

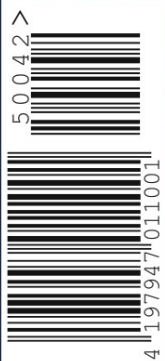
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Preamp/converter/network player Primare SC15 Prisma

No small thing

Primare offers Prisma technology in many packages, the smallest and possibly underestimated package is called SC15 Prisma. It is a preamp, converter and network player at the same time. The Swedes have given the housing, which is only 35 centimeters wide, the best stability and processing quality and equipped the interior with the best possible sound and connectivity. The only thing missing is a headphone output, otherwise, in my opinion, everything that I expect from a modern network preamp is in there.

The first round of listening happens via the analog input. I connect the unbalanced preamp outputs to my Graham Slee Proprius monos, one feeds me an Elac Miracord with WBE phono preamp. Quad S4 and the B&W 603 tested in this issue are available as loudspeakers. I wired the only cinch input (there is also a combined analogue and digital-optical 3.5 millimeter jack input) to the incoming signal. The correct input is selected and the display shows the name I entered via the Primare app: "Vinyl"!

The turntable is spinning Talk Talk's "Spirit of Eden" in the original 1988 DMM pressing.

The floating cymbals in "Inheritance" always make the broom swing back slightly. The sporadically placed bass tones come out just as clearly and precisely defined as the dryly recorded woodwind instruments in the further course of the piece.

Mark Hollis' voice blends into the mix surrounded by a tasteful reverb. It is clear why this album is still considered groundbreaking even after more than three decades.

The following "I believe in you" speaks up with a deep bass drum, supplemented by piano and an electric guitar that is played only gently. The voice gains width through the echo used. I love the passage where the organ comes in and through which Leslie is able to illuminate large parts of the stereo panorama. The Primare SC15 Prisma shows more details and, above all, more precise drawing of lower tones than I am used to from

competitors in this price range. The dimensions are as deep as they are wide, and the separation of the individual instruments works perfectly. However, you have to listen very carefully to be able to write down these details, because these little Vor

First and foremost, stufe makes harmonious music. By finely tracing the recorded sound nuances, I can also listen to the preamplifier for a very long and relaxed time via the analog input - I am always carried away by the music when the performer intends it and can lean back in my listening position with classical or ambient tones sink into the sounds. Big words indeed.

Especially since the analogue input signal is first converted into the digital world, in order to then finally go through an analogue volume control in front of the output sockets. So I'm now switching to the actual main discipline of the SC15 Prisma: the processing of digital music signals.

Best possible data transfer

I have linked my streaming service in the Prisma app. This is where the advantage of the Prisma Board in the SC15 comes into play. Thanks to Google's Chromecast protocol integrated there, the music is not first routed via the iPad, but the Primare can get the stream directly from the provider, in full quality, without changing the sampling rate or similar processes that damage the sound. This also means a slight delay in the choice of title, but from my point of view it is the most uncompromising solution in terms of sound.

So I call up Qobuz via Chromecast connection. My provider's streaming app opens on the iPad and I can navigate as usual. As already mentioned, the Primare obtains the music data directly from the service's server. The surprisingly good album by actor and evidently capable pianist Jeff Goldblum is out. Together with the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra he recorded "The Capitol Studio Sessions" in front of an audience. Even the version of Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island" offered at the beginning shows the class and ability of the ensemble. The Primare, which incidentally shows the title information on its relatively small display, also presents a suitably large digital stage, good separation of the instruments, precision in the bass and a feeling for the flow of the music. Jon Storie's electric guitar, the saxophone

by James King and above all the really well played piano by Mr. Goldblum fill the room with music and the listener with satisfaction. An album that will surely have a permanent place on record shelves and playlists for many years to come. In fact, I have a similar hearing impression as over the analog input, everything is tidy. Dealing with the music is always sovereign.

And Till Brönner's use in a later piece is also finely and precisely traced. Operation via the Prisma app works flawlessly. As mentioned, the somewhat slow response times when changing titles via the Chromecast connection are due to the principle and are not a feature of the Primare.

With or without an app

In the digital world of music, the Prisma app on the iPad is a great help. In addition to streaming from the internet or local network, I can use it to make all settings such as input selection, network settings or naming the inputs. I already know that from the I35 Prisma streaming integrated amplifier, which I was allowed to test for HiFi-Stars issue 40. Incidentally, with the SC15, too, all the necessary settings can be set manually using the three buttons on the front of the housing.

In the course of the test, I decided to use the included remote control called the C25, which had a good feel. I use the app on a daily basis to call up my streaming service, but as I said, the rest is done via the remote control. Thanks to Primare: both — app and remote control — can be used to their full extent. So you have the choice and are by no means obliged to use an app.

Program change, The The play "Gravitate to me" from the album Mind Bomb. The number, initially carried by a tremoled guitar groove, shows after a short time what drums sounded like in the 80s. In this case, the individual drums and percussive elements are nicely distributed in the stereo image.

An effect that increases the tension in the rather long piece

maintains. Compared to Jeff Goldblum's strong, current recording, I can clearly hear the time of its origin here, without having to do without the details of the recording, which were well recorded at the time. Here the funky played guitar pushes as well as the deep threatening bass. Typically, the recording is not as heavily compressed as current productions, so I can listen to it very well on the SC15.

Finest converters

The converter unit of the SC15 Prisma is equipped with the good and well-known AK 4490EQ chip from AKM, which is currently used in many top devices (but also in its mobile version in the FiiO M9, which is discussed in this issue). In addition to wireless and wired network connections, the Primare allows digital music to be connected to its converter unit via USB, coaxial SPDIF, three optical TOSLINK connections and the analog and digital mini-jack socket. PCM signals and, via the USB connection, DSD recordings are also welcome. Incidentally, the digital output of the Primare (SPDIF) also delivers a digitized signal from the analog input... Sure, because as already described, the analog signal is also sent

first transferred to digital. A nice trio. There are also AirPlay and Bluetooth inputs. All inputs can be configured very easily via the app. There you can also set the start level, which is set exactly as you want it even after the system has been completely disconnected from the mains. The Primare mer can do that

know In general, it is almost impossible to list all the setting options here. You can, for example, also set the input sensitivity of each individual input in advance so that all sources sound the same volume.

I choose one more piece — digital, classical. The Orpheus Quartet plays the String Quartet No. 3 in A minor by Woldemar Bargiel. This recording by Deutschlandfunk Kultur gives both the instruments and the recording room enough space in the reproduction. As a result, the strings appear natural, not too dissected and plastic, but dynamic and close to what I know from the concert hall. The stage is once again just as wide as it is deep, the positioning of the instruments works well and the breathing noises of the musicians, which are almost obligatory on current recordings, are understandable here.





In a nutshell

The versatile Primare SC15 Prisma cuts an excellent figure both as an analogue preamplifier and as a converter and network player. In doing so, it combines useful functions with its priority for high-quality audio playback. As an overall package, I see very few competitors on par for the SC15

Prisma in its price range. I find the equally exquisite quality of the analogue input particularly positive. For me personally, it is currently the most exciting device in the entire Primare portfolio!

Frank Lechtenberg

INFORMATION

Preamplifier / converter / network player

Primary SC15 prism

Price: 1,498 euros

Distribution:

in-akustik GmbH & Co. KG

Submats 12 – 14

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