

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS

### Original Phono 2-SB

#### **"The LKV 2-SB Actually is that Good!" - Dennis Ashendorf, California**

"I had a good audiophile system (Linn Sondek/Ittok/Denon DL-103R - older Linn Phonostage - Ayon Orion II - NOLA Contenders). Still, I have listened to better systems at less than I've shelled out, and I have listened to many better systems. In short, every day I was always a little unhappy during playback.

Not now!

Replacing an older Linn with the LKV allowed a calm purity to enter my home. I started listening at lower volumes and was fully drawn in. The reality level is so high that I'm really happy with my entire system now and have been for many months.

I'm using RCA connectors and the 2-SB +6db version for the 0.25 mV Denon. My volume control setting on the Orion 2 in triode mode is the same (9-10 o'clock) as when I'm using my DAC and my 30 Watt Orion isn't pushed. I think I could use a 15-20 Watt amp with my 90 db NOLAs easily. In short, I think LKV is somewhat conservative on the gain numbers.

Thankfully, I met Bill Hutchins at THE Show Newport 2013. Since it's practically pointless auditioning a phonostage in someone else's equipment, he also went over his design and JFET choices with me during a lull in traffic. I was impressed enough to buy. My lucky day. Furthermore, you'll enjoy knowing Bill.

Comment: Before installing the LKV, I considered the inexpensive Denon (about \$300) as the most obvious place to upgrade. It wasn't. It was the phonostage, which surprised me. Spending the money on a phonostage is more paramount than upgrading a cartridge. The LKV 2-SB has an exceptional performance/price ratio."

#### **"A noticeable improvement" - Bob Sattin of Bob's Devices - North Carolina**

"A noticeable improvement over every other phono preamp I have personally tried. A keeper in my personal system. I am so enamored that I will be using 2 of them at upcoming audio shows to demonstrate my SUTs and interconnects."

#### **"WOW this was a huge step up, dead quiet back ground, dynamics through the roof and bass seemed to extend an extra octave lower. Very accurate" - JT Snead, Maryland**

"I ordered the Phono 2-SB based on a couple comments I found on line while researching for an upgrade to my Jasmine phono stage. I have been a collector of records since I was a young teenager, I remember listening to Nat King Cole on my parents console stereo system. I eventually inherited that stereo which I cut off the speakers and used with my first Pioneer receiver and Hitachi turntable. I remember buying my first records after shoveling snow for money in my neighborhood they were Montrose and Aerosmith first albums. This led to a long life of learning and appreciating all different kinds of music. So now that I am older and have over 6000 records I felt that it was time to really get the most possible from my collection within a reasonable budget.

I have owned all types of cartridges from Signet, Monster, Audioquest, Sumiko, Lyra, Benz, Denon and now I am using a Dynavector. I have a good turntable VPI Scout which I changed the tone arm out to a Trans-Fi Terminator air bearing design, this really allowed for the difference in cartridges to be heard. Now I can change arm wands to go between a warmer sound cartridge like the Benz to a more accurate like the Denon to a dynamic one like the Dynavector. I felt the next best step up would be a better phono stage. So based on what I read and what I saw on line I ordered the Phono 2-SB. The pictures of the interior of the unit really interested me, if you research very high end phono stages you will see similar design layouts, dual mono with separate boards, balanced design and outboard

power supply. The electronics looked like something you would see in a 10K phono stage. I ordered the unit without hearing it; Bill does offer a 30 day money back guarantee.

I did not expect a 10K type unit which you do not get as far as the case work, also you have to take the top off for the adjustments, which I do not mind as it allows for a more accurate signal path. I put in place of my Jasmine and once I had all the settings confirmed (which did include me making a call at 7:00PM to LKV which Bill answered and set me straight as to why it did not have the right gain setting) I played a couple sides of a record while I was filing records and cleaning up a little.

During that time I was able to get rid of a ground loop hum totally, which I have never been able to quiet down before in my system, but with all the grounding options the 2-SB offers I was able to do away with all the noise. The first record I listened to was Kraftwerk's box set Minimum Maximum, WOW this was a huge step up, dead quiet back ground, dynamics through the roof and bass seemed to extend an extra octave lower. Very accurate. I hear more of what the record has to offer, better out of phase resolution on records that have that, try Fever Ray, Roger Walters. The vocals I love retained the warmth and glow like Ella on Fine and Mellow. I am very happy with the purchase of the 2-SB and would highly recommend one to anyone with a system with equal resolution.

As a follow up, since the 2-SB has balanced in and outputs, I bought a balanced line stage (Wyred 4 Sound 2.0SE) which allowed me to run all balanced from phono out to my amplifier. This was another step up mainly in detail and resolution. This was using a standard Mogami balanced cable versus my XLO Ref 3. I am going to order a balanced phono cable from Trans-Fi to have a balanced signal from my cartridge to the amplifier so hopefully it will be another step in a very fine analog play back system. Stay tuned for a follow up.

Happy Listening.”

### **“This is one of those components that makes you stop looking for upgrades” - Agustin Filippo, Washington , DC**

“For me, LKV PHONO 2-SB was and still is a revelation. Every time I play it I get a nice feeling of, in lack of better words, satisfaction. This is one of those components that makes you stop looking for upgrades, or for "more" in general. Don't get me wrong, I am sick, like the rest of you. But to my surprise, I got the tube preamp out of the way because I didn't need it. I got the tube amp out of the way because it wasn't necessary. I could go back to normal cables and that would be fine too. I'm actually using cheaper stuff elsewhere because it feels zen. I could use other speakers and I'd still enjoy immensely every tune I listen to. I kinda disagree with the "weakest link" philosophy, since this thing got in my hands. Get one of these phono preamps in your system and I am willing to bet you won't be able to get mediocre sound out of it, no matter how hard you try. If your system is within its operating range and there's nothing impeding the flow of electrons from one place to another, I think you just simply can't avoid great sound.

And a few additional points:

- + Gain is enough from 0.3v cartridge and up.
- + I enjoyed looking for the right "load"
- + Length of cable connection PSU and main box is OK for all setups I've tried
- + Leaving the unit on all the time seemed to be good, but after broken in, it makes little difference
- + Try cables, cartridges and amplification and you'll get differences in sound; but you would be fine with no matter what.
- + You wouldn't get better customer service anywhere else. So if you care about getting responses from the designer to your inquiries, no matter what they are, this is the right place to be.
- The boxes are bulky, plan for that in your system.”

## **Upgraded LKV Phono 2-SB**

**Jason Rich, Maine:**

"I've been listening to my 2-SB for about two months now. I'm enjoying it very much. My only regret is that I should have bought it sooner! Some more thoughts on my listening experience:

First, there is more musical detail across the frequency range from the lowest bass to highest treble. I was expecting this, as the 2-SB is obviously much more substantial than any of my prior phono stages. However, the overall quality that I was not expecting, or at least not expecting to the degree that I'm hearing, is that there is much more nuance to all musical elements from bottom to top. It's somewhat hard to describe, but I would describe the quality as experiencing much more of the *performance* of each musician (or the group as a whole) than I've ever heard my system convey before. When a drummer slightly alters the timing of their beat - I feel it. When a guitar player comes in - I hear the "attack" and its timing in relation to the rest of the music much more clearly (not to mention the best tone I've heard in my system). The aspect of this quality that most surprises me - and maybe the most pronounced - is with vocals. I hear the subtle difference when a singer comes in either slightly ahead or behind the beat, either slightly louder/closer or lower/further away from the mike, when they slightly alter the tone of their vocal or delivery - I feel like I can really appreciate what the singer is conveying. As a result, I'm enjoying the vocals and lyrics in my music more than ever before. Overall, everything sounds less "smeared" together and more like individual musicians performing music together in a room. Every now and then I come across an album - King Sunny Ade's Syncho System is one surprising example - and it's thrilling to hear it in a way that I've never heard before. Overall - the 2-SB has given me a closer connection to the music I love, which is pretty awesome. Thanks for making such a great product!"

**Carl Shaw, Maine**

Just superb!! Thank you!

A huge step forward. Now I know what my Zephyr really sounds like.