

MICHAEL FIDLER

Analogue design far greater than the sum of its parts

FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AND RELEASE

SPARTAN 15 MKII

Low-frequency crossfeed MM phonostage

England – 8th of April 2025: The SPARTAN 15 MKII evolves the successful SPARTAN 15 and SPARTAN 10 double-stage preamplifiers that defined the company's sonic and engineering ethos. The MKII version retains the extraordinary measured performance and engaging sound of its forbearers, while adding refinements in circuitry, features, and enclosure design – all with zero price increase.

Hand-assembled using through-hole components in the South of England, the SPARTAN 15 MKII delivers a digital-audio level dynamic range of over 110dB, from the ultra-quiet background of its Japanese input amplifiers to a scorching 10.5V RMS maximum output level. Panasonic electrolytic capacitors and 1% metal film resistors ensure long-term stability, while 1% tolerance film capacitors in the active RIAA stage hold replay to ± 0.1 dB of the reference curve, eliminating mid-range colouration and channel imbalance.

A key upgrade is the expansion of the low-frequency crossfeed function, blending the two stereo channels to mono at lower frequencies to reduce audible rumble, without loss of stereo separation in the mid-range. The first version a single fixed 145Hz turnover point, but a centre-off toggle switch on the MKII offers selection of 100Hz and 200Hz turnovers, allowing adjustment of the reduction. The mono switch also remains to collapse distracting stereo-field noise and distortion on mono or damaged pressings.

The MKII's new rounded aluminium chassis shows off a streamlined appearance that blends into the front and rear panels more seamlessly. The enclosure parts are bead-blasted, plated, and finished in Berkshire, England. Front and rear panel graphics are durably laser-etched in-house with Classic Audio's CO2 engraving system for enhanced quality control.

Audio performance is enhanced by the 3rd order 22Hz subsonic filter, preventing the slightest destabilisation of loudspeaker and headphone drivers in the troublesome 10Hz region. Hand-matched polypropylene film capacitors in the filter network ensure flat response down to 40Hz with less than 0.1dB variation.

The 40.8dB (110x) gain is shared between the input and output amplifier stages, lowering input-stage workload by 70%, to keep distortion under 0.0006% from 40Hz to 22kHz. By making up the final 10dB of gain after the subsonic filter, these surface disturbances are neatly excluded from the final headroom.

The SPARTAN 15 MKII continues to use a 9V AC external transformer-based linear power supply, ensuring the power transformer's magnetic field stays well away from the sensitive analogue circuitry inside the small enclosure. In contrast to low-cost switching supplies, the linear transformer operates with far lower noise. A new power supply over-voltage protection circuit guards against the use of incorrect adapters. 24V AC units from a popular turntable brand using the same connector previously caused great destruction! While Classic Audio can't guarantee survival of mis-connected third-party adapters, the series-shunt resettable fuse network greatly increases the SPARTAN 15 MKII's chances of living to fight another day.

Internally, the split ± 17 V rails are regulated with precise reference diodes, providing fast and stable headroom independent of temperature. Both positive and negative rails are full-wave rectified, ensuring no direct current can unbalance the transformer core, so it always operates in its magnetic "sweet spot".

By splitting the rails, the design avoids injecting non-linear power currents into the ground, preventing power currents from contaminating the reference point. It also allows all amplifier inputs to be referenced to zero volts, precluding any rail-dependent DC biasing. Thanks to this architecture, the circuitry stabilises in seconds after power-on, and a Panasonic relay mutes the line outputs to suppress turn-on and turn-off transients. There's no long wait for thermal stabilisation or so-called "burn-in"; the SPARTAN 15 MKII's inherently steady design delivers full performance immediately!

More info available at: <https://michaelfidler.com/products/spartan/spartan-15-moving-magnet-phono-stage/>

Independent measurements of the same moving magnet section used in the SPARTAN 15 MKII (as part of the SPARTAN 20 MM+MC device): <https://www.audiosciencereview.com/forum/index.php?threads/michael-fidler-spartan-20-phono-stage-review.61993/>

Pricing and availability

The SPARTAN 15 MKII is available to order directly from Classic Audio Ltd., with global shipping included in the price. Standard units come in black, while limited edition models are also offered in dark grey, deep blue, and red-fronted black finishes.

Prices are set at £360 for the UK, €440 for the EU, and \$490 for the USA. Payments are also accepted in cryptocurrency, as well as Australian and Canadian dollars. Please note that import duties or taxes may apply, depending on your region.

A limited quantity of SPARTAN 20 units (featuring a separate input for moving coil cartridges) are also available.

About the company

Started in 2021 by Michael Fidler, Classic Audio Ltd. creates hand-assembled, high-performance analogue audio equipment at affordable prices. Transitioning from aerospace engineering to audio design, Fidler's focus is on innovative circuit architecture, delivering exceptional real-world performance without relying on expensive components.

Classic Audio's product range includes the SPARTAN and PRO series phono stages, which combine superior sound quality with value. These designs prioritize circuit architecture and use high-quality through-hole components, ensuring durability and reliability. Each unit is powered by a linear transformer supply.

With a commitment to transparency and performance, Classic Audio Ltd. has quickly gained a loyal customer base. The company's focus on delivering audiophile-grade products at accessible prices has helped it stand out in the competitive audio market, offering affordable high-end sound to audiophiles worldwide.

Images

Please see the images attached to this e-mail.

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