





Streamer pre/power amplifier Lindemann Musicbook Source II und Power II

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He who reads, hears more

Lindemann's stylish Musicbook series teaches us that streaming is fun, expands our musical horizon and sounds great. A mighty power amplifier perfectly complements the source device.

Musicbook – the name says it all. Every fortnight I attend a meeting in an internal library. There's a rolling shelving system, like the ones you see in TV crime shows when the commissioner has to go down to the archives to research an old case. For quick access, the reference books are traditionally on the outside. My gaze often lingers on the spines of books behind which the knowledge of the world from twenty or thirty years ago lies – like *Sleeping Beauty* – now Wikipedia is just a click away. Meyer's *Encyclopedic Lexicon* or the *Brockhaus Encyclopedia*, each consisting of 20-plus volumes, are only good for comparison: *Musicbook Source II* and *Powerbook II* by Lindemann Audio are about as big and heavy as one of these blocks of paper labelled A-APT or WEK-ZZ. That's just as a point of reference.



Lindemann Audio has been around for almost thirty years; their first product was an integrated amplifier. With increasing success, Norbert Lindemann has paid homage to the typical high-end format and given his electronics, which have become larger and heavier, grey-black fronts in the style of Mark Levinson or Classé. I experienced the 830 preamplifier, the 850 stereo power amplifier and the 820 SACD player at home. They were in no way inferior to the top dogs from overseas, they satisfied the hunger for power of my Revel Performa F32 and delighted me with a breathy music reproduction full of detail – high-end exactly according to my taste. At some point, they had to be returned. You get used to that in this job, but the components remain as a happy memory to this day.



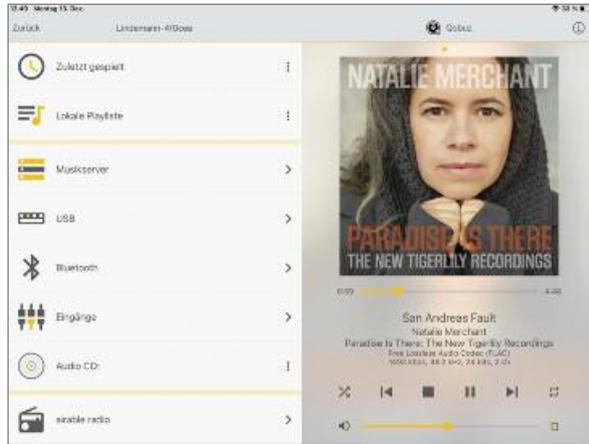
Norbert Lindemann helped shape topics such as upsampling and resampling, brought out the first SACD player built in Germany in cooperation with Sony and later worked intensively on computer and network audio. For the first generation of the Musicbook series in 2013, he focused on processing digital music data from a NAS or the Internet. The Musicbooks have long since become an institution. This is also due in part to their iconic design.

The multifunctionality of the source device, with the eloquent name Source II, leaves nothing to be desired – as a network player, as a digital-to-analogue converter, as an analogue preamplifier including MM input, as a headphone amplifier and, in our test device's configuration, even as a CD player. This “Swiss Army knife for audiophiles” can be controlled directly on the device fascia via a dial to turn and press as well as via remote control, but primarily via the app. On my 8th generation iPad, it ran stably and did not raise any concerns. The app and Source II gave me access to radio stations and podcasts via the Airable databases and were ready for Deezer, Tidal, HighResAudio, Qobuz and Spotify. Roon Ready too, of course.

Digital connections are rarely without problems, not even with a device like Source II that has been developed to the nth degree, and this time the



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The clearly designed Lindemann app is stable and self-explanatory. In addition to source selection and volume control, there are further control options, for example, to select the converter mode between PCM and DSD

problem was with the peripherals: my hard drive with ripped CDs from the public library sometimes went to sleep at the USB input when I had switched to other sources in between. The connection then had to be re-established. Otherwise, no problems for several weeks. In terms of “intuitive operation” and “suitability for everyday use in a family environment”, I therefore put a big tick in the box for the Source II, which, by the way, also willingly took care of the songs from Juice WRLD on my son’s smartphone via Bluetooth.

When you open a book, you enter a new world. This is also true for Source II, at least if you are coming from their SACD player like me. Internet radio in particular offered room for discovery. Even with Lindemann’s help, it doesn’t turn into an audiophile offering, because there is a lack of data rate, but sometimes that’s not what it’s all about: the information and music from the BBC to DLF to WDR has an incredibly wide range of content, and the sources can be easily organised as favourites via the Lindemann app.

Marc Minkowski and the Musiciens du Louvre with the last three Mozart symphonies? Voilà – free delivery via France Musique from the auditorium of Radio France. Or would you prefer double bassist Judith Ferstl and June in October? There was a radio session on Ö1 on Boxing Day. The possibilities are – literally – endless.

What happens at the signal processing level? Music data reach the all-rounder in different ways and in a quality, roughly speaking, between MP3 and High-Res files. The DAC could theoretically process 768 kHz/32 bit and DSD 512, but in WiFi mode, for example, the limit is 24 bit/192 kHz or DSD 128. Still better than any CD signal. First, all music data pass through a MEMS femto clock and are resampled with the help of an AK4137 from AKM. This is to eliminate jitter. The digital-to-analogue conversion is carried out by two other AKM components in a dual-mono configuration, i.e. one AK4493 per stereo channel. By default, everything is converted into a 1-bit signal (DSD256), but you are free to consciously choose PCM as the DAC mode in the app – contrary to the manufacturer’s advice, which attests that the 1-bit signal “opens up completely new dimensions of sound in terms of spatial imaging and high-frequency reproduction”. Filtering and volume control are then purely analogue.

Speaking of analogue: the built-in moving magnet phono stage is based on the Limetree phono, i.e. a separate component by Lindemann. I used the input with my Audio Technica VM 540 ML. The inexpensive moving magnet conveyed the fervent atmosphere of Eric Clapton’s Unplugged LP (Reprise Records 9362-45024-1, Europe '92) well, but of course it has its limits somewhere. Singer and band were neatly sorted from left to right without too much depth in the room. The focus was clearly on the warmth of the voice and the dynamics of the instruments. As a tester, you promptly drop out of critical listening and just let yourself go with the music. Those who run several tonearms and cartridges may prefer to use an external solution that also takes moving coil into account, but for those

who primarily want to put on an LP when the fancy takes them, this MM input offers a strong added value. It reveals that vinyl is something special, ultimately timeless. No, the black disc doesn't sound "better" here than the excellent digital version, but it beautifully embodies a different way of listening – one that is (also) fun, can convey music intensely and will therefore remain. The fact that the supply of tasty MMs is increasing again only serves this purpose (I'm thinking of the Nagaoka JT-80BK, for example, which is unfortunately back with the distributor, image hifi 6/2021).

Do I need the optional CD drive? I ordered it for the test unit. CDs and SACDs still play a role in my everyday life. Half of the recordings I write about still arrive by post as physical media – new cantata recordings by the Gaechinger Cantorey, for example (Carus 83.522). Those who have long since stored their CD collection on a NAS can of course dispense with the slot-in drive. For those who already have a very good SACD/CD player, the same applies. Mine focused a little more sharply on Núria Rial's voice in the aria "Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not" (Sighs, tears, grief, distress) from the cantata "Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis" (I had much grief) by Johann Sebastian Bach, BWV 21, and also grasped the accompanying oboe a touch better. On the other hand, the CD sounds a little softer and more spacious via the Source II's drive, especially in DSD mode; PCM moves the playback closer to the external player, via which the music also sounded rhythmically a shade more agile and exciting. My conclusion would be this: accept a certain amount of mechanical running noise in quiet music passages during CD operation (in my case, the Source II was only one and a half metres away from the right ear) and expect good sound from CD playback, but no miracles. The Source II's core competence lies in streaming and the preamp. It is only because the latter sounds so open that the SACD/CD player can prevail over the internal solution in the first place. Ultimately, the optional drive becomes a question of arithmetic: it only costs 300 euros more – but

Partnering equipment

Turntable: Transrotor Orfeo Doppio with TMD bearing **Tonearms:** SME 3500, VPI JMW 12.5 **Cartridges:** Transrotor Figaro Audio Technica VM 540 ML **Phono preamp:** SAC Entrata Disco **SACD player/DAC:** Marantz SA-11 S3 **Preamp:** SAC La Finezza with dual power supply **Power amp:** SAC II Piccolo **Speakers:** Q Acoustics Concept 500 **Cables:** Mainly HMS, but also TMR, Harmonix and High-Tune as well as Phonosophie **Accessories:** TMR power strip, Solid-Tech rack, home-made turntable plinth, Pro-Ject record cleaner, outer ring by Josef Will, Groneberg wall sockets and fuses

you don't get the close to the sound offered by the external transport.

Streaming opens up a whole new chapter. Qobuz provides me with the Sonata Opus 16, No. 1 by Georges Onslow, played by Hiyoli Togawa on viola with Lilit Grigoryan on piano, in 96 kHz/24 bit. I know the recording quite well as a CD (Naxos 8.573730, Germany '18). The interplay of bow, strings and wooden soundbox results in a viola sound with fascinating presence – neither blessed with the luminous smoothness of a violin, nor endowed with the rich, full-toned power of a cello (for which Onslow actually wrote the sonata), but rough as emery, yet warm, flickering and questioning. This is precisely the "existential" tone that makes the viola's sound so unique. Which only becomes apparent in direct comparison: from the CD and my Marantz SA-11 S3, the music now seems more erratic, the viola tone more metallic, the interplay with the piano more nervous. The Qobuz audio streamed via Fritz!Box and LAN connection into my listening room sounds softer, more mature, more harmonious, it binds the piano and viola together better. I would like to make the comparison: as if Togawa and Grigoryan had moved closer together, but that would imply an acoustic constriction of the room, which is precisely not the case – everything, from timbre to dynamics, but also the



ANDEMANN.

MODEL: PrivateKiosk-Power1-1000-11
INPUT: AC-230V-50/60Hz
S/N: MB071310126



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Top: The power amplifier has XLR inputs, Lindemann recommends hollow laboratory plugs for the speaker terminals. The bass volume control is only used in bi-amping mode

Left: It's amazing how a combination of Class D technology and JFETs can produce an incredible 2 x 500 watts at 4 ohms in such a small space. By the way, the new generation cabinets are milled from solid billet and are mechanically extremely stable – which generally also benefits the sound

three-dimensionality of the recording, tends to unfold more generously in the data-rich streaming than on CD. And this time, the switch to PCM compared to DSD is clearly perceptible as a step backwards in the converter settings – DSD sounds that decisive touch more open.

You can use Source II like a network player and connect it to an integrated amplifier or a preamplifier as an additional source device. In the “Fixed Line-Out” mode, the connected device is directly served the output signal from the D/A converter. Initially, I actually operated Source II in this way into my preamplifier. You can do that. I enjoyed the familiar sound of my system, supplemented by a world of new recordings to discover. Qobuz has enough listen-worthy content to last almost a lifetime, and I'm sure 90% of my CDs would be in the French streaming service's catalogue. The record collection was left behind for weeks. Streaming is fun and broadens your musical taste!

Of course, it is more consistent to use Source II not only as a source, but also as a preamplifier. I did this for the most part – consistently, after a compa-

parison of the CD drives showed how transparently the analogue high-level inputs act as signal ‘highways’, even for external sources. In an all-in-one solution, the Source II could even be used to drive active loudspeakers directly; for systems with passive loudspeakers, Lindemann offers the Musicbook Power II in two power levels, a visually obvious addition.

Lindemann uses an N-core module for Power II, but in the current generation of units, the voltage amplifier stage, which is considered crucial for the sound, is separated and built as a separate circuit around a JFET amplifier. The N-Core module is only used as a power buffer, so to speak, in order to provide the already amplified input voltage with the current necessary for loudspeaker operation. This results in an almost perfect analogue amplification of the input signal without negative influence due to interference from the Class D amplifier. Lindemann promises best measured values in terms of distortion and noise as well as a high damping factor, i.e. full control over the connected loudspeaker and total rejection of sound artefacts.





Top: The multifunctionality of the Source II is not even fully reflected on the tightly packed rear panel – there is also a headphone jack on the front

Left: The power supply is based on a switching power supply (black box on the edge of the board). The CD drive is damped. The excellent workmanship is evident in details such as the fine knurled wheel and the neatly recessed display

If you're looking for an upgrade at some point: Power II can also be operated with a twin unit with vertical bi-amping. The power amplifier switches on and off automatically. It consumes just 0.5 watts in standby and about 20 watts at normal volume. Someone is on the right track.

I had the more powerful version (Power II 1000) at my disposal; for my speakers with “normal” needs for power and control, the standard version (Power II 500) would probably have sufficed. I listen to Stefan Sterzinger's album *Keuschheit und Demut in Zeiten der Cholera* via streaming in 44 kHz/16 bit. Viennese world music with a penchant for the absurd and erotic. Singing and speaking plus squeezebox, guitar and double bass, occasionally a drum kit and percussive elements. Lindemann's compact powerhouse stages this like a heavyweight power amplifier – but guaranteed free of any transformer hum. The reproduction is pure, dry, explosive, real. When the bass violin is bowed, it sings a deep rolling “R” and in my mind's eye a cloud of rosin rises into the air. When the musician plucks the strings with calloused fingers, they snap with pithy energy, vibrate and are fattened by the instrument body. Sterzinger also has a captivating presence as

the storyteller in the middle, sometimes reciting, sometimes singing, here overarticulating, there grumbling like Tom Waits. Countless background noises – from breathing to creaking – support the illusion of authenticity. There is a swing, a rhythmic tension, an electricity in the room, as if you were actually sitting in a small theatre right in front of the stage. I find the reproduction incredibly good. My II Piccolos sound just a touch bigger and juicier, but they also benefit from the HMS Gran Finale, which could not be connected to the Power II because of the fork connectors, so I reverted to the tried and tested Phonosophie LS-2 for Power II and connected the bi-wiring terminals on the speaker with bridges. No, I have no reason to break the longstanding loyalty to my monos, but it does make me ponder. Even with complex symphonies like Gustav Mahler's mighty Fifth in the live recording with the Bayerischer Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mariss Jansons, which Qobuz delivers to me in 48 kHz/24 bit and fabulous sound quality. Class D amplifiers are said to sound extremely fast and dynamic, but somewhat non-committal in terms of timbre. Maybe it's really the JFETs Lindemann deployed, because my experience



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Our test unit was equipped with the optional slot-in drive and can be used as a fully-fledged CD player. The output level of the headphone socket can be increased specifically for models with low efficiency such as magnetostats

is completely different: the Musicbook Power II builds up a vault of sound in front of me that extends to the max in all directions – from the most delicate plucking to the fat tutti, in the focusing of details as well as in the holistic overview, in the painting of the timbres of different instruments as well as in the representation of emotional contrasts between dreamy intimacy and violent discharges of pain. Not for nothing does the score contain headings such as “At a measured pace. Strict. Like a funeral procession.” or “Moving stormily, with the greatest vehemence”. To put it in a nutshell: Lindemann’s compact power amplifier combines hyper-precision with the breath of great amplifier electronics, rigid control with beautiful musicality. High-end audio without a slipped disc – simply clever & smart. Together, Source II and Power II make a real dream team. □

Streamer preamplifier Lindemann Musicbook Source II

Inputs: 1 x phono MM, 2 x RCA analogue, 1 x each digital optical, coaxial, USB 2.0 and LAN as well as WiFi and Bluetooth **Outputs:** 1 x XLR, 1 x RCA, 1 x headphones **Control/Communication/Sources:** including remote control, app, WPS Connect, support for UPnP and DLNA, Roon Ready and Spotify Connect as well as prepared for Deezer, HighResAudio, Qobuz, Tidal, Airable Radio and Airable Podcasts **Data formats:** WAV, FLAC, AIFF, ALAC, MP3, AAC, Ogg Vorbis, WMA, DSD **Resolution:** 44.1 kHz to 384 kHz, 24 bit (WiFi up to 192 kHz, PCM from network), DSD 64 to DSD 256 (WiFi up to DSD 128, DSD from network), up to 768 kHz/32 bit and DSD 512 (DAC) **Special features:** optional CD drive 300 euros extra **Dimensions (W/H/D):** 28/7/22 cm **Weight:** 3 kg **Warranty:** 36 months **Price:** 3,590 euros

Power Amplifier Lindemann Musicbook Power II 1000

Inputs: 1 x XLR **Outputs:** 1 x loudspeaker **Power:** 2 x 500 watts into 4 ohms, 2 x 250 watts into 4 ohms (Power II 500) **Features:** Automatic switch-on and switch-off, stereo and vertical bi-amping (second unit required) **Dimensions (W/H/D):** 28/7/22 cm **Weight:** 5 kg **Warranty:** 36 months **Price:** 3,590 euros (2,690 euros Power II 500)

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