

MONO  STEREO

REVIEWING THE WORLD'S FINEST AUDIO PRODUCTS

**Lamm Industries  
LP1 Signature  
phono preamplifier**

by **Matej Isak**  
**November 2015**  
**[MonoandStereo.com](http://MonoandStereo.com)**

**Vladimir Lamm is among the most intriguing names in the high-end audio industry along with Manuel Huber. His history, work and knowledge extend beyond many audio designers and his heritage goes back a few decades.**

His recognized products have won him many accolades and awards during the years and Lamm "signature" sound carries something very distinguished. In his circuits he implements a model of human hearing mechanism! This is something he developed and heavily researched back in the Soviet Union where he had practically unlimited funds and audio gear at his disposal.

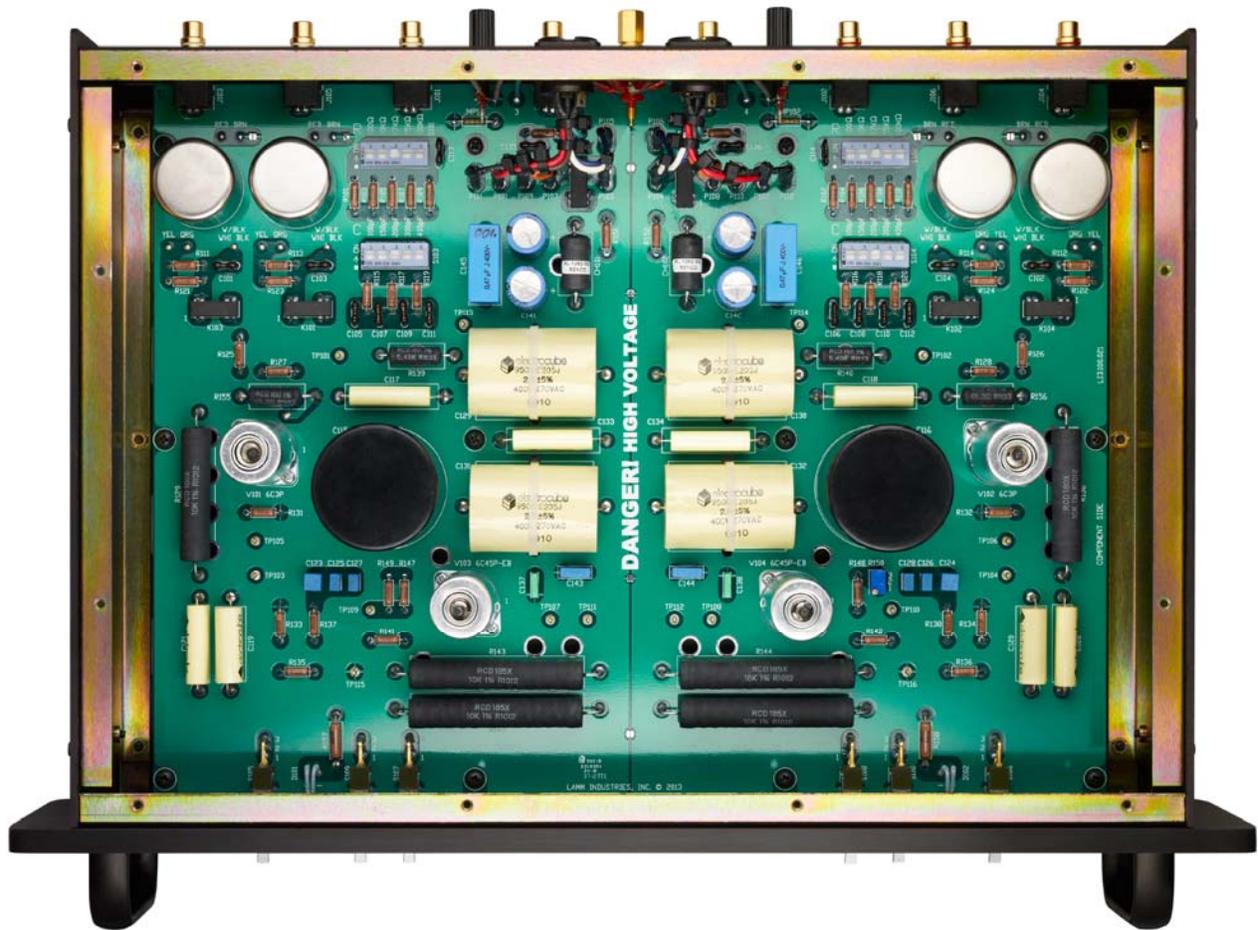
During his research he continually worked on ways to create the closest possible illusion of the real music. This was not only researched and experimented with the electronics, but also with psychoacoustics. He was fortunate to have the access to a full orchestra for doing tests, experiments and evaluations, as well as the real instruments and musicians. All of these were extremely helpful in his quest for the most natural sound reproduction.

These days Vladimir Lamm is among a few rare people who are not involved with trial-and-error approach to design, and, as a result, the need for listening tests in a process of product development. He is able to create sound reproduction equipment with PREDEFINED and PREDICTABLE parameters based on his accumulated experience. Wait! No listening? Too far out!? Well, Vladimir follows his path and exact procedure while designing his gear. It's true that skilled, matured and knowledgeable audio designers can predict the sound outcome based on the circuit design choices as well as selection of material, but still! This sounds quite controversial.

This is similar to the cooking. Master chefs in many restaurants don't taste their food while preparing it as they know exactly what the sum total of ingredients will produce. They trust in their intuition. For many this may be too esoteric and exotic to digest, yet I've witnessed many times and discussed the topic with few of the top audio designers. It's a path not many are willing to undertake. As Vladimir is not only designing the needed primal circuits, but also implements his "human listening mechanism", this all elevates and ignites something that calls even for a philosophical debate.

This "paradox" can be discussed *ad infinitum*. Interestingly, there is something profoundly different with the way Lamm Industries produces sound, and on the very positive performance side. Sound outcomes seem completely forthcoming and expected. Vladimir knows exactly what he's doing and his creations' audible performance is his best marketing tool.





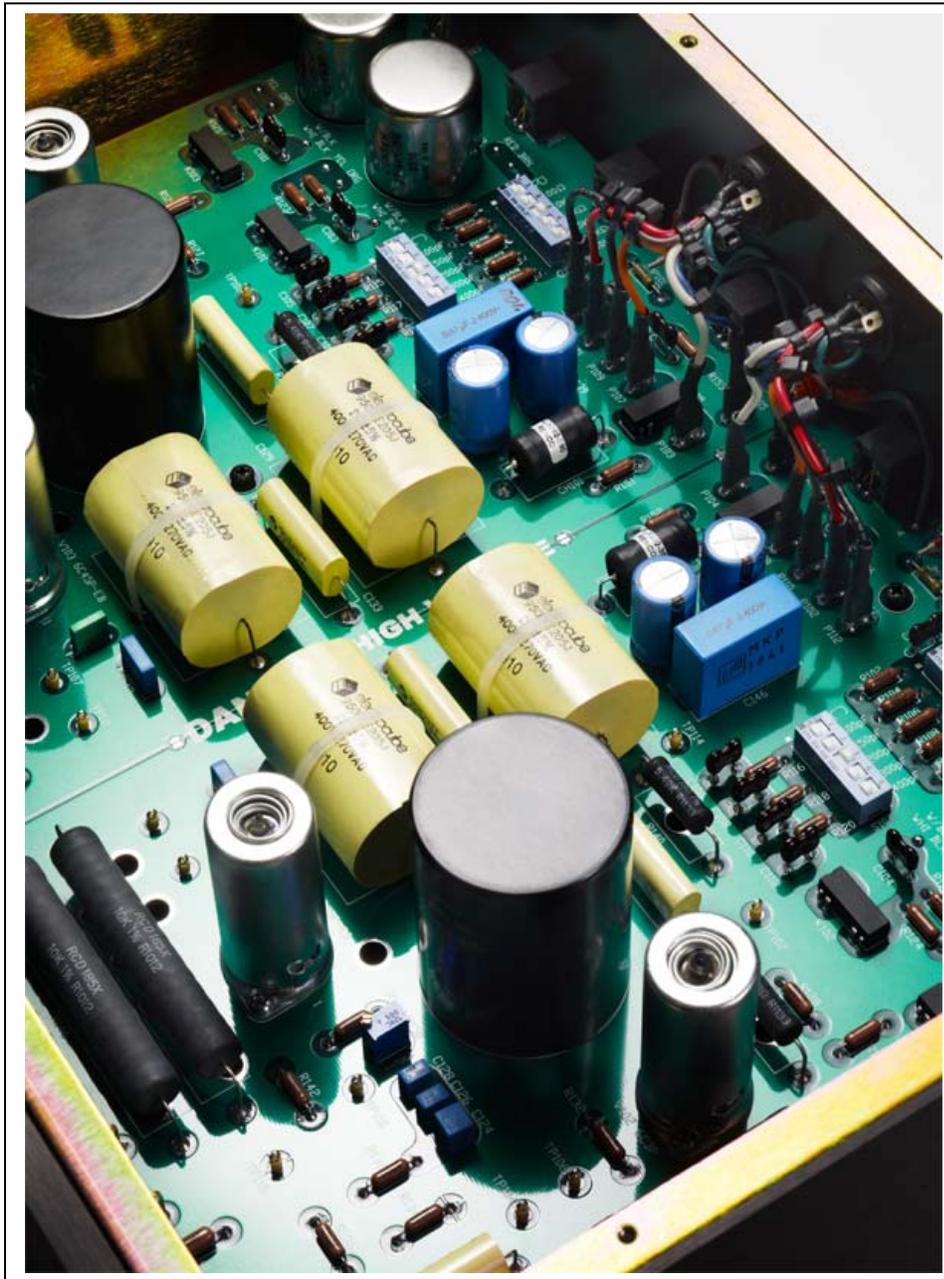
I used to own the LL2.1 preamplifier a few years back and still recall best memories of the enormous listening time spent with it. It was among the fastest musically involving and captivating tube preamplifiers around. Most importantly, it was in the absence of the typical tube sound. The LL2.1 worked more in the realm of the best solid state preamplifiers enriched by the harmonic richness of the tubes. These two paradigms might seem contradictory as the harmonic structure does have a little to do with the tubes initially. When implemented properly, they are transparent sound carries. The treasured secret lies elsewhere -- deep in the design of the circuit and within the choices being made.

## OFFICIAL TAKE

---

The dual monaural phono preamplifier model LP1 Signature is the ultimate statement of perfection in High End audio. Just like the ML3 Signature and LL1 Signature, the LP1 Signature is one of the best creations of its designer's professional career.

The LP1 Signature has been designed to complement the ML3 amplifier and the LL1 preamplifier. It completes the Signature Series triad and, in combination with the other two Signature components, represents a "match made in heaven".



However, the LP1 Signature will perform its magic in any system provided it is of sufficient quality.

The experience of listening to the LP1 is a unique one. It is, at once, intimate and expansive—as if being transported to a space that belongs to just the listener and the music as they merge with one another. With no electrical artifice to impede communication, a greater understanding of the music is immediately possible. Thus enabled, the listener can enjoy each and every musical element locked in the LP's grooves with newfound depth, profundity and insight.

The LP1 Signature features a topology that brings out the most natural sound performance in the audio path. The main distinction of the LP1 Signature from any other comparable type of preamplifiers is its almost inaudible sonic signature. When connected to the appropriate type of electronics, and especially LAMM amplifiers and preamplifiers, it assures the extraordinary transparency of perceived sound and recreation of a three dimensional soundstage in the home, recording studio, etc. without boundaries and limitations.

The LP1 Signature is a vacuum tube preamplifier that employs a high current pure class A operation from input to output. No loop feedback is employed.

Other features include: Audibly neutral power supplies (one for each channel) featuring full-wave vacuum rectifiers, choke contained filters, vacuum tube high-voltage regulators, and solid-state low-voltage analogue non-switching regulators used as the heater supplies. Three separate inputs for MM and MC (two inputs) cartridges. All amplification stages utilize high trans-conductance super low noise high-current vacuum triodes.



### Very accurate RIAA EQ network

Each preamplifier is carefully handcrafted of the finest materials and hand selected top quality parts like military-grade DALE metal-film resistors, RCD wire-wound resistors, BOURNS multi-turn potentiometers; ELECTROCUBE, CORNELL DUBILIER and KEMET/RIFA film capacitors; high frequency switching grade VISHAY electrolytic capacitors; HAMMOND chokes; gold-plated NEUTRIC connectors; and military-grade low-noise long-life vacuum tubes.

A custom-designed massive damping panel installed in the preamplifier unit significantly reduces all types of mechanical vibrations which, in turn, leads to a more extended, coherent and natural bass reproduction.

The LP1 Signature features a custom-designed super-low noise power transformer.



## THE MUSIC

---

Music reproduction is an art in and of itself. It's a complex pursuit of grand illusion and we leave it to the expertise of a few dedicated people and companies in high-end audio industry. This special task initiates an ultimate search for transparency and the quest for the endless reflection of the original music. We are highly sensible beings and our perception of the sound is still a thing of a grand mystery. As years go by this complexity gradually emerges and the truth of it is humbling. We know so little and we move so slowly in this direction. That's why each real high-end audio gemstone is as precious as it gets.

I own quite a few rare vinyl gems which I only take out for special occasions. The LP1 Signature certainly does justice to these records. With all the review gear coming in and out, this preamp was really a highlight on the analog side.

Getting ready to re-acquaint myself with the familiar and cherished music of those precious LPs definitely puts me in a mood of dazzling anticipation and high expectations. Nowadays, pricing

of the rare vinyl can range between a few hundred to a few thousands dollars for hard-to-get copies or first prints, so owners of such records limit their use.

The truth might not be the most pleasant thing and a reasonable conjunction of sane, practical and investment worthy. We pay a disproportionately high price for incremental improvements in quality, and still the little red devil popping up with some version of futuristic law of diminishing returns is always on the duty. And yet the magical mystery of music revealing itself for so many listeners extends beyond the reasonable -- it's a pure injection of musical bliss and a dose of heavenly nectar for the soul. You can count me in on many fronts.

This could be one of the sure ways to help "heal" some of the audiophile scientific minds out there and wean them off the purely technical method of evaluating audio equipment. There are those who simply ignore the echoing nuisance of such a method of evaluating equipment, and those are the people in search of the essence of music. I'm more than sure that Vladimir is speaking to those souls.

Analog front ends in general, and vinyl in particular, are well known for quite a few of their standout attributes. Three-dimensional portrait is surely among the top ones. While pin-point imaging and soundstage depth are the positive characteristics generally more associated with the digital than analog, surprisingly the LP-1 Signature espouses exactly these traits. The LP-1 dared to delve into the best sides of the digital and transmit them to the analogue side. That's quite an achievement and something that needs to be addressed with the respect and in a big way.

When the listening system is set up properly, the analog gear from the upper league is capable of conveying the dark "matter" of the background most profoundly. It is something that brings forward the holographic portrayal of the instruments and vocals beyond what's ordinarily associated with the vinyl playback. Here, on this plane, you quickly distinguish between the entry level, mediocre and high-end phono preamplifiers. It is simply a matter of the given audible facts, and even an untrained ear can spot the difference at once.

I've only come across few phono preamplifiers that can handle the speed and attacks with the absence of crashed balance and with the lightning pace the real music is known for. Tom Evans Master Groove connected to Jan Alerts embarks for some F1, crazy energy transfer on the solid-state side of the things. Thrax Audio Orpheus is another profound example on the tube side (more on it in the upcoming review). The Lamm LP-1 Signature explores the Vladimir Lamm vision and refined vinyl playback of the finest musical cue.

Now back to the music and our exploration to how and where it is connected deeply with the source via LP-1 Signature.

One of the gems I've pulled out for this test and review is Zia Mohiuddin Dagar playing the Rudra Veena, recorded by Georges Kisselhoff and released on the French label Alvares. I have to thank Kavi Alexander for this rare find. In this analog recording the harmonic richness and complexity of overtones is never easy to reproduce as it resolves in a rare juxtaposition of the tone structure complexity and majestic interplay. It makes a serious effort in bringing this record to life. In order to fully appreciate this type of music, one also needs a bit more in-depth understanding of the Eastern music. Not proclaiming myself as an expert, I nonetheless would like to note that I've traveled the needed path of my musical educational back and forth to reach a certain point that I'm satisfied with and that gives me a needed "comfort" of understanding.

Vladimir's philosophy is put to a grand test with this recording. The natural, lush, dark and evolving pace is remarkably outlined. Overtones, micro dynamics and unusual tonality are fully revealed. Music being reproduced was special and most involving. I was trapped with the flamboyant and exotic presentation.



With the recreation of the actual acoustical space and all the utmost important attributes of the live recording, there is a certain number of anchor points that need to be matched in order to pursue palpable musical illusion. The Lamm LP-1 Signature is certainly among few in the top tier when it comes to the grand level of these anchor points being projected. Getting all the needed micro level information from the black grooves and transferring them via smallest scale signal requires a different endeavor than your typical phono stage preamplifier. Here is where the big boys differ from the rookies. Micro dynamics -- translated into the sum of smallest nuances of micro delays reverberations and focus points -- become vividly drawn only at this level of analog high-tech. This is what makes the vinyl listening extremely involving and what creates an emotionally charged listening journey of a highest degree. Many of the current "state-of-the-art" phono preamplifiers aim high and attract attention with their specifications and expected extreme performance. But sadly, most are in fact lacking the needed bandwidth and transparency. As I've stated many times, it's quite easy to kill the noise floor and bring it down to the impressive level, but it's a completely different thing to keep the music flow intact and preserve the musical potency.

The Lamm LP-1 Signature phono preamplifier shines with the translucent ability to shift from the pianissimo to forte fortissimo in a consistent fashion! It is bold in its nature, as fast as it gets, retrieves the minute shifts of both micro and macro dynamics expertly. Peaks and attacks of the sudden dynamic changes are being portrayed with the sense of authority and rich tonality. And this is obvious not only with classical music, but extends across the musical genres.



Let me explore the unique vinyl gems further with the LP-1 Signature. Baroque Tedesco from 1993 was released by The EAR Enhanced Acoustic Recordings label from Stefano Bertinello. Recorded on Revox G 36 tube tape recorder custom modified by Tim De Paravicini and with stocks on N.O.S. tubes on hand, this record was an exploration and antithesis of multi/over miked contemporary techniques (which more often than not create the unmusical recordings). The EAR team followed the heritage and in the footsteps of pioneers like Kenneth Wilkinson, Christopher Parker, J.F. Pontefract, David Hancock, and captured music quite differently in a good sense. And the result is marvelous. It would be very difficult to find a record more worthy of owning. Baroque Tedesco is a part of my reference testing arsenal which is treasured for pure musical enjoyment as well as a great tool of trade.

Reproducing it right and at its fullest it's a nut cracker. In its own way it profoundly challenges any cartridge, tonearm, turntable and phono preamplifier to show its best. Not a lot to discuss.

System or component under the “stress” is either able to provide the sensual, enriched and realistic experience or it fails utterly. Again, here the simplicity is revealed in inherited complexity of overtones and marvelous acoustical landscape.

Leopold Stokowski & RCA Viktor Symphony Orchestra - Franz Liszt/ Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 In C-Sharp Minor. With this recording from the 1961 again any vinyl reproduction is challenged. There is no way going around and when phono preamplifier is not able to comprehend the signal being feed from the cartridge the going phenomena appears. Lamm LP-1 was unreserved with this album as with Andrei Gavrilov performance of the Rachmaninov - Piano Concertos 2 & 3. The sheer energy of Andrei playing needs a bramastra-like force to engage to the fullest. My listening note was highlighted with the red marker: this means a stand out and a satisfying victory act :).

## CONCLUSION

---

Getting the vinyl setup on the level of the upper league is not an easy task. Too many people approach the vinyl rig set-up in a simplistic and casual way and the end results are at best mediocre. I've been to many demo rooms and seen crazy expensive home ultra high-end audio set-ups. Most of these Über-expensive set-ups were equipped with most exotic or highly acclaimed turntables and phono preamplifiers – and they failed miserably. Sadly, only very, very few were able to perform on a satisfying level and deserved to be called “high-end”. When all the gear is put together properly, the vinyl set-up can (and must) perform on quite an astonishing level. It still cannot compete with the analog master tapes or first copies from the reel-to-reel; yet, it certainly can offer a grand view into -- and the utmost satisfying and prolonged -- musical experience. You can call it a close but lithesome.

When paired with my Takeda San cartridge, the Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier showed impressive coherence over a wide bandwidth revealing the smallest nuances of parts and parcels of the grand sound illusion. This was a captivating match engaging me easily into the critical listening.

This phono preamplifier exhibits Vladimir Lamm's school of sound right from the very first note strike with immaculate insights into the black grooves. This is no beginner analog device and it deserves the perfect matching equipment to ensure the illuminating results.

At this level of performance you cannot stuff the electronics into one box and expect a squee. The Lamm LP1 Signature comes in three boxes -- and for the obvious reasons: this level of sophistication demands dedicated space. In no way should you ever dream of stacking them on top of each other! You'll need the separate audio rack or larger shelves to accommodate it.

The Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier carries the common sound virtue, embodied in all of Vladimir Lamm's creations. The one and only reason is its unique topology described at the start of this article. Lamm embraces the liquid musical language as a fact.

Following every listening session, the music being reproduced via the Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier simply lingers with the positive affection. Unique Lamm DNA signature is deeply imprinted in these impressions and they're inviting you for a repeated listening. Over and over again...

The Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier brings me into the same mood I've encountered when owning the LL2.1 preamplifier. It's a contemplating state of mind, music "*perpetuum mobile*" mode and similar projection of impressive sound dispersion, and refined unaltered series of individual notes I've encounter way back. But this time, with the LP1 Signature I've experience it on an even more immersive and impressive level.

It was not a blurry view through the magnifying glass or indefinite spectrogram vies. Rather than being hidden in the endless labyrinth of noise smear, the LP-1 signature taps right into the musical source. In the absence of the diffractiveness usually associated even with the topmost phono preamplifiers the LP1 stands out!

Aesthetics of the Lamm components are discussed often, but I've found them mesmerizing, and understated design with timeless appeal and "2001: A Space Odyssey" like monolithic aura. I would dare say that they transmit Vladimir's language. He's a man of few words, but when he speaks out it's profound, bold and of substance. And this is also how his products reveal themselves.



Yes, I do like much Vladimir Lamm's work and his unique character. He's pacing with the music from an eon back and this clearly reflects on the sound orientation of his high-end audio products. For sure it's not everyone's view. Yet, Vladimir created a unique direction of the sound reproduction where electronics are clearly subordinate to the music, and for a true music lover it will be hard not to be affected by Mr. Lamm's creations.

The Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier is nowhere cheap or easily affordable. However, compared in price to some of the exotic phono preamplifiers it actually is. Anyone contemplating the idea of going with LP1 Signature should take this into consideration. Vladimir Lamm is not into doing anything half-way, and the Lamm LP1 Signature phono preamplifier represents this man's ardent vision at it fullest.

**Price: USD 35,690.00**

**Warranty: Five years parts and labor**

**LAMM INDUSTRIES INC.**

2513 East 21 Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11235  
U.S.A.

Phone: +1.718.368.0181

Fax: +1.718.368.0140

Email: **[lamm.industries@verizon.net](mailto:lamm.industries@verizon.net)**  
**[elinalamm@hotmail.com](mailto:elinalamm@hotmail.com)**  
web: **[www.lammindustries.com](http://www.lammindustries.com)**