

Lindemann Musicbook Source II & Power 1000 II stereo power amplifier

by Jason Kennedy



There is no way to overstate the influence of Apple and its former design guru Jonathan Ive on the world we live in today. He was clearly influenced by Dieter Rams of Braun fame and the world of electronics has been influenced by Ive in turn. Lindemann applies the same 'form follows function' approach to its Musicbook line. This is not a bad thing, quite the opposite.

The Musicbook Source II lives up to its name and then some; this relatively compact unit offers a preamplifier, a DAC, a streamer, a CD player and a phono stage in its sleek matt silver case. I have to admit that I didn't realise that the CD player was there until I looked at the Lindemann site then went back to check if there really was a slot in the black Perspex fascia. But when the only distinct features on the casework are the gorgeous volume 'knob' and an on/off switch it takes a bright light to reveal details like this, and I tend to let hardware bask in semi darkness most of the time.

When the hardware in question can be run from a shiny app lighting the thing is a waste of photons after all, and the Musicbook is very much an app driven device. It needs to be switched on with the nice button or supplied remote but from there on pretty much every facet of its operation is touch controllable. You can use Lindemann's app to do this or run it with Roon which would only provide access to the streaming side, but still it's a nice option. Once you're

in it's possible to stream from Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal Connect, the latter provides direct control from the Tidal app which is a lot better than most third party systems for using this streaming service.

Where external sources are concerned there are analogue inputs on RCAs, digital ones on S/PDIF and the aforementioned optional MM phono stage for vinyl. It offers Bluetooth wireless connection and has a headphone amp built in that is said to be good for a wide range of headphones. Inside the box the DAC is an AK4493 in mono mode and AK4137 as re-sampler; the AKM factory famously burned down at the end of 2020, but Lindemann wisely bought in bulk so has stock to ride out the shortfall. It resamples incoming digits with femto clock precision to eliminate jitter and converts incoming PCM signals to DSD (this can be turned off). ▶

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▶ The volume control is purely analogue; there's no bit curtailment going on for signals output via XLR and RCA sockets. Having experienced bit-chopping preamps before, this is a good thing!

The matching Musicbook Power II amplifier only has inputs for the former connector presumably because there isn't much space on the back panel, the speaker cable terminals are simple 4mm sockets for the same reason. The Power 1000 is the larger of two models and specified as a 500 Watt amplifier which seems optimistic given the 28cm width of the box but that's a four Ohm figure and as such likely to be twice the eight Ohm rating. Which is still a lot of power but that's the beauty of Class D for you, this amp is built around a Hypex N Core output stage but one where Lindemann have separated the voltage gain circuit and built this using J-FET transistors and a very low noise power supply.

There is no power button; a signal sensing circuit does the job for you and shuts the amp down when things go quiet. It can also be used with a second Power II in bi-amping mode. Both amps do bass and treble. Lindemann calls it vertical bi-amping! It has various protection circuits to stop any damage to itself or the attached speakers,

including current limiting which kicks in above a whopping 27 Amps, by which time you will probably be deaf unless the system's in the next field.

When you have selected the correct Lindemann app (the yellow one) the Source II proves to be a straightforward streamer to set up, especially if you go with Ethernet. The Source doesn't have its own server software so merely lists whatever you have stored on your NAS or music library with no need to index its contents. It offers access to Airable internet radio and podcasts with the latter being German-centric but includes many personal favourites including Bob Mortimer's excellent *Athletico Mince*. I like the way it keeps tabs on what you have been playing, building a playlist as you go along, and makes it easy to play tracks or albums. The listings for artists and albums don't have an alphabetical sidebar for quick access but offer a stack of dots that help to jump around the list in a similar fashion. The only thing missing is a search option for your own library (I'm told that this depends on the connected server software).

Under the all-seeing eyes of PMC fact fenestria loudspeakers the Musicbook combo stands up remarkably well, they are a little mid-forward for this speaker but this brings out a lot of detail and works well with vinyl from an external Tom Evans phono stage. Ralph Towner and Jan Garbarek [*Solstice Sound and Shadows*, ECM] turning in some finely textured sounds from guitar, sax and rhythm sections. Garbarek frequently gets too shrill for my liking but this combination managed not to exaggerate matters and delivered the musical message in much of its glory. When I discovered the DSD default setting and changed it to PCM things also got more interesting on the digital front, it's a matter of taste of course and some will prefer the smoother sound of the DSD processing, but if timing is important it's hard to beat the Source II in PCM mode. Now Fiona Boyes' gritty voice projects powerfully and the thump of kickdrum and percussion in the background keeps you engaged. The balance isn't as rich as some amplifiers but there is no doubting the power on tap, which allows the bass plenty of welly on this track and keeps a tight rein on the attack and decay. Control is certainly not an issue. ▶

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► I tried breaking up the band, using the Source II with a larger (physically, and in terms of power and price tag) Bryston power amplifier and was impressed by the way the Lindemann streamer/preamp handled itself. It produced superb depth of image and three-dimensionality with almost everything that was streamed. Tone was also very appealing with little to suggest the digital nature of the signal, instead you get macro and micro dynamics and superb bass, especially on juicy tracks like MeShell Ndegeocello’s version of ‘Who Is He (And What Is He To You)’ [*Peace Beyond Passion*, Maverick], where the shape and tone of the bass guitar is sublime. It proved equally convincing with orchestral pieces too, delivering the drama and dynamics if not the full melodic charm of Schubert’s *The Great*. But given that the Lindemann has so many features this is a very good result, volume control for instance is often a limitation with one box digital devices but it doesn’t seem to hold back the Source II.

The power amp required a more careful bit of matching, and the wrong front-end in particular can make it sound a little cool. It’s clearly powerful and can stop and start on the proverbial dime but can sound a trifle short on relaxation when cornered. With the right partnering hardware, however, it’s possible to combine that control with a degree of musicality that makes everything more than alright, in fact changing the balanced interconnect to something less revealing got me very close to a great result. Olivia Trummer’s ‘Gotta Miss Someone’ [*Fly Now*, Contemplate] is a snappy double bass propelled song that gets really interesting in the final third, this much was brought home in powerful effect by the Lindemann combo.

I’m putting the band back together now. Both Lindemann products did well in their solo careers, but the Source II is the star of the show. However, they work so well and look so good together, their solo outings are academic. You are not going to own just one Lindemann Musicbook, you are going to pick up the whole library! Anyone looking for a compact, domestically appealing audio system that more than delivers the goods sonically should give this pairing serious consideration. The fact that the control app looks good and works well is the icing on a very tasty sonic cake. Don’t let the size fool you... this is the real deal when it comes to high-performance audio! +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Lindemann Musicbook Source II

Type: Solid-state network streamer, DAC, preamplifier, headphone amplifier

Analogue Inputs: Two single ended (via RCA jacks), optional MM phono input

Digital Inputs: One coaxial S/PDIF (via RCA jacks), one Toslink

DAC Resolution/Supported Digital Formats: FLAC/WAV/AIFF, etc.

Sampling rate for D/A conversion
384kHz/24 bit

Music services/Wi-Fi inputs: Spotify Connect, TIDAL Connect, Qobuz, Deezer, HighResAudio, Bluetooth

Analogue Outputs: One stereo XLR balanced one stereo single-ended RCA

Digital Outputs: None

Distortion (THD + Noise): <0.001 %
(@ 0 dB FS)

User Interface: Lindemann application software for iOS, Android

Dimensions (H×W×D): 63 × 280 × 220mm

Weight: 2.6kg

Price: £3,700

Lindemann Musicbook Power 1000 II

Type: Class D stereo power amplifier

Analogue inputs: One pair XLR

Analogue outputs: One pair of speaker taps (via 4mm banana sockets)

Power output: 500Wpc @ 4 Ohms

Bandwidth: 45kHz

Gain: 26dB

Distortion THD: <0.003%

Signal to Noise Ratio: >110dB

Dimensions (H×W×D): 63 × 280 × 220mm

Weight: 3.4kg

Price: £3,700

Manufacturer: Lindemann Audiotechnik

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