ModWright Instruments PH 150

Manufacturer: ModWright Instruments Inc. Price (at the time of review, in Poland): 32 000 zł

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Product delivered for test by: Soundclub









n my previous reviews of products of American company ModWright I explained in detail why it belonged to my favorites. Long story short – it's a reasonable company that

itself serves purpose – for that it doesn't have to look fancy, and so

on. That is why I use two ModWright products in my reference system

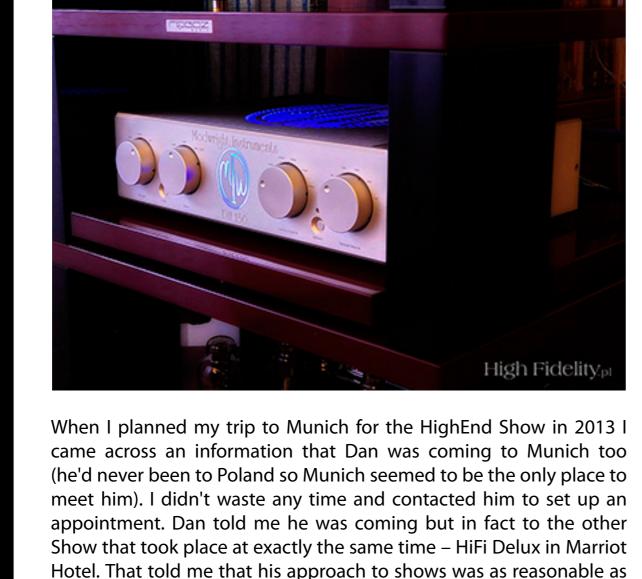
(LS100 preamplifier and KWA100SE power amp), plus an Oppo player with full tube modification done by Dan Wright (ModWright's

owner). I simply appreciate ModWright's approach to audio business

and I love the sound these devices deliver.

Everything about this presentation was accurate – size of instruments, distances between them and so on. ModWright presented a very good has been delivering high quality products from the very beginning selectivity when playing some live recordings (although new product are getting better and better) and it based its done in small clubs, where a lot of musicians success on talent and knowledge of its designers and engineers. crowded on a small stage. I mean records like Jazz Pricing of ModWright products is also very reasonable and it is achieved through something I call "smart savings" despite the fact that almost every element of each of their products is made in USA. What are "smart savings"? For example: same metal casings used for not by ModWright but rather by Koetsu. I remember that AirTight more than one product, also all are made in one color and while there is a black option, customer has to pay for it extra, the design PC3 with my Nibiru phono offered better selectivity – so again I could

Photos: Marek Dyba Marcin Olszewski



as HiEnd, but it is exactly what makes this show more private, less crowded and... surely less expensive to attend. We sat down together with Dan and Kristin Rose Boyd, ModWright's Executive Director of Operations, sipping a very nice, cold Weissbier and talked for almost three hours about many interesting topics. One of the "topics" I was particularly interested in were phonostages. ModWright had offered one stand-alone before, in my opinion a very good one (as far as I know one of Polish reviewers still uses it today), but some time before our meeting Dan had stopped offering it. Shortly after that two other phonostages were added to the portfolio but only as optional cards to be installed in KWA200 integrated (a simpler, solid-state version), and in my LS100 preamplifier (more advanced tube one). Dan explained the differences between them, as they were not that obvious to me and later told me he was already

working on a new stand-alone model. He wasn't sure though how long would it take to finish it and he wasn't ready yet to dwelve into

During out conversation we focused on another idea instead. Dan

was wondering whether or not he should design a cost-no-object

amplifier. Such a product wouldn't really fit into company's profile

but the idea was to show, that ModWright was capable of creating

such product. Why do it? To change the way this brand was

perceived by some audiophiles. It's a fact, although not every person

would admit it, that many audiophiles perceive products, at least

partially, through their prices. For them ModWright products are to

details of this project.

to everything else. This show might not be visited by as many people

cheap, ergo – unworthy of their attention. So such a cost-no-object amplifier could change the perception of ModWright brand, so that it would no longer be a hi-fi manufacturer (maybe knocking to highend's door) but a "true" high-end maker. Those who gave any of Dan's products a try already know very well, that he offers a real bargain. Whether one calls is high-end or hi-fi doesn't really matter, what matters is excellent performance, much better one could expect looking at the price tag. As far as I know this project is still, at best, at its early stages, but some time after our meeting a rumor spread about new phonostage and D/A Converter that Dan was planning to release in a near future. I saw both of them, and listened to them for the first time in Munich, during High End (DAC Elyse) and HiFi Delux (phonostage) Shows. And I met Dan and Kristin again and spent few hours having another interesting conversation with them. But I'll save most of this story for another time. The new stand-alone phonostage, that I finally received for a review, is called PH 150, but the manufacturer adds also a proudly: a Reference Phonostage. We talked about it with Dan in Munich and he was very clear about both DAC and Phono – he and his co-workers had worked very hard, using all of their knowledge and experience to create the best devices possible. PH 150 was designed with quality and performance in mind and not with whatever maximum cost or assumed price level. As a result both products are, as for this brand,

It took some time but I finally got first of these two new products for a review (thanks to a Polish distributor, of course), the PH 150. In fact I received one of two units that arrived in the first shipment from US. That's why my unit was almost brand new. One of the things you need to know about Dan's devices is that they need quite a long break-in period. One has to be patient before ModWright delivers its optimal performance. I experienced that with both my units – LS100 and KWA100SE. Mr Maciej (Polish distributor) told me, that this unit had only several hours of work on it so I would have to give it a lot of time before it would really break in. I waited so long to get my hands on PH 150 that I didn't want to wait any longer. Well, there is one problem with breaking a phonostage in. It is difficult to loop a record, say for a week or two... Unless one has a special break-in record (from Clearaudio for example) one has to play record after record after

record after record... And all that while performance is far from

optimal. PH 150 spun records for maybe 50-60 hours before

distributor picked it up to present it (on static display) during

quite expensive. They are in the same price range as ModWright's top

of the line power amp. After Dan told me that all I could do, was to

demand getting review samples as soon as possible.

AudioShow 2014. My first impressions were quite positive, but, to be perfectly honest, I couldn't really hear anything yet, that would allow me to name PH 150 a Reference Phonostage. One should expect much more considering the price of the device, and I was expecting more after what I heard during presentation in Munich (despite far from optimal show-like acoustics of the room). Fortunately I was aware of the fact that this phonostage needed another 100 or so hours to show me it's best performance. Soundclub (distributor) knew that too and that's why the phonostage did not come back to me right after the AudioShow but a few weeks later, after a full breakin period. ModWright IN "High Fidelity" Recordings used for test (a selection):

## BST 1595-45, LP. • Albert King with Stevie Ray Vaughan, *In session*, STX-7501-1, LP.

gain level.

312, LP.

MOFI 2-002, LP.

RWXLP110, LP.

- Vivaldi, Le Quatro Stagioni, Divox/Cisco CLP7057, LP. • Muddy Waters & The Rolling Stones, *Live At The* Checkerboard Lounge, Chicago 1981, Eagle Rock
- Entertainment B0085KGHI6, LP. • Pink Floyd, *The Endless River*, Parlophone Records 825646215478, LP. • Rodrigo y Gabriela, 9 dead alive, Rubyworks

• Frank Sinatra, Live in Paris, Mobile Fidelity MFSL 2-

• Dead Can Dance, *Spiritchaser*, 4AD/Mobile Fidelity

• Cannonball Adderly, *Somethin' else*, Classic Records

- Buddy Guy, *Living proof*, Silvertone Records 88697-78107-1, LP. • Lou Donaldson, *LD+3*, Blue Note Stereo MMBST-84012, LP.
- Arne Domnerus, *Jazz at the Pawnshop*, Proprius ATR 003, LP. • Dire Straits, Communique, Vertigo 800 052-2, LP. • Kate Bush, The sensual world, Audio Fidelity AFZLP 082, LP.
- Ella Fitzgerald & Duke Ellington, *The Stockholm* Concert 1966, Pablo Live 2308-242, LP. Japanese issues available at djapana
- mentioned it is a phonostage and now I should add that it can work with MM and MC cartridges. As anybody who knows Dan's previous designs would hope for, this is a tube phonostage (with 2 x 6C45 and 2 x 6922/6DJ8/7308), and with external solid-state power supply. A maximum gain for MC carts is 72 dB and for MM it's 57 dB, which

controls (large knobs) allow user to adjust also input impedance and capacitance to optimize these values for a particular cart. Two other knobs are used to set a type of cartridge (MM or MC) and to choose

One of two small push button is an on/off switch (an external power supply doesn't have its own), and "mono", used if one wishes to play mono records. Back panel sports two inputs (separate for MM and MC), ground pin, two outputs (a fully balanced one and unbalanced), and two small toggles – one is an input selector and the other allows phase switching. There is also a multi-pin power inlet that connects,

via attached umbilical, with external power supply. PH 150 sports "classic" ModWright's aluminum casing, with a small blue backlit logo on front and a much larger one on the top. Dan keeps casings of his devices solid, rigid and simple, although I noticed that with these new devices he introduced some subtle changes - like the beveled edges – that make them look much better, at least in my opinion. The casing of external power supply is also finished in a much nicer way than power supply for my modified Oppo. In fact the main "upgrade" (in terms of looks) is a thick front panel, nicely finished and with engraved writing that says only: PS 150. This change seems like not much but my power supply sits behind rack while PS 150 could be placed next to PH 150, as it looks equally good as the main unit. The standard finish is natural, brushed aluminum. Those who prefer

who look for the best performance and not for beauty contest winners. Also, as for all other Dan's products, I prefer black version – but again, that's just me. I must admit though, that the silver version I got for the review looked better than any other silver ModWright I saw before. When I got PH 150 (for the second time as I explained before) I had my favorite quite inexpensive cart mounted on Terminator tonearm the Audio-Technica 33PTG. I did realize that ModWright deserved a higher quality partner, but since it was late afternoon, and I felt bit tired I decided not to replace 33PTG just yet. Few well known (to me, I mean) records landed on the platter one by one in more or less the same order as during my first meeting with this phonostage couple of weeks before (when it wasn't performing that well just yet, as it wasn't broken-in). Even taking into consideration how unreliable our sound memory is I was damn sure of significant improvement of PH

not change compared to what I knew from everyday's listening sessions with other phonostages - it was equally smooth, liquid, involving and simply easy to listen to, but the few above mentioned additional qualities made AT sound better then ever and play music in a most beautiful way. Yes, I do realize, that any phonostage, including ModWright, at this price range is an "overkill" for this AudioTechnica. PH 150 should and will be surely targeted by owners of much more expensive cartridges. In fact the moment I switched AT for my Koetsu Black I started to regret that I didn't ask Soundclub for my absolutely favorite, dreamed cart – AirTight PC3, which, as I'd found out during my test of it, was a perfect partner for my Salvation deck with Terminator tonearm. Also in terms of price level it would fit ModWright even better than a basic model of Koetsu. Someday PC3 is going to be mine, until then I'll keep enjoying my very nice Koetsu. This Japanese cart has in fact a similar sonic character (like 33PTG), although at different, much higher performance level. As it also offered a bit warm, rich, smooth sound, the question was whether combining it with a tube phonostage wouldn't result in too warm, too round, too syrupy sound. I found out very quickly that it wouldn't! Quite the opposite, I might say. What caught my attention from the very beginning was how open the sound seemed and what an outstanding spacing this setup delivered. These two sound qualities came mostly from treble and upper midrange. It actually was the amazingly rich and open, smooth and detailed, with no sign of roll-off, treble that distinguished ModWright from most other phonostages I'd listened to in my system. There were others that extended treble equally well to the very top of the range but none of them combined that with this amazing richness of high end, which in turn made them sound a bit "dry" and thus not so naturally as PH 150

proportions between guitar or double bass strings and wood. These two crucial elements came together in a very smooth way creating a wonderful, inseparable, very natural sounding whole. Did it mean that Nibiru or Trilogy did same thing in a wrong way? Hell no! Both did a fantastic job, too, but both are much less expensive wonderful pieces of equipment, and ModWright just showed me that paying much more was surely worth it. That's the essence of our hobby – we spend more and more money and it buys us better and better performance (although at some point of the way up next steps become smaller and smaller while costing more and more). Usually (maybe except for the very first experiments most of us perform as the beginners) – we have a very well sounding systems and we don't really miss anything in their performances, we love them, at least until... we get to listen to some new, better performing component or a whole system and then we realize that our system could sound even better. It will costs us twice as much to get this better performance, but it is worth it!

come effortlessly (if I can call it that) to PH150 to show proper

High Fidelity,

Treble is surely not the only part of the range of interest but before

moving on I have to go back for a minute to one of its aspects – to

somewhere within width and depth of the soundstage. These images/instruments not only were extremely palpable, they interacted with each other – like during live performance when it is not just about static picture of five instrument of the stage, but about so much more, about how musician interact with each other, how they together create the sound that arrives to our ears. And finally there was one more thing about this presentation, usually attributed to the speakers, but since I could compare few phonostages in exactly the same system I realized, that PH 150 also should have received part of the credit for speakers completely disappearing from my room. Speakers were simply not there – there was music and me and nothing else in the room especially when it came to live recordings when musicians and vocalist were "present" in the room in front of me. Vinyl Club AC Records



Fidelity

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at the Pawnshop, or a fantastic concert of Muddy Waters who invited to the stage guys from Rolling Stones who visited his club to listen to him. I used a "very good" term to describe the selectivity and not "perfect" or something like that, but I think that it was slightly limited

only regret that I didn't ask distributor to let me have a PC3 for this

test. Don't get me wrong - Koetsu is a great cartridge but it is only the least expensive one in company's range, so its performance in terms

of resolution and selectivity, compared to more then twice as

What I love about this cart is the way it presents midrange – rich, creamy, palpable, but also very liquid and smooth. One might call it a "tube-like" sound. That's exactly what created that risk, I mentioned at the beginning, of phonostage amplifying this warmth and richness even further. As it turned out ModWright offered a "tube-like" treble in the best possible sense of that phrase, delivering a wonderful, high quality performance at the top end. As for midrange I would still call it "tube-like" with amazingly palpable, smooth and creamy sound,

expensive PC3, had to be limited.

but what made it different from many other tube devices was that it was also very resolving and clear sounding. I do realize that it is quite a rare combination – I mean warm but resolving and transparent. but that's what PH 150 delivers. Maybe it is able to do that because it doesn't add any warmth by itself, it rather reproduces a natural warmth that is inherent to the sound of each natural (I mean acoustic) instrument. I've mentioned that many times before in my reviews – acoustic instruments and human voices are, by nature, warm sounding, and by warm I understand this inherent quality that makes them sound "friendly" to human ears, and not really, really warm. When reproducing sound of these instrument/voices it is very important not to add any artificial warmth to the sound, nor to "cool" it down. If the former happens sound looses transparency, sometimes it seems even less detailed, less resolving, if the latter happens sound is not perceived as natural. Dan Wright found a perfect balance here – listening to Ella Fitzgerald, or Frank Sinatra I didn't spend a single second wondering whether their voices sounded in a natural way, in the way they really sounded like (as far as I know) – it was obvious to me. They didn't sound too warm, nor too cold, presentation gave me an easy insight into the texture and timbre of these fantastic voices, and without any effort I could experience whatever emotions these vocalist expressed. It was

a wonderful experience to listen to these brilliant artists with PH 150. My favorite acoustic instruments: guitars and brass sounded... lively

would be the best description probably, authentically, brisk and

snappy. Tubes sometimes tend to slow down the pace of music a bit

but surely not in this case. The best proof I needed was the latest album by Rodrigo y Gabriela. These two brilliant, formerly heavy metal, guitarists, delivered astonishing performance on two acoustic guitars with incredible pace and technical perfection on their side, and impressive clarity, richness, and proper share of "wood" in the sound. Also the specialty of Gabriela, meaning turning her guitar into a percussion instrument, was simply spectacular due to proper pace&rhythm. This last aspect of the sound was what convinced me to go back, few times, to this fantastic concert of Muddy Waters and Stones, but also to equally involving album recorded by Albert King with Stevie Ray Vaughan. This outstanding pace&rhythm was supported with extraordinary dynamics. Dynamics in macro scale wasn't that surprising as most phonostages, even tube ones, delivered it as well. But the one in micro scale was something special and only few competitors could try to keep up with ModWright in this aspect. The more complex, more sophisticated recording the bigger role of even

smallest changes in dynamics and tonality, and while playing such

records PH 150 proved (again) to be a Reference Phonostage.

High Fidelity, These attributes of the reviewed phono allowed me, for example, to truly appreciate mastery of jazz giants like Miles Davis, Coltrane and so on. It delivered every tiny detail, every nuance of their play living

me sometimes breathless after some particularly spectacular solo, or

other show of their talents. Also listening to orchestral music

delivered special experience as it allowed me to appreciate all

musicians that gave their individual inputs to the sound of whole

orchestra. Symphonies and operas allowed me to truly enjoy the

scale of the sound PH 150 was capable of delivering. It was truly impressive how easy it seemed for American phonostage to present

such a complex, "huge" performances. It effortlessly put dozens or

even hundreds of elements in a perfect, harmonious order, in a

wonderful whole, in naturally sounding, dramatic music. After few

such recording I was also sure that whenever a particular recording

(and cartridge of course) allow, PH 150 was able to deliver a very

powerful sound with a thunderous, deep bass, that was nicely

Just to confirm that I played also some rock music knowing that

Koetsu Black wasn't a perfect fit for such music as it delivered lower

end in it's own way – powerful, rich, but slightly rounded. Having that

defined and differentiated.

it mind I still thought that ModWright, like most tube devices, offered a mighty and tuneful low end, well differentiated with a very good pace&rhythm. It wasn't that well defined or that fast though, as the best solid-state devices delivered it. There are no perfect audio devices, making a particular choice one accepts its sonic characters, its upsides and few downsides. So when you decide to buy a tube device don't expect it to be the fastest one, or delivering superprecisely defined bass. ModWright impresses with other virtues. Tunefulness of lower end, it's power, unlimited energy, and a very good pace&rhythm. What's more - this is a "type" of bass performance that fits best with the rest of PH 150's range, that's what makes its performance so coherent, energetic and spacial... Summary Dan Wright promised a "reference phonostage" and in my opinion he kept his word. It is a well thought-through design based on high quality components, that is surely more user-friendly (due to all important controls and adjustments being placed on the front of the device) than any competitor I know and it delivers an astounding

performance, too. There is one more aspect many potential ModWright's users will find interesting - they can play with tubes. Tube rolling is one of the reasons why people buy tube devices. In this particular case, as PH 150 uses 6922 tubes (ECC88 family), there is plenty of both currently manufactured and NOS tubes which offers a chance to optimize the sound of this device to users liking. It won't be easy in case of a phonostage as it requires high quality, very quiet tubes to work properly so many NOS tubes might not work. But there

are still plenty of low noise, low microphony NOS tubes that will work fine and allow you to enjoy even better performance than stock ones. And, as I already said, it is a part of fun of having a tube device – one might do something about how it sounds, which is not possible with solid-state devices. Unfortunately when it came for me to the fun of tube rolling I caught a cold that would let me go for a longer time, so I had to give up all that fun as I wasn't even able to hear any differences anymore. Fortunately several listening sessions before that cold allowed me to assess that ModWright PH 150 is a fantastic device already with stock (I am sure that selected) Russian tubes from current production. By a fantastic device I mean the one I would love to use on everyday basis. I've had my ESE Labs Nibiru for, I think, at least 4 years now, and none of the phonostages I reviewed in the meantime made me want it to replace Nibiru. So even if you are not fans of tube rolling you should try ModWright out. It doesn't need any input from you side (except for as good cart as you can offer) to offer a remarkable, organic performance, that will allow you to enjoy your favorite music for hours, days, and probably years. If you're looking for a phonostage at this, or even higher price range, do yourself a favor – check

ModWright PH 150 out! It surely is one of the best phonostages I've

ever heard regardless of their price. Congratulations Dan! You've

\_NOTHING BUT THE MUSIC

earned it!

**SMINGUS** Black Diamond Loose Wire Records, LP (2014) Text: Bartosz Pacuła I don't like the term "alternative music". On one hand it's a term with a very wide meaning, so it can describe almost any music, but the other hand it does put on some limitation and it makes some people suspicious about the music described with this term. But there are some albums that I would gladly call "alternative" and that would be a complement from my side.



It is exactly such a case - the Black Diamond album recorded by a

band called Smingus. It is an international project (if I can call it that,

with a headquarter in Cracow) created by five musicians: Dave Molus,

Tomasz Zapala, Thymn Chase, Chris Bodzon and Jarek Wyka. Music

these gentlemen create is quite eclectic so it avoids a need of

categorization. This is a mixture of light rock, electronic tunes and

some moments when I wished for bit more expressive dynamics, and the slow pieces were sometimes too slow, but the general impression was very good. Black Diamond is a well recorded album way ahead of its "alternative" competitors in terms of sound quality. Sound quality: 7,5/10 Facebook pl-pl.facebook.com/smingusband DESIGN

PH 150 is a new, reference, stand-alone, MM/MC phonostage offered

by American manufacturer ModWright. It sports a simple, solid and

elegant aluminum casing with a thick, aluminum front panel. New

products (as it goes for the new DAC, Elyse, too) gained this more

elegant look in a very simple way – the edges of the front panel are

beveled Standard finish is silver (brushed aluminum) but, on order, a

DwTwo elements that allow one to recognize ModWright's product

are backlit, blue logos -smaller on front baffle, and the larger one on

the top cover (it is an element of a grid cut out in to top cover to help

dissipate heat coming mainly from tubes). Dan is one of these

engineers who put function first. The form is less important and it

should serve the function anyway. I guess that is why he decided to

put four large knobs on the front of the device to make it for user

Another important aspect of this album is sound quality. Unlike many

alternative artists Smingus obviously cared about quality of sound

delivered to the buyers if their record. I was lucky to receive a vinyl version of Black Diamond which allowed me to fully appreciate

sound quality. It's a very easy, warm and spacial sound. There were

very easy to choose required settings. The first knob (from the left) gives user a choice between MM and MC cartridge (it is a threeposition switch with MUTE function in between other two). Next know is a three-position gain setting (maximum gain [72 dB for MC and 57 dB for MM], -6 dB and -12 dB). One uses a combination of these two knobs as the settings of the second one depending on the

board.

transformers.

black (bit more expensive) version is also available.

these two knobs there is a small on/off switch. In the middle of the front that is above mentioned logo. On the right side there two more knobs – one sets optimal (for MM carts) capacitance, the other optimal impedance. Both settings allow user to choose from six predefined settings which should be more than enough for any cartridges. Below there is a "MONO" button. On the back panel (starting from left) there is a ground pin, RCA inputs separate for MM and MC cartridges, separately right and left channel.

On the right side there is a RCA output, and fully balanced XLR one

(with small toggle allowing user to choose one of them), plus a multi-

pin power inlet that connects with external power supply with a solid

umbilical. Casing of PS 150 power supply is as slick as the one of the

main unit, with its thick, aluminum front with PS 150 writing

engraved on it. Unlike PS for my modified Oppo, this one uses not

tubes – it is a solid-state device with a large power transformer on

choice between MC and MM made with the first one. Just below

High Fidelity, PH 150 sport three gain stages. For a very delicate (small) signal from cartridge to travel as short path as possible, the first gain stage - high

quality Lundahl MC step-up transformers are placed right behind

input. Right after that there is the second, hybrid gain stage, that

boost the signal to a level required for RIAA correction, and after that signal travels to the final gain stage. Finally it goes to a tube buffer

stage with another high quality, and quite costly Lundahl output

Inside there are a lot of high quality passive elements like capacitors

branded with ModWright's logo, or another ones by WIMA. Tube

complement comes from current production of Sovtek (2x6C45) and

ElectroHarmonix (2x6922), but fans of tube rolling might have a lot of

fun here (especially with popular 6922 family). Another element that

caught my eye are two long, metal rods that allow to apply

capacitance and impedance settings, which is performed by two

knobs on the front, directly at the input of a signal. It's a much better

solution than long cables sending a signal through whole depth of

the device. And one more thing that irritated me each time I had to

get under cover of my LS100 or KWA100SE – their covers are fixed to the main casing with like hundreds and hundreds of screws. To get inside PH 150 all I had to do was to unscrew just four screws – small detail? Sure, until you have to unscrew dozens of screws couple of times in a raw:) Technical specs (according to manufacturer) MM/MC: 72dB max MC gain; 57dB max MM gain. Loading: (6) resistive and (6) capacitance loadings via front panel control – on the fly! Gain Adjustment: Front panel on-the-fly control of gain = 0dB, -6dB, -12dB attenuation. Input Switching: MM/Mute/MC input switching on-the-fly via front panel controls Mono/Stereo switching: front panel controls

Phase switching: rear toggle Outputs: XLR (fully balanced) and RCA, selectable via rear toggle Power supply: external, solid-state, via 4 ft. umbilical

Tube complement: (2x) 6C45; (2x) 6922/6DJ8/7308 Dimensions: 430 x 335 x 120 mm

Weight: 15 kg

Polish distributor

ul. Skrzetuskiego 42

02-726 Warszawa | Polska

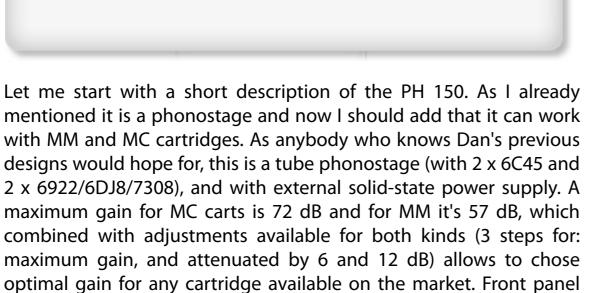
e-mail: soundclub@soundclub.pl

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black finish have to pay extra for it (poor me!). This device is another proof that Dan puts function before looks. Using large knobs placed on front panel for all important settings and adjustments is really comfortable – that is a huge advantage of this ModWright compared with most competitors equipped with small dip-switches often placed on the bottom of the device. But

having four large knobs on the front panel... well, let me put it this way - PH 150 is unlikely to win a beauty contest. Two large knobs and two much smaller ones, or four much smaller ones would increase it's chances dramatically. In my honest opinion, of course. But from my perspective it doesn't really matter as I belong to those audio freaks

150's performance. In fact, I didn't think I'd ever heard 33PTG to perform that well with any phonostage. It is true that usually I conduct my tests of high-end phonostages with my other cartridge (Koetsu Black), but at least some of them for some period of time played also with AudioTechnica and it often performed really well

with them, but not as brilliantly as now, with ModWright. A very smooth, liquid, rich and open sound – that's what I heard while

listening to the last Pink Floyd's album. Audio-Technica usually tends

to deliver a slightly dark sound. With ModWright AT surprised me

with amazingly vibrant, lively but also rich treble. Tone of percussion

cymbals was bit deeper then usually but also more "metallic" which I

liked a lot, and with a nice, long decay. Sound seemed more detailed

- an operative word here being "seemed" (compared to my

phonostage's presentation) as the same stylus couldn't read more information from record's groove just because it sent signal to a

different phono. So in fact the same number of details was presented in a more noticeable way. The general sonic character of 33PTG did

Tubes used in preamplifiers (linear or phonostages) usually offer something that (most) transistors can't – this amazing airiness of the sound, its openness which results in remarkably spacial presentation. My own ESE Labs Nubiru, or the brilliant Trilogy Audio 907 might have been bit more resolving (although I wouldn't bet my life on it), but I liked, especially with acoustic recordings, ModWright better. It delivered more of this acoustic aura, ambiance around acoustic instruments, it felt like there was more of the vibrating air surrounding them, and since it was the air that transferred vibration/music to listener's ears, it sounded better, more natural. Also a decay phase very well presented by both above mentioned solid-state phonos, now seemed bit longer and fuller. It seemed to

Anyway – direct comparison with these two damn good solid-state phonostages I had at my disposal at the time, plus every other phonostage I'd ever reviewed, proved beyond doubt that Dan Wright kept his word. He created, as he said, the best phonostage he knew how to make, it in my opinion it was a fully justifiable thing to do, to call if a "Reference" one. And he priced his creation accordingly.

how spacial that presentation was. I have to admit that this aspect of presentation is very important for me. Soundstage is one of its elements and PH 150 delivered impressive width and depth. The second element is imaging - and ModWright created wonderfully palpable, three-dimensional images – instruments and vocalists that actually had body, and each of them was precisely placed

## Galeria Gallery



HighFidelity.pl

CD player CEC 51XR

• RIAA preamplifier ESELabs Nibiru Loudspeakes – modified project Jerycho with FSAC-2B • Interconnects – Gabriel Gold Extreme mk2, Binaural focus monolith Ag Loudspeaker cable – Gabriel Gold Revelation mk 1 Power cabling – DIY Acrolink 6N-PC4300

Reference system

Integrated amplifier ArtAudio Symphony II

• Turntable Michell Gyro SE

 Tonearm Technoarm Cartridge AT33PTG