



# Lime light

Built to celebrate the company's 25th anniversary, **Ed Selley** says this compact phono stage is a gift in every sense

**B**avaria-based Lindemann is perhaps best known as a purveyor of audio products aimed at the high-end hi-fi sector, but to mark its 25 years in business the company has launched a series of more affordable components. The Limetree range uses the same 120 x 120mm form factor and the moving-magnet and moving-coil phono stage is the first to be released in the UK through distributor Elite Audio. We're told that a USB DAC, headphone amplifier and streamer components will follow in due course.

The Limetree Phono is an all-new model that takes a slightly different approach to its rivals. According to the chief technical officer, Norbert Lindemann, the circuit is derived from a valve-based design but is entirely solid-state and makes use of high-quality components.

The input stages are separate and there are independent moving-magnet and moving-coil inputs on the rear. The moving-magnet section offers a conventional 40dB of gain while the moving-coil goes for a fixed 60dB, which should be enough for all but the lowest output cartridges and limited gain setups. Usefully, the resistance of the moving-coil input is adjustable via a series of dip switches on the underside. Anything between 100 and 800ohm can be selected by various switch positions. There is a single RCA output and switching

between the two input types is carried out via a switch on the front panel.

Even though the budget available for the Limetree is rather smaller than Lindemann's normal offerings, it has done a good job with the casework. The design walks a neat path between functionality and minimalism and the build quality is extremely good. The power supply is an external wall-wart type and the only slight oddity is that there are no feet on the underside, which might become an issue depending on where you place it.

## Sound quality

Initially connected to a £695 Goldring Legacy moving-coil cartridge mounted on a Gert Pedersen-modified Michell GyroDec with SME M2-9 tonearm, the Limetree reveals itself to be sensitive to interference, principally when too close to the PMC Cor integrated amplifier (see p42) it is connected to. Once the required adjustments have been made, though, noise levels drop to negligible and its performance is immediately likeable. The superb pressing of Amadou & Mariam's *La Confusion* is delivered with a fine balance of energy, space and refinement. The top end in particular manages to bring a little sweetness to the way it handles vocals, but it never sounds syrupy or overly warm.

The Limetree Phono doesn't have the most prodigious bass, but what it

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Lindemann  
Limetree Phono

**ORIGIN**  
Germany

**TYPE**  
MM/MC  
phono stage

**WEIGHT**  
293g

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
120 x 40 x 120mm

**FEATURES**  
• Dedicated MM and MC inputs  
• Adjustable impedance settings for MC cartridges

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Elite Audio Ltd.

**TELEPHONE**  
01334 570666

**WEBSITE**  
eliteaudiouk.com

offers is detail that's well defined and well integrated into the rest of the frequency response. The drum in the live version of *Sort Of Revolution* on Fink's *Wheels Turn Beneath My Feet* is felt as much as it is heard, but importantly, starts and stops with the speed of the real thing. The sense of the stage and its placement relative to the audience is compelling and well laid out with an appreciable grasp of the scale of the venue, too.

The star turn of the Limetree Phono, however, is with the moving-magnet input. Connected to a £350 Nagaoka MP-200 moving-magnet cartridge (HFC 434), there is a wonderful tonal richness that is present with the moving-coil section but underpinned with a propulsive energy and sense of urgency that engages the listener the moment anything with an upbeat timing signature is played.

The potent gated drumming in The Chameleons' *Soul In Isolation* is delivered with a visceral force and a truly impressive sense of agility. The upper registers aren't quite as lush as they are with the more costly Goldring Legacy cartridge, but there is still a level of refinement that is notable, especially as it hasn't been bought at the expense of top-end detail. If you play something altogether more relaxed like Nick Drake's *Five Leaves Left* album, this same happy tonal balance remains, but crucially there is no sense of these delicate pieces of music being forced by the rhythmic ability.

## Conclusion

The Limetree Phono is something of a bargain preamp. It offers outstanding levels of performance with moving-magnet cartridges alongside a more than respectable moving-coil showing too, should you choose to upgrade at a later date. At the price, this feels like a gift to any vinyl fans that are on the hunt for a good-value phono stage ●



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY**



**LIKE:** Outstanding moving-magnet performance; build; flexible setup options

**VALUE FOR MONEY**



**DISLIKE:** Sensitive to external interference; chassis needs feet

**BUILD QUALITY**



**WESAY:** An engaging performer at a very reasonable price

**FEATURES**



**OVERALL**

