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& Record Review

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REVIEWS  
SEPARATES,  
VINTAGE  
& MUSIC

# ULTIMATE HI-FI 2012

We reveal the year's finest products  
and essential music

**164 pages**

## Equipment

Over 50 standout  
separates tested

## Vintage

The audio heroes  
of yesteryear

## Music

Your guide to the  
best LPs, CDs and  
hi-res downloads

## Opinion

Our columnists'  
hi-fi high points

• **TURNTABLES, TONEARMS & CARTRIDGES** Air Tight to Thorens • **OUTBOARD DACS** Arcam to T+A  
• **DIGITAL DISC & MEDIA PLAYERS** Burmester to TAD • **TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS** Anthem to VTL  
• **LOUDSPEAKERS** Cabasse to Wilson Audio • **VINTAGE** B&O, Electrocompaniet, KEF, Sony and more

UK £4.50 US \$10.99 Aus \$10.50





**AUDIO  
FILE**

Stereo valve power amplifier. Rated at 90W/8ohm  
Made by: Copland, Denmark  
Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd  
Telephone: 0208 971 3909  
Web: www.copland.dk; www.absolutesounds.com

hi-finews  
HIGHLY  
COMMENDED



## Copland CTA-506 (£4.5k)

It's hard to keep a good technology down, and valves still have something to offer. Copland's Olé Möller believes this and he's come up with a design purposed to run KT120 power valves. The KT120 has caused quite a stir among the cognoscenti for what it represents – think of it as a KT88 that's been to the gym and taken a course of steroids.

It's described by the Danish company as 'an impressive power valve with a long plate structure and huge grid cooling', needing its own bespoke 'ecosystem' with purpose-designed power on tap: precisely what the CTA-506 offers.

Möller says the driver stages have been redesigned to provide

**'The CTA-506 is a ball-breaker of a tube amp, all power and purpose'**

the increased voltage swing needed at higher power levels, so there's an additional gain stage as well as low output impedance buffer circuitry to drive these valves. To meet the increased current demand of the new output stage, the storage capacitors of the power supply are twice the size of those used for the older CTA-505. Furthermore, active voltage regulation of the amplifying

and driver sections has been implemented in this new amp.

Copland says its CTA-506 pumps out 90W/8ohm, which our lab tests confirmed, making it the audio equivalent of a Doc Martens boot compared to its plimsoll shoe predecessor, the KT88-equipped CTA-505. So this new design speaks to the animal spirits of every tube amp fan who knows and loves tube sound but, quite frankly, could do with more! In tune with this philosophy, the chassis weighs a not-insubstantial 26kg and is physically bulky too. Interestingly, Copland has provided an additional 'Light' switch on the back; click it on and, lo and behold, the inside of the case illuminates red to uplift those glowing glass bottles.



### HERCULEAN

A useful way to describe the CTA-506 is to invoke the memory of the soft, silken presentation of

an old Quad II and then imagine the precise opposite. The Copland is a ball-breaker of a tube amp, all power and purpose without a thought for the vagaries of traditional tube sound.

There was no sense of it huffing and puffing when called on to deliver deep tracts of bass on Talk Talk's 'Life's What You Make It'. Those powerful piano cadences

are but a mere bagatelle for this Herculean high-ender. Without shedding so much as a single bead of electronic sweat, the Copland moves your loudspeaker bass units by the required degree, relaxes and then moves them back again.

As its portrayal of a kick drum conveys, however, you're not fooled into thinking you are listening to a solid-stater. Even this, the Charles Atlas of the thermionic world, lacks the ability to deliver bass transients with the sharpness of a blade. Move up to the midband, and there's no denying the Copland's fine provenance. This amplifier is really very open; it manages to unpick dense productions with consummate ease.

Rush's 'Subdivisions' is a gloopy wash of sound with layers of keyboards overlaid by long synthesiser glides, set around powerful electric guitars. The CTA-506 dissected it all down to its constituent parts with unerring accuracy, yet still managed to string it all back together again.

4hero's 'Escape That' gave the thumbs-up for the Copland's upper reaches. The breathtaking hi-hat work was a joy to behold, the amplifier throwing out just the right amount of metallic 'ting', while singularly avoiding 'tizz'. It was tight rhythmically, too – there was a real sense of urgency.

### VERDICT

Copland's CTA-506 offers the smoothness of fine valve amps with the power and punch of top-notch transistor designs – a very desirable combination. Thereby it presents as a very cleverly voiced, highly intelligent working compromise which should win it many friends. ☺

**ABOVE:** Rear single-ended (RCA) and balanced (XLR) inputs are joined by 8ohm and 4ohm 4mm speaker binding posts. Red internal illumination may be switched on – if so desired...

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	95W / 86W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	110W / 100W / 158W / 30W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.49–0.80ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	–0.2dB to –5.2dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/90W)	279mV / 2700mV (balanced)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/90W)	85.1dB / 104.7dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 10W)	0.095–0.55%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	213W/460W
Dimensions (WHD)	430x190x390mm