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VINYL LP FILE

The digizine for discerning music lovers



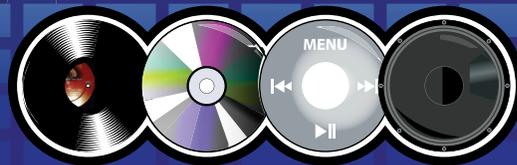
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Back page: Mountains reflected in the mirror-like surface of the Okanagan's Chute Lake on a beautiful October afternoon. We were taking a back-road car hike south from Kelowna to Naramata, partially to see close-up the damage wrought by the Okanagan Mountain fire in Summer 2003, but mostly because it's a nice (if somewhat bouncy at times) drive.

This issue's epigraph: "I have the simplest of tastes. I am always satisfied with the best." —Oscar Wilde

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Editorial



To paraphrase Mark Twain, rumours of our death have been greatly exaggerated! I must apologise for this issue's (very) late arrival: we even missed our own second birthday, last month! Suffice it to say that a lot has been happening outside the magazine that has proved a bigger distraction than yours truly would have liked. The distractions haven't quite been vanquished yet, but they're under control so publication will hopefully resume its usual schedule (every other month).

Talking of birthdays, I can't believe we've been going for two years! My thanks to all our readers and advertisers for their continued support. I'm hoping to expand the magazine in the next issue or two, so that we can cover more gear and more records in each issue.

In this issue have a listen to the Clearaudio Concept MC integrated turntable, Simaudio's baby phono stage, the 110LP, and Annie has been playing with a high-end DAC. Don't

worry, our vinyl-centric focus isn't going anywhere! But it is true that very people have vinyl-only systems, so we'll be covering some of that digital stuff every now and then.

In the next issue, I'll be reviewing electronics from Audio Research and Lyra's new top-of-the-line cartridge, the Atlas, and Annie has a listen to some exotic Italian speakers. In the meantime, keep spinnin' that black magic, and happy listening!

Rich

Dealer Spotlight

Son or Filtronique

By Rich Teer

A while ago I was in Montreal for the Salon Son & Image (SSI) show. While I was there I had the opportunity to meet with a few high-end audio store owners and audiophiles not in the audio industry. One of the dealers I visited was Son or Filtronique.

The store and their staff were busy getting ready for the show, so although I had a quick tour of their impressive store, I unfortunately didn't have a chance to do any listening. I did, however, have the chance for a quick chat with one of their audio consultants, Paul Trépanier.

What's your background? Tell us a bit about yourself.

The store was founded in 1968 by a gentleman called Guy Charbonneau, and I think now he has a recording studio somewhere in Los Angeles. He's done some work with Pink Floyd. The store was then bought by André Riendeau and he was the owner until

just a couple of years ago and now his daughter is actually the owner. Giles has been here for ever, he actually owns some shares in the company, and he's also the manager.

I've been working here for 16 years. I work on the floor, I'm also the main buyer for the company, and I'm the turntable guy here.

Ah, so we're talking to the right guy then!

Yeah! So I started being an audio nut at the age of 16, so it was kind of a long time ago. There were no CDs back then, and the turntable by itself was always my passion in audio, so in the years where turntables faded quite a bit it was a little less fun for me but I've never stopped listening to LPs. That's the only format I use at home, I don't have a CD player. I have one in a secondary system of course, but in my main system I don't have one. I used to own one but I never used it. I have a

few CDs and when I find the vinyl I get rid of the CD. So I've kind of done the reverse of every one else.

Cool! We're very much kindred spirits in that respect. So where did you get your love of hi-fi?

I started listening to music as a teenager, so I was listening to stuff like Grand Funk Railroad, Alice Cooper, all the progressive stuff, Emerson Lake and Palmer, Genesis. I bought my first sound system at the age of 16. That turntable was a Pioneer PL112 and it had an Audio Technica AT11E, which was really dreadful but I didn't know any better. My father used my turntable and broke the stylus, but he never admitted it, so I went to a specialised hi-fi shop and they sold me a \$50 Ortofon cartridge. It was an F15 and I was 16 and I thought "\$50 bucks for a cartridge? That's expensive!".

So I installed it onto my turntable, and the difference was absolutely

astounding. That's where it all started, and it's been downhill since then!
[laughs]

How important is it for you to have a great relationship with the manufacturers of the products you represent?

Whenever possible, to have a great relationship is very important. Definitely, we've dealt with people in the past who made a great product but, to say it bluntly, the guys were acting like a horse's ass! So basically, when you need service after, it's always a problem, it's always a hassle, so I've learned my lesson: the first thing now is to try to meet people, talk with them. If you have a great relationship with them, everything can be worked out in the end.

So what you're saying is that some of your presumably former suppliers were quite happy to take your money, but weren't there to back you up when you needed it?

Yeah, absolutely.

Do you sell used gear in addition to new, and if so, roughly what percentage of your business comes from buyers of used gear?

Yes we do. I would say roughly 25% to 30% of our sales are used. We have lots of repeat customers, so when they want to upgrade their equipment they

bring it back here, and we make them an offer. We have a store policy where if people bought something here and they want to upgrade within that year, provided the next piece of equipment is at least twice the price of what they bought before, we give them whatever they paid for their unit. We do that for a year; it has to be clean, because obviously we can only sell it for market price afterwards. Basically, it's the same as if we lend something to someone for a year until they can afford what they really want. After the year, then we give market price for it.

That's a good policy, and it helps encourage people to get more stuff as they can afford it.

Yeah, absolutely.

How has the global economic slowdown affected your business? Are more people buying used gear than before?

We do see more people coming in for used, but they're much stiffer for pricing. I would say that, at least in my store, that the pricing of used equipment went down because now with the Internet, people will see a price on the 'net and let's say when they come here the price is more expensive, I have to tell them, "Well, we're reputable, you know us. If there's a problem with it you can come back. You don't have to pay for shipping, if the unit you saw is in the US, you will have to pay customs. If it

wasn't made in the US you will also have to pay excise tax. And if there are any problems with it, then it's tough luck." I've been told by customers many times before, "If that guy is happy with that price, you should be happy with it too. That's market price." So now what we do is we have the Blue book on Audiogon. It's not new, everybody has access to it. We go on that site and we show the customer what his equipment is worth. That's the most I will be able to get for it. Then they tell us, "Yeah but you're a reputable store, you're this and that...". We've been there and customers don't listen, they just want the price, so that's it.

What are the benefits of buying from Filtronique?

Well, again, the store has been here a long, long time.

Same location?

Uh-huh. We have a service department downstairs so I would say that most of the repairs are done here. We don't have to send stuff back to Timbuktu to have it fixed, so I think that's a fair advantage. It's a business and we have to earn a living, but I would say that our prices are competitive. I think we're friendly, I like to think so at least!
[laughs]

You have a nice selection of products and brands.

Yeah, exactly. I don't go to my competitors all that often, but I would think—and from what I hear from my customers—we have the widest selection in Montreal. That's what they tell us.

How would you describe your average customer, and roughly what proportion of your customers are new (as opposed to repeat) business?

Mmm, that's a tough one. New customers, not very much; mostly repeat customers. Youngsters, we see them, but not very much. They have other places where they can spend their money. I would say that when we were young, anything that was pertaining to technology was to do with music reproduction, but these days that's not the case at all. And music for most people is just something they can download for free from the 'net, so they don't see it as something really special.

Once in a while we'll actually see a young guy that comes in with Led Zeppelin LPs, and we say, "Oh my God, what happened to that guy?" So we want to serve him as well as possible because we need him as a repeat customer. If you take the whole audio pie, the kind of business we're at, we know it's a shrinking market. Fortunately for us, in Montreal two-channel stereo is still very strong, as opposed to stories that we hear from the US. Apparently it's not very good there... There are some towns I heard, like Milwaukee, the last

specialised audio store shut his doors a year ago.

Roughly what proportion of your clients have analogue sources, and how has that trend changed over the past few years?

It's hard to say, but more and more people are interested in analogue. I would say five years ago I would sell three turntables a year, and now I sell three per week.

Really?! Wow, so it's improved a lot...

Yeah. People are asking questions about it. The main market for turntables that we have here is between \$1,000 and \$3,000. If you take the Rega P3, that's a great seller. Actually, it's our best seller, then the VPIs: the Scout, the Scout 2. The Classic has been an excellent seller for us. Above that the air is much rarer. So in terms of percentage of customers, I would say 35% to 40%, but that's growing.

Excellent, that's great to hear! Do you host any after-hours events, and if so, what impact do they have on your business, especially from new customers?

We've done it in the past. The times that we did it were pretty good. The last time was quite a while ago, it was for Shunyata products. The demo was quite good, it had a great impact, partly because of that we know for a fact

that we're the largest Shunyata dealer in Canada, and have been told that between the lines, we're probably the largest one in North America. Not less than the second one, I'm pretty sure. We did an event years ago with Verity but we were showing the Lohengrin, so it was quite popular but at \$80,000+ for a pair of speakers, it did not generate any sales for that particular product, but awareness actually grew for the brand.

How do you decide whether to take on a new line?

That's a tough one! I mean obviously there's how good it will be financially for the store of course, but performance must be there and everyone who listens to the product must like it. We already have too many lines here, which sometimes confuses the customer, but at the same time, for them we never have enough. So it's a bit conflicting here! As much as possible we try to evaluate stuff. Let's say, for example, if we bring in an amplifier, we try to try it with all the speakers we have to see if it matches well with them, if we like the result. We try to find out the history of the product, reliability wise, we try to find out if we can have a good rapport with their owner, because if the rapport is really cold, no matter how good the product is, for the reasons I mentioned before, I don't really want to touch it.

At the end of the day, this is a business about relationships...

Right. We don't sell black boxes, we sell enjoyment, they're all enjoyed by people, so if you have a good rapport with people they will come back to you. We have people having fun with their system at home and to enjoy it as much as possible.

What's the best demo session you can remember? And the worst?

One of the best demos I ever heard was actually last year at the Montreal show. It was the Verity Audio room. When you go to shows it's all bells and whistles, and sometimes we hear systems that are impressive, but the more you listen to them you finally find something wrong in the sound and then it always sticks out. But the Verity Audio room last year, for me, was the best room at the show. You're probably going to the show this year? You're in town for that?

Yes.

I think we're doing pretty well, usually. René, for Fidelio Audio, his room is always, always top notch.

How about the worst, as in the most embarrassing?

Hmm, I can't think of the most embarrassing one... You know, the worst speaker that I tried in my house was actually a Wilson Audio Watt Puppy. It was a 5 or a 5.1. It lasted for half a cut, I couldn't listen to it. It was ear piercing. But probably, it could've

had something to do with my existing system at the time. But the worst? I've heard so many bad systems...

Has anything gone wrong or blown up when you've tried to demo it?

[Laughs] Yeah, that happens...! Sometimes if you take CD players, for example, they're... Well, anything these days is quite sensitive, so if you touch it and have a static discharge, CD players that refuse to start after. You do the sales pitch about a certain product to someone, tell them how great it is, and then you want to play it and it simply doesn't work. So you think, "Well, I don't think I'm going to be able to sell them this, at least today!". That happens. Sometimes customers come in with their kids and they see a tweeter as a nice button and then you go back and see all those tweeters that are destroyed. We're used to this now, it happens all the time.

As a specialist audio dealer, you presumably have access to pretty much whatever gear you want. What's currently in your home system?

My home system? I'm using an SME 10 turntable. That was a dream from a long time ago, when I first started here in 1999, I said, "One day I'm gonna have one," but it was out of my reach. Let's face it, I'm an audio salesman. I don't drive a BMW, I drive a Mazda. People think, "Oh yeah, you guys have the big

markups, you make lots of money." They don't really know how to run a business. So, a couple of years ago, I sold the Oracle Delphi that I had back then and went to see my boss and I said, "I'd love to have an SME turntable, so can I pay you in instalments for a while?" and he said, "Yes." So I ordered it and I've had it for two or three years, I'm super happy with it. I'm using a Naim SuperLine phono stage and a Lyra cartridge, a Lyra Delos.

Are you using your turntable with the 309 it comes with?

Yeah, it was the 10 at the time, but I'm actually ordering a Series V in the near future.

The Series V is a wonderful arm, I used to have one.

I used to have one myself. Of all the components that I've owned and I've sold, that is the one I regret the most. So I'm, using the Naim SuperLine with a SuperNait which is fed by a HiCap, and I'm just using an old Sansui STU717 tuner. I've changed all the electrolytic capacitors and had the variable capacitor cleaned. It's good enough for what I do and the quality of FM that we have in Montreal. My speakers are speakers that I built myself. They started as a ProAc 2.5 clone but it ended up being a little bit different. I'm quite happy, I mean it's not the system that has the most resolution, but it's system that gives me pleasure. One thing that

I've learned in the past, the fact that I endorse Naim systems is something quite recent for me. My opinion is not necessarily endorsed by everybody, but I've had some obscenely priced systems in my house and when you work in audio, people always ask you, "How does that compare to this, how does this sound? Can you describe the sound of it?" So basically, we're kind of conditioned to always find defects in everything that we listen to. I listen to music the whole day here and I listen to music at home because that's why I started working in this field: I love music. But when you have your own sound system and you can't enjoy it because you're always thinking of how it sounds this way, it's not what you want. I mean you just want to put on your LPs and have fun. A couple of years ago there was a customer who brought back a Naim Nait 5i as a trade in, and it was absolutely mint, so I took it to my house that night and it stayed there! I was using an Exposure amplifier which I liked, but the Naim trashed it. It wasn't a matter of whether there was more bass or less bass or more treble or this and that, it just... Music simply flowed. They call it PRaT [pace, rhythm, and timing] but the way the music flowed was entirely natural, so every single LP that I put on my turntable, I simply had fun with it. So I'm actually quite an addict of that brand now. It's not perfect, there are other brands that do what they don't do, but it gives me the pleasure of listening to music in

my house without thinking of how it sounds.

How much time do you get to listen to music at home, and what are some of your favourite records?

I listen to music every morning. I start the music at about 08:00, that's when my son gets up. Then I come to work and obviously I listen to some music, and I would say that most of the time at night I listen to music. At the weekend, music plays all the time. I couldn't go deaf: I'd go crazy! In the morning especially, I like to listen to some Beethoven piano music, but the rest of the time it's anything from Bach to Varèse. I'm a big Shostakovich fan, Beethoven of course, especially the late sonatas and quartets. I think nobody else ever wrote something like those, but then it can be rock: anything from Black Sabbath to Nirvana, ZZ Top. More and more Americana, like Ryan Adams, Lucinda Williams, that kind of music. I like Jack Johnson very much. So I listen to everything except hip hop. Hip hop is something I don't understand. I have some friends that are music teachers and I ask them, "You're a music teacher. What's the value in this?" and they say, "There's no value whatsoever." They don't see it at all.

Presumably you've become friends with some of your clients over the years?

Yeah, absolutely. Everyone here has become friends with some customers. There's one guy working here, Eric, he used to be my customer. Some customers call me at home, they actually come home and... You build a rapport with your customers so some of them become your friends.

What's next for Filtronique?

Well, we've had both of our feet solidly anchored in two channel, and we've done home theatre like everybody else in the past, but it was never our passion, never our forte. I'm friends with other salesmen in other stores in town and we talk about this among ourselves sometimes, and back in the 1980s when I started If I knew that 20 years from then I'd be selling DVD players I might have gone into that field. I will say this: with Naim products we can do more streaming music, we can stream music into different rooms and I think that's going to appeal to more people. So I think that's the future.

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Reader's System

Just What the Doctor Ordered!

By Rich Teer



More than a few months ago now, I visited the music room of Mark from Seattle. He's a paediatric radiologist and a huge fan of jazz music.

If you'd like your system to be featured in our Reader's System series, just send us an email. In the meantime, here's the transcript of the chat I had with Mark before we settled down for a listening session with a couple of his friends.

What's your background? Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Kansas City. I earned a degree in chemical engineering for God knows what reason, then went to medical school. Radiology is my speciality. Paediatric radiology is definitely a professional passion. I did all my training in Saint Louis, then came out here to interview for my Paediatric Fellowship. We knew from the minute

we passed Boeing Field and saw downtown. My wife turned to me and said, "I don't care what you have to do, you're getting this job!". That was it!

Where did you get your love of hi-fi and music?

I have no idea! Nobody in my family is musical. My side of the family is tone deaf and has no musical talent. My wife's family has a lot of talent. But how

did I get into it? I was always attracted to it. I bought my first record when I was 10. I still have it, it was Elton John's *Greatest Hits Volume One*. Growing up, I was always the kid with the most records.

For my 13th birthday I got a cheap hi-fi. I kind of got into high-end first about 25 years ago. I got introduced to Linn. I literally ate cheese sandwiches for six months during medical school so that I could afford a Linn Sondek, and I had it for more than 20 years.

In that respect your story is similar to mine. Not a Linn Sondek, I had a Roksan Xerxes, but the eating cheese sandwiches for six months. The things we do for our passion!

Exactly! [laughs]

Roughly how many records do you have?

I have about 2,500. I have about 2,000 jazz and pop, and about 500 classical.

What's your favourite genre of music and what are some of your favourite records?

Well, jazz is my passion, but I'll listen to and I like just about everything. Recently, the only time I buy CDs is because I've recently gotten into Latin, Brazilian, and Mexican music. I've recently become a big fan of Brazilian music and it's really hard to find the records, although I've

now got a source, in New York City. The name of the store—it's probably the best record store I've even been in—is Tropicalia in Furs. If you're ever close to NYU, you must stop there! I've actually sent them my wish list...

My favourite records... Probably Monk, Thelonious Monk is probably my all-time favourite. Boy, I've got 70 Miles Davis records, so I guess he's up there! Rock and pop, The Clash, X, groups like that.

Roughly how often do you listen to vinyl as opposed to other sources?

About 98.6% of the time I listen to vinyl. [laughs] The thing I listen to second most is XM radio in my car. I've become completely addicted to *Little Steven's Underground Garage* on channel 59. I like it in part because Andrew Loog Oldham, the Stones' first manager, DJs on there. His voice has an uncanny resemblance to the actor, Terrence Stamp. It's hysterical!

I know you alluded to this earlier, but what was your first system, and how has it evolved over the years?

I am definitely of the "buy and hold" persuasion. I was just thinking about this. I've had three amplifiers in 20 years, this is my second turntable in 25 years, and I've had the BAT preamp for 10 years.

My first system was a Linn Sondek, the Krell amp that you see there, I can't remember what the preamp was, and Shahinian Obelisk speakers. About 15 years ago I bought [Wilson Audio] Watt/Puppy 3.2s. I had those for a long time, I had those for 15 years. I did change amps. I got Mark Levinson 436s, which I had for a number of years until I got this amp. I had a Classé DR6 preamp for 10 years and I've had this one for probably eight or 10 years. Phono preamps, I started with the original Linn Sondek Lingo (I still have it), and I've had the K&K for about a year, it's a transitional product, but it's already sold. I should be taking delivery before the end of my life [laughs] of the Experience Music. I do have to show you a picture of it...

[Mike L] What you should do is send him pictures to put in the article, because that is the ultimate audio porn!

Well, we all like our audio porn!

I sold the Linn Sondek about five years ago, and I had a Wadia CD player for about 10 years. Loved it, but it died, so I purchased a Simaudio Moon Andromeda CD player, and I realised that my analogue just wasn't cutting it, compared to the CD, and I thought, "That's not right, there's something wrong here". So I went to Rocky Mountain [Audio Fest] and thought (based on the research that I did) that I was just going to buy a new turntable. I met up with Tom Mackris of Galibier and was sort of, "OK, take the blue

pill or the red pill”. I took the red pill, I guess, so I got this setup, a Triplanar tonearm, and a Dynavector cartridge, and then things have cascaded.

mono when I realised, “Oh, I have all these mono records!”, so I bought a Miyajima—we bought it together in a group buy—and the Einstein I bought from a buddy of mine who’s also a

and the guy who makes them lives right up close to the Canadian border. I drove up there one day: he is about the nicest guy you’d ever meet, and he makes beautiful speakers. I thought



I met Joel [Durand] the day I took delivery of my turntable, and you’ve heard the stories: Joel has made this magnificent tonearm. I would put it up against any tonearm in the world. At about the same time, I got into

Galibier dealer. I think that’s going to be the limiting step in this system going forward. The speakers are the Daedalus Ulysses, which I bought two years ago. I had the Watt/Puppies for 15 years and heard these at the RMAF,

they sounded great. We have wildly divergent tastes but somehow I knew that’s what I wanted. One of the things that are important to me are a wide dynamic range, which a lot of systems don’t do. Mike’s is the king of wide

dynamic range but for us mere mortals, this sort of speaker, that's one of the things I liked about it. It's also fairly easy to drive, it's got a sensitivity of 96 dB. I don't have a very large room to fill so I'm considering going down the SET path.

That's a good segue into my last question: what's next on your equipment wish list?

I need to get the newest version of the Talea, that's a long-term loan, so I'm gonna need that. I'll put the Miyajima mono on the older version of the Talea, I'll put my Dynavector on the newer version. Other than that, and considering getting into the SET setup, that's about it. I've got the last turntable I'm ever going to get, as long as Joel doesn't make another huge quantum leap I've got the tonearms I want. I know I've got the last preamp I'll ever have, and I really love the speakers so the only thing might be to play with the SET thing. Definitely in this room, once I've got everything settled, I need to get into some room treatments.

Equipment List

Power source Dedicated sub-panel.

Analogue sources Galibier Stevio turntable with Durand Telos and Talea II tonearms.

Cartridges Benz LPS MR on the Telos, Miyajima Premum Mono Be on the Talea II.

Phono stage Experience Music two-box phono stage with mercury rectifiers and hand-wound step-ups; one dedicated stereo, one dedicated mono.

Digital sources Simaudio Moon Andromeda CD player.

Preamp Experience Music two-box line stage with mercury rectification and 71a tubes.

Power amp Einstein Light In Dark.

Speakers Daedalus Ulysses with poly crossover upgrade.

Cables Interconnects: Found-Music Silver and Copper single ended. Speaker: Dynamic Designs. AC: Found-Music.

Annie's Audio Adventures

Resonance Labs Invicta DAC

By Annie St. Jean

The funny thing about this, right from the get go, is that way back when I was in High School, our band played a song called Invicta! I can't remember the tune right now, but I do remember that it was one of my favourite ones to play because the trumpets had a great part! We're off to a great start... or am I already biased because of a name? Also, I really do all I can to buy local produce, food, clothing, etc. as much as I can. Yes I know we don't grow cocoa beans here in the Okanagan, but the chocolate I buy is Fair Trade and organic. No, I don't drink coffee! So I am already biased about trying out a local product, be it apples or audio!

So, here we are, Saturday night, ready for yet another game of "Is it on or is it off"! Hubby is getting trickier, so wish me luck! The opponents: The Marantz CD

player on its own or with the Invicta DAC attached. (Yes we're still babysitting!!!) Then we're on for the Marantz SACD vs SD card full of high resolution music. That is one great feature I really like about this DAC: listening to uncompressed, high-resolution files.

OK, I admit: Hubby can NOT trick me with this one! Even when he makes noises to pretend he's changing things without actually changing anything, I can tell there's a difference. Yes, I hear better with my eyes closed! And it has been that way ever since we started listening to the Invicta. My problem

is that I have a really hard time trying to describe the difference in words! Speechless, moi??? I find that the Invicta really separates the highs and mids, where as the Marantz alone sounds more round and together. Now don't get me wrong: neither sounds muffled, nor undefined, that's not what I'm saying! Some songs I prefer on the Marantz, other ones when using Invicta. Hubby is already 100% sold on the Invicta, might I add. It really does have a nice

sound, full and well defined. I still find that what Hubby calls clarity sometimes sounds too bright to me. I think it just really depends on what tune is playing and what I feel like listening to at the time. Sometimes, for example, I find the trumpet too bright on the Invicta when I find them fine on the Marantz. Rich has the exact opposite opinion,



he finds the Marantz brighter than the Invicta. So here is my point: listen to it at home with your own equipment and hear the difference!

One really cool fact about the Invicta is that you can download purchased music on HD Audio Tracks. That means that they have even more information on them than with Apple Lossless. One more thing: you can store the songs on a memory card, the same kind used in many cameras, and insert the card right into the Invicta. Who knew that the device that stores photos could store music??? Well, I guess you all knew that already, since you are all more technology savvy than me, I'm sure!

One little problem I find: the Invicta doesn't have an RCA digital input,

week? I'm already so used to iPods that except for musicals, I rarely listen to a whole CD from beginning to end. I'm already addicted to my play lists set on random! I will have to adjust when I get more serious with records! I'm really sorry to all musicians who work endless hours preparing their CDs and choosing the order their songs should go! I do promise that the first time I listen to any CD, I always do it in the order that it is in!

Now you know that I'm not a math teacher, but even I know that when comparing equipment, you really have to limit the variables. You shouldn't, for example, change more than one thing at the time. But you probably already know that. I just think it's important to remember that, especially at this

of your set up, you realize that there's something missing.

Conclusion? Well, as I said, the Invicta is definitely something worth listening to! I am happy with the sound, and I am happy it's a local product!

Happy listening!

Product Details

Resonance Labs Invicta DAC

Price (CAD) \$3,995

Resonance Labs

www.resonancelabs.com



which means we can't use the iPod on the Wadia (transport) through the Invicta. Since I usually have CBC classical music from the Internet playing in the house as background music, that would be a problem for me. You know what I realized last

time of the year when you may be out shopping. Some salespeople out there may be after your money and wow you into buying something that sounds great in their store, with their equipment, but when you get home and use the component with the rest

Clearaudio Concept MC

Integrated Turntable

By Rich Teer



If you're in the market for an entry-level turntable, there's an almost bewildering amount of choice. Models from the likes of Rega, Dual, Pro-Ject, and Music Hall are just some of the examples that immediately come to mind. Moving up the price ladder a little, another alternative is available: Germany's Clearaudio.

Perhaps more famous for the more upmarket models in their broad range—including the eye-wateringly expensive, 350 kg top-of-the-line über turntable, the Statement—Clearaudio have been making high-end turntables and tonearms for more than three decades.

In an effort to bring their wares within the financial reach of less well-healed vinyl-loving audiophiles, Clearaudio released the Concept a couple of years ago. The Concept is available with a factory-fitted Concept MM or MC cartridge (at a price that's less than the two components would be if purchased separately), or sans cartridge. My review sample came with the Concept MC cartridge.

Technical Details

The Concept is a suspensionless, belt-driven integrated turntable. The plinth is made from MDF, with a polymer top surface and a rather fetching brushed

aluminum trim to control resonances. It is powered by an external wall wart power supply, and uses a DC motor rather than a more typical AC synchronous one. Talking about the motor, three speeds are supported: the usual 33 and 45 RPM, as well as 78 RPM (although the cartridge must be changed before playing your 78s).

The 30 mm thick platter is made from black-coloured polyoxymethylene (POM), a thermoplastic that exhibits high stiffness, low friction, and dimensional stability. Designed to be used without a mat, the platter has an indentation for the record label.

A large knob selects the desired speed, and three adjustable feet on the underside of the plinth allow for easy levelling.

Perhaps the most interesting technical aspect of the Concept is the included Verify tonearm, which has a carbon fibre arm tube and a magnetic unipivot bearing that Clearaudio asserts is friction free. The bearing is implemented by a pair of strong magnets, one on the top bearing yoke, and the other on the arm tube. The magnets' attraction pulls the arm up, while a tie wire from below prevents the arm from jamming itself against the top yoke. The tie wire also transmits the anti-skating (bias) force.

VTF is set by positioning the threaded counterweight, the VTA is adjustable

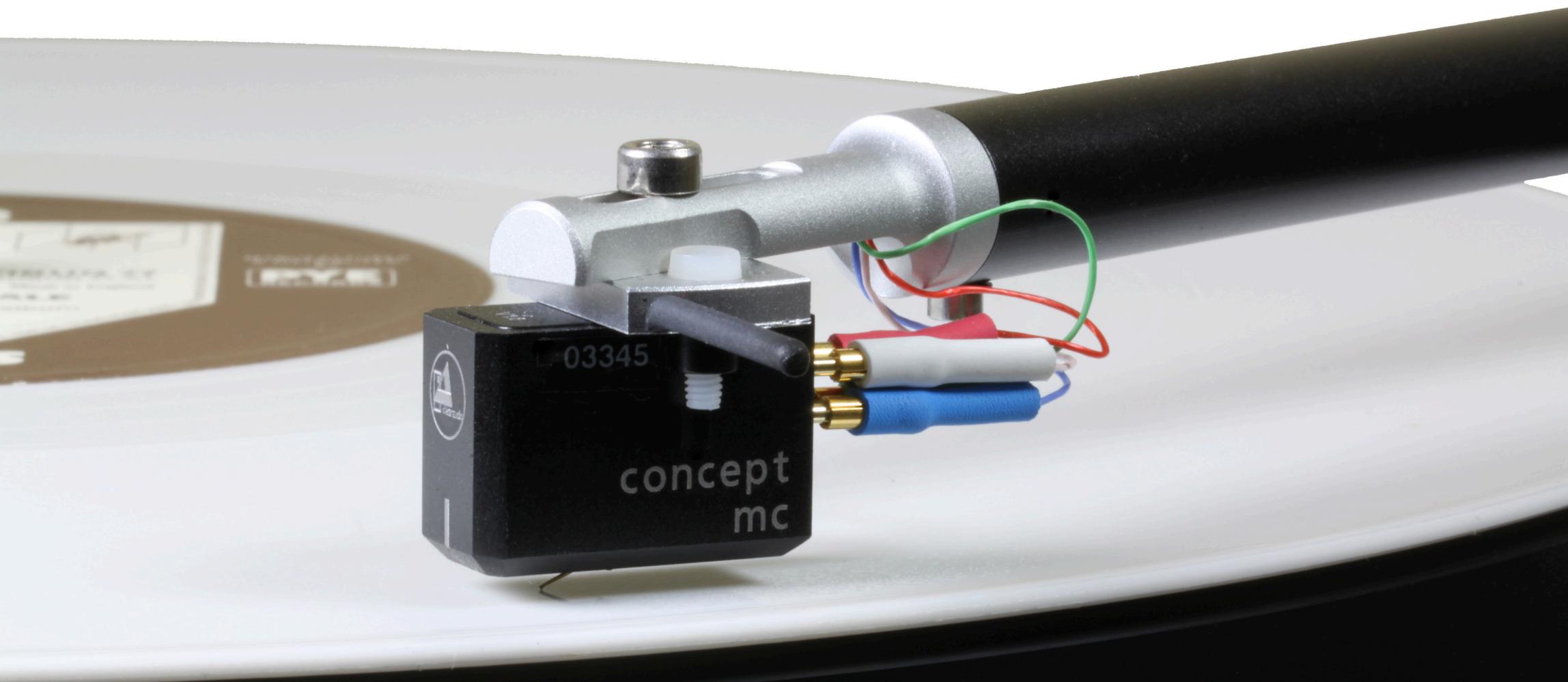
(although not while playing a record), and a screw near the headshell permits adjusting the cartridge's azimuth. All of these parameters are set at the factory, a boon for audiophiles new to turntable set up. While I'm talking about the tonearm: one operational aspect I really liked about using the Verify was the damped cueing lever. Just line the stylus up with the track you want to play, pull the cueing arm towards you, and wait for the damped mechanism to slowly lower the cartridge into place.

The Concept's fit and finish are fine, but it comes without a dustcover (regular readers will know this is one of my pet peeves!). Although one may purchase a separate acrylic dustcover for the Concept, I do think that all turntable manufacturers should include at least

a soft dustcover or a detachable hard one.

Setup and Listening

The Concept is designed to be plug and go more or less straight from the box, so setting it up is easy. After placing the Concept on my stand, installing the drive belt, and putting on the platter, I levelled the plinth using the adjustable feet. Kudos to Clearaudio for including a bubble level for this purpose! I checked the cartridge's alignment and VTF, discovering that the latter was a touch on the heavy side. I measured a VTF of about 3 g, whereas the maximum recommended for the Concept MC cartridge is 2.2 g. I set the VTF to a shade under 2.2 g, and adjusted the bias appropriately using the nut under the tonearm's base. The



manual cautions against doing this, so unless you're absolutely sure about what you're doing, it's best to ask your dealer (or a suitably knowledgeable friend!) to do this for you.

To give everything a chance to burn in, I played the Concept for 20 to 30 hours before doing any serious listening.

Initial Impressions

The first record I put on was Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* [Virgin Records V2001]. It's a record I've listened to countless times and with which I am intimately familiar. My initial thought after the first few bars of the piano introduction was that the speed was very slightly too fast. The pitch of the various instruments seemed to be about right, but I got the feeling that the tempo had been increased by one or two BPM, giving the impression that Oldfield was hurrying his way through the piece. (I later checked the platter's speed with a stroboscope and confirmed my initial suspicions: it was indeed spinning just a little bit fast.) I don't want to make a big deal out of this, as the speed increase was very minor and probably only detectable by someone with a musical ear, but it's my job to point these things out.

My initial impressions were very positive: the tinkling piano, bells, and other percussion sparkled nicely, and the bass was tuneful. Adding to the positive impression was the Concept's detail retrieval. There were details

aplenty, and I think that I heard some subtle textures near the beginning I hadn't heard before.

One of the things I look for when evaluating equipment with *Tubular Bells* is how well the individual people in the Nasal Choir are defined. With gear that has superlative imaging, one can make out the distinct positions of choir's members. On lesser equipment, the choir is presented as a congealed blob. On this test, the Concept fared reasonably well: the choir was about the correct size, but I had to strain to hear the individual positions, and could only place a few of them.

Goosebumps Galore!

Encouraged by my experience of listening to *Tubular Bells*, I moved onto one of my favourite classical pieces: Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije* [Classic Records/RCA Victor LSC-2150]. This record opens with an off-stage trumpet, which is followed by a snare drum and piccolo. The illusion of the off-stage trumpet wasn't quite as real as I've heard on other systems, but the Concept fared quite well.

The bass drum thwacks in the third movement, *The Wedding of Kije*, don't have quite the weight and heft they should, but are still very satisfying. The tintinnabulation and interplay between tambourines and other percussion in *Troika* were very nicely reproduced, perhaps lacking just a touch of sparkle at the top end.

Moving on, the next piece I played was *Albinoni*, the opening track from Gary Karr's *Adagio d'Alinoni* [Impex Records IMP3001-45]. Karr's Amati double bass and the Vega Hall's organ were well reproduced, with nice warmth and weight. It didn't quite plumb the subterranean depths the way my Forsell does, but that's not unexpected given the price differential! This suggests to me that one of the Concept's weaknesses (albeit a minor one) isn't the bass per se, but bass coupled with large dynamic swings. But what the Concept does do very well on this piece is convey the emotion. The sadness really comes across; as my listening notes say, this is a very communicative ensemble!

For a change of scene (and eager to see how the Concept would sound when playing female voices), I listened to *Wuthering Heights*, a track from Kate Bush's debut album, *The Kick Inside* [EMI EMC 3223]. I hadn't heard this song for many a moon, so I was pleasantly surprised by how good it sounded: the tinkling piano, bells, and piano shimmer just right, and when the guitar started playing during the finale, I literally got goosebumps!

Verdict

The Clearaudio Concept MC combines a well-designed turntable and tonearm with a good quality MC cartridge, in a moderately affordable plug 'n' go package. Fit and finish are up to the high standards one comes to expect

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from a company like Clearaudio, and the sound quality is unexpectedly good (remember, this is Clearaudio's cheapest turntable).

If you're in the market for an integrated turntable in the \$1,000 to \$2,000 price range (including cartridge), you really do owe it to yourself to check this one out. Very highly recommended, if I were forced to start again from scratch on a modest budget, I could happily live with this one!

Specifications

Description Belt drive, integrated turntable.

Speeds 33.3, 45, and 78 RPM.

Speed variation ±0.04%.

Output voltage 0.4 mV (1 kHz at 5 cm/s).

Channel separation > 30 dB (1 kHz).

Channel balance < 0.5 dB at 1 kHz.

Recommended tracking force 1.8 g to 2.2 g.

Dimensions (whd) 420 mm x 140 mm x 350 mm.

Weight 7.5 kg.

Finishes Black, with aluminum trim.

Serial number of unit reviewed 053 2398.

Price CAD \$2,000.

Warranty Two years non-transferable.

Manufacturer

Clearaudio Electronic GmbH

Spardorfer Str 150

91054 Erlangen

Germany

+49 (0)1805-059595

www.clearaudio.de

Canadian Distributor

Tri-Cell Enterprises

5-391 Hanlan Road

Woodbridge, ON L4L 3T1

Canada

(800) 263-8151

www.tricell-ent.com

Associated Equipment

Analogue source Forsell Air Reference Mk 2 turntable and arm.

Phono cartridge Lyra Atlas.

Phono stage Allnic Audio Labs H-1200.

Preamp Audio Research SP-9 Mk 2.

Power amplifiers PrimaLuna ProLogue Sevens.

Speakers MartinLogan Spires.

Cables Phono: Nordost Frey. Interconnects: Nordost Frey. Speaker: Nordost Frey. AC: stock.

Accessories Target and SolidSteel equipment stands; Mission Isoplat; Furman Elite 15-PFi power conditioner; Audio Physic cartridge demagnetiser; Acoustech carbon fibre brush; Last record and stylus cleaning products; Audio Additives digital stylus force gauge; Spin Clean Record Washer Mk II.

Simaudio Moon 110LP

Phono Stage

By Rich Teer



Simaudio is a Canadian high-end audio company that's been around for more than three decades. Their extensive product selection is split between two ranges: the cost-no-object Moon Evolution Series, and the more affordably-priced Moon Series. Between the two ranges there are numerous products, including

DACs, integrated amplifiers, pre- and power amplifiers, and phono stages.

There are three phono stages in Simaudio's current line up. At the top we find the recently-announced Moon 810LP Reference balanced dual-mono phono stage. In the middle is the Moon 310LP (and its optional outboard power

supply, the 320S); we reviewed the 310LP and 320S in issue 5 and were very favourably impressed. Last, but by no means least, is the entry-level Moon 110LP; it is the latter that is the subject of this review.

Technical Details

The Moon 110LP is a diminutive solid state phono stage, and replaces the previous generation's Moon LP3. It has one pair of single-ended inputs and one pair of single-ended outputs. It also features user-selectable gain, input loading resistance, and input loading capacitance. Unlike its bigger brothers, the 110LP offers only RIAA equalisation, but this is not likely to be a serious drawback for the majority of users.

The rear panel contains the gold-plated input and output RCA sockets, a gold-plated earth post, and an input socket for the 18 VDC power. The latter is implemented by a wall-wart power supply. It's no secret that I'm not a fan of wall-warts, but I understand that compromises must be made at this price level, and using a wall-wart is a cost-effective way of keeping potentially noisy mains filtering circuitry away from the sensitive amplification circuits. Talking of power: the 110LP is intended to be powered on semi-

permanently, so there is no mains switch.

The front panel, which is made from a 6 mm thick sheet of machined aluminum, is available with a silver or black anodised finish. It houses the blue power LED.

Inside the aluminum case is a single circuit board. The phono circuitry uses a dual-mono configuration and is implemented with high quality components. The dual-layer PCB features several sets of jumpers for each channel. It is these which are used to select the gain and loading options.

Setup and Listening

My reference cartridges are low output moving coil designs, which pretty much

dictated that I positioned the jumpers for 60 dB of gain, 0 pF of loading capacitance, and 100 Ohms of loading resistance.

Simaudio recommends leaving the 110LP powered on semi-permanently, so, with one or two brief exceptions to facilitate moving gear around, I left it powered up throughout the entire review period (this also helped build up the recommended 300 hours of break-in time). I also played dozens of records through the 110LP as background music before starting my serious listening.

Let the Music Play!

Having been very impressed with its bigger brother last year (the 310LP and 320S combo), I was very much looking forward to listening to the 110LP. I wasn't disappointed: my first impressions of the 110LP were very positive. It has a very slightly laid back presentation (by which I mean that the soundstage is slightly further back behind the speaker plane than is usual in my system),



with details galore. As an example of the latter, during the finale of part one of Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* [Virgin Records V2001], after the titular bells have finished, I could swear I heard some new subtle details in the left channel (specifically, a female chorus and some piano). Now, I grant that the Lyra Atlas cartridge is no doubt playing a large part in this, but I find this detail retrieval nonetheless impressive!

Talking of *Tubular Bells*, the jingling bells and tinkling piano were very clearly rendered. Unlike some other inexpensive phono stages, the 110LP doesn't limit the high frequencies. I find that a wide, flat, frequency response is really important for getting the sound of such instruments accurate (no doubt, something to do with reproducing the harmonics correctly). It is also important for convincingly reproducing fast transients, whose leading edges can be dulled by gear with a narrower bandwidth.

The 110LP also does a good job reproducing the bass. The bass guitar near the beginning of *Tubular Bells* can become a little bloated and one-note with lesser phono stages, but not the 110LP. Although I found the sound to be a little on the dark side, I didn't find this trait to be overly bothersome or intrusive.

Bass dynamics are impressive: the thunderous whacks of the bass drum and gong in *The Great Gate of*

Kiev from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* on *The Power of the Orchestra* [Analogue Productions/RCA Victor AAPC 2659-45] is a particularly good illustration of the 110LP's abilities in this area. Another good track for this sort of thing is Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* from the direct-to-disc [Sheffield Lab 7]. The brass has just the right amount of bite, and the triangle in the finale comes through nicely.

Imaging

Two imaging-related observations are in my *Tubular Bells* listening notes. The first is that the stage width isn't quite as wide as it is with some other, admittedly more costly, phono stages (for example, the Allnic H-1200). The second observation is the spatial delineation of the Nasal Choir was good, but not excellent.

Wanting to hear more of what the 110LP could do, I turned to another of my trusty test pieces: Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije* [Classic Records/RCA Victor LSC-2150]. The acoustic ambience of the recording venue is very apparent. Take, for example, the snare drum near the beginning of the piece. You can hear the initial sound coming from towards the rear left of the stage, followed very quickly by a duplicate of that sound being echoed from the rear wall, just right of centre.

Talking of *Lieutenant Kije*, the second movement, *Romance*, features a celeste. I like to use this track to see,

err, hear how a piece of equipment handles the upper frequencies. While it sounded fine using the 110LP, I did notice that I couldn't hear the air around the instrument as I can with more pricey phono stages.

Seeking a change from purely instrumental and classical music, I listened to *Wuthering Heights* from Kate Bush's debut album, *The Kick Inside* [EMI EMC 3223]. I can't believe how talented the young—she was only 19 when she recorded and released this album, and some of the songs on it were written when she was just 13—Bush was (and still is). On the right gear *Wuthering Heights* sends a shiver down my spine, but using the 110LP it wasn't to be. Don't get me wrong, the 110LP is very capable in the "hi-fi" sense, but in this instance the emotion just wasn't convincing. In the context of a \$600 phono stage, I don't consider this to be a major shortfall, and I'm not aware of any other similarly priced phono stage that does convey emotions convincingly.

Verdict

The Simaudio Moon 110LP phono stage is a great sounding, moderately priced phono stage. With adjustable input capacitance and resistance, ample gain for all but the lowest output MC cartridges, and good build quality in a choice of two finishes, it's impossible for me not to recommend a personal audition of this phono stage. One or two minor caveats aside, the

Moon 110LP is a phono stage that will please all but the most demanding vinyl lover: highly recommended!

Specifications

Description Solid state phono stage.

Frequency response 20 to 20,000 Hz \pm 0.5 db.

Crosstalk -97 dB (@ 1 kHz).

Gain 60 dB (MC), 40 dB (MM).

Distortion < 0.001% THD (20 to 20,000 Hz).

Input impedance 100 and 47k Ω .

Input capacitance 0 and 100 pF.

Phono equalisation RIAA.

Maximum input voltage 4.5 mV RMS @ 1 kHz (MC), 45 mV RMS (MM).

Signal to noise ratio 87 dB (MC), 104 dB (MM).

Dimensions (whd) 127 mm x 74 mm x 165 mm.

Weight 1.1 kg.

Finishes Silver and black anodised aluminum.

Serial number of unit reviewed M5814536.

Price CAD \$600.

Warranty One year non-transferable (ten years with registration).

Manufacturer

Simaudio

1345 Newton Road

Boucherville, QC J4B 5H2

Canada

(450) 449-2212

www.simaudio.com

Associated Equipment

Analogue source Forsell Air Reference Mk 2 turntable and arm.

Phono cartridge Lyra Atlas.

Phono stage Allnic Audio Labs H-1200.

Preamp Audio Research SP-9 Mk 2.

Power amplifiers PrimaLuna ProLogue Sevens.

Speakers MartinLogan Spires.

Cables Phono: Nordost Frey. Interconnects: Nordost Frey. Speaker: Nordost Frey. AC: stock.

Accessories Target and SolidSteel equipment stands; Mission Isoplat; Furman Elite 15-PFi power conditioner; Audio Physic cartridge demagnetiser; Acoustech carbon fibre brush; Last record and stylus cleaning products; Audio Additives digital stylus force gauge; Spin Clean Record Washer Mk II.

Featured Record Review



Abba

The Vinyl Collection

Polar Records (nine 33-RPM 180g LPs)

060252734646

This boxed set contains all eight of Abba's studio albums, plus an extra album featuring bonus tracks including several singles and B sides that weren't on other albums. Arguably Sweden's greatest musical export, Abba were massive in the 1970s and early 1980s despite being perceived—at least in my circles at the time—as being very uncool. Who cares?!

Most of the music is great, with the girls' (Agnetha and Anni-Frid) harmonies deliciously complementing the boys' (Benny and Björn) melodies. A favourite of mine (and my late grandmother), *The Way Old Friends Do*, (which is the closing track of their penultimate album, *Super Trouper*) still brings a lump to my through when I listen to it, especially when the bass kicks in when the verse repeats. Incidentally, this track

features the locked groove of the original: try doing that on a CD!

Remastered from the original master tapes and duplicating the original Swedish packaging (including the inner sleeves), the sound quality on this set is OK, the more recent albums generally sounding better than the older ones. The records themselves are fine and the surfaces are quiet.

The collection comes in an attractive box which also includes a very nice booklet with numerous photos and information about the recording dates and so on. This set is probably the best way to enjoy Abba on vinyl, so indulge yourself in this (not inexpensive, alas) guilty pleasure! **Rich Teer**

Audiophile Record Reviews



Peter Gabriel

4

Classic Records/Real World Records
(four single-sided 45-RPM 200g LPs)
PG 4-45

This is the last of the eponymous Peter Gabriel albums reissued on Clarity Vinyl by Classic Records, in addition to *So*. The music on this album is a bit more rocky—and perhaps accessible—than its predecessor, and includes the hit single, *Shock the Monkey*.

The sound quality is very good for a commercial rock album, with little compression and therefore decent dynamics: modern producers and engineers take note! Pressed on four thick, flat slabs of Clarity vinyl, and with great packaging, if you're a Peter Gabriel fan this one is a must-add to your collection! **RT**



Fleetwood Mac

Rumours

Reprise Records (two 45-RPM 180g LPs)
517787-1

Written and recorded during the band members' often tumultuous interpersonal relationships, *Rumours* is Fleetwood Mac's biggest selling album. With great tracks such as *Go Your Own Way*, *Don't Stop*, and *The Chain*, it's hardly a surprise!

Given that it was recorded in 1976, the sound quality is remarkably good, and this version of *Rumours* (which was remastered by Steve Hoffman and Kevin Gray at AcousTech Mastering) blows the others I have right out of the water. Not only is the bass deeper, but the dynamics are better and the recording feels like it has more room to

breathe (these are no doubt aided by the superb 45-RPM Pallas pressing).

This record was also remastered at 33-RPM; I've not heard that version but I say treat yourself to this 45-RPM version. Your ears will thank you! **RT**

bonus tracks. Highly recommended!
RT



The Traveling Wilburys

The Traveling Wilburys Collection

Rhino/Wilbury Records (three 33-RPM
180g LPs)

RHI1 224316

This boxed set combines The Traveling Wilburys' two studio albums, called *Volume 1* and *Volume 3* (the latter is a wry reference to the bootleg album, *Volume 2*, that appeared prior to the release of *Volume 3*). The music is as fresh and enjoyable now as it was 20+ years ago. *Handle With Care* is still one of my favourite songs.

The sound quality on this version, which was remastered by Kevin Gray and pressed at RTI on thick vinyl with silent surfaces, is a nice upgrade from my originals (which aren't too shabby!), and this set includes a 12" EP containing



Billy Joel

Piano Man

Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab/Columbia
(33-RPM 180g LP)

MFSL 1-349

The first time I played this album I thought I'd accidentally left my turntable on 45-RPM because the up-tempo bass and drum at the beginning of the opening track, *Travelin' Prayer*, wasn't what I'd expect from a Billy Joel record! When Joel started singing and sounded like himself rather than a chipmunk, I realised my mistake and settled down to listen. I enjoyed the music on the album, which contains one my favourite Billy Joel tracks, the titular *Piano Man*.

The sound quality is very good, especially considering this is a regular studio pop recording from 1973. The

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AudioScape Canada Inc.
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(905) 833-0010

record is flat with quiet surfaces, and the heavy duty cardboard packaging is up to MFSL's usual high standards. **RT**

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Eric Clapton

Unplugged

Reprise Records (two 33-RPM 180g LPs)

468412-1

Recorded live in England before a small audience, this reissue is the first time *Unplugged* has been available on vinyl in North America (imports notwithstanding). It was previously issue on vinyl in 1992. The original pressing is a great record, but this reissue blows it away! Not only does it contain all 14 tracks (the original vinyl release omits *Rollin' and Tumblin'*), the sound quality is much better (especially the bottom end—which sounds like it is deliberately rolled off, presumably so that the record could be squeezed onto one disc—and dynamics). The latter is no doubt aided by the fact that the

album is spread out over four sides (the original was crammed onto just two).

Among the tracks are a moving version of *Tears in Heaven*, and a down-tempo version of *Layla* (these two tracks are among the album's highlights in my opinion). Do I really need to say it? Very highly recommended! **RT**

Rock Record Reviews



Sodacon Sounds of Summer Volume 1

Sodacon

Sounds of Summer Volume 1

Sodacon Music (33-RPM LP)

Sodacon is a project fronted by Jesse Crawford, and *Sounds of Summer Volume 1* is their first release on vinyl. The music is pretty good indie-rock with some synthesiser sound effects thrown in for variety (Crawford uses the term “sci-fi space rock” to describe his work).

The sound quality is only average but I didn't find it too distracting given the genre. The album also includes a free digital download, so support independent artists and give this one a try! **RT**



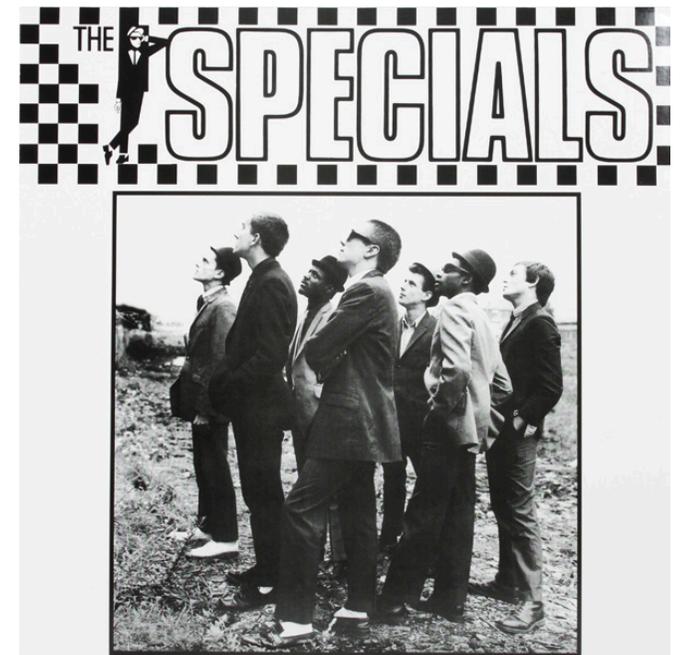
She and Him

Volume Two

Merge Records (33-RPM 180g LP)

MRG 354

Consisting of 11 original compositions and two covers, *Volume Two* is an album of breezy, feel-good songs, sung by the delightful Zoey Deschanel. The sound quality is OK—certainly nothing special—but, as is all too common these days, suffers from being overly compressed. Buying a copy of this record on vinyl entitles the purchaser to a free digital download of it, in a variety of formats. **RT**



The Specials

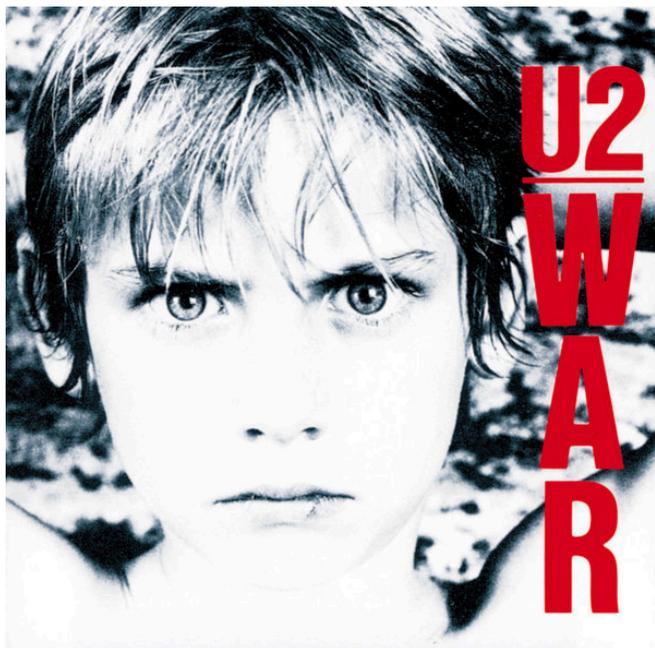
The Specials

Chrysalis Records (33-RPM 180g LP)

509992 43650 17

The Specials were one of the groups that made up the 2 Tone movement in the UK in the late 1970s and early 1980s (2 Tone is a fusion of ska, reggae, rocksteady, new wave, and punk). The album opens with a catchy cover of *A Message to You, Rudy*—which features Rico Rodriguez on trombone as had on the original version by Dandy Livingstone in 1967—and contains one of my favourites of the genre, *Gangsters*.

The sound quality is only so-so, so buy this one for the music rather than to showcase your system. **RT**



bonus sixteen-page booklet containing background notes, song lyrics, and more than a dozen photographs. **RT**

U2

War

Universal-Island Records (33-RPM
180g LP)
1761674

U2's third (and their first commercially successful) album opens with the machine gun-like rat-a-tat drum of *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, which was written as a protest against the violence perpetrated on Irish Civilians in 1920 and 1972. *New Years Day* (the first single to be released from this album), with its haunting opening piano riff, is my favourite track on the album.

The sound quality is nothing special—you won't be using this one to show off your big vinyl spinning rig!—but the pressing is flat with quiet surfaces. The record is packaged in a heavy cardboard gatefold sleeve, and comes with a

Classical Record Reviews



Igor Stravinsky

The Firebird Suite

Reference Recordings (33-RPM 200g LP)

RM-1502

Originally recorded in 1996 by Keith “Prof” Johnson, this record of Eiji Oue conducting the Minnesota Orchestra is one of two releases that mark Reference Records’ long-awaited return to vinyl. And what a triumphant return! The sound of the hall is well captured, and you can really feel the mass of air produced by the bass drum as it reverberates off the rear wall.

The packaging—a thick cardboard gatefold sleeve—is first rate and the record itself is flat with silent surfaces.

RT



Trondheim Soloists

Souvenir Part 1

2L (33-RPM 180g LP)

2L-090A-LP

The Trondheim Soloists (or, in their native Norwegian tongue, TrondheimSolistene) are a highly regarded orchestra that specialises in playing chamber music. This album contains two pieces: Tchaikovsky’s *Serenade for Strings* and Nielson’s *Suite for String Orchestra*. It was recorded in Selbu Church, Norway. The decision to release this album on vinyl was inspired by a personal request by one of the ensemble players; to that person we owe our thanks!

This is an intimate sounding recording of the relatively small ensemble, with just a little of the recording venue’s acoustics coming through. The direct metal mastered (DMM) record sounds

pretty good, which perhaps isn’t too surprising given the 352.8 kHz/24-bit DXD source. The record itself is well made, with wonderfully silent surfaces.

RT

Jazz Record Reviews



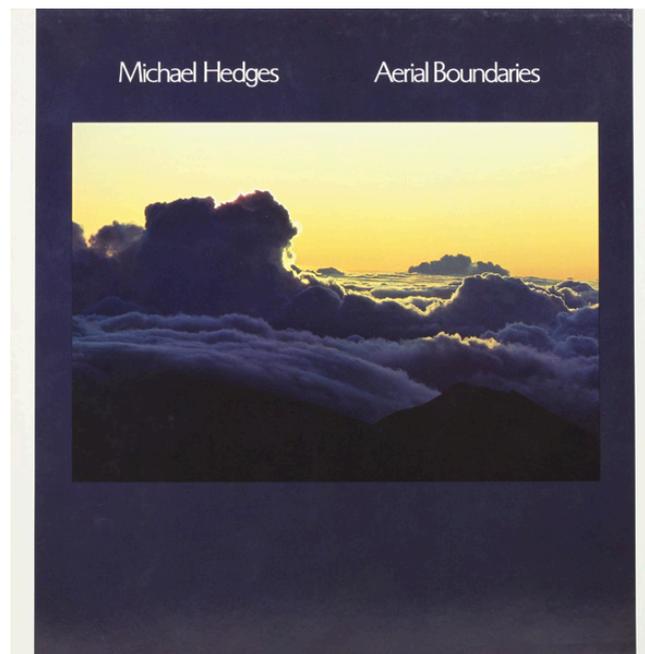
Dick Hyman

From the Age of Swing

Reference Recordings (two 45-RPM 200g LPs)
RM-2501

From the Age of Swing is one of the inaugural releases that marks Reference Recordings' long-overdue and much welcomed return to publishing on vinyl. The sound quality is as good as you'd expect (although I find the sound of the cymbals to be a little bit tizzy), but there are few acoustic cues from the presumably intimate venue.

Musically, I have to be honest and say that this one doesn't float my boat: I guess swing time jazz just isn't my thing! If it's your thing, however, check it out (the first class packaging and silent surfaces should help you in that decision!). **RT**



Michael Hedges

Aerial Boundaries

Windham Hill Records (33-RPM LP)
371032-1

It seems that many hi-fi shows have one or two tracks that a lot of vendors use to demonstrate their products. One such track from my earliest show memories was *Aerial Boundaries*, by Michael Hedges. Intrigued, I purchased a copy of the album. I'm glad I did: Hedges' virtuoso guitar playing is a joy to listen to (it's hard to believe that the title track, and many others, consist of just Hedges playing his guitar direct to a two-track master; no multitracking or other instruments!), and is especially good for winding down at the end of hard day!

The sound quality is pretty good—although some details are perhaps a

little bit overly spotlighted—probably because of the very simple recording chain that was used (many tracks were recorded live to the two-track digital master). If you like listening to the sound of an acoustic guitar in the hands of a master musician, you must add this one to your collection! **RT**



Anne Bisson

Portraits and Perfumes

Camilio Records (33-RPM 180 g LP)

CAM5-2004

Anne Bisson is a Canadian jazz pianist and singer, similar to fellow Canadian, Diana Krall. This album, Bisson's second, contains delightfully quirky covers of several songs—including the most unexpected rendition of Pink Floyd's *Us and Them* I've yet to hear—and two self-penned songs, the result being somewhat reminiscent of a trippy lounge act!

The sound quality of this recording is quite good (Bisson's presence is particularly palpable in some parts of *Us and Them*), but the surfaces were a little noisy on my copy. **RT**

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