

Audio Ramblings - PureAudio Vinyl Phono Preamp
by Dave Clark



The PureAudio comes from the lineage of Plinius... the stellar electronics from New Zealand.

As a matter of record....

*PureAudio was founded by Gary Morrison and Ross Stevens.

Gary has enjoyed a 30 year career in the high-end audio industry, the largest part of that as a co-owner and head designer for Plinius Audio. Gary was responsible for the sound of Plinius from 1987 until 2005. During that time he was instrumental in the creation of a series of highly regarded and well reviewed audio amplifiers.

Ross has worked as an industrial designer for over 25 years, with a particular passion for high-end audio. He has worked with leading designers, including Philippe Starck, ad high-end audio brands including B&W, Perreux, and Plinius. Ross was responsible for the industrial design of the now iconic curved range of Plinius products introduced in 2002.

It was as a result of their collaboration on the design of Plinius products that Gary and Ross developed a close professional and personal friendship. PureAudio reflects their shared passion to create simple, innovative, and refined designs that focus on the very human pastime of the enjoyment of music."



So what does one experience with this relatively new line? I have only had the opportunity to audition the "Vinyl Phono Preamp" which is the only phono stage offered from PureAudio. It is a dual-mono design that features an elaborately robust power section and the flexibility of loading pretty much any cartridge via the back panel switches. I had the unit for a little over two months and found it to be trouble-free, dead quiet, and oh so fun to use when playing back vinyl.



Yes, it does remind me of Plinius... big, fast, nimble, and tonally right in the sense of nothing being augmented or 'augmented' over another. Never lean, nor mean, it presented music with an engaging sense of "here it is... this is what it sounds like." Well, what my analog front-end sounds like: Transrotor 25/25/60 Leonardo turntable with a Marigo dotted Shelter 901 MC cartridge and the Furutech Clamp. Of which I have always been very pleased with... especially so with the Heed Quasar phono stage doing what it does to the analog signal.

Now the Heed really does it for me here, and at the way affordable price of \$1200 it is a phono stage that anyone looking for something under \$3k HAS to listen to before doing anything stupid... like buying any phono stage under \$3k. It makes music... pure and simple.

But then the Vinyl Phono Preamp is considerably more expensive, bigger, way more parts, and so on... and in this case, yes, more is more. At \$4500 it is roughly 3.75 times more expensive... it is also 10x bigger... so while it is not necessarily the fairest comparison (but it is what I own), you had better get something more for the money and real-estate.



And you do. Compared to the Heed the Vinyl Phono Preamp is quieter, more refined, and goes farther in every way. Extension, purity, air... are all just that more there than with the Heed. All that circuitry is doing its thing... the music has greater 'control' and presence... you hear deeper into the presentation with greater resolution and all that stuff we clamber for in our system's reproduction of whatever it is that is getting us all giddy at the moment. But, and this is a BIG but, (you know, "...I like big butts and I cannot lie.") the Heed was never embarrassed sonically nor musically. And yeah, I actually *prefer* small tight butts... but, yeah, the Pure Audio is better.... sadly so. I say sadly so, as it is not something I can afford, but would if I could. Sure the Heed does it and does it well, but Vinyl Phono Preamp does it that much better.

Now let me digress here and reiterate that the Vinyl Phono Preamp is not going to add or subtract anything to your music. If you want more "fill in the blank" sonically you need to look elsewhere. Meaning that if your music is lacking in 'color', then you need to consider something else. The Vinyl Phono Preamp is not going to fix what you have created or omitted. For sure it presents the music with that 'Class A quality' (I do not believe that the Vinyl Phono Preamp is running in Class A as they do not mention it, nor does the unit ever get remotely warm to the touch) meaning that the Vinyl Phono Preamp reminds me of the best of tube and solid-state combined, but it is not really going to sound like either. Light and airy, big and robust, tight and deep, fast and direct, slam and delicacy, pace and timing... all are right on. The Vinyl Phono Preamp gets the music across in a most attractive way.

A few quibbles, and these are all about use and functionality. Wish it was not a shoebox, though I can predict that this is not so much a visual choice, but the result of the function and design. Two, the unit's light goes off after it cycles through the startup; which is pretty much counter-intuitive though I think that this is something one can remedy via an internal switch. The manual is a bit confusing as to the settings on the rear, what goes up or down to set it right... but a quick call to the US Distributor Colleen Cardas Imports set me right—nice to know that any questions or concerns can be answered or sorted out in short work. Good people!

Like I said earlier... think of Plinius in all that it can do right, and you are heading in the right direction. If you want to spend, or need to spend \$5k, then I would definitely head in the direct of PureAudio... after my time with the Vinyl Phono Preamp, I am most curious to hear the rest of the line!

PureAudio
www.pureaudio.co.nz

Colleen Cardas Imports
<http://colleencardasimports.com>