

Perreux VP3 Phono Preamplifier Review

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Mark Gusew samples this impressive and versatile phono stage from New Zealand...

PERREUX

VP3 PHONO PREAMPLIFIER

AUD \$3,295 RRP



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In its forty-six year history, New Zealand-based Perreux has made an illustrious name for itself – not least thanks to its powerful, open sounding MOSFET amplifiers. A key side of its success comes from the pro sector, where its reputation is legendary – many concert halls, theatres and studios have benefitted from these products' reliability and sound. The Dunedin company's portfolio also includes the AUD \$3,295 VP3 phono preamplifier you see here.

Highly flexible, it has been designed to have two cartridges connected at any one time – one being a moving magnet and the other a moving coil, selected via a switch on the front panel. The rear of the unit sports no less than thirty-six DIP switches, letting users customise the Perreux to their own cartridge matching needs. You can change gain and resistive and capacitive loading for each of the MM and MC inputs. You also get the choice of either standard RIAA or IEC RIAA equalisation curves for maximum flexibility. For a full list of cartridge matching options, [click here \(http://www.perreux.com/products/pre-amplifiers/vp3-phono-stage#specifications\)](http://www.perreux.com/products/pre-amplifiers/vp3-phono-stage#specifications).

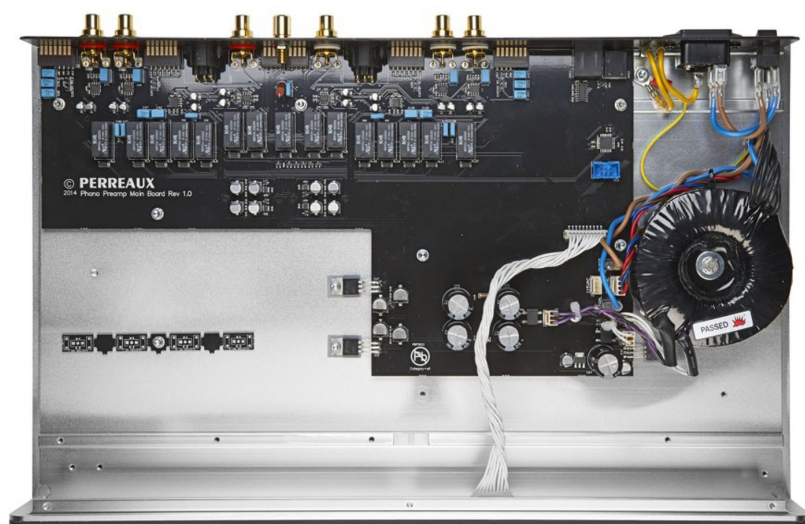


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Image: Jeremy Brew

The VP3 is a full-size device, measuring 431x277x67mm and weighing in at a not-insubstantial 7.5kg – more than many mid-priced integrated amplifiers! Indeed if anything it is overbuilt, with a thick anodised aluminium top plate and sturdy case. Touch-sensitive front switches are set into a black perspex strip, and confer a swish feel; there's also a handy mono button. Much of the product's weight comes from the oversized, shielded toroidal power transformer fitted inside which uses shunt voltage regulators. Internal layout is mirrored for optimal channel separation, and there's a choice of either unbalanced RCA phono line outputs or balanced XLRs; because there are separate buffers for each type, they can be connected simultaneously.



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SOUND QUALITY

For the duration of my listening period, I used an Ortofon 2M Red moving magnet cartridge and a Kiseki Blue moving coil. The VP3 let me hear the potential of both these cartridges, giving a clean and powerful sound with a fine tonal balance – plus an excellent rhythmic flow and very low noise.

The intrinsically open and even character of the Perreaux made for a joyous rendition of **Dire Straits'** early eighties rock classic, *Tunnel of Love*. Indeed it showed that this venerable forty-year-old recording could still sound really good. Without ever sounding bright or edgy, it gave an involving listen that was propulsive and fun. I particularly enjoyed the clarity of the drums, which cut through with great bite. Despite this, its manners were such that you'd be safe to use the VP3 with cartridges that are more on the aggressive side than mine. This is down to a sonic character that's simply not as fatiguing as some rivals, and which encourages extended listening.



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Boz Scaggs' *Lowdown* showed this phono stage's natural athleticism. Dynamics play a major part in the Perreaux listening experience, because it's fleet of foot enough to deliver instant changes of volume from low to high when asked to convey the accenting of the playing. This is a big sounding, bass-driven track with three members of Toto guesting, and the VP3 captured its unique, visceral feel. The result was pile-driving sound that had oodles of grunt, yet didn't dominate the proceedings higher up. This is in no small part thanks to natural grip.



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Image: Jeremy Brew

Another highlight of its character is soundstaging. Feed it an expansive slice of modern jazz like **Miles Davis'** *So What*, and you're instantly aware of the sheer physical space the VP3 can conjure up. This wasn't just wide enough to fill the room; it hung images sufficiently far back to give a cavernous feel, with superb depth perspective. Indeed I loved its smooth and atmospheric sound with cymbals extending beyond my loudspeakers – the magic of vinyl, just as it should be! The overall effect was delightfully immersive, reminding me what a fabulous recording this is, despite being made over sixty years ago – just one year after the launch of the stereo microgroove LP record. You'd never have thought so with the Perreaux.



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Image: Jeremy Brew

THE VERDICT



(https://www.stereonet.co.uk/images/articles/Images/StereoNET_Applause_Award_2020.png) Although not inexpensive, Perreaux's VP3 nevertheless offers fine value for money. What distinguishes it in this already crowded marketplace is its combination of excellent sound and sheer versatility. It's great to have twin phono inputs, both of which are highly configurable, plus a choice of balanced or unbalanced outputs. Factor in the excellent build quality and it's hard to imagine what more a hardened vinyl junkie could wish for. An essential audition for any analogue addict.

For more information, visit [Perreaux \(/au/brands/perreaux\)](https://www.stereonet.com/au/brands/perreaux).

GALLERY



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MARK GUSEW

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Starting his first audio consultancy business in the early '80s whilst also working professionally in the electronics industry, Mark now splits his time between professional reviewing and AV consultancy.

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