

M2Tech Nash

Listening test MM / MC phono preamplifier

M2 Tech was certainly not famous for its preamps, but rather for its work in the domain of digital. But the designer is obviously a man of excellent design skills and so the Italian brand comes to analogue with this affordable phono preamplifier, which can be implemented with a more sophisticated power supply, in separate houses, called Van Der Graaf Mk II.

We at Audio-activity.com have been able to try the so-called "smooth" version, namely Nash alone.

Without going into the technical issues, for which you will be able to visit the very complete website of the producer whose link you will find below, there are two things that immediately strike, as soon as what is written by the manufacturer regarding Nash characteristics is examined.

The first is the gain: with the moving coil heads it is possible to reach an even overabundant value of 95 dB. Virtually no head will have difficulty working with this Nash.

The second, the declaration that the appliance is low noise. No specific data is declared, but in practice the device turned out to be very quiet.

Looking at the specifications, we find a minimum gain value of the MM input equal to 55 dB; certainly not a few, but probably, keeping the gain and the maximum level of acceptance (not declared) high, it is not impossible to contain the noise level of the device.

The Nash is small: 34 x 20 x 5 cm and also weighs little, since it is 2.5 kg. It is finished with good care. On the back, in addition to separate inputs for MM and MC heads, there are the output connectors, two line inputs and the two connectors for the two power supplies, standard and implemented.

Simple Nash operation. The gain value is set for the MM head which can be set to three values of 55, 60 or 65 dB; if the head is MC, in addition to the load value selected for the MM heads, a further 30 dB maximum can be added through a knob (indeed small and not very comfortable for those who do not have fine fingers) placed on the rear panel. For the load there is another knob on the rear panel that allows continuous adjustment from 10 to 1000 ohms. The impression, given also the lack of clear references (from the photos we see that there are few values precisely indicated; and given the dimensions of the rear panel, it could not be otherwise) is that operationally it is not the maximum precision, even if it is undeniable the convenience of being able to work even "by ear", without having to stand and unplug the cables and turn the appliance over (or open).

On the back there is also a theory of switches to adjust the capacity in case of use with moving magnet heads.

Finally, the Nash can be controlled by the remote control supplied by the manufacturer, or by a downloadable application on your smartphone; for the moment only the version for Android is available, but not the one for iOS that will be available soon (and unfortunately, having a smartphone that uses iOS, it was not possible to try this "comfort" further ").

But let's move on to the listening notes; the Nash was inserted in the plant to replace the American Hybrid Technology -P Non Reference (which instead was just the top model of the American manufacturer; one of the many oddities of the appellations' names). Components of the system used for the listening test were the following: Bauer Audio DPS 2 turntable; Morch arm DP8; head ZYX R1000 Airy SH; Lavardin C62 preamplifier; Bryston 2B-LP power amp; Davis Monitor One

loudspeakers with Batpure Take-T supertweeters; Black Noise, Silver Audio, Gotham, Audioquest, MIT and Acoustic Zen cables.

Let's start with the silence of the appliance. It is peaceful; during the listenings it was deliberately exaggerated with the gain, bringing it to 80 db and therefore superabundant for the used head which has an output of 0.48 mV. No noise neither in reproduction nor with the head raised by the furrow.

Then the load. As written above, it does not seem that the adjustment trimmer is very precise even taking into account the chosen (supposed) load.

In any case, aiming the load at around 100 Ohms and in this case using the Messiah of G.F. Haendel, in the usual performance directed by Christopher Hogwood on Oiseau Lyre, in the song The Trumpet shall sound, the head brought out the middle range, so that the bass David Thomas appeared almost detached from the orchestra that instead played backwards and with rather bloodless sounds. Adjusted by ear (in the case, increased) the load, the low range and the high range returned to their place and the registered team presented itself in all its usual completeness, with David Thomas returning to the position he usually occupies and the orchestra to accompany him all around him.

For the rest, nothing to object on Nash's functioning, but neither on the sound that is concrete, material and well restored, both as regards the timbre, and as regards the dynamics, both in the minimum and in the maximum gradients.

Listening to Carl Orff's Carmina Burana directed by Shaw (Telarc), in the Ego sum abbas and in the taberna, it struck the way in which the powerful, braked and deep percussions were returned, with a very pleasant "true" flavor. And the voices of both the baritone and the choir were no less.

Listening to the Reference Recordings vinyl with music by Elgar and Vaughan-Williams (above the photo on the cover) showed that sound a little light in the middle range and pointed rather towards the average and acute ranges typical of this recording; a clear sign that the Nash puts little of his own and allows to easily evaluate the quality of the various recordings that are "fed to him".

Nash also works well "di fioretto"; the delicate dynamic and timbric contrasts of the Missa Bell'Anfitrit'Altera by Orlando di Lasso (excellent recording of the Argo label, with photos below) are well returned. The environmental resonances, well captured in the recording, especially if the volume is not exceeded, are returned very well, giving the feeling of a very large environment, such as a church.

The already highlighted bass control is further confirmed by the splendid organ recorded at the time by Crystal Clear Recordings in the Sonic Fireworks volume; the Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565 by J.S. Bach recorded therein is characterized by bright timbres and a low range from authentic "close-up shot". The bass goes down, but it never breaks down; and also the rest of the pipe, including the smaller rods, is restored to its best and with only a slight subtractive nuance in the high range.

The Nash is not limiting and therefore go-ahead also for what concerns music more recent than those mentioned in this listening, rock, pop, jazz. The bass, as reproduced by Nash, helps a lot to restore a very pleasant sense of rhythm.

But a fairly unmistakable symptom of devices that sound good and correctly is that, with the best recordings, you want to continually increase the volume; and with the Nash it happened several times.

Quite frankly, no negative characters were detected during the listening sessions; the only small notation, the acute range that, while not lacking in extension, does not seem to be as well defined as with the reference that, on the other hand, new and at the time when it was in production, cost much more than it costs Nash.

To conclude, the price at which the Nash is proposed (certainly later reduced by the now-used discounts) appears competitive. It does not give much to aesthetics, but seems to focus more on sound performance; which for us, who listen to music and do not design devices, is the thing that counts.

Domenico Pizzamiglio