

# HI-FI WORLD

MARCH 2011

UK £4.10

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS ISSUE!



**CANTON REFERENCE 9.2 DC**  
loudspeakers **EXCLUSIVE!**



**CREEK DESTINY 2**  
amplifier **EXCLUSIVE!**



**SPENDOR A9**  
loudspeakers **EXCLUSIVE!**



## MERIDIAN G08.2 CD player





**COMPETITION**  
WIN A **BENZ MICRO WOOD**  
SL MC CARTRIDGE  
WORTH £950!

- > KISEKI BLUE NOS MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE
- > SPIRAL GROOVE SG2 TURNTABLE
- > PREAMPLIFIER SUPERTTEST
- > CAYIN CD-50T CD PLAYER

**EXCLUSIVE!**

MARCH 2011

03 >



9 770961 766185

**10 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF iQ30 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)**





## PRIMA LUNA PROLOGUE 3 £1,550

**E**stablished in 2003, Prima Luna are based in Holland and are the brain child of high-end distributor Herman van den Dungen. Along with designer Marcel Croese (previously with Goldmund) and Dominique Chenet (ex-Jadis), he has built up a range of amplifiers across two levels, of which the Prologue series are the less expensive. Despite this I could find no signs of poor quality in the finish or fit of components. The heavy gauge steel chassis was hand finished with five coats of a charcoal colour with odd metallic flecks in it. The front panel can be had in either this charcoal colour or in a silver finish. The casework measures 395x280x190mm and the complete unit weighs in at 12.7kg.

The circuit is a dual mono, non inverting design with no global feedback, fitted with 2x 12AX7s, 2x 12AU7s and 2x 5AR4 valves, the latter being the rectifiers. Volume is controlled by an Alps Blue Velvet Potentiometer. As with the LA4, ceramic valve sockets are specified, this time along with Nichicon, Solen and Swellong capacitors. The preamp is shipped ready to accept the optional onboard moving magnet, solid state, phono stage, which can be retrofitted at any time.

### SOUND QUALITY

From the moment the needle hit the groove of 'Aida', I was aware that this was a very different beast to the Icon Audio. The sound had a darker

hue, being very richly textured and detailed. The performers seemed more rooted to the ground than they did with the LA4, accompanied by the powerful rumble and roar of the timpani which extended very low indeed. Whether there really was more bass output from this preamp than the LA4 I don't know, but the sensation, caused, I think by the darker and richer flavour of the sound, gave that impression.

Moving over to CD and the Prologue 3 disentangled the complex rhythms of 'Arabesque' and presented them for analysis. I felt that there was more colour in this sound than from the LA4, but less in the way of filigree detailing and shape. Turning to the Fats Waller LP and I came to the conclusion

that this preamp likes to show off recordings, and is prepared to flatter them a little. The energy in 'Dinah' was beautifully portrayed, but I felt that there was a little too much richness and perhaps a touch of voluptuousness in the sound, which, in a full bodied sounding system might prove too much.

Overall then the Prima Luna Prologue delivers a very good performance at its price, but will require a degree of careful auditioning and/or partnering; it's a warm sounding device for those who want precisely this. It's less neutral than the far cheaper Creek and Icon Audio preamps but doesn't comprehensively better them; rather it offers a different take on the music which some may prefer.

### MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Prima Luna Prologue 3 measured flat across the audio band, an upper limit of 67kHz ensuring RF is not amplified. Gain was useful at x4 (12dB) maximum, but there is no phono stage and external stages will need to have quite high gain to work with this lowish maximum value, at least double the usual x100/x1000 values.

There was both input distortion (i.e. in the stages before the volume control) and output distortion (i.e. in the stages after the volume control), which leads to a complex distortion scenario, but with 2V in (e.g. from a CD player) and 1V out to a power amplifier, distortion measured a high 1.3% but comprised mainly second harmonic our analysis shows. This will not be obviously audible, as it takes a good 5% or more before timbre is lightened slightly, something that is very difficult to detect.

The Prologue 3 measured well

enough in all areas and should give a good sound. NK

Frequency response	2.5Hz-67kHz
Separation	68dB
Noise	-98dB
Distortion	1.3%
Gain	x4/12dB
Overload	7V out

### DISTORTION



### VERDICT

Dark and rich sounding valve preamplifier that's ideal for brighter power amplifiers and/or speakers.

### PRIMA LUNA

PROLOGUE 3 £1,550

Pistol Music

☎ +44(0) 20 8971 3909

www.pistolmusic.co.uk

### FOR

- smooth, solid sound
- large soundstage
- deep bass

### AGAINST

- over full for some systems