



The Still Point

In more than 40 years of my engagement with music reproduction, I have never before held a component by Rolf Gemein in my hands. It was high time.

We live in strange times, more so than ever before. Yet what I seek in these days is a haven of calm - and it is music. Music lives and breathes authenticity, and it needs devices that are capable of conveying precisely that. Rarely have I felt such an urgency to find this fine sensitivity. Whoever possesses this delicacy must also

be able to find it. This refined sensibility is not new to Rolf Gemein, founder and creative force behind Symphonic Line. In between, there were whispers of a certain tranquility emanating from his devices. In an era when almost everything seems able to touch us only superficially, to invite music in and allow it to remain - that is rare.

Finest Sensitivity My first conversation with Rolf Gemein was a special one. Rarely have I encountered a hi-fi manufacturer who possesses such an immediate connection - perhaps born of a mutual openness. And an extraordinary sensitivity and perceptive ability form the foundation of his work. Added to this is a deep bond with music and with his instruments, which always stand in the service of music reproduction. From the very first notes of the RG 14 Edition MKS S, it was clear to me how this man sees and understands his devices. For he connects these components directly with the music - and makes you forget their reproduction.

Symphonic Line
Germany



Rear view, bottom left:
The rear panel of the RG 14 Edition MK 5 S.
Below, there is even free space for XLR

The Man and the Company About Symphonic Line and Rolf Gemein, virtually everything has already been written - one might almost think there is nothing left to say. Perhaps this is precisely what makes this company so exceptional.

It began in childhood. Inspired by his grandfather, who was a piano and vocal instructor, Rolf discovered the world of tones. Like a natural born searcher, he sought pure sound. These harmonic vibrations touched and shaped his entire being. Years later, together with two friends in a Dusseldorf ice cream cafe, he decided to establish the best amplifier in the world. This was the begin of the Company "Vernissage". So the tinkering began - equipped with his gift for learning components and their characteristics empirically, gathering immense experience over time.

Yet three individuals proved too different in the long run to carry forward the shared vision. From the foundations laid during those early experiments, Rolf Gemein created Symphonic Line.

Hi-Fi components can, in principle, be designed in two ways: technically circuit-driven or tuned through voicing. Rarely do both approaches come together. Certain circuit concepts had

already been commissioned decades ago. Otherwise, the engineer works with ideas he develops himself. Ultimately, everything is crafted in his own workshop - like Jonathan Carr, for example, who develops and tunes his Lyra tonearms himself, though he does not physically build them.

Everything You Need

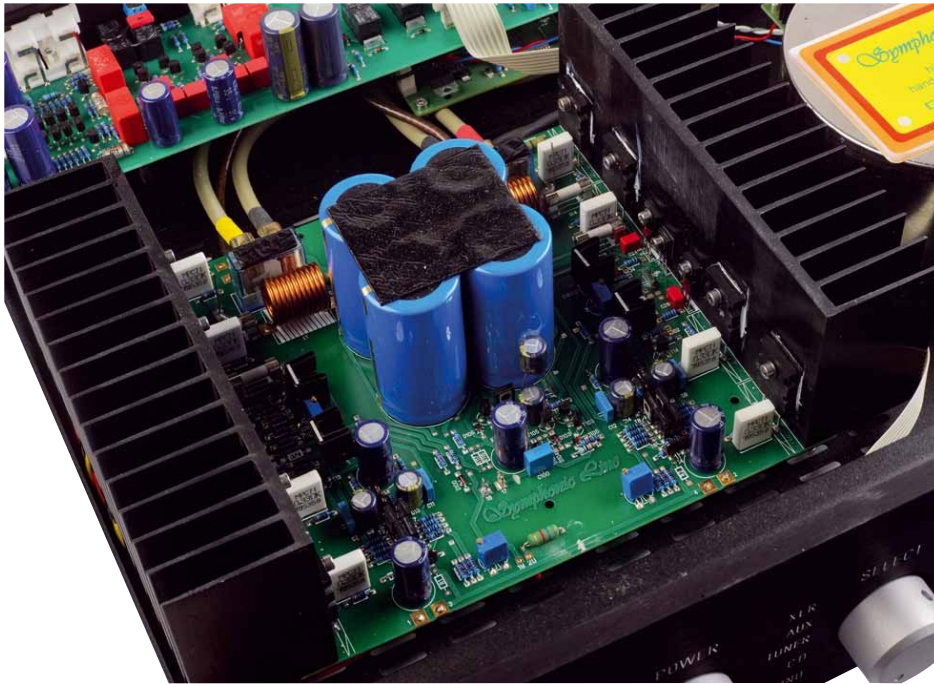
The Symphonic Line range is broad and can appear confusing. Yet if one immerses oneself deeply enough, one quickly recognizes light in the seeming darkness. Rolf Gemein does not build to fill a gap in the market. He builds what he considers necessary. And if a manufacturer tells him that the budget is insufficient, then



Haptic quality:
The large knobs invite you to operate them; they switch with such wonderful precision and feel exactly as they should.



A small look inside.
Reassuring capacitors and the massive main transformer. The sticker on it serves no optical purpose.



Short signal paths are standard at Symphonic Line. Have you noticed the cable in the background? That, too, has been evaluated for its sonic impact.

One might buy a used component and lovingly bring it up to the latest standard. But where does one still find something like that? Rolf Gemein has been doing exactly this since the early 1980s, because the mere idea of discarding well-made things runs contrary to his nature. It also matters deeply to him that as much as possible comes from Germany: the capacitors, for example, are a custom production from Northern Germany. For Rolf Gemein, the availability of good sound - which he rightly regards as a form of healing - is a true calling, never a marketing construct. The RG 14 Edition MKS S therefore possesses qualities that are rarely found at this price level - if at all. And truth be told, one does not really need more than this integrated amplifier to listen to music in deep contentment. But let that remain between us.

Much More Than Technology

Around ten years ago, I once confessed to former T +A chief developer Lothar Wiemann that his devices had once left me emo ~ ally untouched, whereas something had changed in the meantime. He laughed and said that earlier they had only measured - now they listened more.

With Rolf Gemein, the situation is almost the reverse: electronically, his devices are beyond reproach, but never obsessively demonstrative. They become exceptional through his Individual Resonance Pattern Alignment (RMA). One might compare it to the fine-tuning of a Formula 1 car, individually set up for a specific driver. In a similar way, Gemein employs, for example, a special gel beneath his signature labels that absorbs unwanted resonances - of which there are many within any device - while generating positive vibrational behavior. For his tuning to achieve true coherence, Gemein primarily considers three categories: energy, phase

and perception. Particularly crucial is the ability to deliver high energy in extremely short time spans - across all frequency ranges simultaneously. For this reason, he uses exceptionally potent power supplies. In our review unit, a newly developed transformer encapsulated in mu-metal is at work. Ultimately, the precise details of what he does and where he does it are secondary. He knows why he does it - and we can hear the result. One further note: the C37 lacquer, which Gemein applies at selected critical points, was developed by Austrian violin maker Dieter Ennemoser. The resonant behavior of this lacquer corresponds to the density of human bone - hence the designation C37. Its application may therefore be understood as a bridge to human perception. Gemein uses it to damp sensitive components so that they retain their specific resonance characteristics for as long as possible. All Symphonic Line circuits operate in pure Class A for approximately the first watt, only transitioning into Class AB at higher output levels. The design also reflects the size of the employed heat sinks. Fundamentally, however, the topology ultimately follows the logic of Class B. The circuit boards are made of 2 mm epoxy, copper-plated up to 130 micrometers and generously gold-plated at sonically critical points. Gemein's effort is substantial - and costly - but his devices are typically extremely durable and sonically of the highest caliber. With an outstanding phono input offering both MM and MC capability, as well an exceptionally fine headphone amplifier, the RG 14 Edition MK 5 S has everything what a true music lover needs - without digital gimmickry.



Timeless. At the Duisburg manufactory, the design wheel is not constantly turned - because it has been in harmonious balance for many years.

Integrated amplifier Symphonic Line RG 14 Edition MK 5 S

Equipment

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Dimensions (W x H x D in mm) | 450 X 110 X 420 |
| Weight | 18.2 kg |
| Design Principle | Transistor integrated amplifier |
| Power Output | 120 watts/ 8 ohms, 175 watts/ 4 ohms |
| Inputs | 4 x high-level (incl. tape in and out) 1 x phono MM / MC |
| Outputs | 1 x headphone (6.3 mm) 1 x tape out, 1 x pre out |
| Warranty | 2 years |

Rating

| | | |
|---------------|------|-----|
| Sound | 70 % | 1+ |
| Laboratory | 15 % | 1.2 |
| Practical use | 15 % | 1+ |

- ⊕ Outstanding sound
- ⊕ Thoughtful feature set
- ⊕ Superb craftsmanship

Reference class 1+

HiFi
1/26
Test
TV·HIFI

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Price | 7.000 Euro |
| Distribution | Symphonic Line, Duisburg |
| Telephone | +49 203 315656 |
| Internet | www.symphonic-line.de |

Price performance:
outstanding