



Funk LAP-2.V3 preamplifier review - test

Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3



What is the importance of preamplifier? There is no doubt, that preamplifiers play an important role in any high-end audio system. Even when they are not a separate entity, they are an integrated module and act as an active or passive gain stage.

Passive preamplifiers seems to rise above their little market percentage lately, but there is a major believe and also practical reasons for the implementation of active stages. They bring more to the audiophile table generally.

Little giant

With the advancement of SMD and IC and operational amplifiers by each year everything is getting smaller and more compact. Just look at notebooks, phones or high-end audio at French Devialet. Slick, small and easy to fit into any environment.

Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3 preamp is quite small box compared to what we're used to

within high-end audio world. I promised myself I won't judge the book by its cover and followed a strong warm tip by Jacek, that this box is a true special one.

LAP-2.V3 preamp is originally designed for professional studio (mastering) use. One can immediately spot the record out, which indicate the role of line level preamp duties of an instrument amplification. It's true, that mastering engineers demand the most transparent tools for their rigorous job. Should that transcribe to the world of high-end also?

Operational logic is simple and straightforward. Everything is done in a well though and comfort way, without and additional beautifiers. Still you can choose to order LAP-2.V3 in few different colours to make your best match within your rack space.

What would you get if you strip down the high-end pre amplifier of fancy box, giant knobs, and oversized feet? A Functionally working machine. Meet LAP-2.V3.

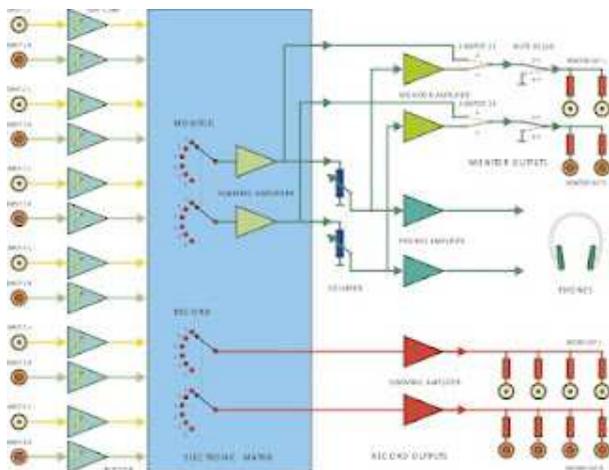
Encounter of a German kind

Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3 took out the role of my Lamm LL2 preamplifier. I also actively tried it in my second and third system to give it the best possible and fair share of different set ins.

Since I'm enjoying lately both analogue and digital front ends with my reference

turntable and Lampizator level 4 DAC, it was obvious to insert LAP-2.V3 in to the main system and with the numerous material from my testing material. I do avoid being specific with an audiophile records. They are a working material, but for the emotional impact, there is more than enough quality music, that sparkle a magic of emotions and sense of well recorded material.

Lately I discussed with few audiophiles Michael Franks Art of Tea. This record launched him into the international stratosphere and open later the niche but premium world of Japan jazz scene. The energy of album and great musicianship of Yellow Jackets creates a monumental stand out time capture. I've seen Blue Pacific as a standard test disc in quite some systems at high-end shows, when CD's were still a medium of choice for high-end front end. This was an interesting record produced by the same team that made unforgettable Steely Dan records. Expertly implementation of digital multi tracking blow the minds of many hard core audiophiles with its distinct sound. Many still measure the quality of production by this album.



Art of the tea is completely different sounding record. Analogue by hearth! A favourable partner for the vinyl system listening. There is nothing like snare impact recorded well. And when its strike is flowing through analogue medium, there are a certain attacks imprints, which makes it unique and instantly recognizable. Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3 preamplifier conveyed those attacks at right pace and with enough energy, that kept my needed attention (said my listening notes). There was not as much gain as with Lamm LL2 preamplifier, but then again no preamp that came

through Mono and stereo HQ's had the same output strike. This is due to Lamm very high gain output and Vladimir changed this in the LL2.1 on request. With updated version now you can switch to few dB of lower gain output. I guess on this level gain of Thomas Funk and other preamps met.

There was no lack of performance in LAP-2.V3 preamp. Just a matter of gain setting for the best out come.

Mactone MH-300 B and LAP-2.V3 preamp played their hearts out. There was a contemporary feeling around Funk LAP-2.V3 preamp. What does these exactly means you can follow up in the next paragraph.

German neutrality?

We used to certain imprint of flavour when it comes to German based high-end gear. While some of the latest amplifiers like Tidal are going into completely different way, trained ear could stile recognize a certain in house sound of some other well recognized companies.

Thomas Funk is coming from completely different school. Pro audio takes a linear approach to the sound. While its main goal (and it should be) of high-end audio a colourless and flavour free sound, we often find specific sound imprint even in higher priced gear. Why? To sync. If you want to match a certain gear, a synergy is of top most importance. Here design schools of sound take a stand.

With some mileage even non-seasoned high-ender or audiophile can instantly trace a specific sound, that certain component carry. Where does Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3 come in all of those definitions?

Funk preamplifier is very transparent. Whatever material thrown at its premises Funk performed with articulation and speed. PRAT was on par with many rivals priced even half as much and there was no missing of details or sense of space. There might be a bit of treble warmth and spike of the top end roll of, but never in such way, that it would take out the life of music. It shows, that Thomas knows what he's doing and that his aim for mastering studio is also specific. There shall be no hidden treasures when it comes down to the final miniature refinements of sound at mastering. Speed is at front and one need to create such device without any curtains or sound speed bumps.

World of desire

These days it's easy to fancy about big boxes, luxury names and exotic approaches. One of the most recognized audio designers told me during this year Munich high end audio show: "Matej, the function of preamplifier is simple and straightforward. There is no need to go all crazy with both prices and crazy approaches. Just logic and knowledge of audio electronics." To most of that extend I can agree. First of all, at present, audiophile in quest of new system can acquire a very good sounding preamplifier for a reasonable sum of money. This can be a good second hand device or a new well priced component. There is no need to stick simple, affordable designs into the premium enclosures and call them high-end gear like we've seen many times in the past and lately. Things are clearing at the high-end society. Money is starting to become an important issue and with the rise of Internet lots of people become far more educated and foolproof then before.

There are few outstanding products costing as much as a great car or small apartment. I would avoid call them jus luxury items. Having luxury of hearing few of them I can declare, that they do excel. But, there are quite some self-imposing products, highly priced for non-apparent reason rather than self proclaiming state of the art value. We should all avoid them like plague. Those products and companies are killing the niche high-end world and the healthy will of audiophiles, high-enders and music lovers to purchase a good stuff from true artisans.

To conclude

Excerpt from the datasheet :

Frequency response : 1 Hz...200 kHz < ± 0.2 dB 10 Hz ...20 kHz < ± 0.01 dB
Phase response 20 Hz...20 kHz : $\pm 2^\circ$ absolute $\pm 0.2^\circ$ relative
Nonlinear distortion (THD) 1 kHz at +6 dBu input level : < 0.0001 % typ. < 0.00006 %
Nonlinear distortion + noise (THD+N 20 Hz...20 kHz) : ... 1 kHz < 0.00025 % 10 kHz < 0.00045 %
Crosstalk input/input : 1 kHz ≥ 115 dB 10 kHz ≥ 104 dB
Noise MONITOR-OUT (Gain = 0.0 dB) unweighted 20 Hz..20 kHz eff.: -109.0 dBu
Noise MONITOR-OUT (Gain = 0.0 dB) "A"-weighted eff.: -112.5 dBu
Max. Level In/Out : + 25.0 dBu
Dynamic MONITOR OUT (S/N Gain = 0.0 dB) CCIR 468 unweighted, 20 Hz..20 kHz : 134.0 dB
Dynamic MONITOR OUT (S/N Gain = 0.0 dB) "A"-weighted eff. : 137.5 dB
Dimension : 210mm x 172mm x 42mm

Matej Isak Mono and Stereo ultra high end audio magazine.

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The Funk LAP-2.V3 is a high performance preamplifier. I learned over the years not to judge things by the size or appearance and here is a nice surprise. LAP-2.V3 compact box might give you an opposite feeling regarding its ability, yet! It's capable in performance of mighty dynamic and speed. Transparent by the nature and with multiple inputs LAP-2.V3 is more then just handy preamplifier. It excel in its simplicity and straightforwardness to covey both simple and complex arrangements. A contemporary device which sometimes felt like lighting fast.

For those who still care, this is pure made in Germany device. Rather then high glossy finish, LAP-2.V3 is actually a Funky looking and acting affordable active preamplifier stage.



In the past few years we've seen silent reshaping of high-end audio society. With a careful quest you can quickly form a well performed balanced audio system. Thomas Funk LAP-2.V3 is one of those budged building blocks, which can perform well beyond its price and shape. Do not skip this mighty preamplifier in your auditions.