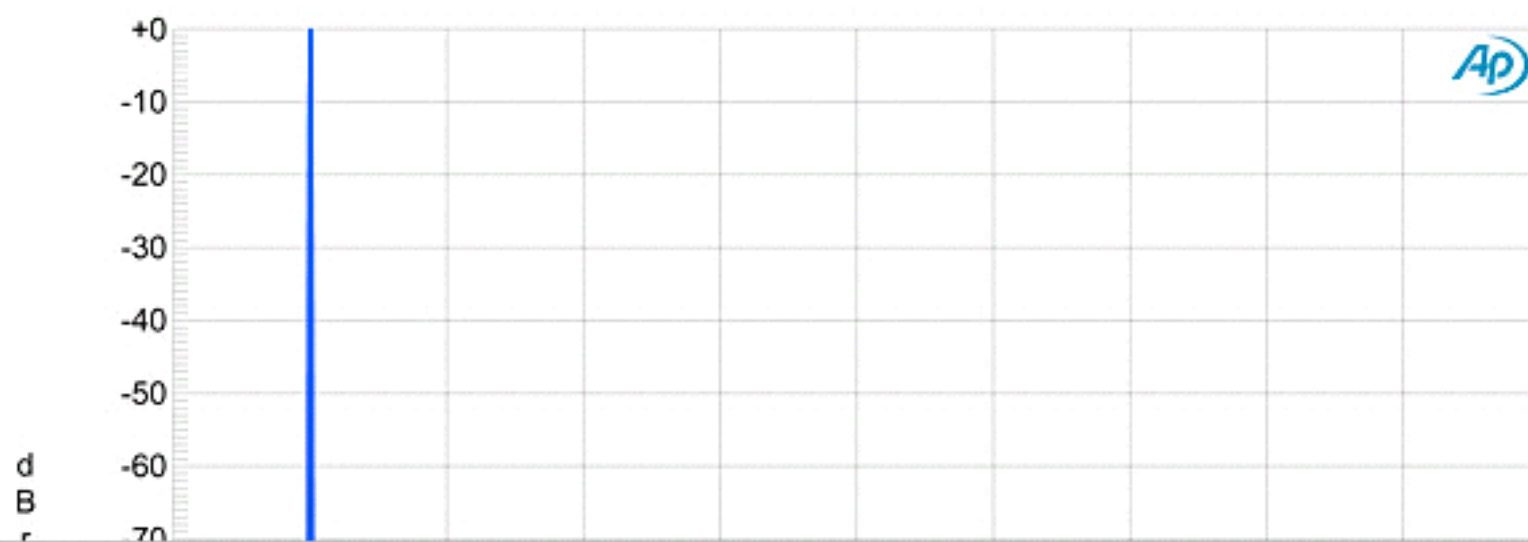


1dB/vertical div.).

With the high gain, the JC 3's overload margin was a little lower than the best-performing preamps, at 15.5dB at 20Hz and 1kHz in both modes, and 15dB at 20kHz. (These margins were again referred to 1kHz at 5mV, MM; and 1kHz at 500μV, MC.) However, the balanced output level at 1% THD+noise, which I define as "clipping," was 20.8V, which is well above the maximum input level of many line preamplifiers.

At typical recorded levels the Halo JC 3 was essentially distortion-free (fig.2), though some very low-level supply-related spurious can be seen in the right channel (red trace). I had to raise the input level at 1kHz to 15mV in MM mode to bring the distortion harmonics out of the noise floor (fig.3), though even then, those harmonics were the second at -107dB (0.0005%) and the third at -118dB (0.00013%), which would be subjectively innocuous at levels 100 times higher. The left channel was even better in this respect! Only when I loaded down the balanced output with the punishing 600 ohm load and increased the input level to 18mV did a regular series of distortion harmonics appear (fig.4), but even then, all harmonics remained at or below -80dB (0.01%). This preamp will be superbly linear under all real-world conditions. It also performed equally well with the demanding high-frequency intermodulation test (not shown).



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