

Tube of the Month
A Tube With No Name

The history of vacuum tubes is often the story of individuals and crazy ideas and not big companies. There are some tubes that were never made for the market, but their stories are well known by hams and tube guys.

In the late 1940's and early 50's, Eimac was busy with new products that were very powerful and relatively small. The 4X150A family had been enhanced to handle dissipations of over 250 watts. These external anode tetrodes were very popular with the military and the hams. Eimac had made a variant of the basic 4X250A tube by replacing the anode with a water jacket and called it the 4W300B. As usual there is someone who wants something just a little different.

There was a well-known ham who used to work for Eimac until he went off on his own to expand and perfect a line of vacuum capacitors and vacuum relays. His name was Joe Jennings and my amplifiers are full of his products. Joe loved to experiment and had the idea of making a high power mobile amplifier and a remotely adjustable mobile whip (ever hear of the screwdriver?) to go in his late 1950's Cadillac (think big fins). Cooling the tube in the trunk was an issue and Joe wanted to use a water-cooled tube. The 4W300B was good but it would easily fall out of its socket without a special clamp and it wasn't designed for high vibration applications. About 1957, Eimac had developed the 4CX300A that was designed for high vibration military uses and had a breechblock socket that would secure the tube. It is unknown what the terms of the deal were with Eimac, but they made some special tubes for Joe that took the water-cooled anodes of the 300B and put them on new 4CX300A tubes. I was once told that with a water pump in the Cadillac to cool the tube, the water pressure could also be used to tune the whip. Some of this equipment is still found at swap meets and a few of the tubes have found their way into my collection.

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