



VINCENT STU-2 £599

This interesting German built hybrid FM RDS/AM tuner sports a solid-state tuner section and valves for the audio output circuitry. One look at the Vincent's front panel and you know you're dealing with a quality piece of kit, the centrepiece of which is a glass 'porthole' window showing a valve behind it that can be illuminated to varying degrees (or turned off altogether) by a set of orange LEDs behind either side of the window! The overall effect is certainly, erm, individual...

The tuner provides 30 presets, although the method of storing/recalling preset stations is idiosyncratic. One feature I found useful that was unique to this tuner was that you could enter the frequency of the FM station directly. Searching in frequency using autotuning was also the fastest out of all of the tuners in the group test – this makes it a little odd that tuning by entering the desired preset number was so slow. The remote control on its own was a work of art. The case of the remote control is made of the same material that the silver front panel is made of and has small circular buttons. The very solidly built remote is quite heavy but well balanced, and it feels and looks much better than the plastic remote controls provided with the other tuners. Sensitivity of the FM reception was also very good.

SOUND QUALITY

Classical music on Radio 3 sounded luxuriant yet highly detailed and with a very open soundstage, making for a highly engaging experience overall. Jazz on Radio 3 was also extremely impressive, being smooth yet exquisitely detailed. On Classic FM, the tuner's mellow sound

was very pleasant to listen to. After the classical music stations, the velveteen sound of the Vincent was best suited to the radio stations playing MOR music, such as Radio 2, and its sound perfectly complemented the cool jazz and soul played on Smooth FM.

Delivery of the pop and rock music stations by the STU-2 was a bit of a mixed bag, however. The big but mellow sound of the tuner wasn't as well suited to the style of music these stations play, and although some tracks were very pleasing to listen to, rock tracks in particular, and loud tracks in general, were not handled as well as they could be, with the

tuner providing an overly rich sound. In particular, the Vincent is quite unforgiving when it is presented with audio that the radio stations haven't taken a great deal of care with (which is unfortunately a fact of life with many pop and rock stations), and most of the other tuners in this group test were more forgiving in this respect.

Overall, the impressive Vincent STU-2 provides superb sound quality on classical music and middle-of-the-road radio stations, it is gorgeous to look at, easy to use and it has the best quality remote control I've ever seen, but if you like rock or pop music then you'd be better buying one of the other tuners in the test.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

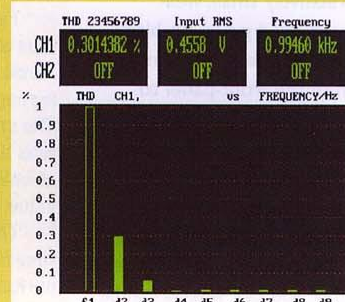
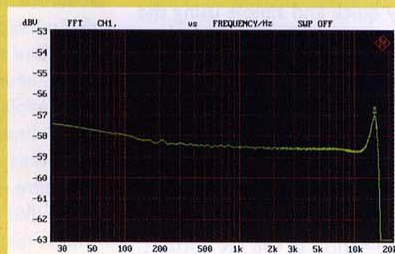
The unusual downward slope in this tuner's frequency response, amounting to a -1dB fall from 20Hz up to 200Hz, is enough to give the Vincent STU-2 a feeling of solid bass and good but not excessive warmth. The effect will be subtle, but that's best. An mp3 filter kicks up sharply at 16kHz, or so it appears, but all the same at -45dB there was a fair amount of pilot on the output, if no subcarrier. In all the STU-2 has a wide measured frequency response and will likely sound obviously better balanced than the many of the tuners in this issue.

Distortion levels were reasonably low at 50% modulation, comprising mostly second harmonic in the mono sum channel, our analysis shows. Channel separation, again at full modulation, was also good. This is a fairly quiet tuner too, hiss measuring -70dB IEC A weighted. Like many modern tuners this state (full quieting) was maintained down to 0.6mV p.d. across the aerial input, before hiss started to rise. Consequently, the STU-2 will stay quiet even with modest aerials. Ultimate (IHF) stereo sensitivity was good at 42µV for 50dB of hiss when receiving stereo.

The STU-2 should meet all expectations for sound quality. It should

have strong bass and a fulsome sound in use, with negligible noise. NK

Frequency response	11Hz-16.3kHz
Stereo separation	32dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.3%
Hiss (IEC A)	-70dB
Signal for minimum hiss	0.6mV
Sensitivity	
mono	11µV
stereo	42µV



VERDICT

Excellent sound quality on the classical and middle-of-the-road radio stations, but its sound doesn't suit rock or pop music

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FOR

- sumptuous sound
- fast tuning
- individualistic styling

AGAINST

- not suited to rock/pop