

Review of Grandinote's Genesi, by Matej Isak, 05/2019, on :

MONO **MS** STEREO

Grandinote Genesi preamplifier



I really didn't expect such an interest about the Grandinote Genesi flagship preamplifier. Based on the responses and requests, that came after publishing the initial article. Genesi went through many system permutations and it's about time, to sum up, the evaluation and review with the final thoughts.

So what makes Genesi ticking? It was designed from the ground up to bring unrivaled completeness and consistency of the sound. Genesi operates in pure Class A without feedback, is fully dual-mono balanced design and uses direct coupling stages in the absence of any capacitors between them. Genesi's circuits were designed and optimized to follow the music's pace as well as to have the ability to drive any power amplifier.

Grandinote circuits are very similar across all of the Massimiliano's products and one can recognize the familiar Grandinote DNA across the complete product line with the products like Shinai, Celio, Volta, etc. Even the Grandinote MACH speakers are designed to follow the sonic orientation of naturalness, speed, energy, extension, an enormous amount of details and, etc.

THE INNER CORE OF GENESI

All of the Grandinote preamplifiers (Proemio, Domino and Genesi) uses multiple power supplies. In fact, each transistor have a dedicated one! In Domino, the power supply circuits are even more sophisticated than in Proemio and stabilization is not single shunt, but double shunt design.

So, there is more filtering in action, but this is not the true reason why Domino is better than Proemio. With more complex power supply, Domino circuits can use more current and thus work at lower impedance than Proemio circuits.

Genesi uses the same signal circuits, but the difference again is in the power supply. It's not 2x, but 4x compared to the Proemio. Genesi circuits also work with lower impedance, than both Domino and Proemio. Basically, the initial design is similar, but the real differences are in the polarisation system of the signal circuits...



This particular polarisation system is very sensitive and requires highly selected components with closely match parameters for all transistors. In order to achieve this, the first step is to test all the transistors one by one and measure all of their parameters! From the batch of 1000 transistors, there are only 30-60 transistors that can be used for Genesi circuits and each Genesi required four transistors. This process of selecting between the thousands of transistors requires four days of work alone! Quite a painstaking process in order to get the required matched selection, that can be used for 7-15 of the flagship preamplifiers. Yes, there is a lot of trial and error and time invested, but this similar to the painstaking method that only a few are taking. One of the prime examples is certainly FM Acoustics, that had taken this path a long time ago. In the end, this cannot be cheap and reflects in the final price and most importantly in the sound.

The very heart of every high-end audio device is the power supply. Grandinote Proemio can be considered to implement "basic" power supply, Domino "double basic" and Genesi as the state of the art a quad "basic".

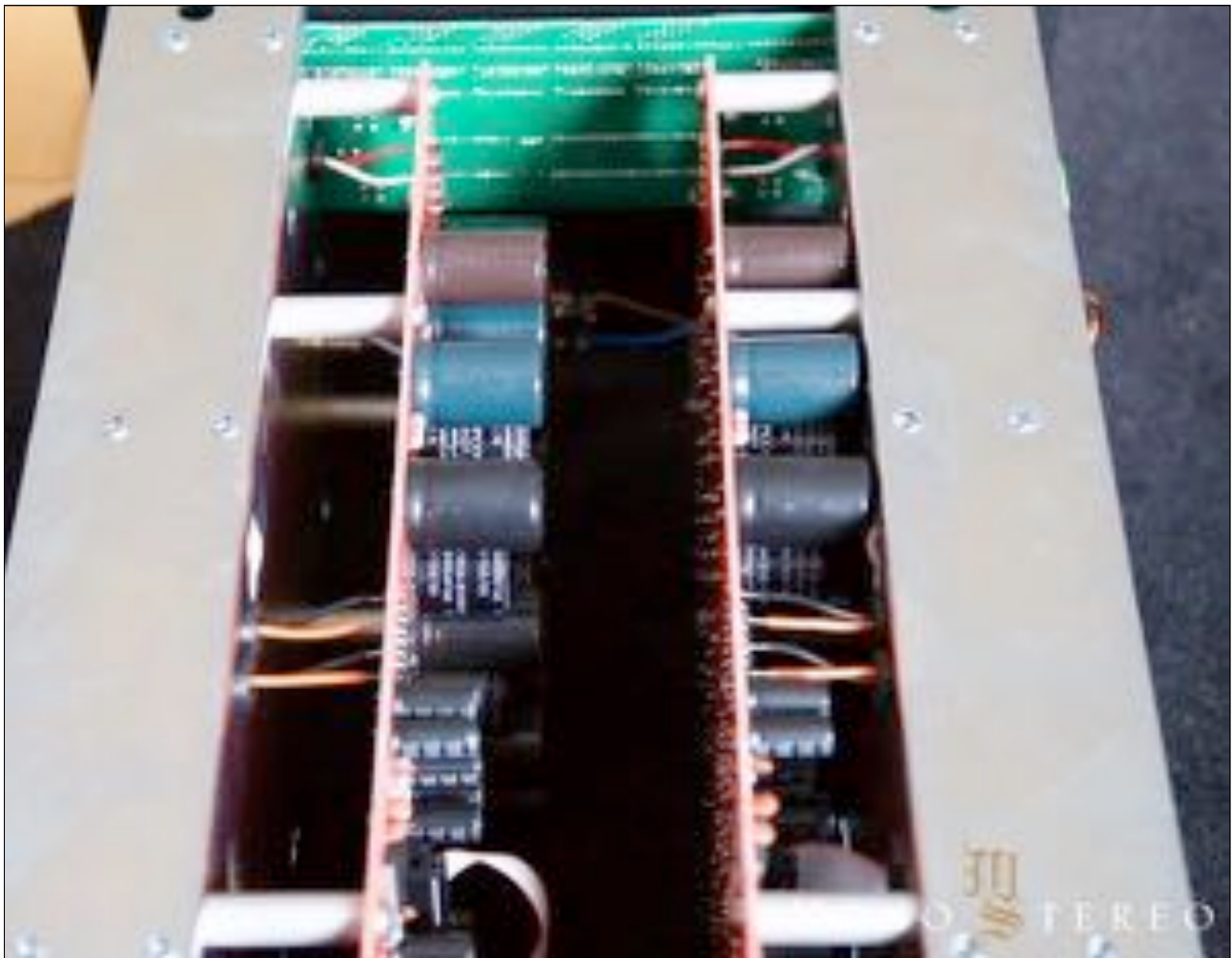
The "negative" side of the more complex power supply is the size. While Proemio PCB boards do not extend to the full chassis length, Domino's take s complete space. With Genesi, bigger, more complex power supply and consequently PCB's size becomes even larger and that called for the grander chassis.

Massimiliano is not the fan of the external power supplies as he strongly believes how power supply circuits and signal circuits need to be close to each other to performer best. He's also trying to stay away from the "more boxes-more money" philosophy and rather focus on the quality of the sound.

He had a similar problem with the initial design of Prestigio and Divina, where the separated power supply would bring down the overall weight, but the sound would suffer in a major way. The result was a separation of two channels and the birth of mono integrated amplifiers, without the external power supplies.



The Genesi challenge was similar. The PCBs grew larger and Max had to do something about it. He had decided to remove the balanced/unbalanced circuit to gain the space for the power supply circuits. The Genesi signal circuit became more "essential" than their little brothers. This particular decision closely followed Massimiliano's purist philosophy. He firmly advocates the superiority of the balanced signals and this is why Grandinote's flagship preamplifier fully adopted this approach. Massimiliano strongly advises against the use of RCA/XLR adaptor to obtain a balanced signal and also recommends to check out if the certain product that claims fully balanced design actually implements such topology.



Grandinote Genesi preamplifier is a complex device. Like most of the extreme ultra high-end audio products, it was born around the idea. With Genesi, all started with the new polarisation system project! The rest was simply a painstaking path needed to be realized. The end result comes in the form of a very unique and different sounding preamplifier.

OPERATIONAL

Genesi has only balanced inputs and one balanced output. As with all of Grandinote's products, everything is straightforward and simple to use. Genesi comes with remote control, that covers basic functions, including volume, mute and input selection. The same goes for the front panel, but with the addition of PRG and ON/OFF button.



The program button allows a few interesting settings. Each input volume level can be saved and if it's for example set to 20, the device will slowly increase the volume until it reaches the particular value. Automatic volume can be stopped at any time by pressing any button on the remote.

The display will automatically turn on if there is no active change for a few seconds. The display will of course instantly turn on with any new key pressing.

And the last, but not least function is a function of changing the "In1" input into the line output. This reduces the number of the inputs to three and the display will indicate "OUT" instead of "In1".



THE MUSIC

The organic nature of Grandinote Genesi preamplifier allowed fluent transitions through the wide variety of musical material. None of my listening notes pointed toward a specific genre priority, which is always a success. Similar to loudspeakers, there are many preamps that are not exactly chameleon-like when it comes to acting as a true via-medium in presenting different music as it is.

Nothing is perfect in this world of dualities, but we do have better or lesser approximates.



Genesi proven track record included Joni Mitchell iconic *Hejira*. While one of my favorite Mitchell's albums in not a dynamic tour de force, it's not exactly an easy transition gain wise. Without proper balancing act, *Hejira* simply sounds vague, non-interesting and completely uninvolving. This goes for guitar, Mitchell's vocal or most poetic Jaco Pastorius's fretless bass on "Coyote" and "Hejira". Genesi ability to keep everything together without sounding like a misfortunate assembly of casual artists performing for some unknown cause is most impressive and worthy of pointing out!



The Genesi ability to masterly handle dynamics and subtle shifts of tone was generously and quickly demonstrated with Anne-Sophie Mutter, Witold Lutosławski, Paul Sacher, Philharmonia Orchestra *Stravinsky: Violin Concerto / Lutoslawski: Partita; Chain 2.*

This mesmerizing Mutter's performance really pushes any preamplifier to show its virtues and miss falls. Grandinote flagship preamplifier really showed the un-abridged energetic strength. While many preamplifiers can handle basic energy transfer, many of them instantly collapse and lose the grip when the dynamic differentiation takes place. *Partita*, for Violin and Orchestra: 1. *Allegro Giusto* takes no prisoners in this regard. Genesi swiftly followed the sudden changes and didn't misbehave with a rendition of the lightning fast attacks. Timber, tone, and color were spot on with brisk rendition of smallest nuances and. with spectral shading of vigorous proportions!

"Chain 2, dialogue for Violin and Orchestra: 1. Ad libitum" can without a hitch cause mechanical stress resulting in decay scattering. This alone can go kaput forthwith and it happened too many times even with much more costly preamps. Not with Genesi. Grandinote preamplifier ability to go along with forceful metamorphosing never lost the interactive communiqué. You wouldn't believe how very few preamps can escape this most onerous task without sounding schlock. This sole feat grants Genesi a highly deserved position of the upper echelon throne.

Surreal Melody Gardot's "Our Love Is Easy" (Paris 2012) from album *Live In Europe* is another highly challenging song. Actually, the whole album is unique sonic tour de force. Without proper gain propagation, complete live performance slows down and becomes wobbly. Grandinote Genesi didn't have any problem in conveying even more dynamically challenged "The Rain (Bergen 2013)" with authority and without losing the flow.



Continuing the sonic stress, Zhao Peng's "The Moon Represents My Heart" from the album *The Greatest Basso* further sealed the Genesi stand out nature. When everything is balanced properly in the system Peng's vocal really comes forward with the most impressive formation, weight, and magnitude. Grandintone Genesi easily followed the demanding tonnage.

Genesi narrative of Holly Cole's *Temptation*, especially the "Train Song" is a well-known track that is not easily passable as O.K. on the non-balanced system and without the needed gain density. Grandionte Genesi nub once more established the beyond usualness. Genesi Cole's true of tone rendition and the absence of sonic cross contaminations offered continuing and prolonged fatigue-free returning immersions.



CONCLUSION

Over the years I've come to conclusion how preamplifier gain works best at lower dB. Genesi uses 10dB gain and this reflects intimately within the sound. With much higher gain the sound too often starts to take over sort of a push forward and steps into the equalization or compression realms.

As suggested by the Massimiliano Genesi demands 24/7 operation to let the intrinsic nature to really bloom...



There is a sense of musical clarity and sound purity with the optimization of electronic parts paraphernalia. "Everything should be as simple as it can be, but not simpler" right! Over the years I've had a pleasure of trying a diverse array of preamplifiers, both tube and solid-state, as some of the finest passive ones. In the end, there are really not so much prime time examples, regardless of the technology!

The role of proper preamplification and gain distribution is taken too often too casual, and the sonic resulted clearly follow such logic. It's more about the higher prices these days, then about the higher performance.

The preamplifier represents the very core of the gain formation where every single nuance is of utmost importance. Especially in the upper echelon of the high-end audio nothing should be neglected or compromised. While we might reach far even quality plane in the entry level the very ultra high-end audio demands much more attention and dedication. The logic of getting deriving the very last drops out of any extreme performance is an endless pursuit of all of the high-end industries.

Within extreme high-end audio, more or less we're always exposed to some exotic concept, that is followed by the electronic design. In reality, not everything esoteric will sound right. It's not that easy!

This is why with quite a few of the "ultimate" preamplifiers the sonic output follows rather the phenomena of glossolalia rather the pure language of the music.

Grandinote Genesi is quite a different beast where the sound is never lackadaisical, corrupt or augmented. Genesi follows the path of purity and simplicity in the signal amplification in the absence of signal scattering.

We're living in the 21st century where technology advancements are reaching the new heights by each year, we're still bound to the music inner core when it comes to the high-order music reproduction. Music is transcendental compared to other, mundane sense enjoyments.

The quote from the Little Prince closely follows the juxtaposition of technology and inclusion of human most delicate sensory receptors in the service of something as sublime and essential as music...

"Voici mon secret. Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux."

"Here is my secret. It is very simple: one sees well only with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eyes."

Yes, it takes more than just a skillful mind to create something very meaningful, different and radiant. It demands a delicate reasoning and the vivacious spirited soul that can not only fine-tune the voicing but also combine equitable electronic ingredients and morph sublimely everything into a harmonic and synergistic whole. And all that is nonsensical if it doesn't reach out an established interactive bond with the innermost nucleus of the music.

Massimiliano Magri - Max is a vibrant persona with a straight forward mindset, a giant heart and genuine passion for the music. And such are his products. Genesi encapsulates Max love for music, life and high-end audio in the best possible way. He not only knows what the heck he is doing, but he's also doing it above of just doing it right!

Grandinote Genesi more than smoothly translates to grandiose. A spending preamplifier that simply let the music to carry its own weight without the occurrence of sonic constraints. Genesi remarkable ability to maintain the signal pureness while responding to single quark like cues and nods that are of utmost constitutional is exceptional. Max's work deserves recognition and its own crowning moment. This is why I'm wholeheartedly giving out the Mono and Stereo most Highly Recommended Product Award!

Matej Isak

