

Vioelectric V90 - A Good Amp

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A Review On:

[Vioelectric HPA V90](#)



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Pros: Outstanding Performance with Orthos

Cons: None of the jewelry of its older brothers

The Vioelectric V series amps are consumer/ audiophile grade products from German pro audio house Lake People.

Fried Reim, CEO and head designer at Lake People/ Vioelectric, has recently released a Lake People branded line of consumer grade headphone amps as well. The new Lake People G series line will include both balanced and unbalanced configurations.... The G103S (Single Ended) G103P (Pro - Balanced), G109S and G109P.

When looking for my desktop amplifier solution, I had initially focused on the G109S (after wringing my hands over Burson, Apex, Woo and Schiit options) however in a last minute change of heart opted for the runt of the litter in the Vioelectric line. The V90 shares a good portion of its design traits with the G109 and so my decision was largely one of aesthetics.... I opted to pay an extra \$15USD for the Vioelectric logo laser engraved across the face plate.

I placed the order by email through Fried's sales office (whom were tremendously helpful and courteous through the process), and the amp arrived two business days later. Out here in California I did have to pay UPS a \$30.00 import duty fee to take delivery of the amp from UPS. I mentioned this to another Head-fi'er who had recently purchased a Lake People amp but he did not have any import duty on his parcel which made its way to Utah. I have to believe its either something associated with the Local Port of Long Beach or California... The State of California loves itself some fees and taxes so this does not come as a complete surprise. That said if you are in California, you should recognize that this will likely need to be included in your budget.

The Amp came well protected in an egg crate foam lined box with a simple 10 page owners manual, power cord and the amp itself.

Physical Appearance



The V90 is the entry level Vioelectric amp and as such is not adorned with the same jewelry as his older siblings. Where the V100, V181 and V200 showcase the brands iconic gold chassis feet, the V90 makes do with simple smallish but chunky black rubber feet. Where the V100, V181 and V200 have 8mm thick aluminum face plates with beveled edges and beveled insets at the headphone jacks and power buttons.... The V90 has a simple flat face plate with headphone jacks and power button surface mounted.

It does have the same Vioelectric logo and model number laser etched into the face plate along the top and left edge, the same suede like Nextel coating around the remaining chassis, the same textured aluminum knob and the same deep blue LED below the power switch. But for nearly \$200 less than the V100 and at nearly half the price of the V181 and V200

costs have to be cut somewhere.... I've gotta believe I am in the majority when I say I'd rather they cut corners on bling than components that affect the sound quality.

However even without the other pretty little bells and whistles, with the laser etched logo, model number and the grey suede coating, it is still a very handsome and well built amp. Sitting along side my headphones and laptop, it is still the prettiest looking piece of kit in the bunch.... black feet and all.

As far as measurements, the V90 is a full 4 inches shorter than his older brothers but measures the same in width and height. As far as how it matches up spec wise.... I'll leave that to you. If you are interested in the model by model breakdown, here is a link to the technical spec sheet for all 4 amps on Lake People's site:

<http://www.vioelectric.de/Pages/en/technical-data.php>

What is worth noting is the current delivery these amps provide. The V90 is the smallest of the Vioelectric line and yet it kicks 1300mw into a 32ohm load & 2300mw into a 100ohm load. And for what it is worth the V90 also scores of the highest of all Vioelectric models with 730mw into a 600 ohm load... This high current delivery means the Vioelectric can and does exert masterful control of headphones.

Opening up the case the path to sonic nirvana is paved with op-amps and largely smd parts. The one major hit that the V90 takes on his older siblings (besides gold feet) is the use of smd parts versus the V100 and up using largely thru hole components. The amp runs both left and right channels through sockets carrying NE5532 op-amps in the gain stage, on the output side we have Burr Brown OPA551's. There is a large Alfamag transformer with a decent sized bank of smoothing capacitors. An ALPS RK14 pot handles volume and headphones plug in through silver plated Neutrik 1/4" headphone jacks.... The dual jacks is a real nice benefit however I have noticed that I can't really keep different headphones plugged in both to do swaps unless I have two sets of cans with relatively close impedance and sensitivity. Setting my Denon D5000's on one and the Hifiman HE400's on the other proved dangerous as I turned the dial to twelve to get a good volume out of the HE400's.... the Denon's were being pushed to near their limit and when I went to switch back to the Denon's realized just how painfully loud they were.

If you do plug two in at the same time you can here an audible little scratch when connecting however there is no drop off in volume.

A few other things to note is that there are AC/DC couplers for a certain level of flexibility and a ground lift jumper inside to alleviate hum.... pro audio habits die hard I guess. I work somewhere where I do not have issues with ground lifting hum but I supposed it could prove handy in the right circumstances for the right person.

So what does it sound like?

The first couple listening sessions I was staggered by just how good my Hifiman headphones sounded. I had been playing them through an ALO Audio portable amp (Continental and National) and thought they had some serious limitations on them because I tended to hear distortion and frayed edges coming into play whenever I took the HE400 above a certain volume. There is none of that slop with the V90. It's high levels of current bear obvious sonic fruit as it takes authoritative control over the mini transducers in both my planar magnetic and dynamic headphones and does exactly what it is supposed to do.... amplify the signal.

The amp is not colored.... I would call it neutral but this is the buzz word that alarms those looking for terms like "lush" "warm" and "smooth". Trust me when I say it does not lack for musicality... toe tapping is in full effect here. However there is no part of the frequency range that I see as tipped up. The amp itself seems essentially linear.... that is not to say that music is not warm, lush and smooth through it.... it is.... but it has more to do with the guitars, voices, drums etc... sounding warm, smooth, rich and full than the amp... the amp is very good but it doesn't denote a "house sound".

Bass is powerful and well driven, highs are clear and crisp, mids are full and live sounding... but none of it seems to be intrinsic to the amp itself... the amp seems to make everything equally louder... but doesn't exact its own price tag on the music for passing through its circuits.

What is remarkable to me about this amp is the benefit one gets from its higher than normal power rating.... Because it pushes such a strong level of current and controls headphones so authoritatively... it seems to be immune to distortion, low frequency fuzz and other transient hash that plagues so many under powered portables that I have heard.... It seems confident and sure footed... I have not been able to get this amp to break form at even the highest volume levels I can endure.

It reminds me of the feeling one gets driving a BMW for the first time... that anchored to the road feeling.... that sensation that makes you unmistakably aware that this car was engineered to drive on the autobahn at 140 MPH...

Moving from low impedance cans, to orthos to 300 ohm Sennheisers was a snap. A quick flip of the switches on the back and the amp was optimized for multiple configurations. I was able to use IEM's, 32 ohm portable cans, 40 ohm ortho-dynamics and 300 ohm pro audio cans without any lack of synergy... The Vioelectric does it all very very well.

Compared to a similarly priced portable amp.... it flat out leaves it in the dust. The portable simply doesn't have the horses to keep up and starts getting wobbly and breaks up.... The Vioelectric smashes ahead violently fast but without losing so much as an inch of form.... locked onto the highway... It's confident and sure footed as it flies down the roadway to audio nirvana.

I am certain there are qualities in the upper range of this line that justify their significantly higher price tag.... but for the money... a scant \$440.00 + shipping, I cannot think of a better amp to pair with planar magnetic headphones.

Little brother maybe.... but a bad ass nonetheless.