Lehmann Audio Black Cube Statement

Similar in concept to the *V-LPS* the £335 *Black Cube Statement* manages to be even smaller. It provides both high output (MM) and low output (MC) cartridge amplification and equalisation, and the case is made from two U-shaped aluminium halves painted black. The lid is damped on the inside and has a large black label with writing on the top. The input and output board-mounted phono sockets are gold-plated and protrude slightly through oversized holes in the case, next to a binding post/4mm socket earth. While all the casework is aluminium, the phono sockets themselves are made from ferromagnetic material.

The *BCS* shares the same input stage between MM (default input load 47kohm) and MC, choosing merely to change the gain of this stage as required, using one of the dip switches on the underside; these also provide alternative loadings (1kohm or 100ohm) for MC cartridges. A fourth setting allows the user to install a different load (plugged into the board), which could be either a resistor or a capacitor. There are also jumpers inside to change the amplifier gain by 10dB, or bypass the output capacitors; with two different gain stages, a total of four gain setting is therefore available. The small through-hole printed circuit board is of course double-sided. The plug-top power supply is rated at 21V 150mA and feeds a full bridge rectifier using fast diodes, a couple of 2200µF 35V reservoir capacitors and then on to the single *LM317* voltage regulator. Input gain is provided by a dual low-noise operational IC amplifier, the RIAA equalization is passive and implemented between the gain stages, while the output stage uses another dual Texas Instruments IC amplifier.

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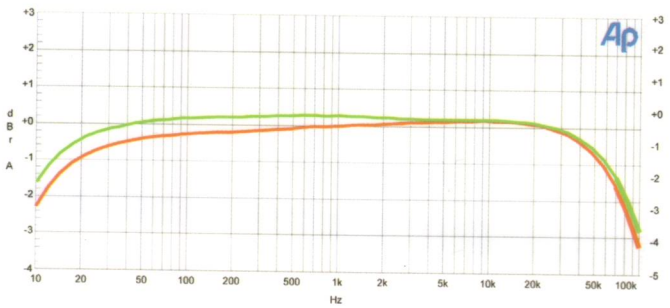
Contacts:
www.lehmannaudio.com
Henley Designs
www.henleydesigns.co.uk
Tel: 01235 511166

Lehmann Black Cube Statement MC RIAA Stereo Frequency Response R (red) and L (green)



Lab Report

Distortion increased on the higher gain setting but is still held within very acceptable levels. The channel separation measurements are very good but have a slight asymmetry. The frequency response is band-limited and the right channel on this sample had poorer RIAA filter compensation, creating a mild 0.5dB difference in response in the bass and midrange (see graph). Intermodulation distortion is well controlled especially for the MM gain levels. The signal-to-noise ratio is fine on the MM setting but only just adequate on the MC setting, so it's probably best to steer clear of the lower output MC cartridges. Overload margins were good and the maximum output level was quite healthy: over 4V was available into a 100kohm load, and its low output impedance meant that output held up well into 600ohm. Sensitivities are well chosen, and as the load impedance is ultimately user selectable, there shouldn't be any problems with cartridge matching.

Sound Quality

On both MC and MM settings, this unit proved amply good enough to keep the listeners interested. It's quick, has good overall timing, perfectly acceptable tonality, and a low enough noise floor for all but really low output moving-coil cartridges. It is at home on all types of music and is difficult to fault at this price point. Compared to significantly more exotic and expensive models, the *Black Cube Statement* sounds a little pinched and forward; it just doesn't involve the listener to the same extent. But I still think it's actually quite special at its relatively modest price.

Conclusions

I found the *Black Cube Statement* more enjoyable than the Musical Fidelity model, as it's more informative and dynamically interesting across a variety of cartridge types. It is significantly more expensive, but not dramatically so, and an overall score of 37 indicates that it too deserves firm recommendation.