



LINDEMANN AUDIO Alu Box with Basswood Leaf

For twenty years the cheap to produce CDs were dominating the sound carrier market almost ad libitum. Now mp3 downloads and streaming services have ruled the mass market for several years with their binary zeros and ones. And those who'd rather prefer something physical again these days will reach out for the record. Vinyl is alive and kicking, and the consumer electronics industry has reacted accordingly.

■ By Peter Steinfadt

So we can also find up-to-date integrated amplifiers with a built-in phono preamp again. But although these are equipped with – sometimes even really decent – phono boards, the external phono preamp, which is to equalize the information from the groove and to transform tiny and tiniest signals into usable current, is still the measure of things for demanding vinyl lovers. With 1 to 5 millivolts of output, moving magnet pickup systems are pretty loud, whereas moving coil systems send only between 0.1 and 0.5 millivolts to the sockets. A small breeze, a whisper.

Let's now lend our ears to a genuine expert, the Limetree Phono II made by Lindemann Audio. For many years the manufacturer from Woerthsee has been a constant on the scene and, as the company states, their Limetree series, which includes a phono preamp, a headphone amp and a network player, offers "true high-end sound quality on a very small footprint". The Limetree Phono II picks up again a proven circuit design from the tube amp era, which is yet completely redefined by cutting-edge technologies and high-grade parts.

The device uses Japan-made J-FET amps, resistors and capacitors. The purely passive equalization of the little Bavarian results in very low distortions, notably in the bass range. Norbert Lindemann puts a special emphasis on the power supply. Together with a medical grade mains adaptor, a sophisticated power filtering and voltage stabilizers guarantee a very clean current processing with ultra low noise figures. The well crafted little alu box with the engraved basswood leaf offers two separate input stages, custom-tailored to the respective pickup type. This ensures maximum sound quality both with MM and MC pickups. With MM pickups the installation is easy: plug in and you're ready to go. Here the impedance has a fixed default value. The rear DIP switches enable to set the input impedance for MC systems between 100 and 800 ohms.

Sure, there would be a lot more to say about the innovative technology of the Lindemann, but we are a music magazine and just want to check now if the phono preamp could crown us audiophile vinyl king. For the test we chose the good entry-level Ortofon 2M Red pickup, the upscale Goldring G 1042 (both MM systems) and also the classic Denon DL-103R (MC). *The Zappa '88 – The Last U.S. Show* (Universal, 2021) release delights Zappa fans with 29 hitherto unpublished live songs by the legend. For the album the recordings were remastered from the digital 48-track master tapes and show the ensemble at its very best.

The magnificent sound quality of the iconoclastic music on those recordings is reproduced by the Lindemannikin – yes, with 107 x 40 x 130 mm (4.2 x 1.8 x 5.1") in size it is tiny – in a crystal clear and utterly detailed manner. No trace of dirt is audible

here in the signal path, no artefacts spoil the undisputed entertainer qualities of the perfectly attuned ensemble. Those drums! The wind players! Mighty, clean, razor sharp in their performance. It's awesome fun to listen to the band at work, and especially complex classics like "Peaches en Regalia" are raised to a new level.

Talking about live music: with *Live in Stuttgart 1975* (Spoon, 2021) there is also new material available from Can. The triple album on gaudy orange vinyl has five parts and documents an essential phase of the Can history. With hypnotic passages, avant-garde instrumental textures and no singer at all, the four gentlemen Schmidt, Liebezeit, Czukay, and Karoli are grooving that it's pure bliss. Thanks to the Bavarian electronics, the listeners find themselves once more in the middle of the concert hall. Not even the smallest detail can go missing, the music is transported so clearly and with a convincing spatial imaging. Really great. And this applies to both channels: MM and MC. The Limetree Phono II is also able to expose very well the different pickups and their characteristics.

For 595 Euro (RRP) the Lindemann will gladly visit you at your living room and not only let you enjoy live rock albums – why, it may be live jazz, too. A real asset to the wonderful world of phono preamps.

Website:
www.lindemann-audio.com

