

THE HIGH FIDELITY MAGAZINE

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# Hörerlebnis



Trinity: phono stage



### Trinity: Phono Stage

When Dietmar Bräuer does something, his motto is: all or nothing. He is a man who makes no compromises when it comes to Hi-Fi. He wants to create the extraordinary - both technically and in terms of sound. His standard is what is technically doable.

With the Trinity series, he has already made waves. He now pushes for new products, first and foremost the phono stage, the housing of which is made from one whole. Apart from the fact that the prepre is a direct hit optically and possesses haptics that allow erotic feelings to arise, resembling the structure of a single material battle (96 ICs, 48 per channel). The

*by Marco Kolks*

phono amplifier is constructed in two stages, between which there is a passive network. Every level is amplified to 46dB, twelve fully symmetrical amplifier levels work in each. The signals are equalised through a passive filter network, the deviation measures a maximum of 0.05dB: a dream value.

In order to meet all customer wishes, Dietmar Bräuer expanded the RIAA equalisation to FFRF (London, Decca, Columbia & Emi), whereby, in the circuit, only manually selected precision capacitors and low hiss resistors operate. Moreover, the stage can still be switched. A much sought after feature, particularly with Asian customers.

Freedom from static is particularly important to the developer. The hiss empty groove of the copper master measures some 75dB (The Sound of Silence Lowest-Noise RIAA Phono- Amps

## No Compromises



Designer's Guide, page 139) - the phono amplifier lies far below it and therefore on the border of the physically feasible.

That's why Dietmar Bräuer is meticulous, because he knows that you can hear everything. When the needle sinks into the groove, the level of hiss is audibly high. As the amplifier works up to the megahertz range and is completely distortion free and its hiss lies under the inherent noise of a record player, the 'sound' is defined from the deck and the pick-up. As the sound pick-up is a load resistor and fades out from nature, it does not even have to be operational (with a flow of current). It's the molecular movement that causes the hissing. The input hiss multiplies with the amplification, resulting in source noise. Here, the 12 amplifier levels switched in parallel that reduce the inherent hiss of the phono to factor 3.5 (or 10dB).

If you get the grounding right, says Dietmar Bräuer, you will have no problem with buzzing. As he didn't want to rely on phono cables made by his competitors, he had one made according to his guidelines, which is included in delivery.

For this, the structure must be strictly symmetrical. The isolation is wrapped and is not injected as usual.

**The back of the phono stage has two inputs and outputs**

The DC servo is designed in such a way that the characteristic curve remains absolutely straight. (Note: for customers with further technical knowledge, Dietmar Bräuer publishes all important measurement reports online. Model).

On the back, two sources can be connected. The tuning takes place using additional plug connectors with ten selectable values, all desired values are provided. The tuning doesn't take place in the housing, in addition you're best equipped for possible new solutions.

The manufacturing costs are the maximum of





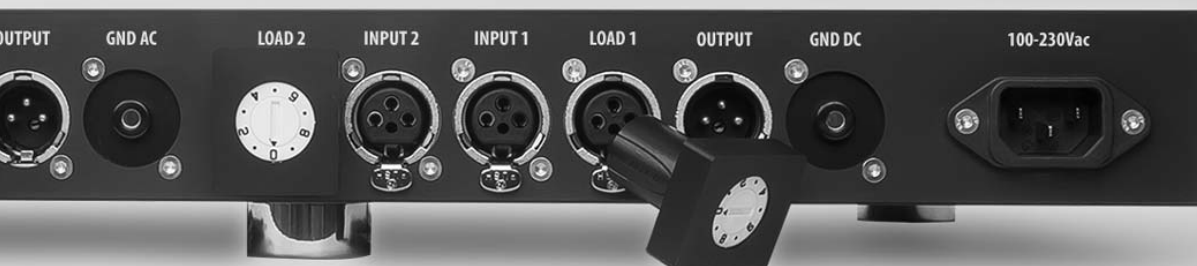
what is offered in the industry. Each component is selected by hand, on average only a third of the preselected lot is left over. Only when all the parameters are in tune can this high level of freedom from distortion and hiss be achieved and this cannot be done for nothing. The icing on the cake is the feet, which absorb balls of various materials (even artificial rubies are provided) and those can be changed due to the substructure.

This phono stage is well thought out from start to finish, is exceptionally solidly constructed and is excellently manufactured. With a glance

**Section 'with connector':** The tuning takes place via external connectors. All values are deliverable.

into the inside, it is easy to determine that technology does not materialise here jumbled up, ostentatiously in on place, scarcely in another. The components, the materials, from the wiring down to the output jacks - everything is through-composed, accomplished with consideration. I believe that the basis for the sound pattern of this amplifier is to be found here. It doesn't appear to lie in the circuit design or the quality of the materials alone, but rather much more on the art of the tuning of small components on each other.

Here, it's not only noble components that are soldered together and current circuit technology used: what particularly stood out for me was the interactions between the parts of the amplifier down to the screws are well thought out. The handpicked components and smart wiring alone do not constitute a good amplifier. I remember the story of the sum of parts and the whole.



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The reliability, the processing and the design of the phono not only make clear what many other are lacking, but also what can be demanded from devices in this price range. With unwary euphoria increased to analogy: When a hit song is really bad, you know it, if you have a certain idea of the musical functional and expressional possibilities in the given time and how they're made use of.

If you want to assign a tone quality to a Dietmar Bräuer preamplifier, you must fall into the imagery of culinary delight and speak of elegance and spirit, an artistic balance that stimulates the senses, that brings individual ingredients to fruition. Soundwise, the phono stage excels through a positive, neutral sound pattern. Excessive gimmickry is not its business. It sounds easy-going, peaceful, stable and understated. It leaves no desire to increase another step. Room, air, breathing, colours: all of them are here. What is more, these dimensions are differentiated and pronounced. As is the profile of gently diminishing voices outlined, the bodies of the instruments realistically large, the plucking or striking of instruments emphasised and the colours of the voices clearly contrasted. Only a handful of phono stages are



**Balls were added under their feet, which sounds different due to different material characteristics.**

capable of properly meeting these expectations. The denouement - or, if you prefer, the grain - is a touch finer than with well-reputed competitors.

The finishing touch, which puts them ahead of some others,

makes it a convincing phono stage. The audio interpretation of a neutral, highly homogeneous, room-filling sound pattern, also contributes to this being pleasant to listen to for a long time.

As you could have the wish to once drive a powerful car on an empty motorway, listening to this phono inspires such thoughts in me. Here the Bolivar Soloists ('Musica de Astor Piazzolla') from the Berliner Meister recording present themselves directly. The young label has revived the art of direct recording and engages the musicians for a project. What happened here on the direct-to-disc recording on 17 January 2012 with air, pressure, integration and articulation is simply stunning. Juan Manuel, the violinist, believed that he has never played so well in his life as on this recording. The middle seems to extend to a certain extent, deeper below, higher above. The body of the violin is plastic, the colourfulness of the playing pronounced. In a vast room, you can see the musicians on the stage. They stand in a circle, framed by a small audience. This phono makes it possible to experience how the instruments are used, interweave with each other, follow on from

The product:

Phono Stage

Price: 24,900 Euro

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one another.

It shows, originating from different places, how such musical interactions occur. From the various positions, the sounds flow out vibrantly, mixing together and forming new entities. Bolivar Soloists had only rehearsed the two days before the actual recording, without even a microphone stand in the recording room, writes the label. The reason was simple, the musicians could not rely on the technical refinement and possibilities of modern sound manipulation. You couldn't edit it afterwards. You have to play everything the way that it should be heard later: one to one. The recording itself first began when the lead-in groove of the lacquer film was completely edited. The musicians then let rip like a firework. The real art of the phono stage lies in the explosive power of this music as an organic design that can be clearly experienced.

A further characteristic I have noticed, that I perceive as great inner peace. The reproduction never loses its drive. None of the notes hurry along, individual tones are not accentuated. Crescendos and diminuendos are accentuated and definitively depicted. Pianists have propulsive playing, drummers a real kick. The perceptual scale is the same over the entire frequency range. If anything were to be lacking here and imbalance were to arise, that is hard for a listener to bear.

I was able to listen to the phono stage for several months and everything sounded absolutely right. It builds up a sound reproduction from a foundation, that stands like a rock. Everything is in focus, quiet and power overlapping.

**Conclusion:** The dynamic capabilities bind with an unusually high spatial resolution, which leads to a side, deep and plastic reproduction. The sound pattern is free, detached and fills the room. Instruments have body, recording locations are audible. Whoever listens to this phono stage,



### **Sound tip Bolivar Soloists**

*Musica de Astor Piazzolla*

*Berliner Meister record/direct recording passion, joy of playing, musicality, virtuosity, temperament: this is how the Bolivar*

*Soloists' style of playing is best summarized. Whoever makes a direct-to-disc recording nowadays despite the stress must be a true artist. These musicians certainly are, as they not only play one track, but even a whole side of an LP in one go. No individual notes can be corrected afterwards.*

*Producer Rainer Maillard had explained to the Bolivar Soloists that such recording sessions would be more intensive, that the pulse would beat much faster and it would have a different feel when listening to the recording afterwards on LP instead of CD.*

*That also means that the musicians and the recording team must work more closely together. The Bolivar Soloists decided on seven tangos from their role model Astor Piazzolla. A direct-to-disc recording proceeds differently than a usual CD production. Rehearse two days, only sound check on the third day: Listen to the arrangement of musicians, microphones, microphone positions, level ratios and reverberation chambers. On the fourth day, it began in earnest. Berliner Meister records edited five films, the A side three times and the B side twice for the pressing. A must have record!*



**The phono stage is delivered in a flight case.**

as he can afford it, will not miss anything essential in the reproduction and make no compromises.  
**MK**

listened with: Analogue decks: Transrotor Eternita, Pluto 12a; Tone arms: Pluto 2 A, SME V (internal wiring Clearaudio), SME 3012R; Sound pick-up systems: Clearaudio Titanium and Victory H, van den Hul Colibri, Canary und Condor, Stein Music Aventurin 6, Ortofon SPU-Royal, Flair from Phonosophie; Transformers: Ortofon SPU T 100; CD player: Burmester 916; Transducer: Burmester 980, Audio Alchemy DTI Pro 3.2; Preamplifier: Burmester 808 MK V; Phono stage: van den Hul The Grail (battery version), Blue Amp Model 42 MK II and Surzur, integrated MC Phonostage 808 MKV Burmester; Final amplifier: Burmester 911 MK II (Mono); Loudspeaker: Acapella High-Violoncello; Cable (NF/LS/network; NF: van den Hul 3T, Langerton, Acapella (silver), Dolphin Gold and Black phono cable: HMS phono cable, grand finale jubilee; digital cable: Langerton, Aural Symphonics, Stein Music (active), LS: Acapella Reference Blue (silver), van den Hul The Third; network: Phonosophie, Blue von Dolphin; mains power strip: Phonosophie; Accessory power supply: Power Animator and optimiser from Artkustik, Burmester power conditioner, network cable adapter from Hans-Ulrich Rahe (prototype), Phonosophie Wanddosen AG; Base accessories: Copulare sound bases, Acapella music bases (also for loudspeakers), Big Block and Speed Block from Acapella, Ducal cable carriers from Copulare, Shaktis, animator bases from Artkustik; Digital accessories: CD sound improver from Gläss, CD magnetiser station DE 2 from Steinmusic; Analogue accessories: Resonators from Finite Elemente, audio animator and cable animators MK II-Versions from Art Akustik, LP magnetiser station DE 3 from Steinmusic, tube checker from Beck Elektroakustik, templates from Stadthaus, Dr. Christian Feikert, Black Wonder from Aura Hifi, Stein Music, outer limit plate ring von Clearaudio, copper disc plate edition from Aura Hifi, tuning metal templates from Pluto

Audio, Vorizoo from Blue Amp, Headshell Stability from Clearaudio; Super Tools from Audio Tuning Tools; Room tuning: High End Novum PMR singing bowl, sound resonators from Acoustic Systems (Fast Audio), Bass Booster from Aura Hifi, Super Tools (JH + JJ) from Audio Tuning Tools, room animator MK II from Artkustik, Harmoniser from Stein Music, Albat Bioenergetic Solutions Revelator pyramid; Cleaning agents: Audiotop (Acapella), Fast Audio, CD washing machine from Gläss, LP washing machine Double Matrix from Clearaudio;