

# Melody Action Ultra, MDA2, and Everest 211



CHRISTIAAN PUNTER [10 March 2021](#) [2 Comments](#)



Review sample supplied by Melodyhifi Europe

Retail price in the Netherlands (incl 21% VAT):

Action Ultra – €1.649

MDA2 – €5.850

Everest 211 – €14.950

When [Melodyhifi Europe](#), a new audio distribution partner of [A Tube Hifi Import](#) in Almere, asked me to review this trio of amplifiers, I must admit that this was the first time I heard of the brand. As it turns out, the brand is indeed new to this region, and MelodyHifi Europe is launching the product in the EU. Of course, there are lots of tube amp brands and one cannot possibly know them all. Still, as it would turn out rather quickly, Melody is something rather special.



## About Melody

Melody International Holdings Pty Ltd. was established in 1999 in Australia by Mr Allen Wang. Founder & the current chief executive of the Melody Company, Mr. Allen Wang has a solid electronic engineering professional background & with a wealth of management experience. Besides being the company leader he is also the product's chief designer.

The corporate headquarters, which comprises, among others, the R&D center (product design), is based in Australia. Later, in order to meet the growing market demands, the company decided to invest by building a factory in Shenzhen, which is located near the city of Hong Kong. The factory has a modern assembly line including a transformer production line, a vacuum processing plant & a variety of proprietary self-built high-end testing equipment & measurement instruments. Although the brand is currently still best known in Australia and Asia, they are working at raising awareness in the EU.



## Review Context

The three amplifiers will be tested in the context of a system that normally consists of an [Ayon CD10-II](#) CD player, an [Ayon Spirit III](#) integrated amplifier and [Xavian Perla Esclusiva](#) loudspeakers in a relatively small room. Interlinks are [AudioQuest Water](#) and for speaker cables, there is a choice between [Driade Flow 405](#) and [FoilFlex](#). Power cables are all Belden 19364 with Bals schuko and [Oyaide C-004](#) IEC.



## Action Ultra

The Melody Action Ultra is the company's entry-level integrated amplifier that is recommended for the Audiophile starter who wants to get familiar with tube amplification. Especially for its size, the amp offers a remarkable power output of 2x 28 Watts (presumably Push-Pull Class AB) using a quad of Melody 5881 power tubes and a quad of RCA 6JT8 (6KT8) driver or gain tubes. Inside, the amp uses point-to-point wiring. Unlike its bigger brothers, the Action Ultra uses Auto-Bias. Every Melody amplifier has a Soft Start and 30-second time-delay.

Besides the Ultra version, there is also a pure Class-A version of the Action amplifier called simply "Action" but for this review, I will only be looking at the Class-AB Action Ultra version.



A removable heavy metal tube guard cage with magnetic feet and a milled from solid aluminum infrared remote control are included. The amp offers two cinch inputs and has separate speaker taps for 4 Ohms and 8 Ohms.





The Action Ultra is silent in use and the remote control works well. With some amplifiers, no matter how briefly the remote control button is used, the volume control makes steps that are too large in either direction. With the Action Ultra, however, the volume is responsive and operates very softly.



## Listening

After 30 minutes of warming up, the Melody Action Ultra sounds energetic, with good drive and dynamics. With its mildly warm sound, it has an easy-going character with a very natural timbre and it is easy to listen to. With a good balance between relaxed fullness and dynamic impact, the Action Ultra may well indeed offer an ideal balance for those who are buying their first tube amp. It offers a middle-of-the-road tube sound (as a first-time buyer will likely expect) without surprises.



It has great grip and drives the Xavians (using the 8-Ohm tap) to high levels without any issues. There is a limit to its power, of course, but I did not reach it without playing substantially louder than I normally do. I should note that the Xavians obviously are not incredibly efficient at 88dB. For 1.649 euro, however, one cannot expect the world. The amp certainly sounds more powerful than one would expect based on its modest size but it does not perform miracles. The amp's lesser areas are a soft and round bass with slightly soft transients. The bass is full and well-paced but lacks definition and attack which translates to a less rhythmic delivery than I would like. However, the amp *does* sound energetic and lively which, to a large extent, makes up for this.



It works really great with ballads, acoustical instruments and slow music in general but is less ideal with more rhythm-driven material. As far as resolution goes, there are more explicit and revealing amplifiers but maybe not at this low price point. The amp has lots of other things going for it, though. It has no dryness, edge, sharpness or grain whatsoever, it is forgiving, quite spacious and has surprisingly deep imaging that will make most similarly-priced transistor amplifiers sound straight out flat in comparison.





The Action Ultra's midrange is harmonically rich and a little warm but still open and communicative. The treble is open, airy and, if not ultimately detailed, still nicely refined. The combined sound is very well-balanced and easy to sink into. Especially smooth jazz turned out to work a treat.



The AudioQuest Water interlink has a robust and solid character itself and found it to match with the Action Ultra very well. Between the speaker cables, I found that both the FoilFlex and the Driade worked equally well, albeit with different results. For those who want to yield the tightest bass and highest precision and transparency, the FoilFlex cable is a good option while the Driade helped the amp better portray its 3-dimensionality and natural flow. While the Driade cable added some more fullness in the bass, it did not lower the pacing and, ultimately, I felt that there was more magic with the fuller and richer-sounding Driade than with the more accurate but also more factual FoilFlex cable.

# Melody Action Ultra, MDA2, and Everest 211



CHRISTIAAN PUNTER [10 March 2021](#) [2 Comments](#)



## MDA2

The MDA2 integrated amplifier uses a quad of Melody 2A3 tubes (presumably in Push-Pull) to output 2x 13 Watts in pure Class A. The driver and gain tubes are 4x "Made In Brittain" XF184 and a single USA-made Western Electric WE407 X. Inside, the amp uses Mundorf capacitors and point-to-point wiring.



The Bias control is accessible on top of the amplifier panel and can be set using the built-in, beautifully back-lit, true ampere meters on the front panel. The amplifier's side cheeks are made of wood to add a smooth and classy touch. Like all Melody amplifiers, the MDA2 has a Soft Start and 30-second time-delay.



An aluminum cage with magnetic feet and a full-aluminum infrared remote control are included. The amp offers 4 cinch inputs and an XLR input and has separate speaker taps for 4 Ohms and 8 Ohms.



After switch-on, the MDA2 emits no hum or hiss from the speakers and, when sitting close, only a very mild hum from the transformer housing. It's so soft, however, that it cannot be heard at the listening position that, in this room, is only

3 meters away, making this really a non-issue. While this may seem like faint praise, I found that it's actually rare for a tube amp to be *this* silent.



## Listening

Sonically, the MDA2 paints an entirely different picture than the Action Ultra. Sure, it's considerably more expensive but from the very first minutes that it plays (even before being warmed up) it's clear that it performs solidly in the high-end league. I don't use that term lightly and when I do, I mean it. Although most tube amps that I listened to had to yield to the Ayon Spirit III in multiple aspects, the MDA2 actually outperforms it in nearly all aspects, something that has not happened before!



The MDA2 sounds beautifully linear and transparent, finely detailed, and highly refined. In all these aspects, it outperforms the Spirit III. That, I did *not* see coming. The MDA2 sounds captivatingly pure and is highly revealing yet supremely gentle which results in a fascinating performance that lays bare all that's inside the recordings. It's very neutral and analytical, but never clinical and its timbre is spot-on natural. The bass, nearly always an aspect in which tube amplifiers perform less well than transistor amplifiers, is fast and tight and beautifully articulate, and with perfect pacing, it's neither slow nor hurried. The bass is a little lean compared to the Ayon's but then, nearly every other amplifier sounds less solid than the Ayon, and that goes even for many a transistor amp. Whether one presentation or the other is preferred, is of course a personal matter as well as something that will be dictated by the rest of the system. The Xavians do not have huge bass and for this reason, I tend to prefer fuller-sounding amplifiers in this room. On balance, however, I'd say that the Melody is more neutral as well as more linear than the Ayon and thus, strictly speaking, the better amp.



The only area in which one could lay blame at the amplifier's performance is in terms of power. Although it outperforms the Action Ultra in literally all audiophile parameters, with 2x 13 Watts, the MDA2 is not a powerhouse. But, as mentioned, at 88dB's, the Xavians are not very efficient, either. Still, you honestly do not notice the power limit unless playing really loudly at which point the amplifier will start to distort. The solution is easy enough: either lower the volume a little or use more efficient speakers. I'd wager that a couple of dB's more sensitivity will already be enough.



As with the Action Ultra, again, I felt that the AudioQuest Water ideally matched the amplifier. And, again, as with the previous amp, I found that both the FoilFlex and the Driade worked equally well. This time, however, the MDA2's carefully balanced sound makes that it does not require further tweaking to give its best. One can simply choose from a wide palette of speaker cables and use whatever best fits the rest of the system or the personal taste.



# Melody Action Ultra, MDA2, and Everest 211



CHRISTIAAN PUNTER [10 March 2021](#) [2 Comments](#)



## Everest 211

The Everest series tube amplifiers are Melody's top integrated models. Using a single large Melody 211 per channel (two in total) along with a single Melody 274B, 2x Western Electric 102, and 2x Western Electric 310A as driver/gain tubes, the Everest 211 offers 2x 13 Watts in pure Class A amplification. Incidentally, due to circumstances, my sample contained a Pavane 274B and Line Magnetic 310A's instead of the Melody and Western Electric tubes.



Inside, Mundorf and Realcap capacitors and point-to-Point wiring are used. Bias control is accessible on top and can be set using the built-in and back-lit true ampere meters. As with the MDA2, the amplifier's side cheeks are made of wood to add a gentle touch. Adding further to the classy appearance is the thick and softly curved front panel. Like all Melody amplifiers, the 211 has a Soft Start and 30-second time-delay. An aluminum cage and full aluminum infrared remote control are included.



*The Everest 211 has the same layout and connectivity as the MDA2 but with WBT and Neutrik connectors*

The amp offers 4 cinch inputs and an XLR input and has separate speaker taps for 4 Ohms and 8 Ohms. Unlike with the MDA2, the bias value is not indicated on the amplifier and the manual also makes no mention of this. Upon checking with Melody Hifi Europe, I learned that the 211 tubes should be set to 70 mA.



## Listening

After switch-on, the 211 emits zero mechanical transformer hum and again there is no hum or hiss from the speakers, perfect! As with the MDA2, it took *no time* at all to realize that this was yet another huge step up. Boy, the MDA2 was already remarkable but now hearing the 211 makes the former amp sound, well, a little matter-of-fact in comparison. The 211 does nearly everything even better!



Thanks to its amazing midrange purity, the 211 sounds so much more emotionally involving, and with its considerably wider and deeper soundstage, the 211 simply makes the other amp sound static in comparison. Yup, SET amplifiers will do that.

Nothing beats using a single output tube per channel, it's something that I have encountered several times before, but usually, the heightened emotional conveyance comes along with sacrifices in other fields. For instance, it is widely known that SET amplifiers are not bass champs. More precisely, it is often said that they are rolled off at both frequency ends. Well, that does not apply to the 211, entirely.

For starters, over the entire frequency range, the 211 sounds every bit as transparent and linear as the MDA2, but, as mentioned, along with the elusive quality in the midrange that only SET amps can manage. It is a kind of illumination from the inside along with seemingly Retina-like resolution and an even higher degree of naturalness. This is not only a matter of timbre, which with the MDA2 was also already highly natural but simply such that vocals and many instruments are simply rendered that bit more realistically.



The 211 has an absolutely gorgeous, super-delicate, and “singing” quality along with a perfect balance between subtlety and attack that makes one *undergo* the music rather than merely listening to it. Like the MDA2, the 211 is neither laidback nor hurried but just perfect in terms of pacing, and while it is smooth, it does not lack energy or attack. Oh, with 13 Watts, it is not a powerhouse, but even with the Xavians, the amp is plenty dynamic, so long as you don’t try to play at party-levels.



While most SET amps pay the price for their midrange beauty in the bass, even in this area, the 211 keeps its head up. Ok, it is indeed a little less precise and incisive in the bass, and overall, the bass range is slightly less powerful than the MDA2 but the amp's overwhelming musicality makes up for it. Its lowest registers may not be as solid as those of the MDA2 and for this reason, the 211 is less suited to rock music or other hard-hitting music that requires more low-end punch and to some extent, this also goes for the MDA2. Still, the 211 is robust enough to handle most other musical genres very well. And I don't mean merely adequately but absolutely beautifully. And if more grunt is on the wish list then Melody has other options in the product palette.

Ultimately, SET remains the holy grail if you value midrange purity and beauty over anything else and, even though it is very linear, the 211 also cannot change that. Nevertheless, this marvelous amp may be the most alluring and even-handed specimen that I have heard.



Once again, there was no need to change interlinks. In terms of speaker cables, also, again, I found that both the FoilFlex and the Driade worked very well. As with the MDA2, the 211 does not need sonic editorializing one way or another but I will say that even though it offers naturally deep imaging also with the FoilFlex cable, this aspect is further enhanced by the Driade cable.

## Conclusion

I was very pleasantly surprised by these amplifiers. The Action Ultra offers good all-round performance at the price while the MDA2 turns in a performance that is, in many aspects, the best I've heard in this system. The Everest 211, finally, offers nearly everything that the MDA2 does and adds to this a heightened emotional conveyance along with an absolutely gorgeous, super-delicate, and "singing" quality with a perfect balance between subtlety and attack that makes one *undergo* the music rather than merely listening to it.

So long as speakers of adequate efficiency are used, the MDA2 and Everest 211 come highly recommended!



(MDA2 and Everest 211)

Associated Equipment

External Links

Manufacturer: [melodyhifi.com](http://melodyhifi.com)

Official EU Distributor: [melodyhifi.eu](http://melodyhifi.eu) (part of A Tube Hifi Import)

Official NL Dealer: [Atube-HighFidelity](http://Atube-HighFidelity)