



The

# Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## The Cheap Channel Great Deals to Stretch Your Budget



By Dana Puopolo

*[November 2011] It is always nice to save some cash, especially when money is tight. But any time you can stretch your budget to cover more purchases, it makes management happy.*

One thing my friends know about me: I am always on the lookout for a good deal on electronic gear. From audio amplifiers to netbook computers, I try to make my dollar go as far as it can.

Let me offer you some ideas on how you can do it, too.

### EBAY AUDIO BARGAINS

You can find some real bargains on audio gear on eBay. Some of this stuff provides Audiophile-grade performance at six-pack prices.

For example, browse over to [eBay.com](http://eBay.com) and search for “Tube headphone amplifier.” You will find something like: “Valve Class A Tube Headphone Amplifier pre Bravo V2 a”



This is a high-grade headphone amplifier that uses a 12AU7 tube, direct coupled to a high power MosFET run in full Class A – with zero negative feedback. I use one of these every night with my [Klipsch earbuds](#) to lull myself to sleep with HiFi music. Total cost, including shipping: about \$50.

There is also a Bravo V1 which uses a 6922 tube (another dual triode) that is selling right now for under \$20, including shipping (which is what I paid for my Bravo V1).

Both of these amplifiers are not circuit boards but are fully built, functional units which have power supplies. They also work great as pre-amps driving power amplifiers. These are real audiophile devices that would cost \$300 - \$400

in slightly fancier cases at your local audio emporium.

## DIY, TOO

If you would like to save even more on some high end stuff that you can build into your own case, there is plenty of that out there, too.

This time try a search for “JHL headphone amplifier” and you will find this one: “NEW Ver JHL Class A Headphone amplifier PRE AMP KIT DIY.”



This kit is a full Class A amplifier, costing all of \$10 dollars (plus \$15 shipping). It takes about an hour to put together. If you want it delivered already built, that will cost you another \$5.

What do you get for your money? Essentially it is a Chinese copy of a 100% Class A headphone amplifier that your audio emporium sells for close to \$500 – in a pretty case, of course. The unit is 100% discrete transistor, with 100% audiophile grade components. All you need to run it is a (big) 12 Volt AC wall transformer.

This person’s eBay store has dozens of similar units. You cannot buy the parts for what he is charging. The only potential downside is some of the directions do lack some English language finesse: “you will need to weld the components and board by yourself,” some pages say.

## A \$19 LINE AMP KIT

Another kit I bought was a high quality line pre-amp, using very high quality surface-mount IC opamps, pre-mounted and soldered to a mini-

DIP adapter with the standard dual opamp pinout.

Try “DIY OPA2604” in your search:



What is unique about this circuit is that its onboard power supply has active noise cancellation – the output of the AC coupled power supply is inverted by a second opamp and fed back into the regulator’s ground as an error signal. This design results in a power supply with very little hum and noise. Needless to say, it sounds great. Even better, my cost was only \$19, including shipping!

## JUST A LITTLE PATIENCE

Where do all these deals come from? Primarily from Hong Kong and China. And yes, they do take a couple of weeks to arrive.

I would recommend that you use Paypal. This way, if your purchase does not arrive you can get your money back. However this problem has never happened to me nor any of my friends.

As you can see, this is a great way to assemble a true audiophile stereo system for pennies on the dollar, compared to what similar stuff (in pretty cabinets) sells for at high end stereo shops.

So, the next time you are looking for some electronics for a project, take a look around eBay. You might be amazed with what you can find there.

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