

Phono preamplifier

MM/MC Fonei Appassionata

Life-giving sound



«We make what we like to and we like what we make!» — It's the motto of the company Fonei-Audio GmbH from Berlin. Only two years have passed since the company began producing its complete catalogue of production, and before that the specialists had been conducting their investigations and designing for 11 years, seeking for the alchemical stone of so called 'living sound'. Where High End and piecework are, there are statements exceeding the limits of electrophysical terms. Electronic sound devices do not reproduce 'living' sound; they just transform an acoustic signal mechanically, within this or that accuracy.

As a result, we succeeded in creating devices that could reproduce the 'living' sound, after all. Therefore our devices do not only reproduce sounds, but help the supporters of healthy life-style to preserve their health and longevity, as well. That's it, neither more nor less. Since Fonei has not acquired a distributor in Russia yet, we've got the device straight from 'wheels' — in a big and very heavy wooden box which looks like those ones the ammunition is usually carried in. Inside there really turned out a 'bomb' — an enormous splendid phono preamplifier of vintage style, weighing 12.5 kilos. Yes, really, but we are accustomed that such devices

are small bricks and blocks. Appassionata is made in a big way — and with love. The extruded massive steel case, polished and varnished, with supporting legs, which contain damping inserts, has anti-resonance qualities and counters the demonstration of the microphonic effect and acoustic feedback. All these improve the sounding quality considerably. The front is framed with a varnished wooden frame-mask of natural walnut (there are variants with mahogany, ash and ebony). Behind the transparent 'display' made of plexiglass, we see the base, amplifying the signal — five electron tubes placed horizontally. There can be used double triodes 6S41S (6C41C), made

in Russia, and also quite a number of analogues (6N2P/6CC41/6SL7GT/6N9C/6188/6SN7GT/6N8C/ECC35) and keno-trons 6X5GT/6C5S/EZ35 from the USA.

In the device the stabilized tube heating power supply is realized and a reliable high voltage filter has been developed. An original system of tube stage control minimizes distortion and interference. In the phono preamplifiers there are no deep feedbacks, and in every stage there is a tube that meets exactly its specific requirements most completely. In the input stage, built-in transformers from the British company Sowter are used for heads of MC type, and, at customer's will, they can be chosen for a certain brand of a cartridge. The transformers sector consists of powerful toroids made by Noratel company according to the Fonei specifications; they have considerable power reserve and a hermetic well-damped case. As transition and balancing capacitors the high-quality film capacitors Wima are used. The filtering capacitors capacity makes 15000 mcF. On the switching rear panel there are two pairs of RCA connectors for input and output, a tumbler providing the work of cartridges of both types, an earthing terminal screw and a power switch. Any broader variants of adjustment are not provided in this model. During warming the tubes up the intrigue reached its acme — sure: to hear and to evaluate the 'living' sound! What is it like? We'll add that we connected the phono preamplifier both to a tube (what is quite organic) and to a transistor integrated amplifier. The fact that the phono preamplifier had a rather strong effect on the work of the latter does not raise any doubts. Of course, we did not gain the complete model analogue level of playback but Fonei Appassionata dominated the association 'turntable — amplifier'. The sound gained depth and saturation; hardness and excessive brightness vanished, and the material started to be perceived more comfortably and as more exquisite. And even the softness, which appeared in hard-rock, was met by us with pleasure; at that the drive, peculiar to the recording, remained the same. And it became clear that the rather enthusiastic declarations of the manufacturing company have good reasons for that. After all, connecting the phono preamplifier to its tube 'colleague' and enjoying the 'living' sound became the

apotheosis of the test. It goes without saying, both the phenomenon and the term itself are subjective mainly. Some of our episodic indispositions didn't vanish into thin air all of a sudden miraculously, but listening to a large number of records put us in much better spirits and that is a fact. The strong points of Appassionata are, of course, old 'first-pressed' rarities and of any genre at that. Here its majestic living sound wields power to its utmost and, in spite of 50-years old age of the records, we listen to really living sound and such, as it was in those far-off days. We were especially much struck by unprecedentedly clear and truthful sound of jazz of the 60s. Freddy Hubbard's trumpet, Jimmy Smith's Hammond, Lou Donaldson's saxophone, recorded at the legendary Blue Note, made us feel creepy all over. The first 'spiral' albums of the Black Sabbath hypnotized us, and the famous 'Abbey Road' (the group does not need any introduction) engendered almost narcotic feeling of euphoria. In addition, we would advise Fonei Appassionata to professional performers of classical music, composers, conductors, those who are good judges of living music. Digital vinyl modern replicas, especially early in and in the middle of the 90s, sounded in the way they should — quite moderately. But it really turned out that way while the global conversion of musical founts into a 'digit' and there is no sense to blame the brilliant phono preamplifier for that. In conclusion we invented our motto — 'A start in life to the living sound!'.

AS A RESULT

Undoubtedly, the price tag for such a usual (as one would think) phono preamplifier is great. However, there are well-to-do men, who appreciate all the best and the most refined even in audio-products, — the more so because it's not a pity to pay much for the sound Appassionata has.