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DLS Ultimate A4 The Big Four NEW

[Amplifiers](#) [Four Channel](#)

Written by Adam Rayner

Wednesday, 23 July 2008

Editor's rating

9.6
out of 10

Reviewed by:

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- 4 x 220w RMS @ 1 Ohm
- 2 x 250w RMS @ 4 Ohms bridged
- 2 x 400w RMS @ 2 Ohms bridged
- Extruded brushed gunmetal coloured Aluminium heatsink with Aluminium plate end pieces and steel plate base. Power & Protect LEDs
- Dual sets of 4Ga. Gold Plated power terminals with Allen headed grub screw connection, encapsulated in clear Acrylic housings, with second remote terminal used to drive optional fan
- 4Ch RCA input on high grade discrete gold plated panel mounted sockets with prophylactic dust covers until use
- Subsonic filter function possible by setting HP filter to 20Hz
- Front Crossovers: Lowpass 50Hz to 125Hz, Highpass 20Hz to 200Hz or 60Hz to 600Hz by 3x button, all @ 12dB per Octave
- Rear Crossovers: Lowpass 45Hz to 200Hz or 90Hz to 400Hz by 2x button, Highpass 20Hz to 200Hz, all @ 12dB per Octave
- Input sensitivity: 02V to 7.0V
- Stereo & bridged operation
- Frequency response not quoted
- Signal to Noise Ratio >100dB
- Channel separation not quoted
- Fuse Rating 150A x 1 by very close external fuse & holder
- no internal fuse fitted
- like JL Audio 300/4v2- HxWxD(mm) 73 x 465 x 240mm
- Supplied with Swedish/English detailed whole-range manual and electronics components list

Editor review : DLS Ultimate A4 The Big Four

To the uninitiated, referring to an amplifier for a car that costs a cool eight hundred smackers, as being 'Good Value for Money' (as I am with its nine out of ten VFM rating) might seem bonkers. But consider that for Audison, with their Thesis range, posh can go all the way up to £3,000 for a stereo amplifier and don't get me started on Krell or Classé in home amplifiers, as the sky's the limit.

So why can an amplifier cost so ruddy much? Well it's about the zone where mere electronic design is transcended by artistry. At this level stuff isn't just designed by a clever fellow and sent into production, this equipment gets listened to by those with known good ears to see if electronic component choices make for the right results. The differences might seem small but if you were played a commodity-type amplifier and then A/B'd to another rig, identical but for a much better amp, you would of

OVERALL RATING	9.6
SOUND QUALITY	10.0
POWER OUTPUT	10.0
FEATURES	9.0
BUILD QUALITY	10.0
VALUE FOR MONEY	9.0



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course hear the difference. Even if the rigs had been sound pressure level matched, so that louder was not just better.

This product is about 'Real' HiFi for cars. It's for those who want the best sound and know that the logarithm is badly against them. Making something to go boom is one thing but making super quality sonics is a lot more challenging. Diamond Audio's D7 was £2,500 and the DLS vacuum tube preamplified product, the TA2 is priced at £1,500. So for what this actually is, it represents high end VFM!

I loved its posh construction, right down to the smooth-as-a-piston-in-a-well-lubed-pot manner in which the RCA's penises penetrated the solid Teflon dielectric RCA panel sockets. They intromitted perfectly.

Like the Tru Technologies Steel 44, this amplifier does feel like it could benefit from a stonkerating high resolution signal from a pukka line driver once up and running on the test rig but it worked well on the signal I was able to muster. Immediately the delicious levels of detail, sweetness and terribly fast resolution of those oh so important high frequency/high rise time sonic components was right in your face. If the Tru Technology Steel 44 played the Morel Supremo 6 speakers well, this amplifier was awesome and made you see why the speakers were £1,400 a set.

The amplifier wasn't just superbly clean and pleasant, it was also able to go loud as well, with a creditable 125.4dB raised; measured via the SPL side of the AudioControl SA-3055 RTA that we use to check stuff out. Not just made to go loud, it's about the scale of things, you can hear the size of the sound stage even at sensible or lowish levels as the headroom is just enormous. This headroom also makes for vast dynamism with the sound able to go from clear and pleasantly restful to major emotional impact and goose bumps in a fragment of a second. I found myself just simply enjoying the test disc yet again, when I should have been getting on with fitting the next amplifier to the rig.

The crossovers are comprehensive, clever, wide ranging and intelligently designed. It doesn't feature a whole load of extra silliness, just the best of what DLS reckon really matters and these work very well and are clearly intended to be used, and not just put there as some punters might complain if they were not present. A completely brilliant single footprint four corner solution for an utterly audiophillic installation and scores so brilliantly in so many directions (including that crucial VFM thing) that it garners only our second ever audio-based State of the Art award.

This product is everything it claims to be and makes me feel good that it even exists.

Sonic excellence on the Hoof!



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