



Zest for life

Lindemann adds to its anniversary range with a headphone amp that has plenty of get up and go, says **Ed Selley**

Hot on the heels of the excellent Limetree Phono (HFC 441), Lindemann's Limetree Headphone follows a similar form factor and is part of a range of models built to celebrate the Bavarian company's 25 years in business. In the case of this headphone amp, the most notable aspect of its design is that although exclusively analogue, it makes use of a MUSES 72320 digital volume control – selected because of its consistent performance at all listening levels. In theory, any headphone you plug in will receive the same performance regardless of its sensitivity, and the listening level selected is further aided by adjustable impedance settings via dip switches on the underside. These can even be changed 'on the fly' to allow you to closely match it to your choice of cans.

The power supply has been constructed to achieve the lowest noise levels possible while ensuring ample current delivery – a 'medical grade' switch mode power supply is combined with ultra-low noise voltage regulators to make it resistant to mains harmonics. In use, it does seem to be almost entirely free of any noise

or hiss at idle and although the actual mains connection is a wall-wart type, it feels reasonably solid.

As well as its headphone amp duties, the Lindemann is also a fully functional preamp and has three stereo RCA inputs with matching pre-output as well as the 3.5mm headphone socket at the front. As with the phono stage, the casework feels solid and the wooden volume knob is a nice touch. Inputs are switched via a toggle on the front that doubles as the power control. Lindemann suggests a matching power amplifier will additionally be joining the fold in the future.

Sound quality

Using a Chord Electronics Hugo 2 (HFC 428) as the decoding section from my laptop and connecting Audio-Technica's ATH-A2000Z headphone (HFC 412), the Limetree amplifier delivers on the technical promise of its specification. With the dip switches in the lowest setting – for headphones between 30 and 50ohm – there is no unwanted noise even with the volume level set high. Wind it back down to zero and play some music while carefully increasing the

level to the threshold of audibility, and there is no sign of channel imbalance – something an analogue control can sometimes struggle with.

Beyond technical accomplishment, this is an enjoyable listen. It achieves a largely happy balance between a believable sense of accuracy and tonal realism without being a 'warts and all' style monitor. It handles the superbly mastered *Chris* by Christine And The Queens in a way that takes full advantage of the sumptuous vocals, but ensures that the experience is still fun. It has a spacious and three-dimensional sound that helps avoid the sense of fatigue that extended headphone listening can sometimes generate and with the comfortable Audio-Technica, it is possible to listen for hours at a time without any sense of ennui creeping in.

The Lindemann is also a fully functional preamp with three inputs and pre-out

Switching to the ballistic, rather compressed and indifferently mastered *No Tourists* by The Prodigy, the Lindemann does a fine job of ensuring the result sounds as listenable as possible. It retains the energy and attack, but unless you wind the volume up uncomfortably high it never tips over into sounding harsh or overly aggressive, meaning even sprawling music collections are unlikely to have anything in them that will be off limits.

Conclusion

As an entirely analogue design, the Lindemann Limetree Headphone is a talented and good value amplifier that delivers a consistently satisfying performance with a wide variety of headphones across a broad range of musical styles and material ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Lindemann
Limetree
Headphone

ORIGIN
Germany

TYPE
Headphone
amplifier

WEIGHT
295g

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
107 x 40 x 130mm

FEATURES
● Inputs: 3x RCA's
● Outputs: 1x RCA;
1x 3.5mm
headphone jack
● Adjustable
impedance settings

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Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★
LIKE: Even and refined sound; flexible inputs and setup; build quality

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★
DISLIKE: Lacks a little fine detail; no 6.35mm jack socket

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★
WE SAY: A great value headphone amp with a satisfying musical performance

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

