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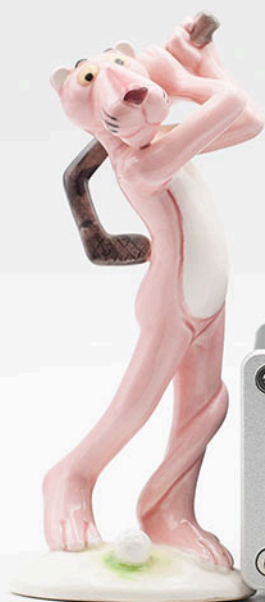
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#1

This is a review and detailed measurements of the Michael Fidler Spartan 20 Moving Coil and Magnet phono preamp. It was sent to me by the company and costs £500/€600/\$670.



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Is it me or is the On/Off upside down? I am used to On being up, not down. That nit aside, there are LP noise mitigation facilities such as mono conversion and dual frequency cross feed. Unlike many other phono preamplifiers, there are independent moving coil and magnet inputs:

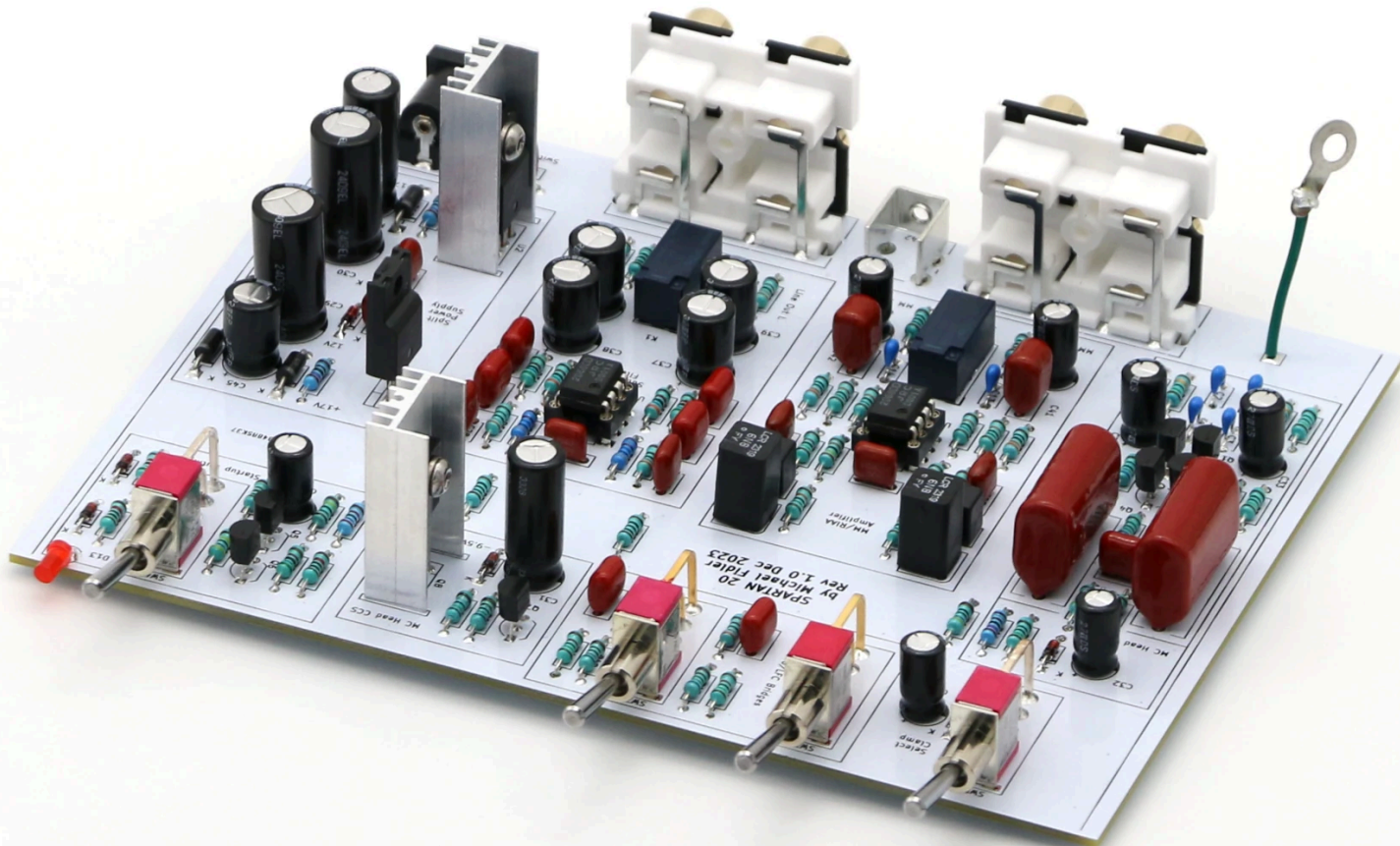


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Spartan 20

I appreciate the upside down additional labeling when you are trying to change things and doing it from above. Nice to see the range of input voltages as well.

Best part of the design is what is on Michaels's site:

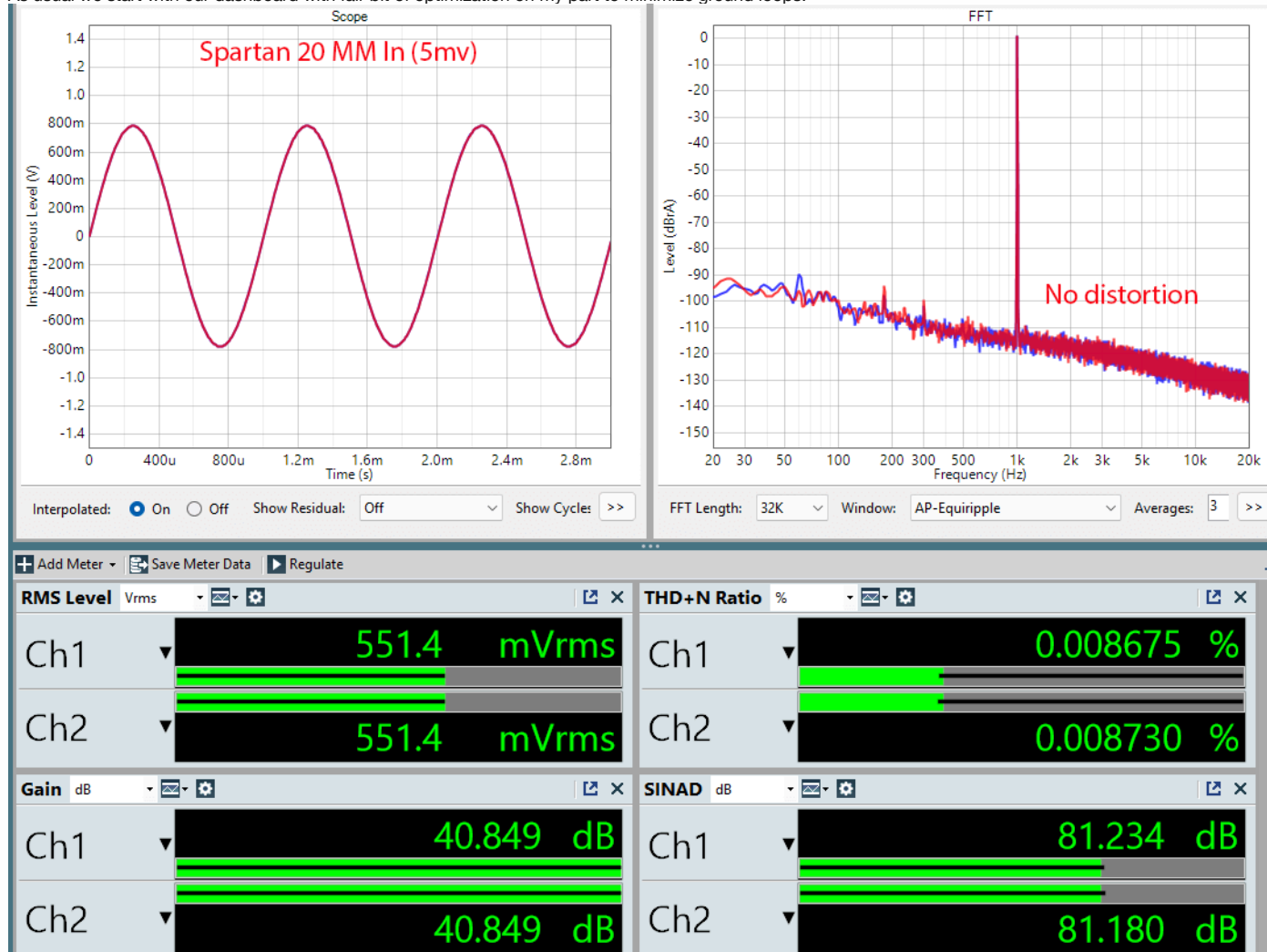


That is one pretty looking PC board! The box badly needs a clear top for this to be appreciated in use.

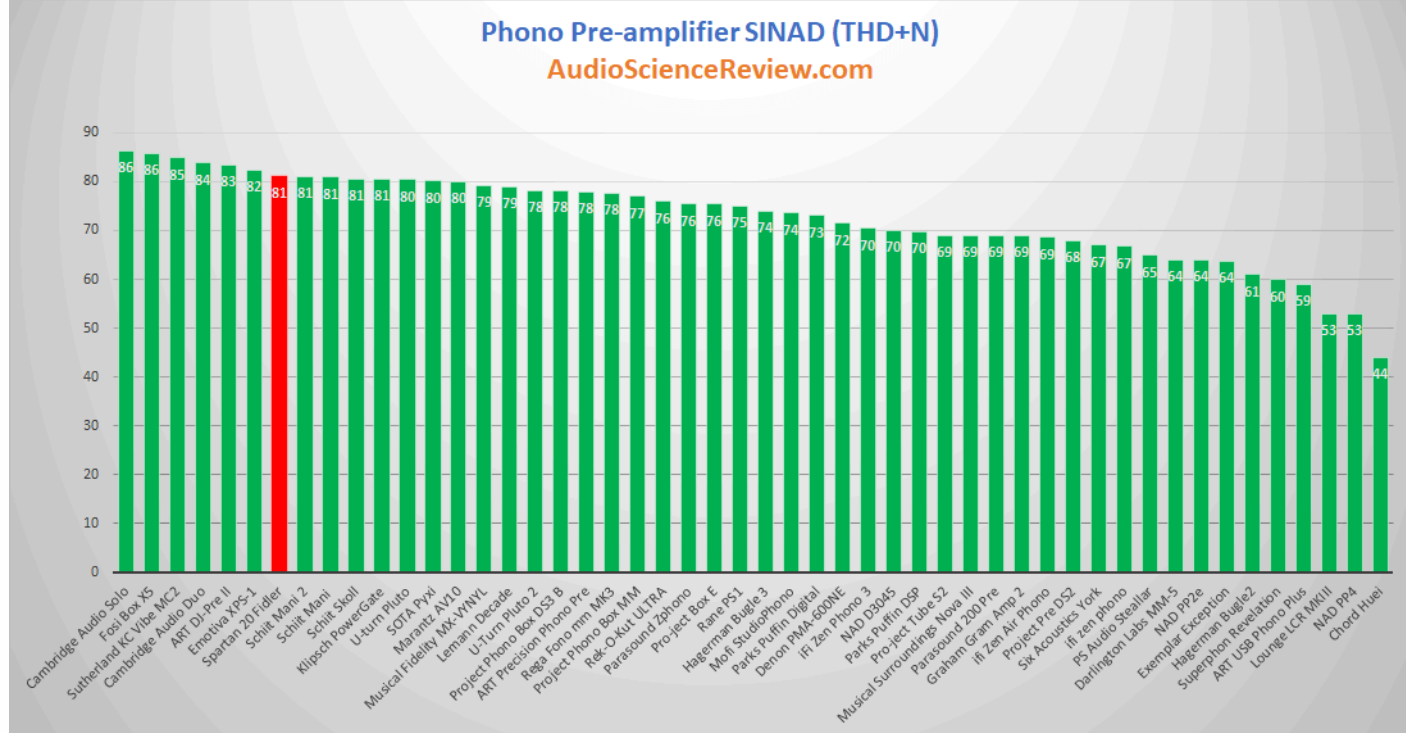
ICs are socketed but company mentions that is only for repair and not silly "op amp rolling."

Spartan 20 Moving Magnet Preamp Measurements

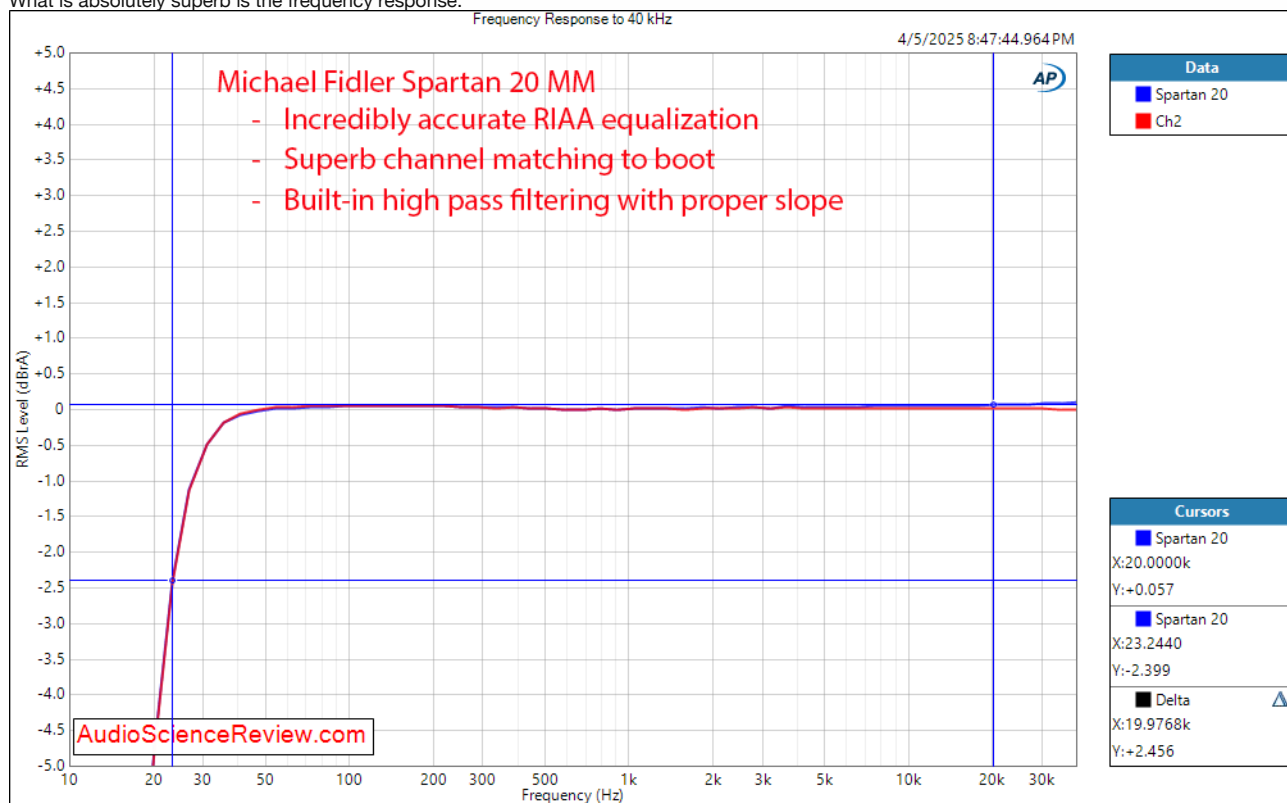
As usual we start with our dashboard with fair bit of optimization on my part to minimize ground loops:



Nice to see no distortion and only hint of power supply noise. This easily lands the Spartan 20 in our upper tier ranking of phono stages:

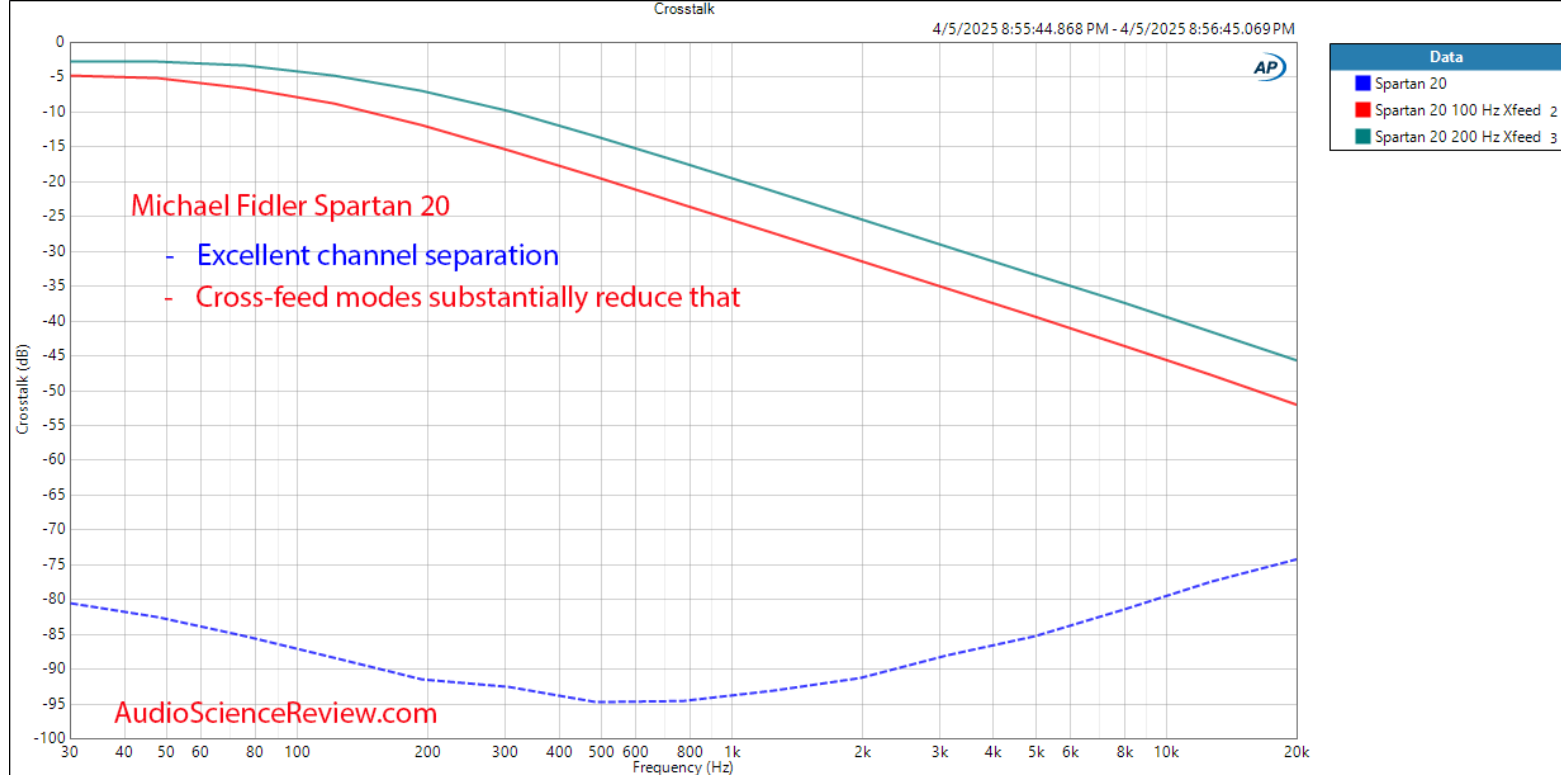


What is absolutely superb is the frequency response:

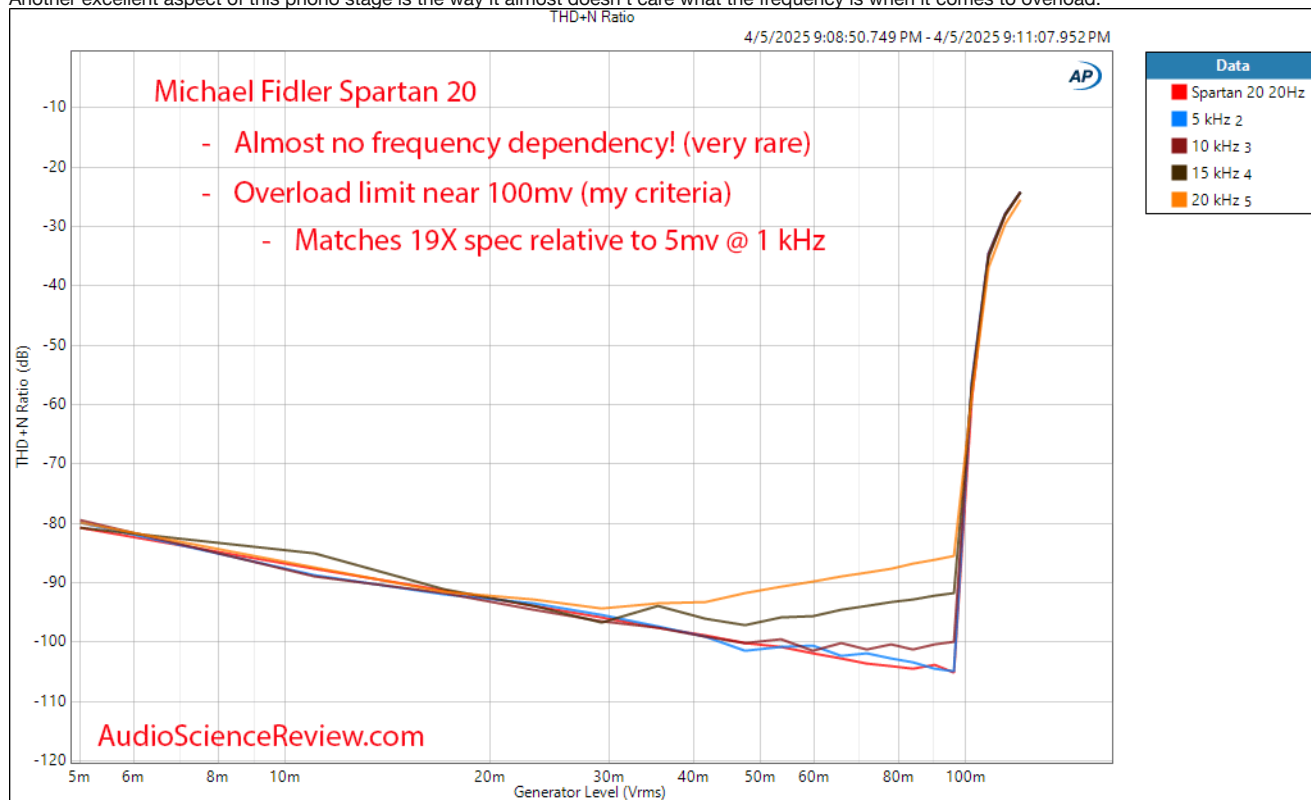


It doesn't get better than this folks. Not only the equalization perfect but so is channel matching. We also have a proper high pass filter to get rid of LP rumble.

There is a crossfeed function for noise reduction but I am unclear as to whether this is the optimal implementation or not:

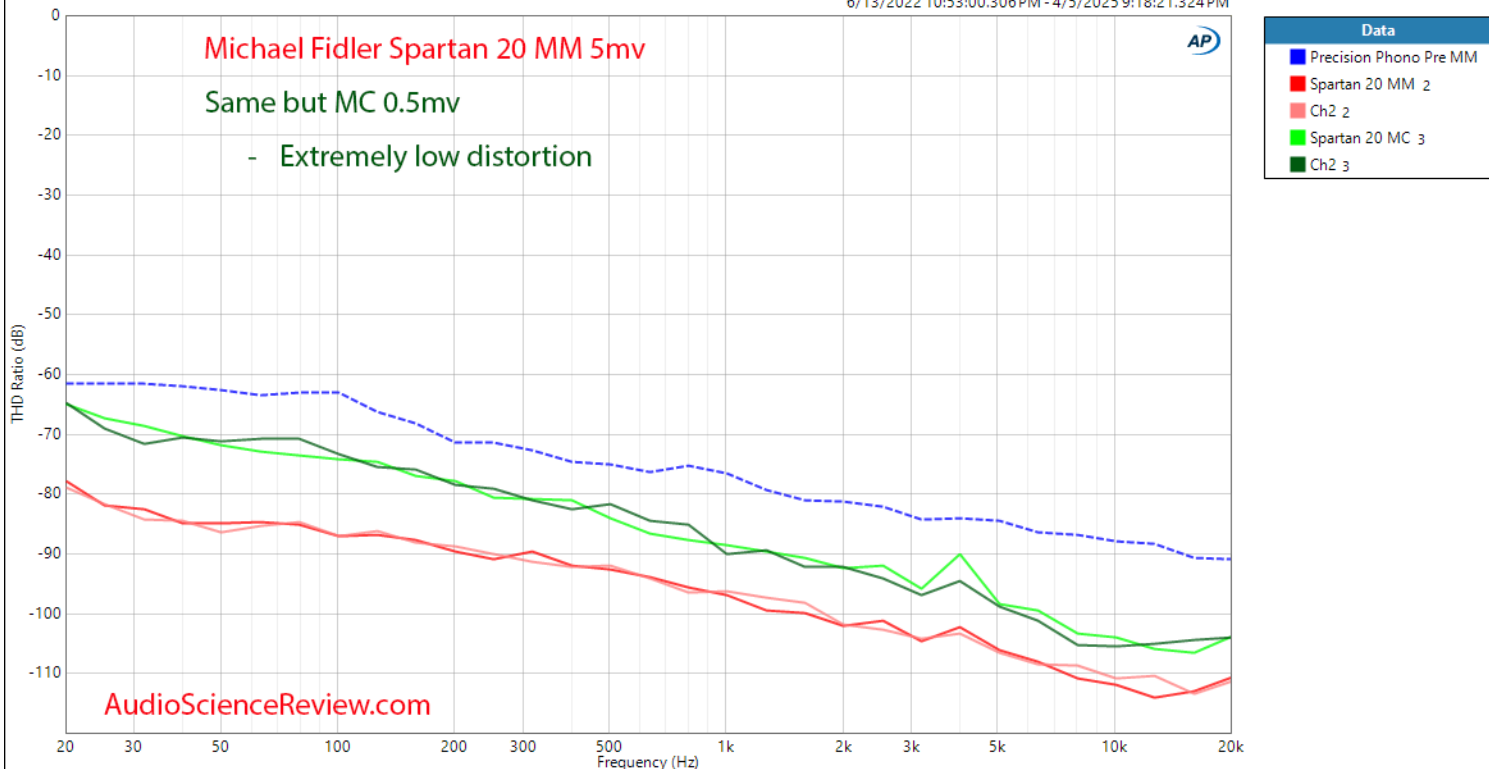


Another excellent aspect of this phono stage is the way it almost doesn't care what the frequency is when it comes to overload:



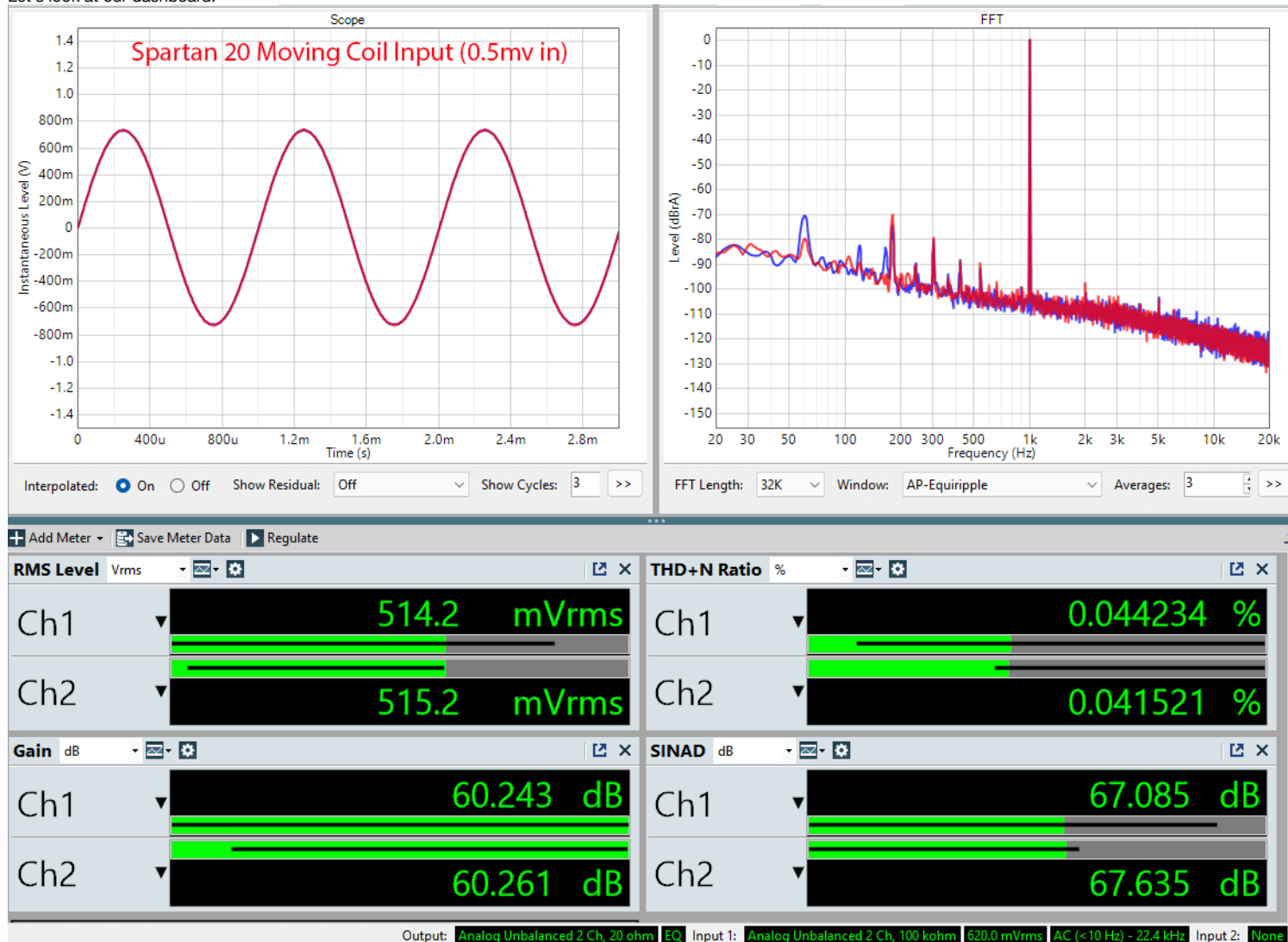
Most phono stages lose substantial amount of their headroom at high frequencies which is where you need it when it comes to ticks and pops. Not here. You have that nearly 100mv at all frequencies.

Distortion is admirably kept low:



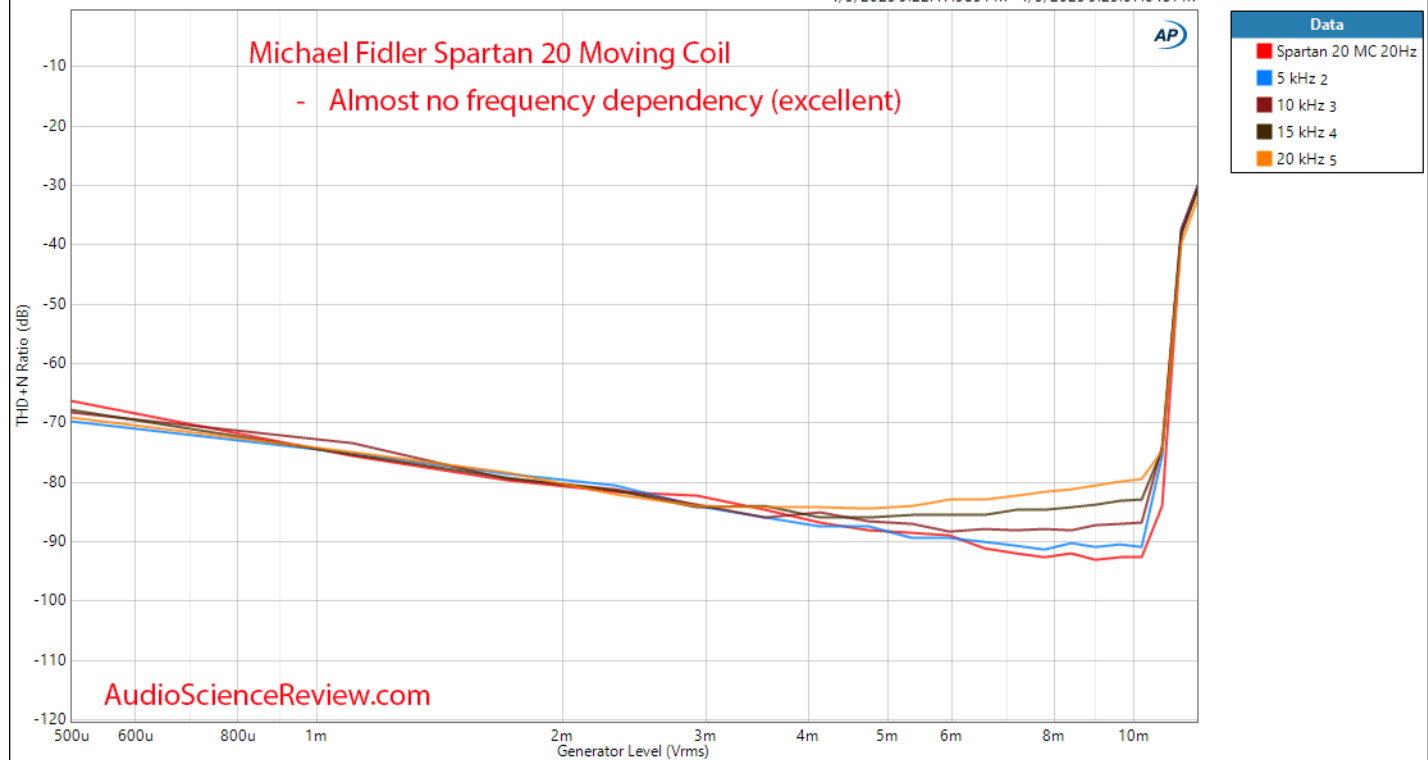
Spartan 20 Moving Coil Measurements

Let's look at our dashboard:



Due to much higher gain, it is hard to completely minimize mains noise. What we have is respectable anyway.

Same excellent overload characteristic is provided for moving coil:



I already showed you the distortion vs frequency in previous section.

Conclusions

I don't know any other phono stage designer that is so focused on engineering excellence as Michael. Spartan 20 is another evidence of that with execution that borders on perfection. You pay some premium of course but considering the device is manufactured in the UK, I think that is justified.

I am happy to recommend Michael Fidler Spartan 20.

As always, questions, comments, recommendations, etc. are welcome.

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