

Grandinote Proemio



Grandinote is a young brand whose base is in the Pavia area, South of Milan. It was born few years ago due to the owner, Massimiliano Magri. Grandinote, little by little, imposed its presence on the National market and, thanks to sector shows around the world, also on the international market. Grandinote's production is dedicated exclusively to electronics but recently, at the Milano High Fidelity Show, many audiophiles had the chance to listen to their new loudspeakers. Magri facetiously defined it "Max Magri Lab", a work in progress. At the moment these loudspeakers are nameless but their performance is very interesting. Anyway in the catalogue of the brand you can find a phono preamplifier and three integrated amplifiers - one of which has two chassis- pre amplifiers and mono and stereo power amps. Massimiliano Magri uses a peculiar circuit whose name is Magnetosolid[®] that treats the solid state circuit as if it had tubes. This makes Magri declare that his appliances sum up the advantages of both technologies and do not have the disadvantages of the two. I cannot contradict this assertion but I cannot, on the other side, agree completely with it. In my house, Proemio had a classy solid state sound but seemed not to have that euphonia that many valve appliances have; and I refer to pentodes because triodes usually play in a different way, less redundant, if I may say so. Proemio is the small preamp by Grandinote - at least for now -. It is sold at a price of 7.800,00 euros and has to face a wide American and European competition. It is big - it weights a lot - big in its dimensions, original in its look, has a peculiar dimention for the world of audio since it is narrow, high (quite a bit since I could not fit it in the usual closet

for electronics) and very deep. The quality of its manufacturing is really good. It has excellent connectors on the back and the quality of the finish is really high. You may like it or not, it's a matter of tastes as it is with all the brands.



It has six inputs, three balanced and three unbalanced and two outputs, one of which is balanced. Proemio has all the volume controls and inputs on the front side. They are positioned three by three around the display that gives us information about the operation of the component, the selected input and the volume level. The display is also used to set channel balancing and the three unbalanced inputs can be changed into balanced inputs that must be used in this case with the usual Cannon/RCA adaptors. The switch on is very particular because it has a sort of security stand by of 100 seconds. Every time we change the input, the volume resets itself. This may seem annoying but it avoids situations in which the volume is too high if the sources are not well calibrated; this happens typically when they have a different level of signal output. The volume though can be adjusted for each input and when changing input the component automatically adjusts itself at the volume set by the user. The remote is small but handy enough. There is no power cable. The producer knows that a standard cable would be immediately replaced by a more performing one so he does not supply it. In my test I have used a Crystal Cable and the "Pearl" by Systems and Magic. The packaging in which the component is delivered is strong and the user's guide gives sufficient pieces of information. Proemio has been listened in the following system:

DPS 2 turntable with Mørch DP6 tonearm and Denon DL S1 cartridge, Revox B795 turntable with Ortofon MC Vivo Blue cartridge, American Hybrid Technology –P e Lehmann Black Cube phono preamplifiers, Olimpia Audio Guglielmo II e Spectral

DMC12 preamp, Spectral DMA50 and Wyred4Sound ST 250 power amp, Magneplanar MG 1.6 loudspeakers, Audio Note Az Two e Audio Note AN-E SPx (now my reference speakers system) with Systems & Magic cable, Kimber Kable, Audio Note, YBA and others.



Reading on the Grandnote website about the technology employed, I imagined a totally different sound. At least different from the sound I heard when I listened to this component in my house together with my system. I have read that Grandnotes have a sweet “tube” sound ... I switch Proemio on, I let it warm up and I listen and the sound I hear is precise, detailed, sometimes violent, material for sure and somehow live but very correct. This result is quite interesting because many times it happens that we have nice pictures, nice revivals but here we have energy, power and a nice sense of the rhythm. My ideas about valves may be different from those of other people but the thought that this preamp had something to do with valves did not cross my mind. This Proemio for me is just a good solid state. To be correct I must say that the low range seems backward just a bit. All this makes the medium-low range very quick. It is only a matter of energy and this is not detrimental to the low keys of the pipe organ or to the decay time of the viola or of the double bass, that remains always natural. I am talking about the sensation I had listening to the pre amp but to understand better it would be interesting to listen to it together with his "sibling" finals. In this way it would be possible to say if the situation changes or if this

is the brand's characteristic sound.

Just a hint, using balanced connection, the bottom range is realigned a little bit.



This is something that can be noticed with all the music genres: the violence of hard rock (Metallica, Black Album), or the sweeter rock (Dire Straits, Love Over Gold), but also Count Basie's Jazz (You and Me), or Benny Goodman's (The King). The usual Classical genres that have been mentioned many times, make no exception. The result is very pleasant, especially in the genre that I like best: classical music. With the Wyred4Sound amplifier and the Audio Note AN E SPx speakers, listening to Stravinskij's Firebird (Dorati/Decca), the timbres we obtain are very accurate and dynamic contrasts are correct (with regard to the ambience and recording; the concert hall is something different). The piccolo, when hits really hard, overcomes the entire orchestra and this is something that people that go to concerts know is possible. Hearing this effect in a HiFi component is something that pleases the ear. Another noteworthy result is the fact that the preamp does not try to cover the final sound with its own sound attitude. Timbric nuances are not less important in fact Ivo Pogorelich's piano playing Mozart (DGG) has the right sound of the string hit by the hammers covered with felt. The instrument's size and the left hand side have the right peremptory even if held back in the first octave; the effect of the pedal is very present. Dan Laurin's Vivaldi (BIS) is well reproduced and at times pleasantly blown but annoying as a very small flute can be. Or on the voices the nuances of the changes of Ella Fitzgerald's voice from throat to head in Whisper Not (Verve), or on the small nuances of Emma Kirkby's voice in Gentle Morpheus in the musical score Haendel's Alceste (Oiseau Lyre). Listening to this Proemio, a word occurred often to me: energy. This

sensation of energy never fades away and gives to the whole reproduction a dynamic sensation, violent at times where the partition requires it as in the *Sacre du Printemps* (Dorati /Decca) or in *Wien Modern* (Abbado/ DGG).

This is an Italian high quality product that does not have a popular price. But good sound is something we have to pay for.

Domenico Pizzamiglio