

AUDIO
FILE

Tube phono preamplifier
 Made by: PrimaLuna, The Netherlands
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd
 Telephone: 0208 971 3909
 Web: www.primaluna-usa.com; www.absolutesounds.com
 Price: £3398



PrimaLuna EVO 100 Tube Phono

The vinyl revival has such momentum that the flood of phono stages and decks will surely continue unabated. More than that, it's encouraged PrimaLuna to show its confidence in analogue by adding a phono amp to its EVO series.

Priced £3398, the 'all-tube' EVO 100 Tube Phono Preamplifier is aimed at seasoned vinyl users

'A taste of the time when dinosaurs and LPs roamed the earth'

expecting a full array of features and facilities. Two levels of MM capacitance (47pF and 100pF) are offered, plus five wisely chosen MC loads of 50, 100, 200, 500ohm and 1kohm. These latter options are set by a front-panel rotary, as are the 52dB, 56dB and 60dB MC gains.

Between the rotaries are buttons selecting MC or MM cartridges and mute. The EVO 100 Phono has a proprietary 'SoftStart' warm-up

stage lasting around a minute, ensuring no nasty thumps through the system. Around the back are two sets of RCAs, one for input and one for output.

This 12kg unit is imposing for a phono stage, its chassis made from heavy-gauge steel (fully vented so it never seems to run hot despite its ten-strong valve complement) and fronted by a black or silver fascia.

Inside, it's all point-to-point wiring, and the rotaries have a fabulous feel and scroll, landing on settings with a 'click'.

Also sure to please the fastidious are ceramic valve bases, Nichicon and DuRoch capacitors and gold-plated sockets.

But would it have hurt to add a second set of RCA inputs, or a volume control and variable output?

T-REX APPEAL

Enough grumbling because the EVO 100's sound is a delightful taste of the time when dinosaurs and LPs roamed the earth. From the get-go it delivered the kind of lushness which, on a basic level, has been

the distinguishing character trait which separates analogue from digital. Irrespective of the albums played, including One-Steps with digital stages, the experience was 'vintage' – but in a good way.

And while this phono amp excels with moving-coils, as these are more simpatico with its overall nature, MMs from Ortofon and others will add a touch of coolness, even restraint, if you find it too warm.

The 2022 re-release of Elvis Presley's *Blue Hawaii* [Mobile Fidelity] started with the richness of the vocals and their faultless realism. Then came Hawaiian guitar, an instrument ideal for gauging what can only be described as 'liquidity' – a clarity which exposes unwanted edges or grain. Via the EVO 100, notes slithered out of the loudspeakers, as fluid and seamless as you'll hear at the price.

The Boston Pops' *Jalousie* [RCA Living Stereo], with its orchestra playing Latin-flavoured material, is a long way removed from the *Blue Hawaii* soundtrack, but there was a resemblance to the overall sound, including the scale of the portrayal coming from the amp's prowess with soundstage and air. Meanwhile, *Off The Record With The Move* [Sierra] does that brilliant band no favours but showed the EVO 100's near-magical 'valve skill' of balancing detail, transparency and accuracy.

VERDICT

PrimaLuna has bridged the gap between mid-level and high-end with this versatile phono stage whose all-tube sound has so much warmth and air that it can only be described as 'cossetting'. Fans of the brand are gonna love it. ☺

ABOVE: The EVO chassis has rotaries for MC gain and loading (MM has fixed gain/loading). The main RIAA stage features a pair of 12AX7 tubes per channel [front row] with EL34 pentodes and 5AR4 rectifier tubes in the PSU [back row]

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Input loading (MM/MC)	47kohm/100pF-1nF / 50ohm-1kohm
Input sensitivity (re. 0dBV)	10mV / 1.67mV / 1.02mV / 640µV
Input overload (re. 1% THD)	250mV / 43mV / 26mV / 16mV
Max. output (re. 1% THD) / Imp.	25.1V / 160-380ohm
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBV)	79.1dB / 63.2-64.7dB (MM/MC)
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	+1.1dB to -0.28dB / +1.1dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.0011-0.085%
Power consumption	85W
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	280x190x405mm / 12.7kg