

Minitest

Do you use headphones? Then **Richard Black's** invaluable guide to the best head amps is for you

Lehmann audio Rhineland

PRICE: £425 CONTACT: 01235 511166

WEBSITE: LEHMANNAUDIO.COM

LEHMANN'S PRODUCTS always seem to be highly individual, and this amp is no exception. OK, it's basically the same as all the other units here in essential operation, but it can be reconfigured (by means of internal jumpers) to serve as a single-input preamp.

If the jumpers are set to 'in' you have, instead, the option of selecting between two inputs, which for many users could remove the need for a separate preamp. Gain is also adjustable via internal jumpers. Maximum output is impressive into low impedances, with the ability to drive nearly half a watt into 15 ohms. The distortion rises, but that hardly matters because your ears will have overloaded long ago! Under more sensible conditions, distortion is as low as any. Output impedance is quite low

at 6 ohms, which should ensure consistent operation into any normal headphone load.

Although the basic component count doesn't immediately look like twice the value of the others in this test, sound quality does seem to justify the outlay as this is clearly an exceptionally capable device. The basics are all there, with detail, imaging, rhythm and so on clearly in very good order, but above and beyond that there is a magnificent sweep and assurance to the sound that's as effective with a Schubert song as it is with glam rock or a big band. Perhaps, more than with any affordable headphone amp we can recall, the sound just keeps you there listening after bedtime and you'll find yourself enjoying familiar recordings as never before.

VERDICT AN UNUSUALLY CLASSY little box which drives any headphones with the greatest panache, but also has the subtlety to bring out fine details

