

THE GROOVE-MASTER



With tubes and transistors, balanced and single-ended connections, MM and MC inputs and adjustable transducer, the Edison is undeniably well-equipped. Is perfect sound also part of the package?

It's rare enough to hear news from Helmut Brinkmann. He rejects the notion that this is because he's spent most of his time living "la dolce vita"; rather it's due to his approach to development, which is completely independent of standard product cycles and marketing strategies. In fact, sometimes years can pass before an idea becomes a (small) series product, which Brinkmann then presents to the public – as is the case with the Edison phono pre-amp here.

Doesn't know the meaning of the word 'hurry'

In a recent interview (STEREO 8/11), Brinkmann explained why it sometimes takes so long: simply, it's his conviction that everything affects the sound. This means every new development finds him confronted with a puzzle of seemingly infinite pieces which he has to put together through a recurring rhythm of installing, listening and correcting. And as if that wasn't tortuous enough, sometimes Brinkmann simply makes individual components himself in the in-house machine shed.

In addition to the desire for the best-possible sound, Brinkmann had

another target for the Edison: to offer a complete set of accessories for analog operation. In today's world that's as much about several inputs with variable impedance and amplification factor as it is to do with providing a remote control.

Yet the most demanding of analog aficionados (at the princely sum of €9,000 only they can be considered serious buyers for the Edison) demand even more: just to attract their attention requires capabilities and details which make the extraordinary nature of the object of desire apparent just by reading its brochure.

All Brinkmann products are characterized by the quality of their workmanship: flawless and full of attention to the smallest detail, they combine a subtle visual appeal with a similar tactile allure. This is achieved as much by the granite plate under the device as the view provided into the meticulous interior granted by a glass plate.

Next to the sophisticated green wax paper capacitors, you first notice the two **transducers**, recognizable by their silver covers, while another technical particularity is almost concealed: two PCF 803 tubes are used per channel. These were developed in the 1970s, and used the receiver

section of Telefunken televisions to boost the incoming antenna signal with as little noise as possible. Tube connoisseurs know them as **multiple tubes**.

Brinkmann places them in a key location of the Edison: between its two systems the exact RIAA rectification (so important for phono amps) takes place. In addition, the tube works as so-called

KEYWORD

Transducers: Adjustment of the very small impedance of a system to the downstream electronic device. This adjustment already includes an increase of the volume.



▲ The tubes hide in the cooling area.



▲ This silver droplet is one of the two high-quality transducers.

cathode follower in the circuit, delivers a linear signal with very small output impedance, and is also used for the symmetrical signal processing.

Brinkmann leaves the amplification and impedance adjustment of different pickups to the transistors and transducers, and says he feels a minimal deviance of the signal-to-noise ratio from the optimum is acceptable as a trade-off for an especially harmonic sound. Despite its apparently generous handling of decibels, the test lab can confirm that the Edison is quite free of interference.

The ingenious circuit board layout, and the power source on the side, contribute to this. Let's not forget that the balanced design is resistant to interference of any kind, and that – thanks to the included low-loss adapter – the balanced output of the Edison can also be connected to a conventional single-ended input on the downstream pre-amp. In addition, the contact of the ground plug can be removed from the device in order to allow the connection of one or more ground wires.

KEYWORD

Multiple tube:
Combines two amplifying systems (triode and pentode) in a single glass tube.

Free of affectations

If the knobs in the back are set to the right impedance values and the optimal amplification factor has been found on the jog dial in the front plate, the result is a sound able to draw the listener into the musical experience with irresistible gravity. It will then monopolize the attention for hours, and then leave a lasting feeling of having experienced something extraordinary.

After a brief warm-up phase, the Edison starts up quietly and reliably. Select input and turn on the transducers for real balanced operation. You should really consider the latter option depending on the system you use.

In contrast to many other great-sounding rivals, this phono preamp shone due to its complete absence of foibles: no special demands when setting up the phono stage or power supply; no fuss when

connecting to different preamps; no more or less intensive noise depending on the position of the cables carrying the signal; and no unwanted temporary reception of radio signals of unknown origin!

None of this is accidental: instead it's the result of a design informed by experience collected over the years.

Music you can feel

What you get is not just music to the ears: The listener is instantly transported into a musical orbit beyond the scope of most rival components. Remember the report on the Musical Fidelity M1 Vinyl in STEREO 12/11, in which I said it could take you quite a way towards Hi-Fi Nirvana?

The Edison will take you the rest of the way: Brinkmann has built an amp whose qualities never push themselves into the foreground, but whose presence can be felt in every sound.

You don't even need audiophile recordings: it's more than able to demonstrate its exceptional abilities with the Sisters of Mercy or the brooding Smiths, and while Its authority in the bass range is exemplary, this doesn't come at the expense of "swing." Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong exude a playfulness and intensity in "Makin' Whoopee" which is infectious, while "Flamenco Fever", a live recording from 1978, becomes an experience with unrestrained dynamics, attack, and spatial authenticity.

Even the Tingvall Trio, considered too soft and harmonic by hardcore jazz fans, suddenly shows an inner tension, perfect tonal balance, and fine spatial reproduction in all three dimensions when played via the once played by the Benz LPS and the Edison. It's enough to make even non-jazz fans emotional!

The fusion of characteristics essential for experiencing music is here managed in an exemplary manner, and when you add in the workmanship and flexibility here, you will soon you forget your desire for "more".

Michael Lang



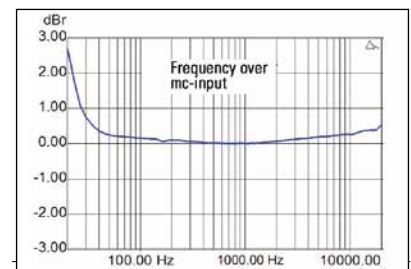
▲ The terminal impedance is finely adjustable, the variety of connections impressive.

BRINKMANN EDISON

Price: about €9,000
Dimensions: 42x8x41 cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 3 years, Contact: Gaudios
Phone: 0043/316337175, www.gaudios.info

World-class phono preamp, comprehensive equipment, excellent workmanship. In view of if the flexibility, effort and quality, the price seems fair.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Distortion at 0.5 mV/1 kHz/1 kOhm(MC)	0.07 %
Intermodulation at 0.8 mV/8 kHz/60 Hz	0.02%
Signal-to-noise ratio Phono MM/MC at 5/0.5 mV/1 kHz/100 Ohm	73/68 dB
Channel separation at 1 kHz	63 dB
Overload stability MC 1.5mV (60 dB amp.)	
Electrical supply data	practice-oriented
Output impedance at 1 kHz	500 Ohm
Power input On / Standby / Idle	0 / 5 / 29 Watt

LAB COMMENTS

2 x XLR + 1 x RCA input, XLR output, switchable transducers. Amplification factor adjustable from 43 to 67 dB, external power supply, impedance adjustable over a wide range. Remote control, German manual.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY 100%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE
★★★★☆
VERY GOOD



▲ The back shows single ended and balanced inputs and outputs and impedance adjustments