



REVIEW: R32 PHONOSTAGE
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Well Prepared

The Primare R32 preamplifier is a properly mature device: the design of restrained elegance with well-ordered material strength makes it right – especially given the price tag.

975 Euro is exactly what is called for in the R32 – just slightly below the psychologically important 1,000 Euro mark. That, I think, is a very positive characteristic from a manufacturer of high quality hi-fi equipment. From the outside, the phono preamplifier fits exactly with other Primare 32 series products – but will also cut a fine figure in every hi-fi rack. Three solid feet ensure a wobble-free and above all quiet base – the powerful, matt brushed front panel carries just the engraved company logo (it looks very nice by the way) and an LED which provides information about the operating status.

Despite its Danish roots, Primare is a Swedish company – obviously, a country where high-quality hi-fi does well. The R32 builds on Primare's twenty-five year history of development. It has a clear relationship to the R20 predecessor, which was produced in the midi-sized format.

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Unscrew the cover (which is a few millimeters thick) and you'll see lots of interior space and very little phono amplifier - clearly even more minimalist in phono pre-amp design. There are two amplifying stages and RIAA equalization, plus a MC amplifying stage and that's about it. The electronics are divided into three "sites" that are cleanly separated and shielded. The actual phono board is located at the rear of the power transformer. The power supply board is a good 20 inches away from the other components. The parts quality is very good and the dual mono design potentially makes for a very clean performance. Our measurements in the lab showed the usefulness of the large housing: hum is not an issue in the Primare R32 – other phono amplifiers have to fight it a little more. The gain is a good 40 decibels in the MM operation (internally, you can switch to 46 decibels). There is a 62 dB gain available for MC signals and that is enough for the most current pickups. The values for the impedance matching at the two step switchers (one per channel) are constructed accordingly: the input can be adjusted between 10 ohms and 47 kohms, where the values of MC are indeed graduated finely enough. For me, the 1000-ohm setting is still missing, but that is a matter of taste. In the listening test, I found the very fine gradation useful for one or other exotic pickups, and can confirm that the very good measurement values in the product specifications are accurate and conservative. I found during our tests that performance exceeded these values on occasions.



The Primare R32 is a device that sees itself as a noble all-rounder rather than as a specialist for a single area. Performance was clear and consistent across the spectrum – the upper edge of the audible spectrum was very open and airy, and in the presence area where the human ear is most sensitive, the R32 was always accurate, according to what comes out of the pickup. The sometimes oddly arranged chorus of Jennifer Warnes' version of "A Singer Must Die" from her "Famous Blue Raincoat" tribute to Leonard Cohen, is perfectly audible and despite the very dynamic recording still remains beautifully controlled – I've heard it quite differently. The subsequent piece "I Came So Far For Beauty", shows how wonderfully the Primare can handle voices: the poignant and wistful piece is portrayed in all its depth and, in an emotionally poignant way, communicates the wonderful voice of the singer. It goes just as well for male voices: Eric Anderson's latest disc "The Cologne Concert", from Meyer Records demonstrates the full expressive power of the old master, who, accompanied sparingly, reprises his decades of work for a live audience.

Deep Purple's masterpiece "Machine Head" was recorded exactly 40 years ago but is still vigorous. The Primare R32 renders this milestone of classic hard rock, which has a great sound quality, in a

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punchy and open way. It's fresh and open in the highs while properly communicating the pulsating pressure from the drums and bass in the deeper layers. Guitar and organ swap between virtuoso solo and accompaniment, while Ian Gillan's unique voice is fully opened – all display their impressive bandwidth.

Change of scenery: A visit to the green hill in Bayreuth. The R32 can differentiate the large orchestra and chorus so finely that one can very precisely follow individual voices. Yet - and this is extremely important - the organic interplay remains fully intact. The body of sound remains such that the individual voices, overlapping in shifts of tonal colour, form an expressive background for the solo singer. The balance between throat and body is absolutely right, and the localisation succeeds wonderfully. What's really impressive is that the enormous breadth and depth of the orchestra's sound, combined with the unique acoustics of the festival hall, are reproduced with an almost life-like quality. If such a thing is possible in a device, then my conclusion of the R32 is that everything is right!

The bottom line ...

Technically and sonically brilliant. Elegant high quality housing. The Primare R32 is clearly a "Best Buy" for its price tag.

Teammates

- Turnables: VPI Classic 3 - The Funk Firm Vector III - Rui Borges Uno
- Pick-ups: BenzACE SL - Nagaoka MP-500 - Denon DL103R - Phase Tech P-3G
- Amplifiers: Malvalve Preamp Three Line and Power Amp Three - SAC Preamp + Igel WLM Sonata
- Speakers: Sonics Allegria - K+T Titania
- Accessories: Bases from Thixar and Accurion - Power cord from HMS and PS Audio
Phono cable from Nordost and Furutech - Interconnect cable from van den Hul

Adversaries

- Phono Preamplifiers: Trichord Dino MKII - Quad 24P Phono - MalValve Preamp Three Phono
Modified PS Audio GCPH

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Played:**Eric Andersen**

The Cologne Concert

Jennifer WarnesFamous Blue Raincoat
20th Anniversary Edition**Richard Wagner**

Parsifal

Gomez

Split the Difference

Deep Purple

Machine Head

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Waisenhausmesse, Claudio Abbado

Miles Davis

Milestones

**Measured****Test comment**

Very well balanced frequency response with wide bandwidth. Good channel equality.

The manufacturer's specifications are exceeded by the measured -77.3 dB (A) for MM and -66.3 dB (A) for MC. The values for the channel separation are only slightly lower.

The distortion is negligible at 0.01% (MM) and 0.09% (MC). The Primare is frugal with power consumption: It allows approximately 10 watts from the outlet.



The back shows no exciting features: inputs, outputs and impedance selector switch are completely separate channels

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The board in dual-mono construction located behind the front panel of the Primare



In another corner sits the power transformer which complies with the maximum possible distance from the phono board

Primare R32:

Dimensions (W x H x D)	430 x 95 x 380 mm
Weight	8.5 kg
Colours	Black, Titanium