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JUNE 2004

Ultimate SURROUND SOUND

**JIM FOSGATE'S
FAP V1 PREAMP**

IN REVIEW:

Focal-JMLab, Jean-Marie Reynaud,
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When PR guy Adam Sohmer first told me about the Fosgate Audionics FAP V1, I thought that the impressive-looking device would be the first analog preamp-processor—heck, the first tube *anything*—in my multichannel system. Then I looked closer at the user's manual I'd downloaded from Fosgate's website. Hmmm. No Dolby Digital, no DTS—just Dolby Pro Logic. Of course, the FAP V1 is Jim Fosgate's signature expression of Dolby Pro Logic, and I guess that counts for something. But the more I thought about it, the more interesting a prospect the FAP V1 seemed.

The FAP V1's attractions are many. First, it's all analog—just what I'd want for the reproduction of multichannel SACD and DVD-Audio discs. Second, its configurable Matrix and Panorama modes, along with its Dolby Pro Logic II processing, can enhance two-channel sources to give a more exciting surround experience without filling the room with a wash of corrupting sound. Third, in terms of construction and design, the FAP V1 is a statement product from the inventor of Dolby Pro Logic. Finally, it's all analog, and while its vacuum tubes won't attract everyone, it's certainly a curiosity in the multichannel market.

The FAP V1 is just plain gorgeous. After I'd unpacked it, I couldn't wait to put the tubes in their gold-plated sockets and see their images reflected in the mirror surface of the transformer housing. The hand-finished Bubinga casework, its luminous metalwork, and Jim Fosgate's signature plaque on the side, all scream "Limited Edition." (I'm told only 50 such units will be made.) I didn't open the FAP V1's chassis, but the accurately tracking ($\pm 0.05\text{dB}$), eight-deck, 23-detent volume control alone probably costs more than the entire parts list of an Audio Refinement Pre5. When I turned the unit on and dimmed the lights, it looked more like an illuminated portable organ than a piece of audio electronics. It's heavy as an organ, too.

On the rear end, along with the expected IEC line connector and fuse post, are four toggle switches and a slew of input/output RCA jacks. The four toggles enable: 1) front L/R channel high-pass, 2) center channel high-pass, 3) rear- and side-channel high-pass, and 4) subwoofer phase inversion. All the high-pass filters are -3dB at 80Hz . The rest of the rear panel is occupied by eight pairs of input jacks, one pair of two-channel tape outputs, and one set each of 7.1-channel inputs and outputs.

The front panel has a large volume control in the center, and above it an LED array that indicates the activity of each channel. While fascinating to watch, the LEDs' action never seemed closely correlated with what I was hearing. Left of the volume control are: 1) an Input selector, 2) a Record Out selector, 3) a Mode control, 4) a Bass Blend switch, and 5) a Power switch—all self-explanatory except, perhaps, the mode and Bass Blend controls. The Mode switch permits selection of Stereo Bypass, Pro Logic II, Panorama, Matrix, or 7.1 Bypass. While the two Bypass modes are supposed to sidestep all surround logic, bass management and the subwoofer output *are* enabled when Stereo Bypass is selected.

Pro Logic II and Panorama are similar, the former giving a more frontal presentation, the latter a more widespread one, especially with the addition of a pair of side-channel speakers. Both of these modes benefit from the FAP V1's facility to adjust "centerness" and frontal width. Matrix bypasses the logic steering used in the other processes and will distribute a mono signal to all available channels. I didn't use that mode much, as I had no mono sources and it made a mush of the stereo signals. Finally, with Bass Blend you can direct bass to the subwoofer as well as to the front channels, if your front speakers are large and you want more overall bass in the room.

Right of center are these controls: 6) Shelf-EQ, 7) Rear+Side Low-Pass, 8) Center Width, 9) Dimension, and 10) Balance. All but the last require some comment. The Shelf-EQ switch reduces HF (-3dB at 5kHz) at the input of the surround processor, and Rear+Side Low-Pass reduces HF (-3dB at 8kHz) in the outputs of the surround channels. These can serve to reduce sibilance and other highly directional cues that should remain in the front channels if you're sitting much closer to the surround speakers than to the fronts. Despite the rare sound that leaked to the rear, I didn't find such adjustments necessary; they might be useful in some setups.

Description: 7.1-channel, tubed analog preamplifier with Dolby ProLogic II surround processor. Tube complement: nine 6N1P, one 5AR4. Inputs: eight line-level pairs (RCA) (two-channel); one 7.1-channel analog bypass (RCA). Outputs: 7.1-channel (RCA) and two-channel tape. Input impedance: 200k ohms. Nominal voltage gain: 6dB. Channel gain trim range: -6.5dB to $+7.5\text{dB}$. Absolute polarity: inverting. Nominal output level: 2V RMS (15V maximum). Output impedance: 750 ohms. THD+noise (at 1V RMS input): $<0.003\%$ 1kHz, 0.2%, 20Hz–20kHz (stereo); $<0.3\%$, 20Hz–20kHz (PL II and 7.1 modes, surround and center channels); $<0.07\%$, 20–100Hz (PL II

subwoofer); $<0.02\%$, 20Hz–5kHz (7.1 subwoofer). S/N Ratio (ref. 1V): 92–98dB, depending on mode and channel.

Dimensions: 21" W by 10.5" H by 16" D. Weight: 45 lbs.

Finish: Anodized aluminum, bubinga wood.

Serial number of unit reviewed: Not indicated.

Price: Price: \$13,000. Approximate number of dealers: 70.

Manufacturer: Fosgate Audionics, A division of Rockford Corporation, 546 South Rockford Drive, Tempe, AZ 85281. Tel: (866) 777-7282, (866) 888-4404. Fax: (480) 894-1528. Web: www.fosgateaudionics.com.