to know that a UV876 is a rectifier, while the others are power triodes, equivalent to types '10 and '50!

Tube audio lovers, you're not alone! There are others who love tubes, too! Among them are the collectors and restorers of antique radios, the tube collectors, and ham radio operators who like old equipment. All love and use tubes, and we can all learn from each other and from *The Collector's Vacuum Tube Handbook, Volume I, The Non-RMA Numbered Receiving Tubes* by Robert T. Millard (available from Old

Colony Sound Laboratory, PO Box 876, Peterborough, NH 03458-0876, (603) 924-9464, FAX (603) 924-9467, [www.audioXpress.com](http://www.audioXpress.com), \$25.95).

The 196 pages of this volume are crammed with information about the earliest American vacuum tubes that were widely available. Some of these are already of great interest to tube audio people, while others should be!

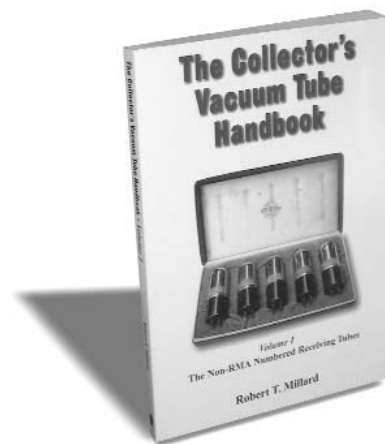
Unlike a manufacturer, a do-it-yourselfer can build something using uncommon tubes, as long as you have a couple of spares, and there were some very interesting tubes made in the early days of radio that are covered in this volume.

But first you must understand the numbering system. Before the Radio Manufacturing Association method became standard, there was much confusion about tube types. Manufacturers could name their products anything they wanted. Very different tubes were sometimes given the same number, while interchangeable tubes were given different designations.

In addition, by the early 1930s manufacturers often dropped the letter prefix and first number. For example, the UX232 became the 32, although it was the same tube. The author does a nice job of explaining this in his preface.

The rest of the book is about the tubes. Most of the tubes, beginning with the UV200 (00), are presented on a single page. Each has a base diagram with pin-out connections, a brief description of what the tube was intended for (similar to that in the RCA manuals), a chart showing maximum ratings, another chart showing typical operation in the service it was designed for, a photograph of the tube, and a representative carton!

This information is not available anywhere else in one book, and some of it just isn't available at all. In some cases where the author couldn't find printed



information, he actually measured samples of the tubes!

For the tube audio lover, this book can be of considerable value. For instance, most do-it-yourselfers are familiar with the type UX245 (or 45), but how many have thought about the 46? This is a "dual grid" tube intended to be used with the screen tied to the plate as a Class-A driver for a pair operated with the screens tied to the grids as Class-B output tubes. Class-B, of course, went nowhere except for public-address systems and portable work, but the 46-operated Class-A is very close to a type 45 and a lot cheaper!

To be honest, it doesn't sound quite as good (very few tubes do), but it rivals a 2A3. If you come across some at a swap meet, it might be worth your time to give them a try.

It's also fun to look through the book at the small signal triodes. Some use an odd filament voltage or require DC, but that isn't much of an impediment anymore. I know from experience that some of these old triodes such as the '27, '30, and the '56 sound very good indeed.

The only way to find out is to try them. Look through the book and find likely candidates. Then shop the catalogs of the used tube dealers for the ones that are low priced and buy one with your next order. If it works out, buy a couple of spares while they're still cheap and before they are "discovered" and enjoy!

*The Collector's Vacuum Tube Handbook* is a valuable addition to a tube library, and I'm looking forward to subsequent volumes. ❖

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