

- SMc Audio -

Hand -Tuned Performance by Steve McCormack

McCormack TLC-1 Preamplifier Fact Sheet

The TLC-1 "passive" preamplifier is an excellent basic preamp for the audio purist. It is also extremely cost-effective in that it offers an unprecedented degree of neutrality, transparency, and harmonic texture at its relatively modest price. While active preamps have their own virtues, this level of performance is very difficult to achieve in a conventional design - at any price.

The TLC-1's design has evolved from the original "Line Drive" series of passive preamps, dating back to 1984. While the concept of a passive preamp is superficially simple, achieving the desired performance with "real world" associated equipment is a complex and subtle problem. The TLC-1 is a very successful design, and offers more than a glimpse of true high-end performance in its stock form. However, the search for even higher levels of performance is ongoing, and I am pleased to be able to offer the benefit of my research in the form of the upgrades listed below.

- TLC-1 Upgrade Options -

Volume Controls - the true heart of any preamp:

The TKD stepped-attenuator is the finest volume control I have found, which is why it is specified as part of the Revision A upgrade. Its tracking is almost literally perfect, and it has enough steps (40) to allow precise control of your volume level. The improvement in bass depth and power, transient definition, precision focus, and staging with this control is amazing.

The TKD conductive-plastic volume potentiometer is just behind its "big brother" in performance. Its sound is wonderfully smooth and rich, while exhibiting fine detail and "air." It is not quite as transparent as the stepped-attenuator, and focus is not quite as sharp. But, do not be misled - this is the finest true potentiometer I have ever heard.

RCA Jacks:

WBT RCA jacks are like beautiful pieces of "audio jewelry," and they deliver the goods sonically, as well. These jacks combine fast, detailed, and transparent sound with a degree of "body," warmth, and richness I have not found in any other jack.

Cardas RCA jacks - a classic. I've used these parts for many years, and still love them. Fast, detailed, and transparent, and they wear very well over time.

The Active Circuitry Upgrade: Although the TLC-1 is designed as a "passive" preamplifier (one with no gain), it incorporates a high-performance, actively-buffered output section in addition to the purely passive output. This is done so that you have the option of using long or high-capacitance interconnect cables, or amplifiers with low input impedance (25Kohm or below) - options unavailable to owners of purely passive designs. This circuit is built of active electronics, but has no gain - which is why it is referred to as a "buffer."

The circuit itself is deceptively simple - just a matched pair of JFET transistors. But it takes a very complex and sophisticated regulated power supply to make it really sing. In addition, it must be built with the finest parts available to compliment the performance of the TKD volume controls.

Many people feel that the active buffer provides better bass performance and infuses the music with more dynamic life, but at the expense of the incredible purity of the passive output. Now, you don't have to choose! This upgrade is a complete rebuild of the active circuitry, resulting in a buffer of surpassing clarity, transparency, dynamics, and, yes - purity, too. You no longer have to be concerned about the length and type of interconnect you run to your amplifier, or which amplifier you choose.

Upgrade Procedure

Select your preferred options from the list below. Multiply the number of RCA jack pairs you have chosen by the amount shown. Add the totals for all selected options, and then add the Fixed Cost amount (\$170). This will give you the total amount for your upgrade, less shipping. The shipping cost can be determined when we schedule your upgrade.

Select from the following options:

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|--|----------|
| - TKD Stepped Attenuator | \$450.00 |
| - TKD Conductive Plastic Volume Control | \$150.00 |
| - Volume control resistor bypass for even better performance | - \$50 |
| - WBT RCA Jacks (per installed pair) | \$60.00 |
| - Cardas RCA Jacks (per installed pair) | \$30.00 |
| - Active Circuitry (Buffer & Regulators) Upgrade | \$450.00 |

Fixed Costs:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| Test / Disassembly / Re-assembly / Final Test | \$170.00 |
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The TLC-1 Revision A

For those of you who would like "the Full Monty" performed on your TLC-1, we offer the Revision "A." This is a complete rebuild of the preamp, including the TKD Stepped Attenuator and the Active Circuitry Upgrade. WBT RCA jacks are installed on 2 inputs (your choice) and both sets of main outputs. CARDAS RCA jacks complete the other input and Tape circuit jacks. Damping material is added to the circuit board and chassis to suppress vibration and further purify the sound.

The cost for Revision A:

\$1300.00 for a Deluxe TLC-1
\$1400.00 for a Standard TLC-1

Applicable CA tax and shipping not included. Please make your check or money order payable to **SMc Audio**.

Please call us at (760) 732-0352 to discuss which upgrade best suits your requirements.

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