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## Oehlbach® XXL® Phono PreAmp Phono-Update!

Recommended by i-fidelity.net 4/2015

Sound Quality: **Very Good**

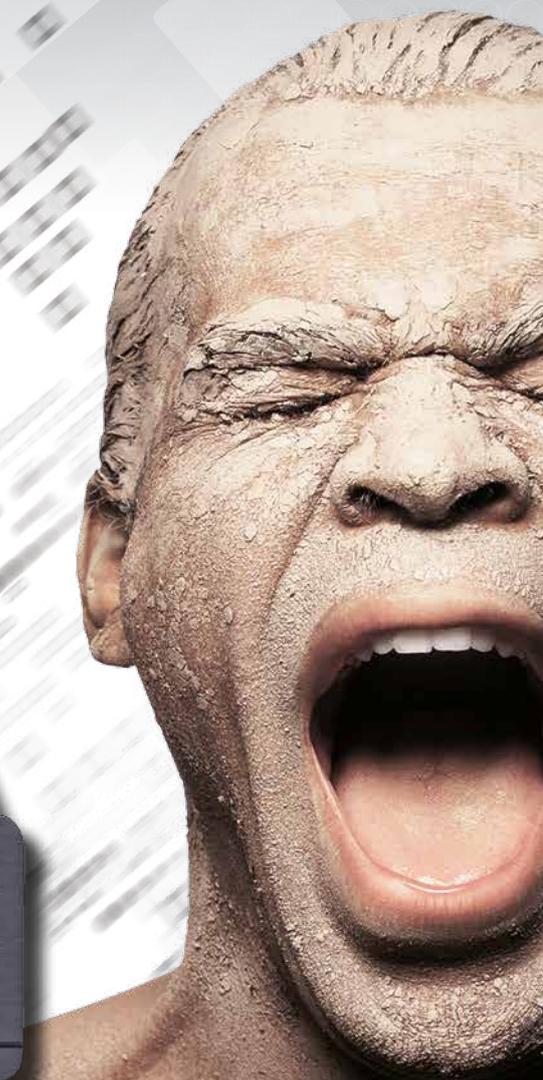
Equipment: **Good**

Workmanship: **Very Good**

Overall: **Very Good**

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**Tuning-Tip**



**With the XXL® Phono PreAmp Ultra, Oehlbach® offers an inexpensive upgrade for existing amplifiers lacking the appropriate input.**

What often dominates at the moment when buying an AC receiver is more the number of HDMI ports and, when purchasing a power amplifier, the focus is usually on a USB port. After buying the unit and listening for a while, thoughts then turn to the long discarded turntable that is still lying around. And all the LPs are still there, too. Dire Straits, Genesis, Pink Floyd, Yello, etc., etc. In addition, there are more and more new albums being issued on vinyl again. Wouldn't it be great to listen to them. Getting the turntable working again is no problem; nor is converting the tiny pickup signals into the right unit of measurement for high-level amplifiers. There are separate phono preamplifiers for this with a huge price range.

With the XXL® Phono PreAmp Ultra, Oehlbach® now offers a pre-preamplifier that processes the signals from MM as well as MC cartridges. It is possible to switch between the two variations on the back of the enclosure. The inputs and outputs are provided in the form of solid, gold-plated cinch sockets. There is also a ground connection on account of nearly all turntables having a »ground« output in addition to the cinch connection. The power supply is located in the plug connector and converts the 230 volt AC power into 12 volt DC.

The circuit board is surface mounted, which saves space and therefore also automatically means short signal paths. The developers emphasize that the design mainly concentrates on ensuring low noise and distortion. The front of the Oehlbach is a prime example of simplicity and purism. On pressing the power button, a blue LED illuminates and the phono preamplifier starts working almost immediately. On account of its modest power input requirement, the tiny unit can remain connected to the power supply permanently, giving it slightly enhanced sound potential. The amplification factor is 42 decibels for magnetic pickups, with moving coil systems amplified by up to 62 decibels. Ready waiting in the listening room was the Clearaudio Anniversary, fitted with the Stradivari MC pickup, and the Avid Ingenium with a ProJect pickup arm and Benz ACE L system. We transmitted the signals from the Oehlbach Phono to the Audionet SAM G2 via the HMS Duetto. There was first a gradual increase in level at idling speed, with no buzzing and also very little signal noise relatively speaking. This meant good conditions for the listening test.

**It sounds very decent**

Bill Withers sings sensitively about »Grandmas Hands«, and the mood comes across well. The basis of this sound quality is the Avid drive, which is relaxing in combination with the ProJect pickup arm and the Benz system, playing on a solid foundation.

In addition, the Oehlbach® does not display any of the aggression that often signifies disqualification for smaller phono preamps. Although the Lehmann audio Decade, three times more expensive in contrast, fans the room out further, it also demonstrates that the basic way in which the Oehlbach® plays is well suited. This then also becomes clear with voices, which are projected into the room very melodiously and realistically. The testers also like how the Oehlbach handles the low and mid ranges, which have sufficient power as well as being clearly contoured. When the signals come from Clearaudio, the sound does not change that much. The means that the Oehlbach® is already very well served with the Avid drive. The pleasure of the musicality emanating from this combination brings a smile to our faces. And despite all the growth in high-resolution music files: Listening to this kind of music is certainly not something from the long-gone past, sales are also on the increase again in the analog segment, in particular. So it would not surprise us if LPs even outlast CDs.

**Test result**

You still have a treasured analog collection that should no longer lead a sad existence hidden away? With a reasonable turntable, e.g. from Dual, Thorens, Technics or ProJect, and the Oehlbach® XXL® Phono PreAmp Ultra, you can now listen to vinyl records again with very good sound quality. This goes for both MM and MC pickups. A very creditable performance given the price.



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Oehlbach XXL Phono PreAmp Ultra  
**Testresult: Very Good**