

CORRECTIONS

In my article "The LP797 Ultra-Low Distortion Phono Preamp," *aX* Sept. '07, there are three errors:

1. Schematic, Fig. 2, p. 8: The MM/MC switch S1A (left channel shown) should have the top terminal (labeled MC) grounded.
2. Also on Fig. 2: R19 should be 2k87, not 2k2.
3. Power Supply Schematic, Fig. 3, p. 10: The labeling on the wall-wart output and J5 says "+24V" and "-24V." This would be 48V applied, which would fry the entire preamp! The labeling should be simply "24V," with + and - polarity markings.

I apologize for any problems these errors might have caused.

Dennis P. Colin

HEARING AND BLIND TESTING

I thoroughly enjoyed Ed Dell's terrific book review in *aX* July '07 ("Music In-

side the Brain," p. 6). This subject has special importance to me because of a health condition I've been dealing with for the past ten years. I have hyperacusis (hypersensitivity to certain sounds).

My dad and I had purchased some favorably reviewed high-end power amps. The sound was great, but after a couple of weeks we noticed our ears were hurting. . . even at low playback levels. For a year we experimented with different cables, source components, acoustics, and so on, but ultimately discovered that the problem was caused by RF/EMI noise from the power line. A power line filter solved the problem. By that time my condition was worse, and fan sounds, some stereos, and loud sounds could make my ears hurt/ring.

Initially I got a lot of bad information from doctors that scared me. And I read horror stories in medical journals about deafness with loud ringing, and so on. I eventually retreated indoors wearing heavy ear protection.



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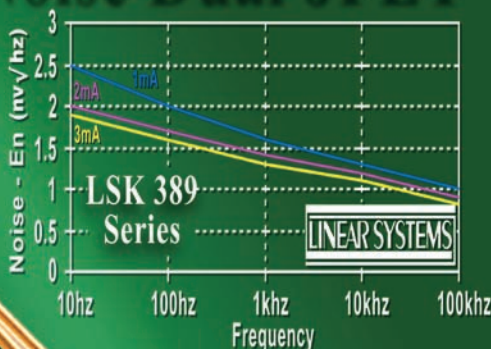
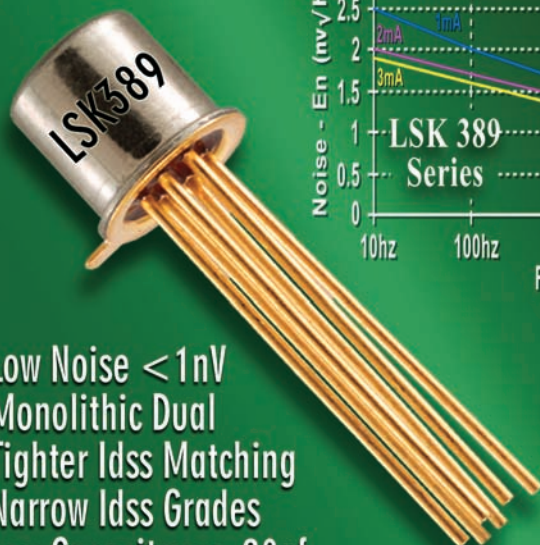
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In seeking help I learned about Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT) and the Neurophysiological Model for Hearing developed by Dr. Pawel J. Jastreboff (www.tinnitus.org). In short, it explains that the brain turns up the gain (electrical potential) for sounds with special meaning. When we're born (even before, as you suggested), new sounds we hear go through a period of evaluation and are stored in a relatively empty auditory cortex. The meaning we attach to a sound determines the gain. This is a positive or negative experience depending on the meaning of the sound.

For example, someone calls out your name in a loud crowded room, you respond. However, if someone asked you who else was called out in this room, you probably wouldn't know.

And there are sounds that people have a natural aversion to (i.e., nails scratching a chalkboard, styrofoam rubbed together). Other sounds are naturally pleasant, eliciting excitement or goose-pimple response.

Sounds with no particular importance

we hear on a regular basis are filtered out. The cochlea is a surprisingly noisy place, but these sounds are also filtered out. It's called habitation.

As a result of my fear of sound (phonophobia), silence, and my complete avoidance of sounds that hurt, I had increased sensitivity (aversion) to all sounds. As it turns out, hyperacusis and tinnitus (ringing ears) are not permanent or the results of hearing loss. Tinnitus is simply randomly firing neurons. Many people continue hearing the sound because they find it threatening and develop an aversion to it.

For the past nine years I've been using TRT to reverse positive (phobic) feedback loops. I slowly listen more to sounds I have aversion to, facing my disaffections and think good thoughts. The very opposite of what got me into trouble.

The "Cables" letter published in the same issue (p. 43) got me thinking about blind testing. Peter Moritz said, "no proof to my ears and brain and any ears/brains used in any blind tests that cables

are audibly influencing the sound." I think blind testing doesn't work because it puts what we've learned about sound from past experience in the trash—essentially desensitizing our ears. Moreover, it's unnatural. It's like taking an exam without studying for it.

For blind testing to work you need to have past experience with the sound you are listening to. This lets you form beliefs about the sound.

Take the cable blind testing, for example. You could have cables labeled A, B, and C and have the subject listen to the cables for 2-4 weeks in a system he is familiar with. He would then list the cables in order of preference. Afterwards, you could blind-test the subject to see whether his cable preference still matched.

A person who has a strong belief that cables all sound the same probably doesn't hear a difference. For example, Peter Moritz's belief that cables don't influence sound causes any difference he may hear to lose its importance, effectively desensitizing the ear—nega-

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tive feedback. Conversely, an audiophile recently claimed that adding a small amount of contact enhancer to the AC plug of his boom box made a huge difference in sound quality. His belief that it would make a difference likely enhanced the sound according to his expectations—positive feedback.

Often, I'll go into my computer room to turn my system off. I have aversion to the computer sound. I'd swear I'd hear the fan running, only to find the computer is sleeping. Of course, then the fan sound disappeared. It makes you wonder what's real.

A TV program once noted that the electrical signals in the brain have the same harmonic structure as music. After I had retreated from sound, wearing heavy ear protection, for three days I heard all the electrical signals in my head (i.e., heart beat, and so on). It was some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard.

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SUGGESTIONS

How about an article or two on turntable setup or repair? Setting cartridge angles, tweaks and tips for better performance. There is still a lot of interest in vinyls: Thorens, Pro-ject, Music Hall, Dual or others, including custom-made units.

Jim Petersen
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I read with interest Daisuke Koya's article on sound level meters (June '07, p. 16). I'm not very familiar with this kind of instrument, but I've seen them being intensively used by professionals. I believe an interesting article would be a discussion on how such a meter should be used and what to look for when measurements are made in a home entertainment hi-fi set.

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