

Lehmann Statement (£350)



Founded in 1988, Germany's Lehmann Audio offers an extensive series of phono stages which employ technology drawn from its pro-audio range of mixing consoles and the like. All Lehmann phono stages are based around passive RIAA filter designs and, according to Lehmann, the differences between models can be found 'in the quality of the parts and/or in the grade of sophistication of the circuit design.'

The Statement is the base model in Lehmann's entry level 'Black Cube' range and sits below the original £450 Black Cube and the £635 twin-box SE. It comes in a fairly ordinary black box made from non-magnetic aluminium, sporting a top cover coated with a 'special anti-resonance treatment'.

Its RIAA equalisation network employs high precision foil capacitors, and all its resistors are of the low-noise metal film variety. The Lehmann offers standard load settings of 47kohm for high output MM/MC cartridges and 100ohm/1kohm for lower output MCs. As with the other models in the Black Cube series, the Lehmann boasts a fifth onboard dip switch that can be fitted with a custom impedance setting, tailor matched to any cartridge. The chunky earth post will take bare cable, a spade connection or banana plug. A blue LED shows if the supplied wall-wart adapter is delivering power.

SHOWING ITS ROOTS

You can certainly tell that phono preamps are Lehmann's speciality when putting it through its paces. Instruments and vocals sounded accurate, having a 'studio-like' honesty. Neil Young's harmonica was conveyed with a polished yet mellow treble and came across with none of the harshness that some of the others in the test

RIGHT: Seen from the underside, Lehmann's MM/MC gain and input loading DIP switches are clearly accessible

RIGHT: Simplicity itself as single unbalanced RCA inputs are joined by a 4mm earth terminal

introduced. Overall the Lehmann has a well-mannered, pleasing tone which will not fatigue. With 'Spiralling' this occasionally worked against it, as the piano notes had a softness to them that meant they became overshadowed in the mix, reducing the song's atmospherics.

On the other hand its soundstaging is impressively wide, Young's slide guitar on 'Out On The Weekend' emphasising how well the Lehmann does stereo separation. Bass was well captured and natural, although it sounded lighter through the Lehmann in comparison to other models on test, such as the M1 ViNL.

Percussion was precise and controlled while being carefully held back in the mix, which added depth and realism to the music, especially through the shimmering cymbals within 'Spiralling'. With the Respighi piece, the bottom end could sound a little thin, diluting the piece's imposing scale, but not to the point of robbing the orchestra of its majestic range.

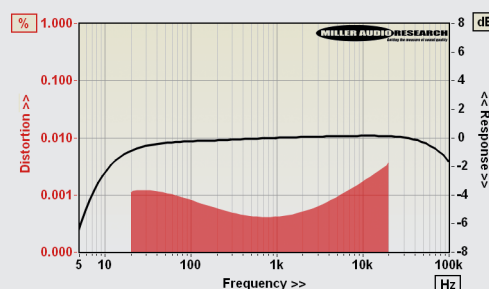
Well-recorded vocals are lapped up by the Lehmann, so where the Clearaudio conveyed the power of a performance, this Black Box went one step further by capturing the *tone* of the voice. Sure enough, the Statement may not enjoy the gravitas of costlier phono stages like the R32, but it's a prince in its realm.

Sound Quality: 77%



HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

Lehmann's entry-level 'Black Cube' phono stage offers a higher gain than either its Black Cube Decade or SEII models, with a default of +40.6dB for MM and +61.1dB for MC, even if the input overload margins are slightly reduced at 59mV and 5.7mV, respectively. Relative to standard 5mV and 500µV inputs (re. 5cm/sec) this represents a headroom of +21.4dB and +21.1dB which is acceptable for mid-output MM/MCs but a little short of the preferred +26dB. Relative to these same input levels, the Statement's A-wtd S/N ratio works out to a creditable 80dB/70dB (or 85.0dB/74.4dB re. 0dBV, MM/MC). Maximum output is 6.3V from the Statement from a usefully low 45ohm source impedance, although the subsonic filter (falling to a sensible -3dB/8Hz) also causes a rise in impedance to 500ohm at 50Hz and 2.2kohm at 20Hz which may impact slightly on subjective bass performance. The top-end response is flat to 20kHz and rolls away gently to -1.7dB/100kHz while distortion is held very low indeed at just 0.0004% through the midrange to 0.004% in the high treble [see red infill Graph, below]. PM



ABOVE: RIAA-corrected response (black, 5Hz-100kHz) plotted with distortion versus frequency (red, 20Hz-20kHz)

Input loading (MM/MC)	47kohm / 100ohm-1kohm
Input sensitivity (MM/MC re. 0dBV)	9.23mV / 0.87mV
Input overload (MM/MC)	59mV / 5.7mV
Maximum output (re. 1% THD)	6.3V
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 5mV/500µV in)	79.7dB / 69.7dB
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-1.0dB to +0.1dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.0004-0.0037%
Power consumption	4W
Dimensions (WHD)	103x45x108mm