

Preamp / Mono Power Amps:
Vincent SA-T7 + SP-T700

Vimala-ya Trip





Vimala-ya Trip

When introducing the label »Made in Germany« by the end of the 19th century, the British industry wanted to protect itself and the English consumers against the allegedly poor quality of German merchandises. But as history has shown, this stigmatisation was a real barrel burst. For German goods developed into the quality standard which over a very long time was – and still is – a hard nut to crack, not only for the British industry. The devices by Vincent presented here may carry the quality seal »Made in Germany« in its finest manifestation quite rightly and swollen with pride. Solidity both in construction and material selection as well as the quality of workmanship are nothing but excellent.

The SP-T700 mono power amps, which come along in the half-wide hi-fi format of 21 centimetres, yet with a stately height of more than 26 centimetres, put forward a fighting weight of 16 kilogrammes which is not something you can just tuck under your arm for transport. These are hybrid amps with a valve-loaded input stage and a transistor power section. This almost classical approach combines the virtues of valves, which leave the acoustic fingerprint, with the power of a solid-state design. And these babies do have some power. With 180 watts into 8 ohms or 300 watts into 4 ohms, measured in our laboratory, they provide enough power even for watt-hungry loudspeakers. Moreover, until 10 watts into 8 ohms the monos will run in the sound-enhancing class A mode.

For being able to make this power available under all circumstances, the SP-T700 blocks are equipped with a high-performance transformer, which – together with the housing

Vincent's SA-T7 preamp and SP-T700 mono power amps are true delicacies – by all means visually. Is this also true under technical and sound aspects? Let's go and find out!

of a decent wall thickness – contributes its share to the amps' hunky weight. One of the valves is showcased to the listener in a »shop window«, and to make this also look smashing, this display window may be illuminated in three brightness levels. At first I was shaking my head about this, but then enjoyed the glowing valve illuminated at level 1 during the listening session. The monos have two pairs of speaker terminals, which may also be switched separately, plus two 3.5 millimetre mini jack sockets labelled »Power Control« to allow the remote turn-on via the preamp.

The Vincent SA-T7 preamp is a true-bred valve concept with an integrated D/A converter. And here we've also come full circle with the art of German engineering. Compared against the simplest run-of-the-mill valve circuits, the Vincent designers have put their shoulders to the wheel here: around an NOS CV6189 clamp grid pentode they developed a new pentode circuit, which is already patent pending.

On a straight path

This circuit module was given the name »Vimala« by its designers, meaning »pure«, »transparent« and »clear« in

Sanskrit – I'm eager to know if the amp can also meet the prompted expectations when run in a musical application. As to the quality of workmanship, the pre-amp is on par with the power amps. It is not quite as massive, but perfectly crafted: Nothing is rattling, and the switches and rotary knobs are a haptic pleasure. On the front panel we see four rotary knobs: two of them are used in the classic style for input selection and volume control, then there are two other controls for a sound compensation. Hence the owner can use the preamp to correct potential influences from sub-optimal room characteristics. Of course, the equalisation network may also be turned off completely.

Like with the monos, the centre of the preamp's front panel is adorned by a valve in a display window, which may also set an optical highlight here, supported again by the level 1 backlit illumination. The SA-T7 offers six inputs for line-level sources, whereby one input can be used to access the D/A converter. The preamp comes with a remote control of the finer grade. Provided only with the basic functions – volume, source selection and mute function – and made of high-class aluminium, it lies phantastically in your hand. I really can't stand plastic remotes overladen with functions, so I'm very much delighted about this design version.

To find out about the sonic virtues of the preamp and the monos, I also connected them extensively to different partners, and each time their acoustic fingerprint was clearly recognisable: »Vimala« with the preamp, power and sovereignty with the monos. However, the following sound descriptions refer to the combination of SA-T7 with SP-T700, which simply make a soundwise congenial couple. Linked up using mains cables, AF and speaker leads from HMS, the Vincents gave me several weeks of musical enjoyment on a high level.



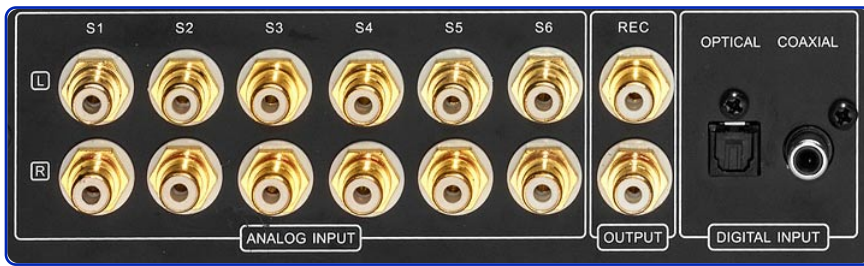
Vimala – clarity, purity, transparency

Those are the words that turn up time and again in my notes during the tests. The sound image is free from ear-stressing artefacts of any kind whatsoever. On the »Great Gate of Kiev« from Mussorgsky's »Pictures at an Exhibition« – played by Liliya Zilberstein on piano – the piano strokes came with grandeur and force, the sound image was large, of stable dimensions and solemn. I rather infrequently listen to the piano version, but this interpretation over the Vincents struck me in the truest sense of the word. Here the strong side of this combination becomes evident very clearly: the sound is celebrated with



On the IEC mains socket the phase is marked with »L«, making obsolete the procedure of measuring or determining the correct plug position in the power strip by ear.

AMPLIFIER



In addition to the six line level inputs the Vincent SA-T7 also offers digital inputs.

impetus, based on a solid low-end fundament. Yet this impetus is always precisely articulated, and the low-end power does by no means overlay the delicate piano play in the upper registers.

How well this combination works, I was able to comprehend also with a musical piece which I had bought for my son in his pre-school age to give him a little understanding

of classical music: »Peter and the Wolf« by Prokofieff – narrated by Boy Gobert and performed by the RIAS youth orchestra. The duck's quacking sounded totally free and airy, whereas in a beautiful contrast the bassoon depicting the grandfather raised a deep, sonorous and decisive voice. The Vincent team will draw you into the rendering and let you join the performance.

The spatial imaging is generous, but not exuberant, reaching beyond the speakers more in depth than width, yet always close to reality in all three dimensions. Here we can also hear the quality of the D/A converter: it offers a far better resolution than my ageing converter and is at the same time capable of conveying its treasured musicality and also the beautiful tone colours without an anatomising touch.

True, modern converters have a finer resolution with more bits and kilohertz, but they often unravel a wealth of information from the ones and

zeros while losing track of the total image, and they also disappoint in terms of musical coherence. By no means this can be said about the converter module of the SA-T7. It discovers the soul of the music and also brings it up on stage - something that is not self-evident in this price category.

Their great performance ...

... came for the monos with »Round Up« featuring Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Here the young-history of the USA is being told with the help of a large orchestra. The music is like the country – big, wide and sometimes also a bit boisterous. The Vincent trio can transport this in an absolutely manner even at very high volume levels. Powerful, screaming, boastful, yet always musically involving.

When it comes to reproducing vocals, no matter if male or female, soprano, alto, tenor or bass, the Vincent combinati-



Solid powerhouse: the Vincent SP-T700 mono block can deliver up to 300 watts to the speaker.

on would not even commit the smallest blunder. Voices are portrayed with great transparency, but not overly present: each female or male singer is reproduced precisely the way the sound engineer had wanted it. But I finally raised my hat to this amp trio with the rendering of Gregory Porter. Last December I had the pleasure to attend one of his concerts in Zurich. This man is not only a mighty figure in a musical, but also in a physical context. And this is unconditionally transferred into my listening room by the Vincent combination. With my eyes closed I had a feeling that Porter is giving me a private performance in my lounge.

Features

High-end preamplifier Vincent SA-T7

Special features

- Inputs: stereo RCA, 1 x optical, 1 x coax
- Outputs: stereo RCA (pre out),
1 x stereo RCA (rec out)

Dimensions (W x H x D): 43 x 13,5 x 37 cm
(16.9 x 5.3 x 14.6 in.)

Price: 2.499 euros

Warranty: 24 months regular, 5 years upon registration

Mono power amplifier Vincent SP-T700

Special features

- Inputs: 1 x mono RCA,
1 x 3.5 mm jack socket (Power Control)
- Outputs: 2 x 2 speakers terminals,
1 x 3.5-mm jack socket (Power Control)

Dimensions (W x H x D): 21 x 26,3 x 40 cm
(8.3 x 10.4 x 15.7 in.)

Pair price: 3.998 euros

Warranty: 24 months regular, 5 years upon registration

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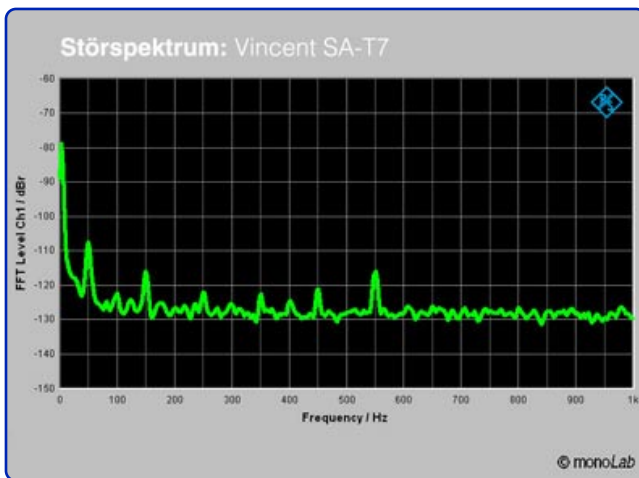
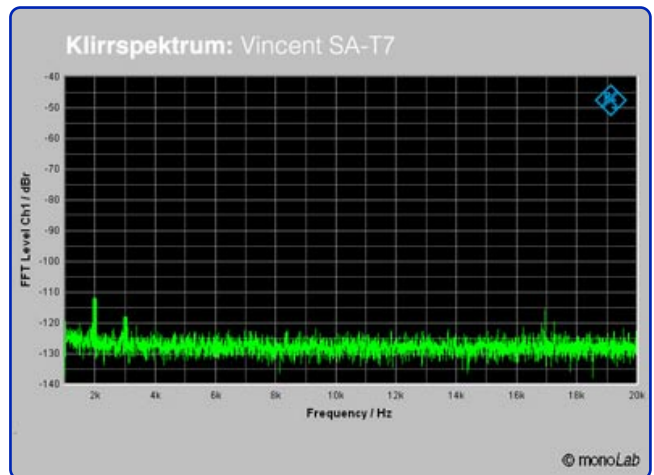
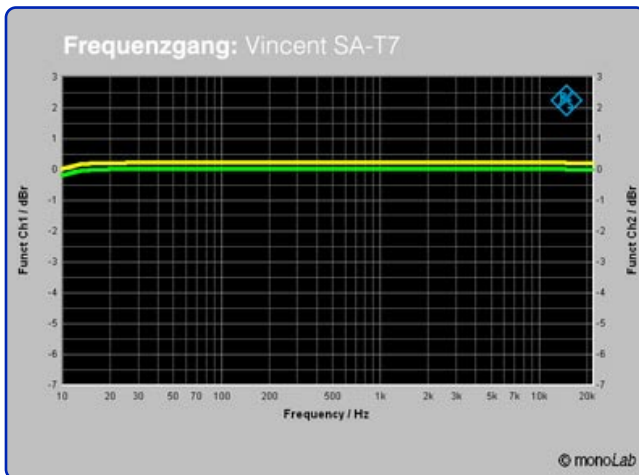


Test Result

The Vincent SA-T7 preamp and the SP-T700 mono blocks form a pre/power amp combination on the highest level of workmanship, designed with smart technical gimmicks far from the beaten tracks, which plays on a high sound quality level and, thanks to the powerful monos, will not get wobbly knees even with current guzzlers. Yet the sonic highlight in this group of three is the preamp. I feel unable to judge whether this may be due to the fancy valve and the new design. But honestly speaking, this does not matter much to me – the important thing is that the SA-T7 sounds as it sounds. And there's only one word to describe it: »Vimala«, which i-fidelity.net tops off with a "Highlight" quality seal. *Stephan Schmid ifn*



AMPLIFIER



Vincent SA-T7

Gain:

Gain factor: 5,18 dB / 4,4-fold
Max. output voltage: 8,8 V

Distortions:

Distortions factor (THD+N): 0,0024 %
IM distortions (SMPTE): 0,0009 %
IM distortions (CCIF): 0,0003 %

S/N ratios:

Unweighted noise voltage (-20 kHz):
-87,13 dB
Weighted noise voltage (A-weighted):
-90,3 dB

Other data:

Upper limit frequency: > 185 kHz
Channel deviation: 0,2 dB
Input impedance (unbalanced):
45,5 kohms
Output impedance (unbalanced):
598 ohms or 50 ohms (selectable)
DC output offset: < 0,5 mV

Power consumption:

Off: 0 W
Idle: 55 W

Sound quality

outstanding

Laboratory

very good

Features

very good

Workmanship

very good

Overall score

very good

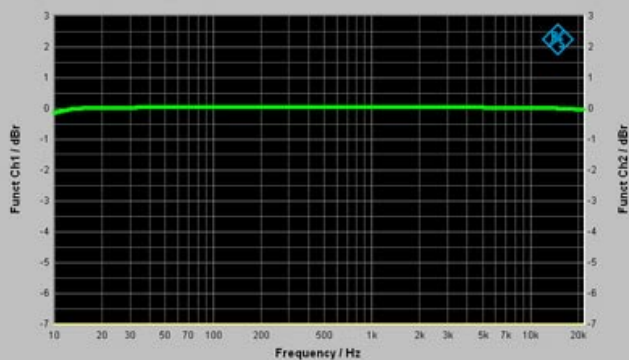
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Vincent SA-T7

Test verdict: very good

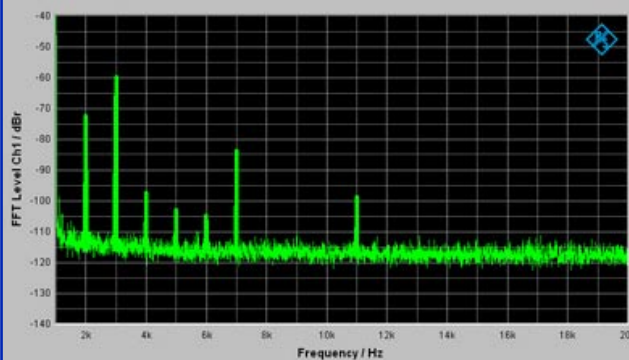
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Highlight

Frequenzgang: Vincent SP-T700



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Klirrspektrum: Vincent SP-T700



© monoLab

Vincent SP-T700

Output power:

Nominal output power @ 4 ohms

(1% THD): 302 W

Nominal output power @ 8 ohms

(1% THD): 181 W

Distortions :

Distortion factor (THD+N, 10 watts @ 4 ohms): 0,0175 %

IM distortions SMPTE

(5 watts @ 4 ohms): 0,056 %

IM distortions CCIF

(5 watts @ 4 ohms): 0,014%

S/N ratios:

Unweighted noise voltage (- 20 kHz):

-98,6 dB

Weighted noise voltage (A-weighted):

-103,0 dB

Other data:

Gain factor: 20 dB / 10-fold

Upper limit frequency:

(-3dB / 10 W @ 4 ohms): > 185 kHz

Sensitivity (for full drive 4 ohms): 3,5 V

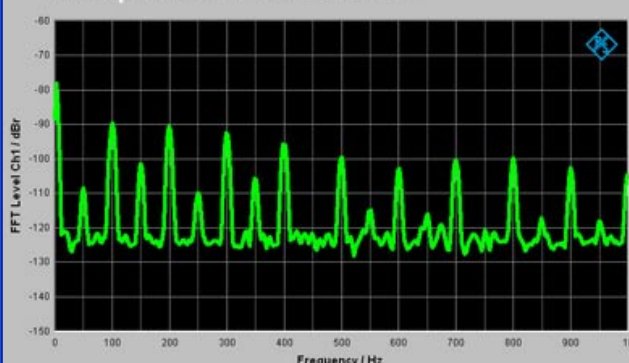
Input impedance; 24 kohms

DC output offset: ~ 1 mV

Power consumption:

Idle: 101 W

Störspektrum: Vincent SP-T700



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Sound quality

very good

Laboratory

good – very good

Features

very good

Workmanship

very good

Overall score

very good

i-fidelity.net
Top-Design

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Vincent SP-T700

Test verdict: very good