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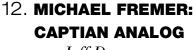


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JEFF DORGAY

A Wisconsin native, Jeff built his first amplifier from a schematic in the RCA tube manual. A brief career selling mid-fi gear ended in 1981, when he told a customer to take his big check up the street to the local Levinson dealer for some really cool equipment.

Having spent the last seven years writing about photography and digital imaging for a number of publications, he also had a brief career at another popular high end audio magazine before starting TONE.

TONI MCQUILKEN

Toni McQuilken steps up to the big chair at TONE after being assistant editor at Digital Output for three years. A confessed technology junkie, she has a Communications Degree from Flagler College in St. Augustine. Florida, and recently finished her MBA from the University of Phoenix Online.

She lives in New York with her two spoiledrotten cats, loves most types of music, and chews Cinnamint Orbit gum.

JEAN DORGAY

With a wealth of advertising experience, Jean brings 25 years as an art director to TONE. Her early studies of fine art and marketing were spent at the University of Southern Oregon. She later moved to the Southwest to work on her tan and finish a degree in design at the University of Arizona.

When she's not digitally designing, you can find Jean at the local gardening shops looking for cool things to add to the yard and dreaming about living in Tuscany.

DAN BABINEAU

Dan joins TONE as our classical music authority. Much more than just another opinionated audiophile, he brings a wealth of knowledge playing classical music (oboe and bassoon) for a number of well known orchestras and has more equity in his record collection than most people have in their homes. A certified analog enthusiast, watch for DB contributing an occasional review concerning the stratosphere of LP playback.

STEVE HOFFMAN

Known to many in the music business as one of the world's most talented mastering engineers, Steve is a passionate Leica collector and known to take some pretty good pictures when the mood strikes. He's not a bad drummer. either.

Steve resides in Los Angeles to stay close to the music business with his wife Karla and two year old son, Mikey who would very much like to get his hands on Dad's Leica collection, or better yet some of those antique 300Bs in the nice wooden boxes.

NICOLE WILSON

A graduate of the University of Washington, Nicole spent her early years listening to classic pop/rock and later developed a taste for goth and hip hop. A time spent on the London music scene broadened Nicole's music collection as well as her hair colors.

When she's not catering to the coffee connoisseurs, Nicole can be seen toting a Dachshund named D.C. and enjoying double short cinnamon non-fat lattes with a bit 'o whip on top.

JOE GOLFEN

Joe comes to us from Phoenix, where he has been a long-time friend of the family. Now as he is about to graduate from Arizona State University, he is following in his father's footsteps at the Arizona Republic, where he regularly writes about music.

With a depth of music knowledge beyond his years, Joe also plays guitar whenever he has the time. Keep an eye on this one!

NORWOOD BROWN

Our music editor, Norwood Brown has an interesting past. Playing drums professionally since age 12, Norwood is a music industry veteran, having spent many years behind the scenes in the record company and recording studio worlds. Now living in the Pacific Northwest, he is a certified living legend and walking encyclopedia of all things musical.

JEROLD O'BRIEN

JD can't remember if he first met Jerold at a Badger game at the University of Wisconsin or standing in line waiting to see the Rocky Horror Picture Show on Milwaukee's East Side.

The staff hermit. JO now also resides in the Pacific Northwest where he listens to a lot of '60s and '70s rock music, restores old BMWs and vintage tube amplifiers. He is the only member of the staff that does not own a TIVO.

SCOTT TETZLAFF

Scott keeps the computers running for the world's largest advertising agency by day, but is a big music enthusiast, with almost a full terabyte of music on his hard disc. Because his job takes him all over the world, his buddies keep him on top of the coolest new music in all of the clubs in Europe and elsewhere. Incidentally, he and JD met working in Milwaukee's infamous Safe House spinning records many years ago.

CONTRIBUTORS

NEW IN TONE THIS ISSUE

Todd Scott Sageser

Todd's Dad launched him into hi-fi at age five with his first LP and an old Zenith combination set, a reel-to-reel at age eight and a cassette deck at 11. He spent his teens buying stereo gear and musical instruments. He spent part of his early 20s selling a lot of his gear to our publisher, who lived right across the street.

After managing the audio studio at UW-Parkside and graduating in Mass Comm from UW-Milwaukee, he worked in radio, sold hi-fi and then ran Pearl Studios in Milwaukee. He was also the house engineer for Alpine Valley Music Theatre for four years.

Todd now heads the audio department at the largest church in Wisconsin, Elmbrook Church, where he does live mixing, music and audio recording. He is also mentoring his part-time staff and volunteers, to pass his knowledge on.

William Lemke

Mr. Lemke is a fine art photographer of the world's landscape from Waukesha, Wisconsin; home of Les Paul. A good friend of the late Ansel Adams, he is much more a lover of music than an audiophile. (though his studio was sporting a nice pair of ProAcs the last time I was there). He also plays a pretty mean Les Paul and I was floored by his interesting story about his Mom knowing him as a youngster. Imagine if Mom would have married her childhood sweetheart!

When you have a spare minute, check out his work at www.lemkephotography.com

Joe Nino-Hernes

Joe Nino-Hernes is wise beyond his young years and is a very enthusiastic hi-fi guy to boot. Introduced to the audience at the Stereophile show by our own Steve Hoffman as "the future of the recording industry", Joe is finishing up his degree in Audio Arts and Acoustics at Columbia College in Chicago. He also spends a lot of time doing live recording and mixing for various artists in the Chicago area. He is a full member of the Audio Engineering Society. (AES)

In his free time, he also works part time at a local hi-fi shop repairing and modifying gear.

Joe will be helping us out with entry level gear and vintage gear reports as well as our tape deck column, i.p.s., soon to be on the new *TONEAudio* website. Keep an eye on your CD covers for this name in a couple of years.

You can usually contact Joe through Steve Hoffman's forum.



PUBLISHER'S LETTER

It's been a great first year! I even survived the recent squirrel attack the other day. Seriously; it was a pleasant fall day here in the Pacific Northwest, when I noticed my Lakeland Terrier quivering next to a big stack of amplifiers. He'd caught the scent of a giant squirrel that came wondering in through the open door! Knowing that these dogs have been bred for about 2000 years to attack rodents, it was a tense moment. I could just hear the conversation now: "Hello, (amplifier manufacturer here) there's going to be some big scratches on those monoblocks when I send them back. Sorry about that!"

Fortunately we grabbed the dog and got some nutty snack treats to lure the squirrel out with no harm done to any animals or equipment.

Now that we are starting on year two, we have a lot more in store for you. More reviews, more DIY and setup and most of all MORE music. We are adding a few more writers that I hope you will all enjoy. By the end of this year, we should have the *TONEAudio* website on line, so there will be quite a bit of bonus content there as well. I'll be sure to blast you all an email when it is up and running. We will be updating it regularly, so you will have more to read between issues.

On behalf of the staff at *TONEAudio*, I would like to thank you for continuing to read our magazine. We really appreciate your feedback and appreciate the positive comments you have sent our way. I would also like to thank our advertisers for continuing to support our vision. It appears that we have all developed a great working relationship.

However, most of the credit goes to our staff. I am fortunate to have such a good crew that not only shares my vision, but enjoys music as much as I do!

So, stay tuned. If you had fun this past year, we are only getting started. There's a lot more where that came from. If you happen to be attending the **Rocky Mountain Audio Fest** in Denver (October 20-22), please stop by **Room 1026** and say "Hello". I'd like to thank you personally.









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"Life was so much easier when we had single-ended triodes"



The Bargain of the Century

The Outlaw 2200 Monoblocks

Jerold O'Brien

What's black, weighs 36 pounds, cranks out 200 watts per channel into eight ohms (300 into four) and only costs \$650? A PAIR of Outlaw 2200 monoblocks. That's right, a pair! For those of you just entering the audiophile world that want a real world power amplifier on a student loan budget, look no further. Matter of fact, if you buy a pair RIGHT NOW, you can get them for \$624 and Outlaw will throw in free ground shipping!

Buy four and they throw one in a fifth one free, a great deal for those of you assembling a home theater system!

200 watts should be enough power to drive damn near anything, so you can think of just about any speaker to go along with a pair of these. In addition to being powerful, the 2200s are small. 17" wide x 11.5" deep and only 1.75" tall, so you can put a pair or a pile of them anywhere.

Considering this is the budget column, I didn't use any fancy power cords or interconnects. I just stacked them on top of each other, plugged them into the wall without power conditioning and let em go. After all, if you are just joining us on this journey, you won't have the dough for fancy accessories yet. (Not until we sink our hooks into you, anyway)

I used an Ah! Tjoeb 4000 for digital playback and a Rega P3 with a Sumiko Blackbird and (highly modified) Bottlehead Seduction phono preamplifier for analog playback. DH Labs BL-1 interconnects were used throughout the system and I also used the DH Power Plus power cords on both preamplifiers used for the test.

The folks at Outlaw have been building a steady reputation for offering good gear at reasonable prices and they have received some

(continued)

FEATURE



good words elsewhere, so the big cheese was very excited to get these monoblocks in to run through their paces. Once they arrived at my door, they only needed a few days worth of continuous running to be fully broken in and at their best. They only sounded a touch harsh right out of the box, but most of that is gone in the first 24 hours of play.

A lot under the hood

Even though the cover has some pretty big slots, I had to take the cover off and nose around. Big transformer and related power supply components, translates to lots of juice, so I hooked them up to my Vandersteen 2ce Signatures that only have an efficiency of 86 db and began to torture the Outlaws. I didn't have any Outlaws music, so I did the next best thing; I played some Skynyrd! That's right, I blasted Freebird so loud, I did something I haven't done since college, I got a visit from the cops! There I was playing air guitar in the living room in my Spongebob boxers when there was a knock at the door...

I thought to myself, it couldn't be my girl-friend, because she has a key, so who could it be? Yep, it was the men in blue, politely asking me to "turn it down a little, sir..." But these particular cops were pretty young guys and when they saw all the gear in my room, we started chatting about audio and I put a few other tunes on for the boys. Who knows, maybe they will become Outlaw customers?

Ok, let's get serious

Rest assured that for most of the rest of this review, I kept the 2200s at near respectable levels. My 2ces are power hogs and as a tube guy, I sometimes forget what that kind of power sounds like! But having the extra juice really helps when you want to rock.

I did most of my critical listening with the 2Ce Signatures and the ModWright 9.0SWL linestage, but keeping in the budget vein, I tried them with my Bottlehead linestage too. If you are on a really tight budget, the Bottlehead Foreplay III can be yours for \$365. One night of soldering and for just under a thousand dollars, you have a great combo. (continued)





Put a pair of really warm NOS tubes in the sockets and you can mellow out the transistor amps quite a bit.

The 2200s had a pretty fair amount of finesse at this price point as well; they were not just brute force and nothing else. (You old-timers remember Phase Linear?) I was listening to Somewhere Down the Lazy River from the first Robbie Robertson album and was really impressed at how well the ethereal vocals on this track floated between the speakers. I also spent a bit of time with the Dire Straits On Every Street disc (I know I need to get into the 21st century...) and was again impressed with the mids and highend response of these amplifiers.

Granted, they did not have the resolution of those cool Boulder 850s that our fearless leader is reviewing, but hey; you are getting a PAIR of amplifiers for the price of a decent POWER CORD.

On the back panel, there is an input for an RCA connector as well as a balanced XLR input. There are also connections for low voltage switching, so that you can make these part of a system with central control. All in all, very versatile and well thought out.

Highly recommended

Whether you are looking for your first big power amplifier, building a home theater system, or just would rather spend a large pile of cash on something other than hifi gear, the Outlaw 2200 monoblocks won't let you down. They offer a very high level of performance for the price and won't take up a lot of room on your shelves.



Captain Analog

— Jeff Dorgay

mxangle1 NTSC-English Language





21st Century Viny

ANALOG FOREVER

HERE'S A FUN
EXERCISE: Get
30 audiophiles in
a room and ask
how many of them
know how to set
a turntable up. Of
course they will all
raise their hands! (and
tell you your table is set
up wrong...) Now, here's
where the fun comes in: Ask
one of them to show you how to
set up your turntable and watch them
all scatter like cockroaches! (continued)

f you are new to the audio hobby and considering your first turntable, setup can be a daunting-experience. But if you want to listen to LPs right and become a "real audiophile" that doesn't just listen to digital, what are your options?

A. Fumble through it yourself. Considering how crappy the instructions are that come with most turntables (most manufacturers are guilty here), this is a 50-50 proposition at best.

B. See if the dealer that sold it to you will

either set it up at the store or better yet, will come to your home and set it up. If you are one of the lucky ones that lives near an analog friendly dealer, this could be a good deal and eliminate the geek factor. Ed. Note: should you be lucky enough to have someone like this in your midst, make sure and take him out to din-

your midst, make sure and take him out to dinner or at least lunch for taking care of you. DO NOT offer him a beer or other adult beverage BEFORE he sets up the turntable, or you could be back in trouble.

C. Get one of your other audiophile bud- dies to do it for you. This has about an 80-20 proposition (odds against the house) of success, but even if your buddy can do it, he will always have hand over you. If you are comfy with that, it's okay, but make sure to find a way to put the odds back on level ground ASAP.

Should you choose any of these options, there is a high probability that this could all end in tears and you still won't be spinning records.

However, *Stereophile* columnist Michael Fremer has an answer for you and it's a good one. He takes you through the basic setup on a Pro-ject RM-9, which also will help you with most of the Music Hall tables too. Next on the list is the Rega P5, which is very similar to the rest of the Rega line and last but not least, the VPI Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster is a pretty good step up from the other two tables, so this part is somewhat more advanced. If you want to set up your LP-12, forget about that here, this is a basic course.





Gee, it's great to be back in Los Angeles, but seriously....

Besides being informative, **21st Century VinyI** is funny and if there is anything the audiophile world needs now is a few more laughs, so hats off to Mr. Fremer for adding some levity to the picture. I found myself cracking up more than once during the presentation, and I won't give away the funny bits here. *(continued)*

The Badge Tells You What's Inside.

At Great Northern Sound we offer upgrades on some of the finest names in audio, taking great gear to an even higher level of performance.

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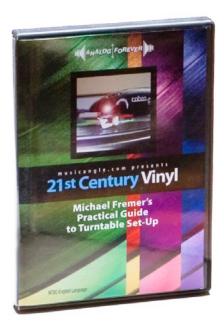
In addition to the turntable setup information, there is also a great interview with George Marino of Sterling Sound. Whether you are new to the vinyl world or a die-hard fan, this is great to watch.

An added bonus is the PDF file on the disc that gives you even more technical information pertaining to turntable setup. I would highly suggest that you read this first and then keep a printed copy handy while you are watching the disc, but I'm geekier than most.

The Proof's In The Pudding

To give it the acid test, I used the disc to set up my brother in law's Music Hall table and it worked very well. I think that if you are someone with no turntable setup experience, 21st Century Vinyl will get you up and running in no time. You can always learn more about turntable setup and be as geeky as you want, but this disc will get you safely down the beginning of the path.

A Great Buy!



SAMOUS

THE ACOUSTAT 2+2

TODD SAGESER

When first asked to write an article for a feature called "The Monogamous Audiophile" it took a while for the meaning to hit me. And when it did, it hit hard. I have had the same speakers and amp since 1982. Those speakers have determined many things in my life. Where I live, what size living room I have and the layout of the living room, who I can share my space with, what my neighbors will put up with and more.

I'm talking about the Acoustat 2+2 electrostats. If you never encountered them, they are just about eight feet tall, twenty inches wide and 4 inches deep. Since they a bipolar radiators, they need to be two to three feet from the wall and need dampening on the back wall, directly behind them. They were made in two colors: black, which made them look too much like the monolith in "2001: A Space Odyssey", or beige, which sort of blended into a room painted a light color. I can guarantee that the wife of any 2+2 owner would not be amused. There is no way that these could possibly fall into the "Honey, could we sort of make these into end tables" category! I was single and solo when I bought the 2+2s. I lived above a storefront and had no problems with coming home after a sound mixing gig and putting on the first Van Halen album at 3 AM and playing Eruption/You Really Got Me at full volume, probably about 110 dB. But about a year later I moved into a third floor apartment and even with four hand built acoustic deadening wall panels and Sonex behind each panel, reality set in. I couldn't go above three on the preamp, and only before 10 PM.

Acoustat offered upgrades to the speakers. Again, I was faithful. The Medallion Blue change involved a temporary separation while the interface units had to be sent back. I think I was without the speakers for about three weeks. I year or so later, the Medallion Red update was announced. Not again? This time, to my surprise, the parts came to me in a box, and I got to install them.



I stayed true to the Acoustats through a number of apartments and flats until I had a financial struggle and had to move back to my parents. The speakers stayed at a friend's house for about 2 years and I had visiting privileges. What I hadn't thought about, was my friends smoking habit of lighting up and letting cigarettes burn in multiple ashtrays around the apartment. The speakers and Sonex, and even the two sound deadening panels turned a dark, grayish brown. I had to rescue them! So I borrowed a van, disassembled them and put them into storage in my parent's basement. (continued)

GAMOUS

I went through more living spaces, including a log cabin, which didn't even have eight-foot ceilings, and living with a friend who had a small, two-bedroom ranch. He had just bought a 32-inch television, a big entertainment center and a small surround sound system, and didn't want my speakers to invade his living room. I don't blame him. He would have had to sell the couch to make room for them!

Well, about 18 months later, we parted company and I was waiting for some repairs to be finished on my own apartment. The living room would be big enough to set up the speakers again, but what to do with the ugly grille clothes? I went through with removing about 140 staples from the top and bottom of each speaker and sliding the fabric off, then into a tub of Oxy-Clean for a while. Then through the washing machine a couple times. Then hanging to dry for a couple days, for fear that the dryer would shrink the already tight fabric. Low and behold, they were beige with a sort of light tan streaky pattern. It looked sort of artsy, so I decided to put them together again. Can you see the monogamous thing happening here? A labor of love.

I moved into the new place a couple days later. After arranging the rest of the living room, I started putting the speakers together. Needless to say, at nearly 8 feet tall, the 2+2s cannot be brought into a room fully assembled, so you have to put them together. The panel lies out on the floor, the base sits at the bottom, and the interface unit sits on the other side of the base. You fasten a metal plate over the speaker wires and attach it to the base. Then you rock up the speaker panel and fasten it to the base. You connect the speaker panel wiring to the interface and rock the interface up. Fasten the interface to the base and connect speaker brackets to the interface for support. Then plug the interface into AC and connect speaker cables.

Acoustat recommended that you let them charge for three days to get the best sound, but I couldn't wait. It was like a second honey-

moon night. I had to hear the first speaker, just plugged in, in mono! I put on a CD and I heard sound. Sound that made me tear up after a few minutes. I put the other speaker together, connected it and it was a pretty emotional experience indeed.

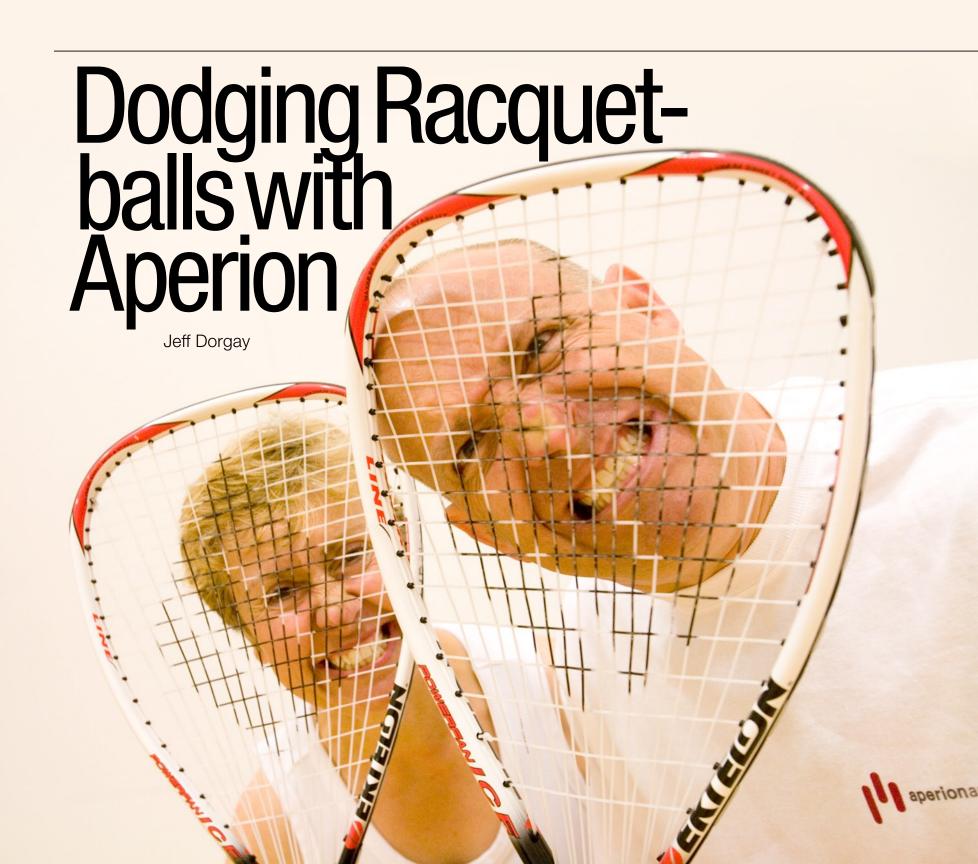
At this point, I have to tell you, I had thought of selling the 2+2s on E-bay and starting over in this new space. I would have missed out on keeping the best investment I had ever made!!!

I have a young neighbor who is an audiophile and computer expert. My neighbor and I spent many hours listening to CDs, my original recordings (I'm an audio engineer by trade), and of course, vinyl. He brought his favorite records over (imagine, a 26 year old that cherishes vinyl), and was amazed at what he heard. He has a friend who works at Music Direct, in Chicago that came up to visit on a Saturday night. I stopped by to see them and after describing my old stereo, non-surround, system, I invited them over for a few minutes.

Before I played anything, the friend said "I've heard of electrostatic speakers, but I've never heard them." We played a CD first of a live concert I recorded. He freaked out and said, "They just disappear... it's all music!" We tried CDs and vinyl. And more CDs. And more vinyl. At 3 AM I finally had to call it quits for the night and invited them to come back another time, maybe a little earlier next time. They still had a list of things they wanted to hear.

That night, I remembered what I felt the first time I dragged the 2+2s up the stairs, getting stuck in the stairwell and having to cut the box open to extract them separately, before setting them up. "They just disappear... and all there is is music. All of the music!"

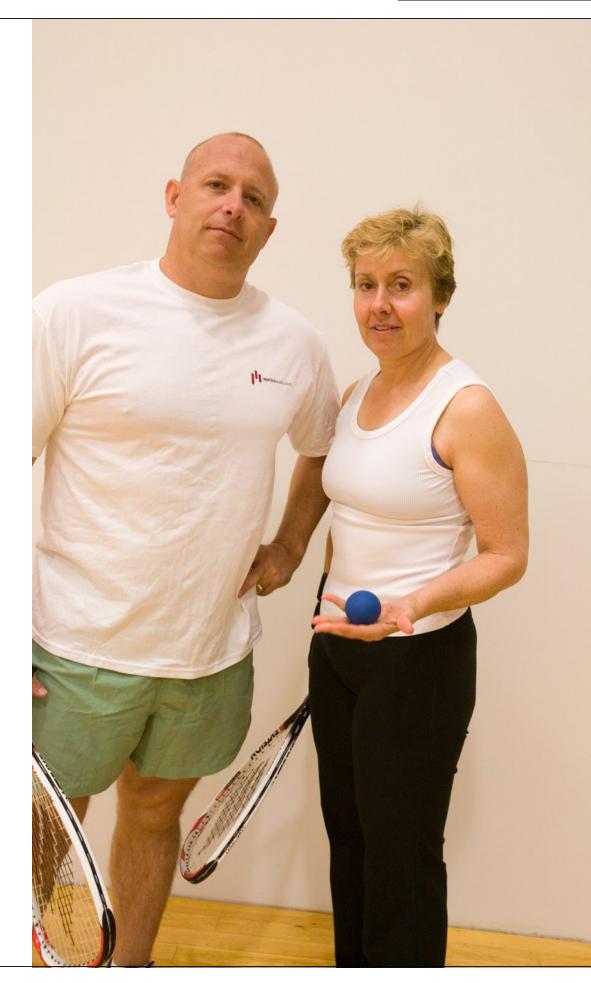
That's why I still have them.



f you tuned in last issue, we had Ken Kessler share a bit of what he does outside of the hi-fi world in his spare time. For this issue we caught up with Win Jeanfreau and Lorraine Janeway of Aperion Speakers, located in Portland, Oregon.

I've known these two for some time and while they run a company with a very relaxed corporate culture, they are both very active people and somewhat competitive; though it's a *friendly* kind of competitiveness. Like Mr. Kessler, they both also really appreciate speed. Jeanfreau flies a Piper Comanche in his spare time and rides a motorcycle. Janeway recently traded in her BMW Z3 convertible for a hybrid Camry (all of the folks at Aperion are very environmentally conscious) but she remains topless in spirit. I also noticed that their IT guy had a brand new Ducati Sport Classic in the parking lot...

Win and Lorraine play racquetball at the health club down the street from Aperion and I was brave enough to get on the court with them to take some photos. Over lunch, we discussed how important it is to set work aside for a while and what else these two do for fun. Here's what they had to say: (continued)





We were talking about who is the most doggedly competitive and became competitive about the discussion.

TA: How long have you guys been playing racquetball? Did you play before that, or was this part of a corporate fitness program?

Janeway: We've been playing together for four years, but we have both played for many years before that. While we do pick up the tab for half of our employees club memberships, it's not part of a formalized "fitness to kill you" program at work. We just love doing it. No better sound than the crisp crack of a fast, well-executed shot.

TA: Except for the sound of a new pair of Aperion speakers.

Jeanfreau: Correct!

TA: Which one of you is the better player? Which one is more doggedly competitive? Does this carry over to Aperion as well?

Janeway: Who is the better player? Definitely Win, but I can beat him enough to keep us both happy. We were talking about who is the most doggedly competitive and became competitive about the discussion. In racquetball, even when we're behind both of us stay the course with full commitment and energy. This full-bore complete commitment is a great attitude to share in business. We're just glad to be on the same team at work, because we both know that the other person is pulling equally and that our backs are covered, always.

TA: What else do you guys do for fun to forget about work?

Jeanfreau: I really enjoy two-wheeled transportation, I just picked up a new BMW R1200GS and I love to fly. I have a Comanche at the Twin Oaks airport. I'm working on my instrument rating and I have an endorsement for complex aircraft. *(continued)*



I think it has something to do with us both having the same birthday, January 25th. We are cut from the same cloth for sure. **Janeway:** We are both certified scuba divers and share a boat. He drives and I love to ski. I like to spend as much time as possible with friends and family and am an avid reader.

TA: Do either of you skydive?

Janeway: Not yet...

Jeanfreau: I've only done it a few times, but I love to jump out of the plane too!

TA: Do you find that both of you are pretty much adrenaline junkies or just fiercely competitive?

Janeway: As far as disengaging from work, it's hard to do. I think that's why we like full-immersion sports and hobbies. The brain; even better when it's brain and body HAS to be fully engaged somewhere else in order to fully relax. That's my suggestion.

Jeanfreau: I think it has something to do with us both having the same birthday, January 25th. We are cut from the same cloth for sure.

TA: Any suggestions to us for getting away from the audio world?

Janeway: Play like you work; full-bore, wideopen throttle. Laugh a lot and don't hang out with people that are a downer. Don't let fear make your decisions.

I know I'll be headed over to Portland to challenge these two soon, as I'm pretty competitive with a racquet in my hand. So if you see me with some bruises at the Rocky Mountain show, you'll have a pretty good idea where I got them.



GT3

No, NOT a car, but hi-tech, and full of flawless sound performance.

Chris Beeching

Loudspeakers come in all sorts of sizes and shapes these days, with the various designers claiming all sorts of benefits from their particular chosen path.

However, there is one almost universal belief, and that is that parallel sides in a loudspeaker cabinet can and do influence the sound in a way usually accepted as being detrimental to the overall end result. So it will probably come as no surprise that there are many designs where the corners are non-square (or not 90 degrees!). Throughout history cylindrical designs, five and seven-sided designs and compound curved designs have graced many a hi-fi dealer's shelves with widely differing degrees of success and acceptance.

(continued)



Of course, the WAF (or wife acceptance factor) is something many male audiophiles have to live with, and there is no doubt that the WAF can make (or break) sales of a particular product, so the styling element cannot be discounted when a new concept is proposed for a loudspeaker design. Fortunately the majority of loudspeaker designers also have partners who are pretty keen on the WAF during the initial design stage, but occasionally things slip through, not being subject to WAF scrutiny until much later in the process, even, in some cases, 'till it reaches the dealer's shelves. (sometimes with disatstrous results)

This is not the case with the GT3s which are not that radical as it turns out, but nevertheless are definitely not square!

Styled to be as aesthetically pleasing as possible, the GT3 is a spherical loudspeaker design, about the size of a soccer ball, with a single main mid-bass driver and a separate tweeter mounted atop in an aerodynamically-shaped housing.

The finish on the whole affair is absolutely top class, and even though the main cabinet is made from two halves fused together the join is simply not obvious, and the degree and depth of polish on the surface is truly stunning. The tweeter housing and the main stand are wooden; the lacquer and depth of polish and shine are amazingly good. Had they been a flat surface then you could have happily used them to gaze at yourself for hours on end.

The driver itself is spherical, some 6 inches in diameter, and reasonably efficient. In fact the system sensitivity is in the upper reaches for a design such as this, being around 90dB/w. The downside is that the stands are not that tall, and are also circular, so finding a suitable support at this stage may prove tricky, but I am assured that very soon a dedicated stand will be available which complements the overall design of the speaker, and will match the GT3's aesthetically as well as acoustically.

Of course, as I have striven to make clear above, their looks are totally unimportant(!!), and their aural performance is all that matters, so it was with some intrigue and apprehension that I coupled them up to my beloved 2A3 SE amplifier and sat back with bated breath. (continued)



"The Audience Au24 and powerChord cables share a family resemblance-they balance tonality extremely well, have superb detail (again, in balance; neither too much nor too little of it), and they're smooth. Not colored-smooth, but just-right-smooth." OnHiFi.com - Wes Phillips - April '04



"The Adept Response made a phenomenal difference in my system. Fundamentally, it improved the clarity of recordings by eliminating a previously undetected lack of definition, without introducing any brightness or most importantly any coloration. That is worth repeating. I did not hear any coloration from the Adept Response or any obscuring of the rhythm of the music. The Adept Response just made every recording I listened to more natural and in turn more musically engaging." The Absolute Sound - Max Shepherd - June '06



The result was a sound quality that was really quite good. Even straight out of the box (or in this case the car boot, as they were delivered by hand so to speak) they sounded absolutely superb. What was initially surprising was not only the depth of the bass (without any running in) but also the range of dynamic contrasts even with 2 ½ watts of power driving them.

Switching to a larger 300B PSE amplifier brought immense improvements to the degrees of light and shade, and the impact of music was now much more apparent. 18 tube watts was much nearer the mark in terms of power, so we upped the power just a little more with the desired effect. 25watts of EL34 P-P amplifier really put recordings into perspective. Being almost a point-source (as the tweeter was so close to the main driver) imaging was as natural as you'd expect from a point-source, and the benefits were a very realistic sense of proportion and depth to recordings which were naturally recorded.

With greater power available, bass weight and depth seemed to benefit as well, and the overall effect was of a very complete loudspeaker indeed.

Many have used female vocal tracks to test out loudspeakers, and here again they really excelled. Even though they were able to go considerably deeper than I'd anticipated, the GT3s didn't add any unwanted or additional chestiness to female vocals, yet they still were able to present low level and low frequency information with clarity and dexterity. (continued)



Fortunately the speakers use a 'standard' driver rather than one with a long-throw cone, and the end result was a clean but deep and very articulate bottom-end response.

So, back to the females. The hackneyed 'test track' of *Joe's Diner* (Suzanne Vega) was played without distress, undue sibilance and bloom, but neither was it sterile and lifeless. In fact the speakers were very 'human' in the way in which they presented the track, and they were also sufficiently sensitive enough to portray the depth and ambience of the recording studio, something which, in my experience, usually only single-driver systems are truly capable of.

Thankfully they didn't make music sound like hi-fi, so there was no technicolour haze surrounding the music, and it verged more towards 'BBC' than 60's technicolour epics from the big screen.

In some ways it was very unnerving hearing females sound so real, and so threedimensional from such a small speaker package.

Switching to more radical material, Jane Siberry's radical album *When I was a Boy* was presented in an unflurried way, with the deep bass totally failing to fluster a simple though unusual vocal line. Kate Bush also failed to reveal any nasties, and later on Kathleen Ferrier and even the Pussycat Dolls brought no failings. In fact, whatever your preferred music type, in the female vocal arena there really wasn't anything to criticise.

How about the male of the species? Again, because the lower registers were presented so cleanly the often-encountered thickening of the bass regions was absent. If the initial impression was one of a slight leanness down below, this was soon dispelled with the realisation that here was a clean and vibrant lower register which conveyed the music rather than the (false) impression of a big sound. (continued)

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Whether you prefer Caruso, George Michael, Freddie Mercury or Harry Belafonte, all you were really aware of was the performance taking place in front of you, and not of any shortcomings. The GT3s really excel in presenting music without making it 'hi-fi'.

So were there any downsides?

There were, but only really in two areas. The first was the lack of deep bass, but for a speaker of this size at this price, you really couldn't ask for more. The reality was that you probably got a lot more than you paid for. In large works with loud deep bass the speakers would eventually run out of capability. They never sounded harsh or horrible, but certainly low organ pedal notes and orchestral deep bass sometimes left you feeling you were just a little short-changed. That having been said, for a speaker of such modest size the design was surprising in the amount of bass and its depth that was produced, so much so that our 'usual' speakers weren't put back in place for long after the review set were due back.....

The last issue was power requirement. Personally, I like to see a high sensitivity because that makes volume 'free'; lower amplifier power also has the potential for really high quality with a minimal number of components in the signal path; not a universal truth, but a long-standing 'holy grail' for me. That having been said, 18 tube watts in a modest room, or 25 in a larger room will be more than adequate, and even for prolonged loud passages, they will soon set the eardrums ringing! (continued)



But what of solid state electronics?

Well, in fairness, I tried those as well, and again the performance was very similar. Though the timbre of solid state was marginally different, musically it was still as satisfying, and similar power requirements were observed. The original Naim Nait (in my view a much under-rated piece of kit), Quad gear, and even Krells failed to disappoint. More power did bring benefits, though marginal. In terms of sound quality, the speakers were able to convey accurately what was presented to them by way of a signal, and it was very difficult to fault their presentation. The humble Sugden A21 did particularly well, but then that was a preference thing, and others may find that other electronics 'do it for them'. As with any piece of equipment, there are more factors at play than simply sound quality, looks or the weather!

Conclusion

It's difficult to be uninspired by these little gems. They give a musical presentation which many larger speakers would do well to match, and at their price point are something of a major audio bargain. The choice of colours is limited at present white, but in future others may well become available, but white does make a refreshing change from the uniform black which seems so overly prevalent at the moment. Its unique styling may well take a little getting-used-to, and one dealer commented that 'pound for pound there's nothing to touch it' in the sound quality stakes, but that the styling' is not run of the mill; refreshing, but not universally acceptable'. You have to decide for yourself, but.... Close your eyes and there's no contest! I highly recommend an audition.

ED. NOTE: According to the manufacturer, the Gt3s are now available by special order here in the US!



Blast From The Past

THE ACOUSTIC RESEARCH AR-3

Joe Nino-Hernes

Just mention the name Acoustic Research to anyone over 40, and you will surely get a smile out of them. Every teen-ager from the 1960s who built Heathkit or Dynaco amps dreamed of having AR-3s like their old man, however at around \$250 per speaker, paper route money simply would not do. Does this sound familiar to anyone?

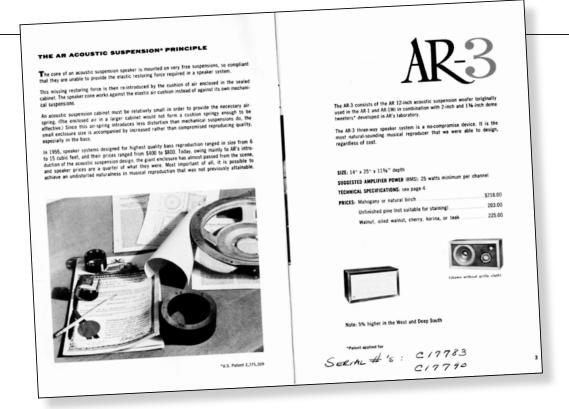
The AR-3 was a revolutionary speaker system, which broke new technical ground on many fronts. It made its debut in the fall of 1958 at the New York High Fidelity and Music Show. The AR-3 combined the 12 inch Acoustic Suspension woofer used in the highly acclaimed AR-1 with newly designed high frequency devices. *(continued)*



Edgar Villchur, the brains behind Acoustic Research, conducted many tests and he concluded that much of the sound that we hear from a loudspeaker system is reflected sound. He conducted various experiments with cone type high frequency devices, and ended up with a prototype where the center of the cone actually ended up above the level of the surround. The resulting diaphragm shape was a dome. This dome shape allowed high frequencies to radiate evenly into the room. The first generation dome midrange devices and "super tweeters" were cloth coated in a phenolic resin. What made these devices especially unique was that the voice coils have no former. The extremely lightweight aluminum voice coil was attached directly to the cloth dome. The assembly was then inserted into the gap with a rather large amount of fiberglass between the inside of the dome and the pole piece of the magnet structure.

The fiberglass was necessary to dampen the movement of the dome. The assembly was sealed in place with urethane foam, which was poured into notches surrounding the dome, visible as four little yellow spots on the edges. After the foam set, a coat of butyl rubber was applied around the perimeter of the dome to prevent dust from entering the gap. The midrange device used a 5 lb Alnico magnet structure, and the super tweeter used a 3 lb Alnico magnet structure. These superbly built drivers exhibit extremely flat on and off axis response.

(continued)



Due to the extremely lightweight voice coil/diaphragm assembly, they also possess fantastic transient response. Almost 50 years later, these devices are extremely reliable.

When they do fail, it is rarely due to excessive power. It is generally due to breakage of the fragile aluminum voice coil wires which come through the front of the dome, and connect to the terminal strip on the front of the cabinet. Another common failure is the dome literally popping out of the gap, due to the pressure from the fiberglass underneath it. This is only seems to plague the midrange drivers. If you have ever seen an AR dome midrange unit, it has a metal screen over it with a fiberalass pad in between it and the dome. This was used not only to roll off its high frequency response, but also to help counteract the pressure of the fiberglass that is underneath it.

Acoustic Research was an amazing company that changed the hifi industry forever, by making stereophonic sound part of the mainstream. Due to their compact size, a pair of AR speakers could easily fit in the living room, often up on bookshelves. (Hence the term, bookshelf speakers)

Before AR, speakers were massive (this never flew too well with the wives!), and required a large room. AR not only solved this problem, but created a loud-speaker superior to anything on the market at the time. Audiophiles hate to hear this, but the AR-3 still compares favorably with many of the high-end speakers on the market today. At 40 Hz, the AR 12" woofer produces less than 5% THD at 100 dB SPL! The AR-3 was indeed the Stradivarius of loudspeakers. There was nothing like them before and there will never be anything like them again.

When setup properly, the AR-3 is capable of reproducing music with in incredible sense of realism. I actually prefer the AR-3 to the AR-3a which was supposedly an improvement on the AR-3. The 3a is indeed flatter, but it does not have quite the same sense of immediacy and reality that the AR-3 has. There seems to be a delicacy to the original AR-3 super tweeter. When I play a good violin recording, like the RCA Living Stereo reissue of The Chicago Symphony playing Brahms: Violin Concerto in D op. 77, Jascha Heifetz's Stradivarius sounds absolutely stunning!

You can hear the harmonic complexity of the instrument, with no hint of false harmonics that would be created by a substandard loudspeaker. You can hear the rich room ambiance of Symphony Hall, attack and decay is perfect with no loss in detail as the reflection decays. I have found that with the AR-3a, some of this harmonic complexity, especially the decay gets lost. The system also does not seem to have quite the punch of the AR-3.

Amplifier Selection

The AR-3 and 3a are rather inefficient (85 dB) and difficult to drive. They are both 4 ohm systems. The woofer has a two inch double wound voice coil surrounded by a 10 lb Alnico magnet structure. Later AR-3a's had an 80 oz (5 lb) ceramic magnet structure. The driver can take a lot of power however it provides a challenge to the amplifier driving it. Though I hear stories of blown AR-3a tweeters, this can be prevented; the key to driving AR speakers is plenty of clean power! Clipping will destroy the tweeters, especially the tweeter in the AR-3a.

When using a solid-state amp, be sure it can handle a 4-ohm load that can drop to around 2 ohms in some places. For solid-state amps, I would recommend no less than 150 watts per channel. These days, there are a number of good solid-state amplifiers that are reasonably priced that would fill the bill.

I am driving my AR-3s with a 50 watt per channel vintage Eico HF-89. It is a class A push pull tube amplifier. It is one of the few vintage stereo tube amps that is capable of driving the AR-3 and the distortion characteristics of a tube amplifier is far less toxic to AR tweeters. Fortunately for us tube lovers; there is some nice affordable tube gear on the market that would be just great for AR speakers. Again, more power is better! (continued)

Placement

The AR-3 and 3a (or any AR speaker with offset high frequency devices) are excellent loudspeakers, but they like any other piece of audio gear, have their downfalls. They could have been even better if the midrange device and super tweeter were vertically aligned with the woofer. The offset midrange device and super tweeter really make them difficult to position in a small room. The problem goes away in a large room, as these speakers were designed to be placed pretty far apart. If you can get them about 10-15 feet apart, the drivers integrate much better. The closer you get to them and the closer they get to each other, the more of each driver you hear and the less you hear of the speaker system as a whole. I think this is why modern audiophiles don't like AR speakers. They don't know how to properly place them.

Today's speakers are much more plug and play, few of them have level controls to introduce differences between the right and left speakers. They usually have vertically aligned drivers or mirrored pairs optimized for two-channel reproduction. For the most part, you sit them down in your room 4-8 feet apart firing straight ahead, make sure they are in the same plane, and you're done!

When I set up AR speakers, I go through a slightly different process and here's how I do it: I start with them vertically on stands with the woofers at the bottom. This process will work with any 3 way AR speaker with offset midrange and tweeters. You can also fudge this to work with the two-way models like the AR-4x.

First, I place the speakers right next to each other in the middle of the room on their stands. Then, I turn down the midrange and tweeter controls on both speakers all the way. Once I get a feel for the woofer by itself, I raise the midrange until they integrate well and finally move on to the tweeter. Then I listen carefully to double check integration of the whole speaker.

Then, mute this speaker and repeat the process on the other one! Switch back and forth making adjustments as necessary to make sure they both sound exactly the same.

This process is tedious, but I guarantee that you will hear differently after you do

it. Just as a musician practices ear training with their instrument, this process is great ear training for the audiophile. After this is complete, I place them in the room where they will be. I like them around 7-10 feet apart in my room. I have them placed vertically on 12" stands with isolation points on the bottom. I highly recommend the 12" wood stands made by Wood Technology. They are only \$60 a pair from www.rack-sandstands.com.

Once the speakers are placed, I measure the distance from the wall to make sure that they are both firing in the same

time domain. I like them out from the wall about 4-5 feet. I also make sure that my listening position is directly in the center of the two speakers. Now I finally get a chance to sit down!

A known recording, preferably one with a good vocal that sits right in the phantom center helps with the final adjustments. The song *My Skin* from Natalie Merchant's album Ophelia is one of my favorites for this. I often use *The Fox* from Nickel Creek's album Nickel Creek as a good male vocal reference. If the vocal is not right in the center of the two speakers, this becomes a bit more difficult because of those offset drivers.

As we toe the speakers in the driver alignment changes. If we toe in the left speaker, the tweeter is sticking out a bit, and the midrange driver is back a bit. When we toe in the right speaker, the midrange driver is sticking out a bit, and the tweeter is back a bit. *(continued)*





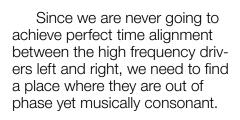


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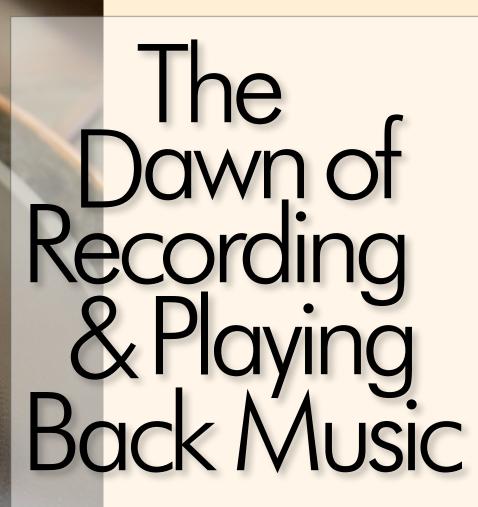


Phase vs. Time vs. Polarity

Please remember that phase is a measure of TIME not to be confused with polarity, which is absolute. People often say "phase" when they actually mean "polarity". You can shift phase, and invert polarity, but you can't invert phase! If you can invert phase, please let me know immediately! If I could go back in time, I would call AR and place a very large order!

When the proper positioning has been achieved, the speakers will disappear and imaging will be spectacular. When playing well recorded symphonic material, you will not hear the speakers as two sources, you will hear a huge soundstage and it is quite stunning. When playing vocal material, the vocals will sit right in the center. You will swear that there is a speaker there!

If you have a pair of AR speakers lurking in your basement or attic, dust them off and hook em' up! If they are still in working order, I think you might be pleasantly surprised with their performance. If they are not working, visit www.classicspeakerpages.net which contains an extensive library of AR information. Also, join the discussion forums and ask some questions. There are many incredibly knowledgeable people on the forum that will be glad to help you. I would like to thank Tom Tyson, an avid AR enthusiast, for providing me with detailed background and technical information about AR and their products. Tom posts regularly at the Classic Speaker Pages and possesses a wealth of knowledge. Enjoy!



I WAS BORN 100 YEARS TOO LATE.

- STEVE HOFFMAN



LOVE talking machines. I mean the playback systems of the pre-1925 electric era. ACOUSTIC TALKING MACHINES. Always did love 'em even when I was a little pup. There is something fascinating about a record spinning around at 78 (usually 80) RPM and blasting back music that grabbed me right from the beginning. I can play all kinds of music for my 2 year old but when we spin one of these old discs, he stops and stares at it with the same kind of dreamy fascination that I showed at his age. A (record) chip off the old block, eh?

First, some history: When I was a little kid I had permission to use my parents' big Zenith COBRA-MATIC record player to play their old swing era 78s on. As an only child I spent many hours in front of that glowing monster with the lightning bolt on the front! MANY happy hours. That is how I got accustomed to hearing old swing, classical, be-bop, etc. My parents' (and grandparents') records were and still are a source of great joy to me.

So, I dug old records even at the age of three, sue me. But this article ain't about that. It's about this:

When I was 5 years old my grand-mother (who, to prevent retirement boredom, worked part time at an antique store in Palm Springs) brought me over an old record when they came to visit. That really started me down a weird road. She knew I liked old stuff and even to **HER** this record was ancient. It was an Enrico Caruso record from a **REALLY** long time ago.



(continued)



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I'm sure it is very spooky to some of you that I enjoyed this record for many years, but it gets worse. A few years later, when on a shopping excursion with my parents (my mom looking for depression glass for her collection in the usual places, thrift stores, etc.) I spied what looked to be a really old phonograph out of the corner of my eye. I couldn't figure out how to turn the thing on because it had no on switch or electric plug. My dad said that it was like a machine that he had as a boy and it ran on a handcranked spring motor and had an acoustic horn (inside) that amplified the sound without electricity.

Curious and recognizing the basic concept from the endless "His Master's Voice" pictures I had, I asked the store owner (in my most polite little boy voice) to play it for me. (continued)



He had one record by "The Original Dixieland Jass Band" that went with the machine (a 1914 Victrola). I stood there slack jawed as I watched him crank it up and screwed a needle in the heavy, massive tone arm. (Sound box) Then, he placed that big tone arm on the record, opened the doors for maximum volume and let it blast!

Well, the thing played so loud that it stopped everyone in the store cold. I mean it was louder than my stereo in my bedroom when turned up really loud. FROM THAT MOMENT ON, I FOUND A NEW LOVE, OLD TALKING MACHINES.

I don't have a big collection, just a few choice pieces. If I was single and living in my

built up a bigger collection but I vowed when I got married that I had to actually have a life: which meant not more than a handful of old toys. So, I have two 1903 Edison Cylinder machines, a Brunswick monster from 1919 (which plays regular acoustics, Pathe discs and Edison Diamond Discs just by turning the sound box one way or another). I have also several nifty Victor Victrolas (baby versions) which I love; so small and compact

yet really **LOUD!!!**.

One thing to remember here; a **VICTOR TALKING MACHINE** is a machine that was built from around 1900 to about 1911. IT HAS A BIG HORN THAT IS PRETTY NEAT. In 1911 people complained that the horn was too big and annoying looking in the home. Victor listened and they came up with a machine that folded the horn inward and the sound came out through doors that opened up. You could control the loudness of the playback by varying the degree that you opened the doors (and by the type of steel needles you put on the machine). This type of machine (AND THIS TYPE ONLY) is called a (continued) Victrola.

If I was single and living in my parents' basement I might have built up a bigger collection but I vowed when I got married that I had to actually have a life.



In order to play these puppies you must first wind the crank (not too much or you'll break the spring motor). You must REPLACE the steel needle EVERY TIME YOU PLAY A RECORD. Yes, they still make them. It's a ritual that is very pleasing to me and the faces of my guests when they hear the giant volume of sound that comes out of these machines and how it really tickles me. I enjoy watching the machines work and the records really make a big racket. If you are standing right in the path of the front doors you have to hold your ears on the loud notes (If you don't believe me, come on over and I'll show you...).

I Love those old machines! No azimuth, no VTA, no nothing, just put a record on and enjoy. Don't forget about the one needle rule...

If you want to collect or have questions about these machines and the records that play on them, you can find me online at www.ste-vehoffman.tv. It's a fun hobby, doesn't cost much and thanks to eBay you can find almost anything of a Talking Machine nature for not much money. Try it, you'll like it! There are many places on line to find out about these machines, especially Victrola and Victor Talking Machines. Do a quick Google search and investigate! ●

STEVE HOFFMAN'S ACOUSTIC MACHINES:

1917 Columbia Grafanola
1927 Victrola VV-4-40 Orthophonic
1903 Edison Banner Standard
1903 Edison Banner Gem
1919 Brunswick 117
1911 maple Victrola VV-VI
1923 (last year) Victrola VV-VI
mahagony (rare wood)



conrad-johnson
Premier 3508A

Building A Reference System:

The Conrad Johnson Premier 350SA

— JEFF DORGAY



've been on a transistor-free diet when it comes to power amplifiers since the early '80s. I had the big Levinson, Krell and Threshold amps back in the day, because I had Acoustat 2+2s and they wanted current, baby! Back then; I would have never ever considered a tube amplifier for all the records in the record store.

Towards the end of last year, I got a chance to hear the Conrad Johnson Premier 350 in Dan Babineau's home and I was impressed in a major way. That last bit of graininess that I had always heard in solid-state amplifiers was gone. (And he's a really fussy guy...) I knew my preamp choice was going to be the ACT2 from Conrad Johnson as well, so I talked to Lew Johnson for his take on the situation, as they had some really sexy new 140-watt monoblocks coming out soon. Even Lew admitted to me that their new 140 tube monos had just a slight bit more musicality. "About 5%". He also gave me some great advice:

"Jeff, you are a reviewer, you need something that will work with everything and drive any speaker, no matter what."

That's when the light bulb went off, it would be transistors after all, and it's been an excellent choice.

These days the Premier 350 retails for \$9500, which puts it on the list of serious amplifiers. Like its name suggests, it puts out 350 watts per channel into an 8-ohm load and double that into 4 ohms. It weighs pretty close to 100 pounds and uses a 20-amp power cord. It is a very simple, yet elegant and unassuming box with the trademark C-J champagne front panel and a big power switch. *(continued)*

Coffin Trout





Interlude - Lady's Blue Sapphire ring accented with Diamonds, set in Platinum.

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The rear panel sports four fuse holders, a pair of speaker binding posts and the RCA input jacks, as C-J does not feature balanced topologies in any of their gear.

In typical C-J fashion, the Premier 350 is built like a tank, and should provide years of trouble free listening.

Opening the top revealed a very tidy layout, top shelf metalwork and the best quality parts available to the audio industry.

Initial Setup

The Premier 350 comes with a short instruction manual and a fairly beefy power cord, but this went back in the box and a Running Springs Mongoose 20amp cord was substituted. When I was wiring my studio, I planned for hi-fi, so there are two dedicated 20 amp circuits and two dedicated 15 amp circuits. The Premier 350 has its own dedicated line, upgraded power cord and Running Springs Duke power conditioner. This has proven to give all of the amplifiers we have tested here the ability to sound their best.

As with any high power amplifier, the Premier 350 will give you that last bit it is capable of at high volumes with a dedicated line, but even on a 15 amp circuit with the rest of the system plugged in, I could push it really hard without running out of juice, so don't pass up the opportunity to own a Premier 350 if you only have a standard 15 amp circuit.

The rest of the system consists of my C-J ACT2 (now upgraded to the ACT2 – series II), SME10 with Shelter 90x and (continued)



Aesthetix Rhea (upgraded by Steve Huntley of Great Northern Sound) and a Wadia 581 CD player. Power cords and conditioning by Running Springs and all other cables from Cardas (Neutral Reference) round out the system with my Tetra 506s and a REL Britannia B2.

Anticipation, it's making me wait...

The only agonizing part of using this amplifier is part of what makes it so awesome in the first place; it's massive power supply. You guessed it; these Teflon CJD capacitors are going to take 2-300 hours to really be

all they can be. Fortunately, I had spent a fair amount of time listening to Dan's ACT2/ Premier 350 combination, because when I took these two out of the box, they sounded pretty sluggish. So, if you follow me down this path, don't panic, it gets better, a LOT better.

Just keep playing the Premier 350 and you will notice a hint of it opening up around 100 hours and it just gets a little better every couple of days until the 200 hour mark.

Just when you think that it's really incredible, it takes another jump right around 300 hours and that's really the magic number. I'm not the world's most patient guy, but this was worth every minute! If you want to speed up the break-in process, do what I did; hook your iPod up to the input jacks and let it play all night long. Two weeks later, you are just about done!

Plays well with others

Just when you think that

it's really incredible, it

takes another jump right

around 300 hours and

that's really the magic

number.

Over the course of this review, I probably tried the Premier 350 with about fifteen linestages, as it is my benchmark. It offered

up fantastic sound with everything I mated it with, so whatever you might have as a front end, rest assured you would have no problems incorporating this amplifier into your system.

As Lew predicted, this amplifier was able to drive anything that I threw at it, including my 2-ohm (sometimes 1 ohm) Apogees without any problems or sense of strain at any volume. For the last few years, I've been

listening to a lot of tube amplifiers in the 3-100 watt per channel category and I thought I was happy. The Premier 350 is a lot like the current 505hp BMW M5; it never runs out of power! If you like music with a lot of dynamics, the Premier 350 will never disappoint you.

As great as the Premier 350 worked with every linestage I tried it with, the real thrill comes when you mate it with the ACT2. Adding the seductive qualities of the ACT 2 makes this a combination that has not been bettered by anything I've yet heard. But we'll talk about the ACT2 next issue. I have noticed this to be pretty common these days; usually gear from the same manufacturer sounds the best together.

The lack of sound?

Every amplifier adds some kind of coloration to what passes through its circuits. Much as we would like that proverbial straight wire with gain, it just doesn't work that way. What I like about the Premier 350 is that it doesn't sound like a solid-state amplifier, it just sounds good. To be more exact, it does everything I want a reference amplifier to do: (continued)

"I'm a Believer."

"When everything is right, even the listener disappears. It's soulful, powerful, yet delicate and smooth. All we need now is the ears of the world. May it be so."

- Legendary Grammy-Winning Producer/Engineer for Eric Clapton, Bonnie Raitt, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and The Band. Co-Designer of the new Tetra 606 (a.k.a. Thee Fraboni)



It has endless dynamic reserve, a lot of weight and slam, yet a lot of control without sounding grainy or harsh like some solid-state amplifiers can, all the while having an airy presentation that is not unlike the best tube designs.

Lew gave me a bit of insight into the design of the 350 and told me that the Mosfets in the gain stage have a predominantly even-order distortion characteristic (just like tubes), which is very related to the original notes, musically. They also have almost no distortion after the fourth order. Another aspect of using the Mosfet is that they are available in complimentary pairs (n and p types), so in this configuration, cancel almost all the distortion in the circuit without any feedback. The signal is then passed on to a composite Mosfet/bipolar output stage and the subsequent lack of distortion is what gives the Premier 350 such a detailed presentation without being harsh.

I played the new SACD of Shostakovich 5 on Capriccio and it was scary, just the way I like it!

To celebrate the break-in process being complete, I brought out a treasure from my record collection; sealed copies of GNR's Use Your Illusion 1 and 2. Yup, that's right, NEVER played them till now. This was an amazing experience, but I couldn't stop there I had to play the new Wolfmother CD. Trust me, this disc will kick your ass into the next room!

However, raw power without finesse is nothing. Shelby Cobras are a blast to do burnouts with, but you won't beat any Porsches on a road course. The Premier 350 has finesse in spades. (continued)



Some people have discussed the importance of the "first watt" of power and that if it is not good, the rest is not good either. For the most part, I agree with this theory (no disrespect to Mr. Pass and his First Watt amplifiers, because I own one of those as well) so I gave the Premier 350 a fairly unrealistic test; I hooked it up to my 101db 2nd Rethms.

Now no one in their right mind would do something like this, but I'm obsessed. Rest assured that even the first watt of the Premier 350 is excellent and this amplifier passed this test with flying colors as well. The Premier 350 even gave my Rethms more oomph and control on the bottom end than my SET, even at a one-watt level!

This is what makes the Premier 350 so special.

All of the usual female vocals and jazz standards were fantastic through the Premier 350, with a sound that again, kept feeling like a lack of sound. The 350 is one of the best amplifiers that I have heard. It acts like a conduit of music, imposing very little of it's own colorations on the material to present the music to the listener. Real instruments sound like real instruments and it possesses a lot of air and depth in the presentation. Thanks to the extreme lack of midrange grain, you might even be tricked into thinking this was a tube amplifier, but it's just too clean for that.

It's been said that power is your friend and now that I've had this experience, served up the way I like it, I would have a hard time going back. One of the most important and overlooked aspects of listening to music is the ease that comes from having enough power to properly reproduce dynamics coupled with accurate tonality. No matter what type of music I was listening to, these factors really added to the realism of the presentation, even at modest levels.

Should you get a chance to hear the Premier 350 (already broken in) at a friend's house or your C-J dealer, I hope you will enjoy it as much as I do.

In The End

We're all going to be worm food. But while Im here, I'm glad I have a Premier 350 to listen to. If you want that last bit of tubey warmth and don't want to get it from a source component, you might consider something else. (Like the C-J LM 140s) But if you just want to enjoy music and not worry about tubes, biasing or all the associated hoo hah that goes along with owning a tube power amplifier, this one's as good as it gets. Plan on seeing this one in my associated components list for a long time. Just remember to give this one plenty of time to break in before you listen seriously!

MANUFACTURER:

Conrad-Johnson Design,Inc.

2733 Merrilee Drive Fairfax, VA 22031 703-698-8581 www.conradjohnson.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifier: Conrad-Johnson ACT2, Aesthetix Callisto. BAT VK42-SE

Speakers: Penaudio Serenades, Tetra 506LTD. Apogee Caliper

Analog Source: SME 10/Shelter 90x with Ray Samuels XR-10B phono stage

Digital Source: Wadia 581, Metronome CD-3 Signature

Interconnects: TARA RSC, Acrolink, Cardas Golden Reference

Speaker Cables: Cardas Golden Reference

Power Cords: Running Springs Mongoose, Essential Sound Products "Reference"

Power Conditioning:

Running Springs Jaco, Duke

Vibration Control: Symposium Ultra Platforms

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

Shostakovich Symphonies

Nos. 1-15 (Hybrid SACD) Capriccio

Guns N' Roses – Use Your Illusion 1 & 2 (LP)

Wolfmother – Wolfmother (CD)

Led Zeppelin – Led Zeppelin II (LP)

XTC – Drums and Wires (LP)

Kenny Burrell – Around Midnight (LP) Classic Records

The Red Rock Renaissance Amplifiers

— JEFF DORGAY

n the first issue of *TONEAudio*, I mentioned that we would not concentrate on stratospherically priced gear, but we wouldn't rule it out, so when the opportunity came up to review the Red Rock amplifiers (\$38,750 a pair) I was excited to give them a go.

Now I realize that most of our readers, especially yours truly can't afford a pair of 40 thousand dollar amplifiers. I can't even afford a pair at the normal industry accommodation price, but that doesn't mean *TONE* doesn't have some readers out there that have the ears, the room and the dough to pick these babies up. So, if you are in this category, this review is for you. And the rest of us can fantasize. *(continued)*

The Red Rock Renaissance amplifiers are built by hand in Colorado and take about 100 hours per pair to build. All of the audio circuit is wired point-to-point with one small circuit board in the power supply. Opening the side plate reveals a massive power supply as well as a nicely laid out amplifier circuit.

Speaking of power supplies, one of the really nice touches of this amplifier is the way the soft-start circuitry of the power supply slowly ramps up the filament voltage of the tubes and then takes about another minute to bring up the B+. Combining this with the way the four 572 output tubes (per channel) are operated well under their limits, this amplifier should have excellent tube life. Perhaps Mr. Stiefel will let me keep these amplifiers for a long-term test, so I can let you know?

Moving right along, unless you have seen these amplifiers in person, the pictures are pretty misleading as to how big they actually are. Each mono amplifier weighs about 110 pounds each, coming out to about \$180/lb; certainly much more than the steaks I bought at Safeway this afternoon. They stand 26" tall, 10" wide and 17" deep.

One of the things you DO get at this price level is a pair of road cases for the amplifiers. The Renaissance amplifiers are incredibly well packed and easy to move around. Put the cases on that piano dolly I told you to buy a couple of issues ago and gently remove them from their boxes right where you plan to use them.

Initial Setup

I moved the Renaissance amps into my second system, which has grown to about the same level of quality as my main system and now includes the Tetra 506 customs and the excellent BAT VK-42SE preamplifier. My analog source was an SME 10/Shelter 90x/Ray Samuels XR-10B phono stage. Digital playback was handled by the new Wadia 581 disc player. I used Tetra Artet speaker cable between the



It just kind of creeps

up on you, all of a

sudden the music goes

from sounding nice to

sounding REALLY good.

amps and the speakers and Tetra Artet interconnect between the VK42-SE and the amplifiers. Cardas Golden Reference (XLR) connected the phono preamp as well as the

Wadia player. Clean power was supplied by a Running Springs Jaco and Running Springs Mongoose power cords.

As these amplifiers had a bit of time on them, break-

in was not really required. However, if you are considering purchasing a pair of these beauties, keep in mind they really need about an hour and a half to really be up to snuff. They sound a touch brittle when you first

turn them on, but this goes away in about 10-15 minutes. But right about 90 minutes, the magic really kicks in and they go to another level. It just kind of creeps up on you, all of a

> sudden the music goes from sounding nice to sounding REALLY good.

While these amplifiers are more in the "floorstanding" category and come with spikes installed, I highly suggest get-

ting them up off the floor with some kind of isolation. Red Rock suggests the Walker Audio bases, which I'm sure work fine, but I had a pair of smaller Symposium Ultra platforms that worked very well too. *(continued)*



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21919 NE 399th Street Amboy, WA 98601 When just on the floor, the Renaissance amps sounded just a touch on the tubby side for me, but putting them up on the Symposium platforms really did the trick.

You could probably get way too geeky for your own good here, so I would just stick with the Walker or Symposium platforms and enjoy the music.

I also experimented with tube dampers with mixed results. Some things sounded quieter, some things sounded a touch over damped to me. Alan told me that the carbon fiber tube dampers should extend the tube life (and that's always a good thing), so I suggest a little trial and error to find the sound that suits your fancy.



The four output tubes are biased separately, via a very cool little red circular meter on the front of the amplifier. Once the amplifier has been on for a while, with no signal present, adjust the four individual front pots with a plastic screwdriver to 40ma, and you are good to go. During the two months of test listening, the bias did not change a bit or require any adjustment, but I advise checking tube bias every now and then just to be safe. (continued)

This amp has no global feedback an only uses regenerative feedback on the front-end two stages in the form of self-bias for the 6BL7 and 6BX7 tubes.

Contrary to some folks that like to experiment with tube bias, the folks at Red Rock frown upon over biasing the output tubes to get a bit warmer sound. Some amplifiers will respond to this a bit (with much shorter tube life as a result), but the Red Rock does not. Yes, I gave it a try and goosed the bias about 15% with absolutely no change in sound, so listen to the manufacturer on this one.

The Dilemma

The hardest thing about reviewing a product that is this expensive is to give it fair treatment. Does anyone really need a forty thousand dollar pair of power amplifiers? There is also the question of whether these (or anyone else's forty thousand dollar amplifiers sound thirty thousand dollars better than a number of the very good ten thousand dollar amplifiers currently available.

Here's a rationalization for you, (and I'm good at them, if anyone can figure out a way to justify a pair of forty thousand dollar amplifiers, it's me!)

I got out my calculator and figured living in the Northwest, these amplifiers would offset about 500 dollars a year's worth of heating expenses in the TONE studio. If I keep them for 20 years, that will take a ten thousand dollar bite out of the sticker price. Yup, these amplifiers get HOT, so plan your ventilation accordingly.

But seriously, the guy or gal that can spend 40 large on a pair of power amplifiers probably doesn't need to justify them to anyone. One of the bonuses you get with these amplifiers is the ability to pick from a number of different front panel colors and finishes. This will help integrate them with your current gear and décor as well.

As with any other luxury item, we can't judge these amplifiers on cost alone. Just

like an exotic sports car, boat or watch, one is paying a certain amount for exclusivity. Does my Swatch keep time as well as a fifty thousand dollar Patek Philippe? Of course it does, but Einstein wouldn't have worn one, and so it goes. Should you end up being the happy owner of a pair of these, I guarantee you won't see them at anyone else's house and there is a certain coolness factor to this.



So, if you are playing the exclusivity card, the Red Rocks win that contest, hands down.

So, do they rule or do they suck?

Okay, they rule.

Much as I would like to be the jaded audio critic and whine about how these 40 thousand dollar amplifiers didn't sound that

great, I'm never going to play that card with you. Of course they sound great and I think they are very cool to boot. I'll miss them tremendously when they are gone.

The only bad thing about a 50-watt per channel amplifier is that they won't drive everything. I'm sure there are those of you in the audience saying "for 40k, they should

shine my shoes and take out the trash!" and there is some validity to all this, but remember, no matter what price point you are building a system at, it's all about component matching. Keep in mind though, that this is 50 watts of triode power, so it is a lot smoother and less grainy than a 50 watt per channel ultralinear or pentode amplifier. Thanks to it's huge power supply, it sounds a lot more powerful than it's rating suggests.

I like mixing tube and solid-state components to get a bit of the benefits of both. My reference system that consists of the Conrad Johnson ACT2 series 2 and the Premier 350 offers me the perfect balance of seductiveness and control; that's why I chose the BAT preamp to match up with these tube amplifiers. The Red Rock amplifiers are somewhat "non-tubey" in their sound, because of their extended high-frequency response and well controlled bass response, yet still possessing the last bit of air that you really do need tubes to achieve. However, if you really want the BIG TUBE SOUND, I suggest a great tube preamplifier to go with these amps.

As I had the Asthetix Callisto here, I couldn't resist the combination. This is a match made in heaven, but remember, we are talking another palette of tubes. If you have the room and the ventilation, this is the romantic tube sound at its best. Should you want a touch more control, the ACT2 is also a great choice.

I defy anyone to sit down with their favorite pair of relatively efficient speakers and this combination and being able to resist its power. The combination of the Callisto and

the Red Rock amplifiers was really intoxicating and along with the 91db Tetras, I never ran out of gas. Just to be sure, I swapped back to my Premier 350, which was still good, but

it did not have that last bit of magic. It was kind of getting out of a Bentley Turbo R and getting into a Porsche GT3. Awesome performance to be sure, but not as comfy. *(continued)*

No matter what price point you are building a system at, it's all about component matching.

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GALEN CAROL

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San Antonio, Texas 210.805.9927 If your musical taste is more on the female vocal, small jazz group world, you will have a hard time leaving the couch. I went through a pile of Ricki Lee Jones records as well as KD Lang and that new Madeline Peyroux LP and this was wonderful. Once those amps are warmed up, the Tetras disappeared in the room in a way they have never done before. Same thing with my favorite Miles Davis and John Coltrane records. (and Thad Jones, and, and, and,...)

What the Red Rock amplifiers offer is a wonderful, three dimensional presentation. They also do really well with music that has a lot of texture, complexity and nuance. *(continued)*





It's like putting Kodachrome in your camera as opposed to 400-speed color negative film. While not necessarily the last word in accuracy, it's a grain-free, saturated presentation that is very dreamy, indeed.

While we are talking about detail, I set the Red Rocks up in a pretty unconventional system, just because I can: I put them in my third system with my 2nd Rethm speakers. If there is one thing the Rethms really excel at, it's inner detail. Typically, I use them with a 2A3 (3 watts per channel on a good day) or a 300B amplifier (9 watts when all the planets line up). Even though the Rethms sport a 101 db efficiency, this was an amazingly great match! I've never heard these speakers sound so wonderful and open. Should you be one that completely dias midrange bloom, detail and air, this is as good as it gets! A side benefit with 101db speakers: you will never run out of dynamic range with this combination.

Mr. O'Brien was over a few times during the test of the Red Rocks and he teased me for listening to so much of this kind of music. But putting on Transatlantic's Bridge Across Forever and cranking it up convinced him that this combination would rock too. Whether you like Van Halen (I suggest Ice Cream Man from the DCC 24kt. CD version of Van Halen 1) or George Winston, I think you will dig these amplifiers. A LOT. As much as they have a very three dimensional sound, they were also very fast and dynamic. Because they are very neutral, the better your source components perform in these areas, the more sound you will wring from the Red Rocks.

The longer I listen to any kind of music, the more I listen for texture. This is what I enjoyed so much about the Red Rock amplifiers. In many ways they reminded me of my Wavac amplifier, with an ability to really capture the texture of the music, in a way that a lot of amplifiers can't. Listening to the acoustic bonus disc that came with Prince's One Night Alone box set features Prince along with a piano and minimal instrumental accompaniment and a bit of electronic sounds that float all over the room. Again, this is where the Red Rock's really shine. On a lesser system, the electronic effects and

percussion are on the same plane as the lead vocals, but with the Renaissance amplifiers, these things float all over the soundstage, almost like a surround sound mix!

What they won't do

As great as these amplifiers are, they are still only 50 watt per channel tube amplifiers and as expensive as they are one needs to keep this in mind. Because of this, they still do not possess the last few molecules of bass extension or control like the best solid-state amplifiers do. They also are limited to what speakers they will drive, but a 50 watt amplifier has a lot more possibilities than a 9 watt SET does. Realistically, the Red Rock amplifiers will probably drive 80% of the audiophile speakers out there just fine.

THE VERDICT

The Red Rock Renaissance monoblocks were a true joy to listen to and I was never less than thrilled with their musical presentation. They are definitely an attention getter wherever they are in the room as well. As far as tube amplifiers go, these sound fantastic and if you are a tube lover, I suspect that you will not be disappointed with their performance.

However, 40k is a lot of change. But if you are the kind of person that has this kind of discretionary income, I suggest you give the Red Rock Renaissance Monoblocks a serious audition. They might just be the magic you have been searching for! ●



MANUFACTURER:

Red Rock Audio

363 Cook Street
Denver, CO 80206
303-393-7918
www.redrockaudio.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifier: Conrad Johnson ACT 2, Aesthetix Callisto, BAT VK-42SE

Digital Source: Metronome Technologie CD-3 Signature

Analog Source: SME 10/Shelter 90x/Ray Samuels XR-10B phono preamp

Speakers: Impirium Acoustics Nicole, Tetra 506 Custom, Rethm 2nd Rethm

Interconnects: Cardas Golden Reference, Tetra Artet

Speaker Cables: Tetra Artet (Impirium and Tetra), Audience AU24 (Rethm)

Power Cords: Running Springs Mongoose, Essential Sound Products "The Essence" Reference

Power Conditioning: Running Springs Jaco

Vibration Control: Symposium Ultra Platforms

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

VanHalen – Van Halen (DCC CD)

Prince – One Night Alone (CD)

George Winston – December (LP)

KD Lang and the Reclines – Angel With a Lariat (LP)

Los Lobos – Aztalan (MoFi LP)





In have to be honest with you until this box arrived at my door; I was just about to give up on digital. All this talk with Michael Fremer and a few others resulted in the purchase of a much better analog rig, and that's when it happened; I just started to listen to digital less and less. I even went as far as to digitize my entire CD collection of about 2000 CDs in uncompressed form. I know what you are thinking, that would take a heck of a lot of hard drive space. 1.4 terabytes to be exact, or 1400 GB.

As luck would have it, I just happened to have a spare two terabytes hanging around on my Macintosh G5, so I was up for the challenge. A months worth of spare time later and all of my CDs were imported, all uncompressed. I was completely ready to take them to my local used CD store, drop them off for good and go buy a convertible.

But the CD-3 arrived and I hadn't yet boxed my music up, so I thought, what could it hurt? I had heard

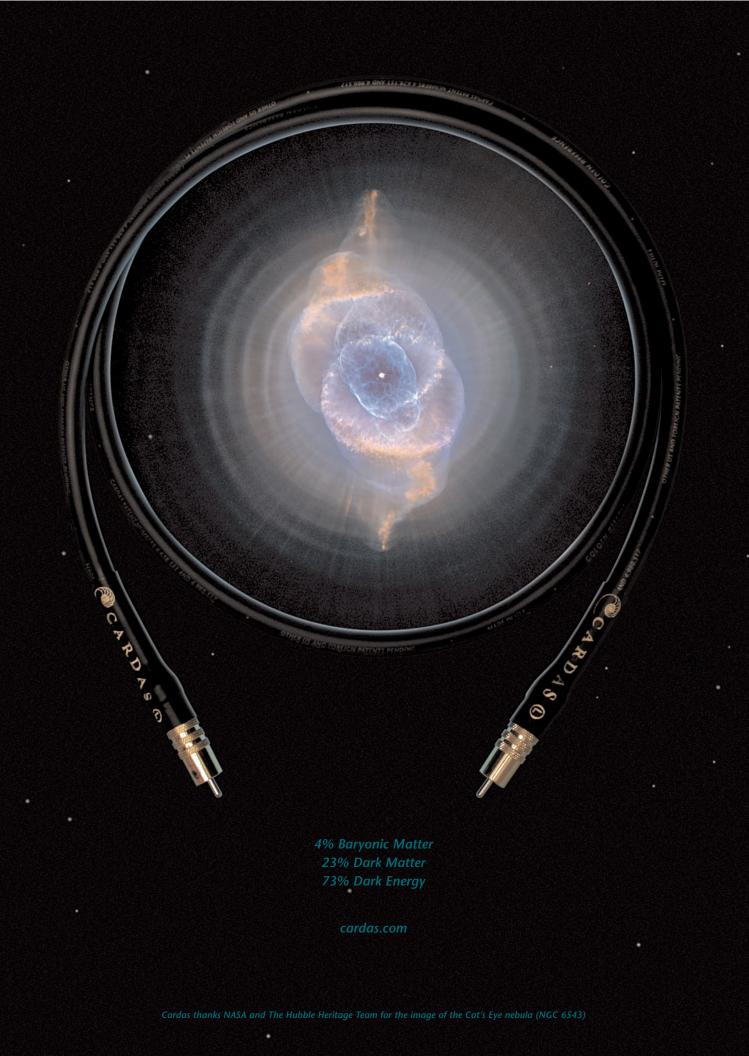
and read great things about this player, so I plugged it in and gave it a listen. How did it sound? More about that later, but I can tell you it was good enough to keep the CDs on the shelf for now.

Now for the bad news, this little jewel isn't cheap. It isn't ridiculous, but \$10,800 is not chump change either. My current turntable, cartridge and phono preamplifier is worth twice this amount, so on

that note, 10 grand for great digital play-back isn't so bad after all... The CD-3 is actually the most musical CD player I have heard to date. Please keep in mind I am not using the B-word here, because I haven't auditioned all of the five figure players. (However, I am now on a mission after hearing the Metronome)

The CD-3 is actually the most musical CD player I have heard to date. Metronome Technologie is a French company, whose products are distributed in the US by Jim Ricketts at TMH Audio. The

CD-3 is actually their entry-level player, so I can't wait to listen to their 20 thousand dollar two box player. They also make a separate CD transport and DAC as well as some very interesting looking electronics AND A TURNTABLE! All of the Metronome products uphold the French tradition of beautiful things; the CD-3 is very attractive, yet understated. Even the remote is GORGEOUS. (continued)



This is a top loading player, featuring a modified Phillips CDM-12 Pro 2 transport (that is made out of metal) with a magnetic clamp and an oversized spindle. The CD-3's transport bay is also flooded with blue light for higher disc read accuracy. Make sure you have the clamp on the CD before pushing play, or you could damage the player! The top drawer opens manually and along with the rest of the player is very solid. The remote is also very industrial with ball bearing style buttons. Every aspect of the CD-3 is substantial and this player weighs about 35 pounds. Even before you turn it on, it feels like a ten thousand dollar player!

The rear panel has a pair of RCA outputs; a pair of XLR balanced outputs and an RCA digital output, should you want to use this as a transport alone. The on/off switch is also on the rear, placed by the IEC outlet, so the front panel is clean; just a massive aluminum piece with a blue digital display. The five buttons for the player are on the top and for the purists in the group; you can turn the display off while listening if you choose.

Initial Setup

The CD-3 started in my second system, but after about a week's worth of listening was moved to the main system with my ACT 2 and Premier 350, so that I could do a lot of switching between LP and CD with my new SME 10. Jim Ricketts, the importer told me about the Delrin feet on the bottom of the CD-3 and suggested that to get the most sound out of this unit, that I place it on some kind of isolation platform (preferably Symposium) and a set of Rollerblocks or Rollerblock Jrs. (continued)

I wanted to give the unit the benefit of the doubt first, because I always hate telling people that in order to really enjoy a piece of gear, they need to buy another thousand bucks worth of accessories. After really getting a feel for the CD-3, it is a great CD player, but I must admit if you want to take the sound to another level of clarity and resolution, I would highly suggest a Symposium Ultra Platform,

a set of Rollerblock Jr.s and upgrading the power cord to a DH Labs Power Plus. I know this will set you back another \$800-\$900, but I think you will enjoy it even more. If possible, live with the player for a while, and see if

you can borrow this stuff from a dealer or a friend. It's kind of like driving a Porsche 911 or BMW M3 and replacing the tires that it came off the showroom with the latest Michelin Pilots; a bit more cash, but it makes an excellent drive fantastic.

The Sound

Because my test unit arrived fully broken in, I only needed to let it play for a day before I started listening seriously. The first thing I noticed with the Metronome was how dynamic it sounds. While I won't tell you to sell your turntables, the presentation was right up there

with a good analog rig, just a different flavor. I would compare it to hearing the best solid-state gear right next to the best tube gear.

Even the first day when it was warming up, I threw on the first Audioslave CD and noticed immediately how forceful the Metronome was, going from the extremely quiet beginning of *Gasoline* to when the bass kicks in; Kapow! Switching to a bit of classical with that new

Even after quite

a few 10 hour

listening sessions,

I still was really

digging the sound.

Bax box set revealed the same thing; going from the quietest passages to the loudest was effortless and much more dramatic than I've been accustomed to with digital playback. Often times when listening to digital it

is easy to get fatigued, but one of the highest compliments I can pay the CD-3 is that even after quite a few 10 hour listening sessions, I still was really digging the sound. There are very few other players that I can make this claim for and they are all rolled off in comparison to the CD-3.

The CD-3 is fully balanced, so if you have the opportunity, I suggest using it balanced. When I was using it in my other system with the Callisto and could compare the single ended outputs with balanced, I felt there was a touch more inner detail to be had using the balanced outputs. Switching the Callisto for the BAT VK-42SE gave the same results. I even preferred the balanced outputs using the CD-3 with my new McIntosh C220 in my third system. Even on a modest system it made enough of a difference, that I would recommend using it this way; however I doubt most people with budget systems would buy a player of this caliber! However, if you have aspirations for a mega-system, you could start with this piece!

Just to keep things a fair "apples to apples" comparison, I tried two different cables (the DH Labs Revelation and Cardas Golden Reference) that I just happened to have with RCA and XLR termination, so I could be scientific about this. I really enjoyed the sound of this player with the Cardas cable, regardless of preamplifier. Enough about cables, back to this glorious player!

I'm sure you are thinking that this player can't be all that and a bag of chips at this price and it's really just marginally better than a good CD player in the \$1000-2000 range. But, it IS. I always hate comparing one manufacturers gear to another, because everyone has different design goals, budgets and even different things they listen for when building a CD player, so it's really not fair (to me anyway) to say "Player A just smokes Player B." (continued)



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I know, you have heard this modestly priced digital player that you think is really great and that's fine, but here's the test I dare you to perform: switch between your favorite reasonably (even moderately) priced digital player and then go right back to a good thousand dollar turntable with any good 5-700 dollar cartridge. I'll bet you a glass of your favorite expensive wine that you end up preferring the sound of the turntable. I know I always did.

Not this time, buddy.

I had to go all the way up to my SME 10/Shelter 90x/Ray Samuels XR-10B combination before I felt analog had the edge, and I have to say, it wasn't a ton. At this level, analog was pulling just a bit more low level detail out of the mix and was just a bit more grain-free, but it was darn close. Considering that all I had to do with the Metronome was plug it in and NOT fool around with VTA, etc. etc., it makes you wonder.

Thanks to the Metronome, I'm on a quest to seek out more of this caliber of digital playback. We will have a number of these players to audition in the months to come and I must say for the first time, I'm thrilled to listen to digital. I'm hearing detail, texture and air like I've never heard before.

(continued)

When you are at a show listening to a mega player, it's really difficult, even when you bring vour own test discs along.

I spent a lot of long listening sessions with this player, often sitting on the couch here all day working on my laptop, just so I could keep listening to the CD-3. No matter what I was listening to, it was so easy to just relax and enjoy the presentation. Keep in mind, this player did not add or subtract from the sound. Some digital players trick you by rolling off the highs or softening the sound to make digital more palatable. The CD-3 was very neutral, accurate and dynamic at all times. Like a first-class turntable and phono cartridge, it extracted more information than anything else I have heard so far.

If you are an audiophile with a huge little or no vinyl, I would buy this player and forget about analog, it's that good.

It didn't make my awful CDs sound better. Other than KISS-Alive, the worst collection of CDs and sounding CD I have in my collection is Carole King's Tapestry. I often use this as a test CD because it sounds so compressed and rolled off, with almost no life in the

> recording. As much as I would like to tell you the CD-3 transformed this disc into something wonderful, it didn't. However, it did allow me to hear a lot more information on this disc than I ever did before. This was the experience I had with everything I listened to from Hip Hop to Classical; the sound was always more involving than I remembered it on other players.

The Ultimate Compliment

Here's my take on the CD-3. If you are an audiophile with a huge collection of CDs and little or no vinyl, I would buy this player and forget about analog, it's that good. If you have a substantial collection of both and were at the same impasse I was a few months ago, I think you will love this player enough to be happy when you switch from CD to LP. It's that good. I can't wait to see what Metronome's \$20k player sounds like!!

MANUFACTURER:

Metronome Technologie

Importer: TMH Audio PO Box 751681 Dayton, OH 45475 937-439-2667 www.tmhaudio.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifier: Conrad Johnson ACT2, BAT VK-42SE, Aesthetix Callisto

Amplifier: Conrad Johnson

Premier 350

Speakers: Tetra 506 Custom

Analog Sources: SME 10 w/Shelter 90x phono cartridge, Ray Samuels XR-10B phono stage. Teac A-4300 open reel deck

Interconnects: Cardas Golden Reference, Tara Labs RSC, Tetra Artet

Speaker Cables: Tetra Artet **Power Cords:** Running Springs Mongoose, Essential Sound Products "The Essence" Reference

Power Conditioning: Running Springs Jaco



FAVORITE TEST TUNES: (all CD)

Audioslave – Audioslave **Carole King** – Tapestry Miles Davis - Kind of Blue

Patti Smith - Land

Donald Fagen – Morph the Cat

The Daedalus Audio DA-2 Speakers

— JEFF DORGAY

Originally, this review was going to be about the DA-1 speaker, but sales had been so busy this spring, that Daedalus owner, Lou Hinkley was just plain out of speakers!! I had been very curious to review a pair of his speakers, so arrangements were made to bring down a pair of the new DA-2s, which are a variation on the DA-1, being a bit smaller and utilizing one less bass driver.



You can purchase a pair of DA-2s for \$4150 without stands (highly recommended) or \$4600 with. The speakers carry a five-year warranty and a 30-day money back return policy, provided the speakers remain in perfect shape.

These are definitely speakers assembled by someone with an eye for craftsmanship. The cabinets are made from renewable North American hardwoods (Red Oak, Cherry or Walnut) instead of MDF. Hinkley claims that hardwood is three times as rigid as MDF for an equivalent weight and a quick knuckle rap confirms these are solidly built!

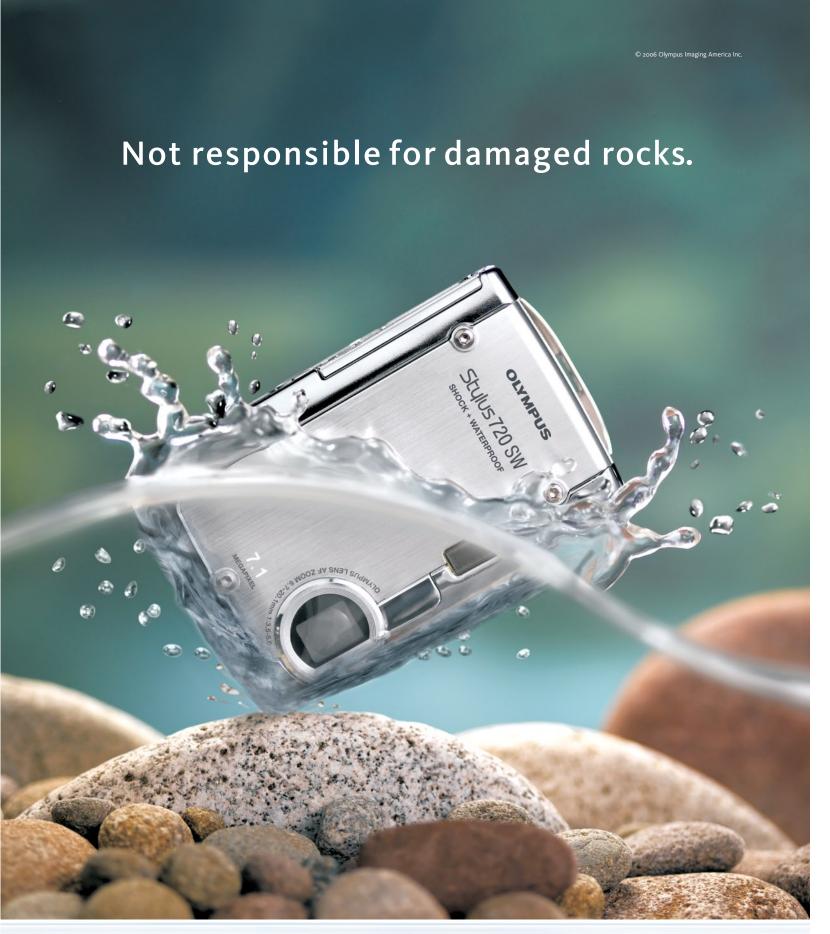
Using an eight-inch woofer and a fiveinch midrange driver built here in the US to Daedalus specifications along with a pair of Vifa dome tweeters, the DA-2 has a system efficiency of 95db. The cabinet is built with a 14-degree toe in on the front panel, which helps to eliminate resonance as well as eliminating guess work on how far to toe them in!

Initial Setup

Don't let the high efficiency rating fool you; these really aren't speakers to hook up to your flea-powered SET. I tried it, but it just wasn't a fit, these speakers need current and lots of it. (though Lou told me that he has had some customers that have had luck with lower powered SET amps.) I experimented with a few different amplifiers and every time I went back to solid-state to really make these speakers sing. The winning combination was a toss up between my BAT VK42-

SE preamplifier paired with the CJ Premier 350 and the new Boulder 810 preamplifier paired with their 850 amplifiers, also reviewed in this issue. If you are considering these amplifiers and have currently have tube amplification, these may not be the speakers for you.

On Lou's suggestion, I also tried the ED422 interconnects and ED213 speaker cables from Empirical Design. I had great luck with these well-made cables that are very reasonably priced (\$440 for an 8 foot pair of speaker cables and \$298 for a 1-meter pair of interconnects). I also gave the DH Labs Revelation interconnects a try with very good results as well. Again, these speakers work best with cables that will reveal a lot of detail. *(continued)*



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Digital sources were played back from the ModWright Denon 3910 and the HagUSB/Benchmark DAC-1, while analog was provided by my AVID Volvere/ Shelter 90x/Ray Samuels XR-10 combination.

The DA-2s were remarkably easy to set up. The Daedalus website says that they can go as far back as one foot from the wall with no adverse effect on upper bass/midrange response and I concur. My test area is about 16' x 24' and I tried them in my favorite corner arrangement as well as putting them about two feet out in the room, approximately 8 feet apart, with the couch about 10 feet back. This provided the best balance of bass reinforcement without clouding the midrange.

A Different Kind of Fun

It has been remarked elsewhere, that the Daedalus speakers do not have a similar sound to other audiophile speakers. and I would concur to a point. Though no one would mistake the sound from these speakers as the sound that comes out of a pair of Quads, but the one thing the DA-2s do that is somewhat Quad-like is the almost diffuse presentation. This speaker does not produce a stereo image with pinpoint imaging, but more of an overall picture of the music. Again, I would compare it to hearing a group of live musicians in a club. You don't really get that sense of an instrument coming from one specific spot, but more from a general area.

Daedalus claims a maximum power handling of 500 watts for the DA-2. *(continued)*

Though I never got remotely close to pumping this much power through them, I must admit they have a ton of dynamic range and are able to play very loud without distortion or breakup. I would attribute this to Lou's wealth of experience with building acoustic guitar amplifiers and pro audio monitor speakers.

Most speakers have a defining character, and I would say the DA-2s is their ability to capture dynamic contrasts effortlessly. Listening to some of my older direct to disc recordings on the Sheffield label was a lot of fun, because these speakers could go from soft to loud so well. Ride of The Valkeries was

very convincing! I also enjoyed listening to the Cream at Royal Albert Hall box set a bit louder than I normally do, because these speakers were able to capture the ambience of the hall and help to create the illusion of live, amplified music. Another record that was really a blast was Little Feat's Waiting for Columbus on MoFi. Again, that feeling of listening to live rock and roll really came through on the DA-2s, thanks to a lot of current on tap courtesy of the Boulder amplifiers.

A quick test with a tone generator reveled that these speakers indeed go down pretty strongly to about 35hz, but fall off pretty quickly after that. In a medium sized room,

these speakers should not leave you wishing for a subwoofer, as the bass response was also well defined. When sorting out my old hip hop CDs for Nicole Wilson to review, I felt my Run DMC CDs could use a bit more oomph, so if you listen to hip hop or rock music with a lot of deep synth-bass, you may want to pony up for the DA-1s.

THE VERDICT

The Daedalus Audio DA-2s are speakers with a bit more relaxed presentation than you might be used to, but if you are looking for a bit more organic presentation, these could be your holy grail, indeed. Tube lovers should audition these speakers with care, but those with higher powered solid state systems should be very pleased indeed.

There is a lot of care in the construction of these speakers and it is very evident that someone who is a real music lover built them. Lou just happens to be a well-seasoned musician, playing acoustic guitar for many years. Stop by his website and purchase a copy of his CD, it features some great guitar playing!



Daedalus Audio

7056 Portal Way #22 Ferndale, WA 98248 360-312-3604 www.daedalusaudio.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifier: Boulder 810, Conrad Johnson ACT 2

Amplifier: Boulder 850, Conrad

Johnson Premier 350

Digital Source: ModWright Denon

3910, Benchmark DAC-1

Analog Source: AVID Volvere/ SME 309/Sumiko Blackbird

Interconnects: ED 422, DH Labs

Revelation

Speaker Cables: DH Labs Q-14

(biwired)

Power Cords: Running Springs Mongoose, Essential Sound Products "The Essence" Reference

Power Conditioning: Running

Springs Jaco

Vibration Control: Symposium

Ultra platforms

FAVORITE TEST TUNES: (all CD)

Audioslave – Audioslave

Carole King - Tapestry

Miles Davis - Kind of Blue

Patti Smith - Land

Donald Fagen – Morph the Cat





The Boulder - JEFF DORGAY 810 Preamplifier And 850 Monoblocks



have always been very aware of Boulder products, but with the 2000 series being in the 60k range, They were always a bit out of reach. The introduction of the 800 series is sure to win a number of converts, offering Boulder performance at an affordable level. The 810 preamplifier has an MSRP of \$6900 and a pair of 850 power amplifiers are \$10,000. Like all other Boulder products, the 800 series has only balanced XLR inputs and outputs, so if you are planning on interfacing with non-balanced components, you will need a few adapters.

Build quality has always been a major strength of Boulder and thanks to having all of their CNC machining in house they can do some cool stuff that would be cost prohibitive for others. With these components they continue this tradition of excellence in smaller packages. I was immediately impressed by how quiet they were, and I'm not talking background noise – even

with a stethoscope there was no mechanical noise or transformer hum coming from these boxes at all!

The spiral bound manuals that came with the 810 and the 850s are the best in the industry.

The rear panel of the 850 features an IEC socket, a balanced XLR input and a

pair of speaker binding posts that look like something from a welding machine. They only accommodate spade lugs and according to the manual, Boulder does not recommend using banana plugs for anything else in your system.

Speaking of the manual, I've done a bit of harping about manufacturers that sell expensive gear with lousy manuals, but Boulder is not one of them. The spiral bound manuals that came with the 810 and the 850s are the best in the industry. They thoroughly explain how to use and set the gear up, and most of all provide detailed color pictures!! I tip my hat to the folks at Boulder for going the extra mile on this almost always overlooked aspect of ownership. *(continued)*





Just like the great power trios in the world of rock and roll, that crank out a lot of music while taking up a fairly small amount of space, the Boulder 810 and 850s do the same.

Unlike Ginger Baker, Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce, they will do their job quietly on your equipment rack and never make a fuss!

Thanks to the Boulder Link system, whether you are considering these components for a two-channel system in one or more locations, setup and integration will be very easy. I really enjoyed the time spent with this gear and appreciated the flexibility it offered in addition to great sound. Boulder Link will also let you know if an amplifier is offline, overheated or has been driven to clipping. (continued)





I used a few different speakers with the Boulder gear, however I did do about 60% of my listening with the Manger Zerobox 109s. Because the Mangers were so fast, they were a perfect match for the Boulder gear. The system was rounded out with my trusty LP-12/Shelter 90x combo, using the Ray Samuels XR-10B phono preamplifier, which also had balanced outputs. Though Boulder says you don't need any accessory power cords, just to keep things equal, I left the Running Springs Mongoose cords on everything in the system along with a Running Springs Jaco for power conditioning. Because I was only dealing with a preamplifier and a pair of amplifiers in close proximity, I didn't bother with the Boulder Link setup. (But it was tempting...)

The Boulder remote is really a work of art, combining the necessary functionality with a very cool shape.

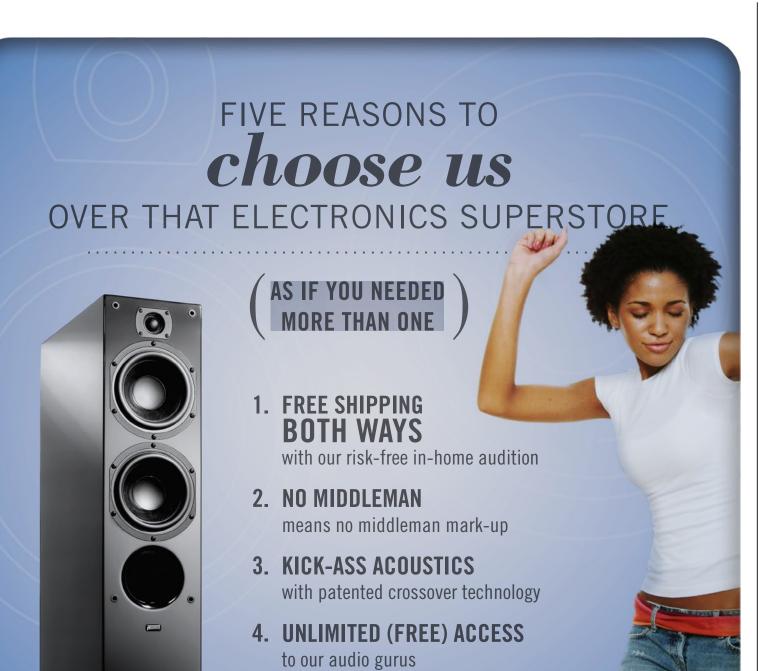
The 810 allows you to set quite a few variables for each input like many of the other full function preamplifiers on the market, but it has a much better alphanumeric display with more resolution and more characters at your dis-

posal. This makes it very easy to describe your inputs and in a multiuse system, where you might be using more than one phono preamplifier or digital source.

One thing that really impressed me about the 810, was how quiet it was when adjusting volume and switching inputs.

One thing that really impressed me about the 810, was how quiet it was when adjusting volume and switching inputs. Most other preamplifiers that are electrically switched still have a hint of noise when going between inputs or ratcheting up the volume. I think this level of refinement is a testament to Boulder's microprocessor expertise.

I spent about two weeks breaking in the Boulder system, leaving it play continuously yet dropping in the chair for a serious listen now and then to see how things were progressing. It was obvious from the beginning that these were serious components. *(continued)*



5. AWARD-WINNING

66 If you're shopping in this price range—or even if your budget is two or three times higher—I highly recommend checking them out. 99

-Thomas J. Norton, Ultimate AV



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Seriously Quiet

As I mentioned earlier, the Boulder gear was very quiet mechanically, but it is also dead quiet electrically. The signal to noise ratio is listed as 118db, so you can put your ear right up against your tweeters and not hear a thing!



When listening to The Jan Gabarek-Bobo Stenson Quartet, all of the players occupied their own spaces and the double bass were well represented. The first side of this record has a lot of piano-sax interplay, with alternating solos going up and down in intensity quite a bit; thanks to that ultra-low noise floor, there was very much space between the notes!

The Boulders played music neither omitting nor embellishing anything; just the facts thank you.

The 810 and 850s were always a musical combination. The Manger speakers have a rise time of about 13 µs, and this was a great match with the 850s. (continued)



This setup was always very dynamic and really lent itself to reproducing drums and percussion with the necessary attack to sound very lifelike. The 850s were able to make the Mangers play very loud and that is quite a feat.

I also spent a lot of time listening to the Daedelus Audio DA-2s and while not as fast as the Mangers, they really required a lot of current to get up and go. With tube am-

With tube amplifiers or lower

powered solid-state amplifiers,

they just sounded kind of dead,

but when I put the Boulders in

the system, it just came alive!

plifiers or lower powered solid-state amplifiers, they just sounded kind of dead, but when I put the Boulders in the system, it just came alive!

I spent some time

listening to some of my favorite rock records with a lot of punch and this was the most fun I had with the Boulders. A lot of my favorite albums that I used testing the DA-2s were fantastic through these components.

Little Feat, Lyle Lovett, Robert Cray and even my favorite fusion band, Brand X were a ton of fun to listen to because this system had a lot of control to go along with the power. Sometimes, when there just isn't enough juice to go around, some of these recordings can lose their luster, because the amplifier just can't keep up. This was never a problem with the 810/850 system. I managed to audition a number of different speakers during the

course of this review and a few of them were fairly inefficient, but the 850s always kept up.

Very much like other manufacturers that make amplifiers and preampli-

fiers, the Boulder gear worked just fine with other components, but there was a definite synergy working together, and the Boulder Link is just plain cool.

If you are considering more than two of

these, or possibly putting together a custom installation, rest assured that even when you are really rocking out, the 850's do not generate a ton of heat. Again, the Boulder Link will let you know if you get out of line, so it's all good.

As Easy As It Gets

I found the combination of the 810 and the 850's exhilarating to listen to on a number of levels. It's hard to believe that these are their entry-level pieces, possessing the same level of quality and attention to detail as their flagship electronics. You can tell that they want to keep you as a customer for life.

If you have a chance to peruse the Boulder website, there is an overview of their manufacturing facility, where you can get a feel for the level of workmanship in all Boulder products. The 810 and the 850s are an example of American high technology at its finest. ●

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MANUFACTURER:

Boulder Amplifiers Inc.

3235 Prairie Ave. Boulder, CO 80301 303-449-8220 www.boulderamp.com

PERIPHERALS:

Analog Source: Linn LP-12/ Shelter 90x/Ray Samuels XR-10B phono stage

Digital Source: Wadia 581

Speakers: Imperium Acoustics Nicole, Manger Zerobox 109, Tetra 506 Custom, Penaudio Serenade

Power Cords: Running

Springs Mongoose

Power Conditioning: Running

Springs Jaco

Interconnects: DH Labs Revelation, Cardas Golden Reference

Speaker Cables: Cardas

Golden Reference

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

Brand X – Livestock (LP)

Little Feat - Dixie Chicken (LP)

Robert Cray -

Strong Persuader (MoFi 24kt gold CD)

The Doors – L.A. Woman (DCC 24kt gold CD)

Lyle Lovett – Lyle Lovett (LP)

The Imperium Acoustics



Why does everyone name everything after their kids/wife/dog these days? That's why I like BMWs; they have model numbers. But what's in a name anyway? I have a dedicated room, so I don't care what gear looks like, I just want good sound. Think about it, how do you put drivers in a box and really make it look sexy like a car or some other piece of art?

The Impirium Acoustics Nicole speakers sound great and that's all I need to float my boat. The Nicoles were developed as a group effort headed by Lenny Mayeux of Running Springs Audio and included the technical expertise of Phil Bamberg of BESL and

Dan Babineau (our classical music editor and chief dedigner at RSA). The cabinets were designed by master woodworker Brian King. Dan gives Mayeux the credit for seeking out

the best components that include Audio Technology drivers from Denmark, Revelator 9900 tweeters and an assortment of proprietary crossover bits.

Lenny explained that the transfer function was created by DSP simulation and modeling

before actual crossover components were tested and voiced The passive crossover was then designed based on this lab data, along with a lot of listening. Tone, rhythm, and dynamics or "TRaD" is the handle that Imperium puts on the results.

Between our staff and my close friends, I have enough EEs, EEEs and PhDs to finish building the space station. For the last thirty years, I've been trying, buying and selling a LOT of speakers and here's my dilemma; I like the way panel speakers have a fast, transparent

sound, yet I like the way a great pair of minimonitors disappear in the room and I really love the coherency of a single driver speaker. To top it off the slam of a great cone speaker is also very intriguing.

As speaker design even on a good day is a series of compromises, so where do we end up? On one hand, I'm lucky enough that I have a great pair of minimonitors (Sapphire XLs), a pair of panels (Apogee Calipers) and a pair of single driver speakers (the 2nd Rethms) on hand so I can call up those references when I need to refresh my memory.

Quantifying speakers is difficult, because on paper, a lot of things look pretty similar. I agree that measurements can show where gross anomalies occur in a speaker (which a good pair of ears could determine anyway), but the current measuring tools just aren't fine enough to really tell me how a speaker will actually sound. This is why we haven't bothered with measurements at TONEAudio. and we have the capabilities. Between our staff and my close friends, I have enough EEs, EEEs and PhDs to finish building the space station. While I lean on these guys all the time when I need to know the techie side of things, it still doesn't tell me how the speaker will sound to me or to you. That's why I spend a lot of time listening.

That being said, Impiruim Acoustics extensive R&D has paid off; the Nicole has been one of the most enjoyable speakers I have heard in a long time. There are still some compromises that had to be made at this price point and the main one is the last ½ octave of bass. *(continued)*



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www.emotiveaudio.com



The Nicole was designed for a medium sized room and in a 12 x 16 foot room they should be quite a good match. My main listening area is about twice this size and they still did an admirable job.

Test tones showed solid output down to about 30hz, but after that was a pretty rapid drop off. I have become pretty hooked on the speed and accuracy of the REL B2 lately and this proved a perfect match for the Nicoles if you have to have that last bit of bass extension. For most of you in a small to medium sized room, you will probably be just fine without a sub. I did 95% of my listening without the REL, but once in the system, it was crossed over at 27hz and the Nicoles were run full range.

Setup

The Nicoles are very easy to setup. They are just light enough at about 70 pounds each that you should be able to moose them around without help, however I was informed that you should not use the rear firing port as a handle. Once unpacked, the Nicoles spent about 200 hours in my garage, breaking in with my trusty Pioneer SX-737. They even sounded pretty good in the middle of the garage with a cheap receiver, but the best was yet to come. While they are not terribly fussy about room placement, I had the best results with the speakers about 7 feet apart and the couch about 8 feet back. Impirium suggests that an uneven distance from the side walls be maintained rather than keeping an even distance between the side walls for optimum results.

My main listening room lends itself to corner placement and this worked very well with the Nicoles also. Dimension here 7' apart with the couch 8' I used a couple degrees of toe-in and the rest was a breeze. Coincidentally, this was how I heard them at the January CES show.

(continued)

The Nicoles use a 1" soft dome tweeter and a pair of 7" drivers from Audio Technology. Part of what gives these speakers their sound is the crossover which features very steep slopes.

I believe that this is part of what gives them such good transient attack. The lower 7" driver is a woofer and the upper one is a midrange driver with an overhung voice coil.

Thanks to an 89 db efficiency, these speakers do not need a lot of power to drive, though I made it a point to try them with everything from an SET up to my reference C-J Premier 350. A testament to excellent crossover design, these speakers sound fantastic with tube and transistor amplification and while you might squeak by with a 9 watt SET, I would really suggest about 20 watts per channel or better. (If I were being a JEDI, I would just wave my hand and tell you to get a Premier 350, because that really makes these speakers rock!) However, I do need to stress that the ability to work with tube or solid-state gear is a feat that not all high-end loud-speakers can accomplish.

Enough nerd-speak, how do they sound?

The Nicoles do a great job of covering all the bases. I think my favorite aspect of these speak-

They offer up a lot of

resolution and detail

without being harsh

and that's always a

fine line to tread.

ers is that they offer up a lot of resolution and detail without being harsh and that's always a fine line to tread. The presentation has a lot of air, transparency or whatever you want to call it, but is never grainy or veiled. I found them extremely reveal-

ing of whatever gear was placed behind them and with the combination of the ACT2 and the Premier 350, I was always very engaged, especially with vinyl playback from my new SME10.

The reviewer gig demands that I be a little more demanding on a speaker but I also have a pretty wide range of music as well, so you never know what
I might want
to listen to at
any given time.
With any new piece
of gear, I have a set
of favorite tracks that I
go through pretty quickly
just to get a taste of what a
speaker can do, kind of like
that first "test drive" with a new
car. You can't come off the exit
ramp sideways with the sales guy in the car, but
you can get a good idea of what it will do.

Going through a range of male vocal, female vocal, some instrumental tracks and my favorite rock tunes that I'm really familiar with, it's time for serious listening and that means spinning records....

While the quest for resolution can be vexing at times, when a piece of gear gets it right, it is an intoxicating experience indeed. This was the most enjoyable part of listening to these speakers. Granted, everything made another leap after adding the SME table to my system, but I had enough time to become accustomed to it before

adding the Nicoles. Remember science, we only add things to the mix one at a time...

Right from the first cut, I knew I had a winner here. The Nicoles do a number of things very well and precious little wrong, but if I had to pin down their greatest strength, it

would be inner detail. These speakers really let you get WAY into the music. They do such a fantastic job with pace and timing (again, whatever you want to call it...), that you can always distinctively separate events in a piece of music.

Instead of a ball of vocals, you can hear three, four, five layers of vocals, while a horn

is playing off in the corner, with guitars spread across the space and the backbeat of the drums all at the same time. Many speakers for me seem to get overwhelmed by complex music and it takes away from the experience.

I was very pleased with the dynamic range of these speakers too. Often times, a speaker that has a lot of low level detail can't play loud. No problem here, these speakers will pin your

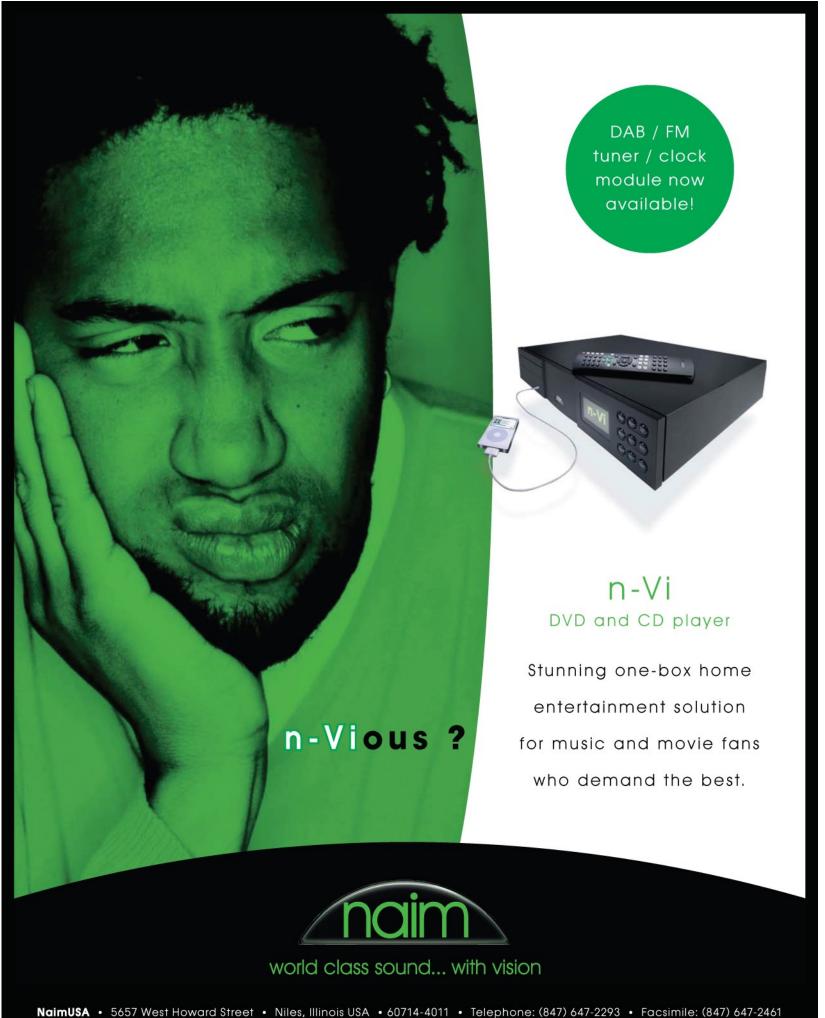
ears back if you have the juice. If you enjoy fairly large scale classical music or arena rock, the Nicoles will not disappoint you. However, if you are going to listen loud in a larger room I do suggest a good sub to get the necessary weight.

As much as I might bore you with telling you how great they played this track or that one, this is one of the best tests I can give a speaker. Do they make me happy and do they make other people just smile and forget that they are listening to hifi? I don't claim that any hifi can duplicate THE REAL THING, but there is a threshold of detail, weight, resolution and tone where you think to yourself that this is pretty damn convincing.

The Nicoles easily passed this test and I have only heard a handful of speakers that can do this for me.

Closing Comments

One of the most difficult parts of my job as publisher is to decide who gets coverage and who does not. For fledgling audio companies the dilemma is much like getting your first gig. You can't get the job without experience and vice versa. So, when you are releasing a new product, it's hard to get coverage, because you haven't been out there very long. I made the decision at *TONEAudio* to give some of these people a shot, because while a couple of the products you read about may not be around in five years, none of them will be around in five months if the word doesn't get out. (continued)



I had a great time listening to the Nicoles; this is one of the most musically involving speakers that I have heard in a long time.

The technology built into these speakers is beyond excellent. If you are looking at a speaker in this price range, I would put the Nicoles on your SHORT list. ●

MANUFACTURER:

Imperium Acoustics

Escondido, California 949-582-8072 www.imperiumacoustics.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifiers: Conrad Johnson ACT2, Aesthetix Callisto

Phono Preamplifier:

Aesthetix Rhea with Great Northern Sound Premier Mods

Amplifiers: Conrad Johnson Premier 350, Red Rock Rennaisance

Analog Source: Linn LP-12/ Shelter 90x/Graham 2.2, SME 10/ Sumiko Celebration/SME 10 arm

Digital Source: Wadia 581, Metronome Technologies CD-3 Signature

Subwoofer: REL Britannia B2 **Power Cords:** Running Springs

Mongoose

Interconnects:

Cardas Golden Reference

Speaker Cables:

Tara Labs RSC 1

Power Conditioning:

Running Springs Jaco

Accessories: Symposium Ultra Platforms, Symposium Rollerblock Jrs.

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

Public Enemy

- Fear of A Black Planet (LP)

Steve Morse Band

- Stand Up (LP)

Weather Report

Live in Tokyo (LP)

Lyle Lovett – Pontiac (LP)

The Fairfield Four

- Standing in the Safety Zone (CD)



The REIL Britannia

The great thing about a subwoofer review, is that you can focus on pretty much one thing; bass. No worries about midrage palpability or image height, etc. Seems easy, right?

— JEFF DORGAY



Not always. Think for a minute, how many of your friends in the audio world have gone down the subwoofer path, whether it be with a pair of smaller speakers as satellites, or just to augment the low frequency response of an already good system.

Now, how many of them are happy with the choice they made? Let me guess, you always walk away from their system thinking: "not enough bass", "too much bass", "doesn't integrate with the room and/or speakers" "boy, that big thing is ugly".

At least that's what often goes through my head, even when dealing with my own system.

Personally, I have been on and off the subwoofer bus more times than I like to remember and I have only managed to get it somewhat close a couple of times. Adding all that low frequency energy to your room adds more complexity to your system beyond just more cables. Achieving solid response down to the 20-25hz region will reveal new inadequacies in your room and system setup that may need to be accommodated, especially if you are a turntable person.

Don't forget that you now will also have one more big box in the room to deal with and the related issues there... However, in the end if you can make it all work properly, the reward is tremendous.

I have heard nothing but great things about REL subwoofers for some time now, so I was anxious to put their B2 subwoofer to the acid test. *(continued)*



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Here at the TONE studio, we always have quite a few sets of speakers here for review at any given time and I have a few things of my own that I wanted to give the B2 a go with!

The REL Brittania B2 comes in Cherry or Maple wood veneer for \$2695 and in Black for \$2495.

It weighs about 85 pounds, so eat your Wheaties the day you decide to experiment with subwoofer placement!

It is a forward-firing design that features a 10" woofer and a 300 watt amplifier.

Setup and Initial Listening

I've told you before, I am a mind reader. I know you are out there in the audience thinking that you have panel speakers, or minimonitors or whatever, and there is no way this sub is going to work with YOUR SPEAKERS. Rest assured, I put this subwoofer through its paces. While my main setup consisted of the Tetra 506 Customs and the Imperium Acoustics Nicoles (both good full range speakers that go down solidly to around 30hz), I also did a lot of listening with the ACI Sapphire XLs, the 2nd Rethm single driver speakers and my pair of Apogee Calipers. So much for just listening to bass!

Because these speakers were used in such varied conditions, almost all of the gear that I had here at my disposal was put to use, from SET amplification all the way up to the Premier 350. Same thing with all other system aspects. In many ways, this has been the most comprehensive review we have done to date, because we used the B2 in about seven different systems and four different room configurations. (continued)

Keep in mind that the manual is ES-SENTIAL to read before setting up your B2. Not only is it very well written and will give you some great tips, there are a number of ways to hook it up depending on the configuration of your system and it is important that you figure out what the correct way is before you begin.

REL suggests a number of different placement options for the B2, but because I had my speakers set up in a corner arrangement, it was a perfect solution to have the front of the B2 about three feet out from the corner, which REL suggests as the preferred spot.

Read the manual, listen to the manual!

One interesting aspect of the B2 is that REL suggests that you DO NOT spike it. I can confirm that though this might go against your audiophile conventional wisdom, I tried it and the spikes really don't work, dulling the bass response and slam considerably. Read the manual, listen to the manual!

Especially when used for low frequency reinforcement, the REL B2 will transform your system. In the past, a number of subwoofers I have used gave you some of the notes, but it was often more of a whumpy type of bass; not so with the B2. With this sub in place, if your room can handle it, you can expect very solid output in the 20-25hz range.

In my final reference setup, where I was just using the Tetra 506s or the Nicoles, with the crossover on the B2 set to 28hz. I was fortunate to get a visit from my local Sumiko rep, Kathleen Thomas who can set speakers up better than anyone I've ever met. It was a big shot in the arm, when she only moved the crossover settings a click or two and we could spend the rest of the afternoon listening to records! Again, hats off to the concise manual.



Subwoofing defined

First, if we are going to be scientific, we have to set the parameters for the experiment. Most manufacturers use the subwoofer as an integral part of a speaker system in the sense that it is usually crossed over in the neighborhood of 50-80hz to free up the two main speakers from reproducing any low bass, and often by means of an active or passive crossover, taking the burden off the shoulders of the main amplifier.

Not a bad idea in theory, but it usually ends up crossing that big woofer over at a range that is just a bit too high, resulting in mediocre integration and a somewhat wooly upper bass response.

The folks at REL have a different take on what a subwoofer should be and also offer a few additional ways to make the B2 part of your system, giving it a tremendous amount of flexibility. You can hook the B2 up via line level RCA, XLR inputs, or you can use the high-level (speaker outputs) Neutrik Speakon connector. The Speakon connector is preferred, because it's high level, 100k input

simply takes the signal that is going right to your speakers. REL says that is the most accurate picture of the low level information in your system and I agree wholeheartedly.

The REL philosophy also differs from most others in the sense that they see a sub woofer as truly a "sub bass" device, just reproducing the lowest frequencies and leaving the rest to your system. In order to really accomplish this, you need a system to have decent low frequency response to begin with. To keep the minimonitor folks at bay, I did use the B2 in this configuration. While it did a better job than anything else I have used yet in this capacity, using it to just handle the deepest bass notes is really the way to go.

Now I Get It

For the first time in my own system, I was hearing amazing bass detail instead of just low frequencies. You might think that it can't make that much of a contribution to the overall sound, crossing over at 28hz, but the effect is fantastic. *(continued)*

I keep harping about weight, but once you experience it, you will never want to go back. REL has always talked about pressurizing the room and now I get it. Very much like the way a system with clean, extended high frequency response, gives you an airier, more lifelike musical experience, it's the same thing with the lower registers, properly reproduced.

As soon as I got used to this newfound power, I shut it off. The music really collapsed after the B2 was not in the system anymore. Whether you are a classical music listener or you just want to rock out, the B2 will take your system to another level of realism.

Still a classical newbie, I went back to Bax and Shostakovich, because that music has a ton of dynamic range and impact. Where this music was pleasant before, thanks to the reinforcement on the bottom of the spectrum, it now had a presence. Granted, it still didn't feel like I had the BBC Philharmonic in my room, but it felt a lot closer!

Those of you that are lovers of rock in roll are also in for a huge treat. Music that you have listened to for years (that you thought you knew pretty well) will be a fresh experience. Whether you listen to Dark Side of The Moon for the millionth time or just pulled Bob Dylan's new LP out of the jacket for the first time, you will dig the B2.

But how well does it work with the other speaker groups?

As I hinted before, the least preferable way to use the B2 is with a pair of small speakers with limited bass response. Though it did a fantastic job with the Sapphire XLs (6" woofer) and much better than I expected, it was straining a bit with the upper bass, lower mids going up to about 70hz to crossover.

Panels were next on the list and my Apogees go down pretty solidly to 35-40hz, so this was no problem at all. Because they are so inefficient, I was barely using the amplifier power of the B2 and it was more than fast enough to keep up with these speakers. Integration was excellent with this combination and that's the trick with a panel speaker system. It was also a great match for the Manger

Zerobox speakers reviewed in this issue and that is one of the fastest speakers I've ever heard.

The biggest surprise was with my 2nd Rethms. These are single-driver speakers with a modified Lowther driver. Spread way out in my room, they can get down to about 45 hz by themselves, but it's a pretty harsh dropoff after that. Again the B2 was a great match, keeping up with this speaker very well at a crossover point of 50hz.

TONE Says

I recommend the B2 very highly. If you are shopping for a sub, put the B series subwoofers at the top of your list. The B3 is a bit smaller and less powerful and the B1 is a bit larger and more powerful. (it also uses a 12" driver, where the other two use 10") Either way, I think you will be very pleased.

The only thing left to explore is getting another B2, to take room pressurization to another level. Perhaps we will revisit this sometime in 2007, but for now I am thrilled with the B2. ●



MANUFACTURER:

IMPORTER: Sumiko

2431 Fifth St.
Berkeley, CA 94710
510-843-4500
www.sumikoaudio.net

PERIPHERALS:

Preamp: Conrad-Johnson ACT2, Aesthetix Callisto

Power Amplifiers: Conrad-Johnson Premier 350, Conrad-Johnson CA200, Pass Aleph 3, Pass First Watt F3, Pacific Creek SEI 300, Red Rock Renaissance monoblocks.

Speakers: Tetra 506 custom, Imperium Acoustics Nicole, Rethm 2nd Rethm, Penaudio Serenade, Apogee Caliper, ACI Sapphire XL, Manger Zerobox 109

Analog Sources: SME 10 w/Sumiko Celebration, AVID Volvere w/ SME 309 arm and Shelter 90x, Ray Samuels XR-10B phono preamp.

Digital Sources: Metronome CD-3 Signature, Wadia 581

Interconnects: Cardas Golden Reference, Cardas Golden Presence, Tetra Artet Speaker Cable: Cardas Golden

Presence, Tetra Artet

Power Cords: Running Springs Mongoose
Power Conditioning: Running Springs

Jaco, Running Springs Duke **Vibration Control:** Symposium Ultra

Platforms, Rollerblock Jr.s.

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

Bax – The Symphonies (CD)

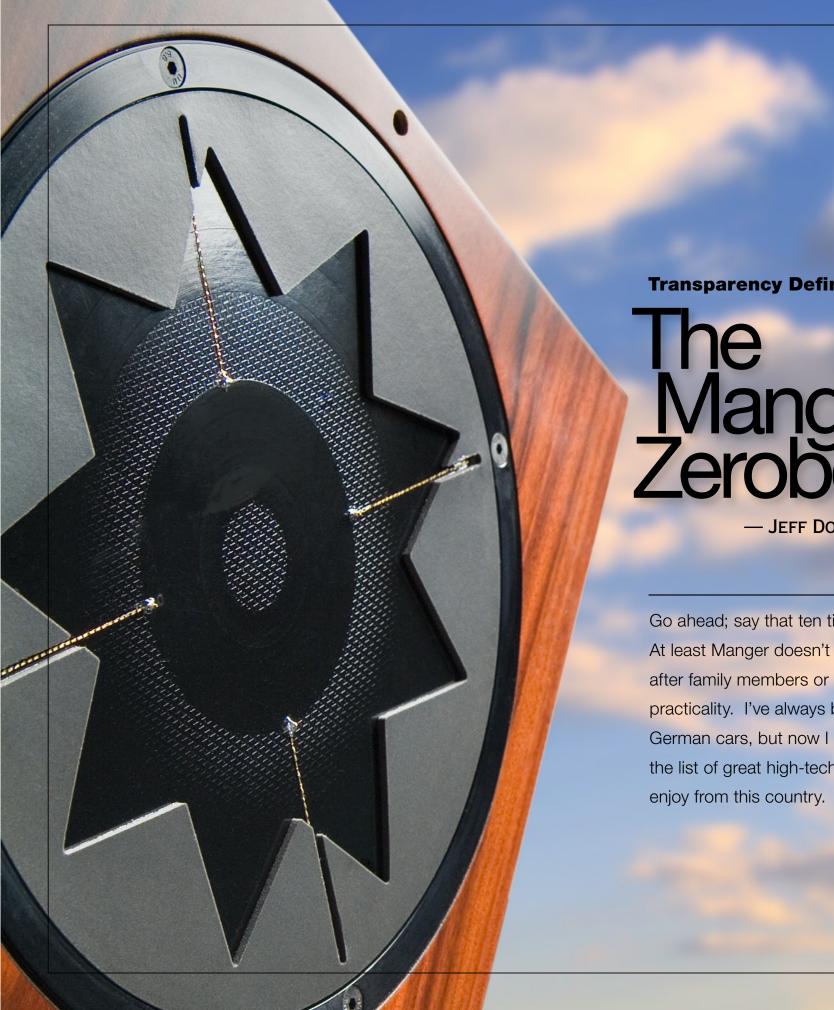
Genesis – Lamb Lies Down on Broadway (LP, Classic Records)

Kruder & Dorfmeister – The K&D Sessions (CD)

Lyle Lovett – Johsua Judges Ruth (CD)

Michael Hedges – Aerial Boundaries(LP)

Me'Shell NdegeOcello-Plantation
Lullabies (CD)



Transparency Defined:

The Manger Zerobox109

— JEFF DORGAY

Go ahead; say that ten times as fast as you can. At least Manger doesn't name their speakers after family members or pets; I like that German practicality. I've always been a huge fan of German cars, but now I have to add speakers to the list of great high-technology products that I enjoy from this country. (continued)

The Germans are quite the masters of understatement as well. (Except for those goofy op-art checkerboard interiors of the

early Porsche 928s...) If I had to describe the Manger Zerobox 109 in one word, it would be understated. The next word would be quality, these are beautiful speakers and my test pair came

in rosewood that looked like it came from the Maybach factory. For those of you in the crowd that aren't car enthusiasts, the Maybach is Germany's answer to the Rolls-Royce, and they are built to order through your Mercedes/Maybach center at about 500 thousand bucks a throw.

These speakers come with some pretty cool grilles that are very transparent, but I like the look of the Manger driver so much, if these were my speakers, I'd leave the grilles off!

Also worth noting is that the side panels are at slightly different angles, so that they are non-parallel, helping to better manage resonance. Due to the striped pattern of the rosewood cabinets, this was hard to see at first! I can only imagine how much work goes into all of those non-standard mitre cuts!

In the past, a few people have tried this unique driver, which from the technical info appears to be more of a membrane-like speaker than a ribbon or electrostatic with mixed results. As someone who really loves the sound of an electrostatic speaker, I was always intrigued by the potential in this driver because I liked the imaging and high frequency response. When I heard the Manger company was making their own speakers, my tail perked up just like one of my terriers and I was very intrigued to get a pair for review. Who else to get this design right than the people who designed the driver?

I must confess after our classical guy Dan Babineau and I moved the 506 poundeach Tidal speakers at Steve Hoffman's

house in August, I was really happy to get some 37 pound speakers to move around! The ZB 109s were placed on a pair of 24" Sound Anchors stands that were filled with sand to provide a sta-

ble platform. The more massive you can make the stands for these speakers, the better.

While small and understated, a pair of the ZB 109s cost \$7500, and they are worth every penny.

Setup

While small and

understated, a pair

of the ZB 109s cost

\$7500. and they are

worth every penny.

After getting the speakers unboxed and up on stands, I tried them with a few different amp/preamp combinations to get the sound I wanted. I have said many times before in these pages that I love panel speakers, and importer Jim Ricketts told me on the phone that these speakers had a sound quality very much like a good ESL. If you go to the TMH Audio website, (www.tmhaudio.com) you can read all of the tech information, which would take up the rest of this review, and you still wouldn't know what I think!

But the Reader's Digest version of the tech info is that this speaker has an incredibly fast, 13us rise time. For comparison, the average person can shift a Ferrari with a manual transmission in 40-60ms and Michael Schumacher can do it in 13ms if he's having a really good day at the test track in Italy. The Mangers are 1000 times faster than Michael Schumacher on top of his game. (continued)



Renaissance

Triode Monoblock Amplifiers

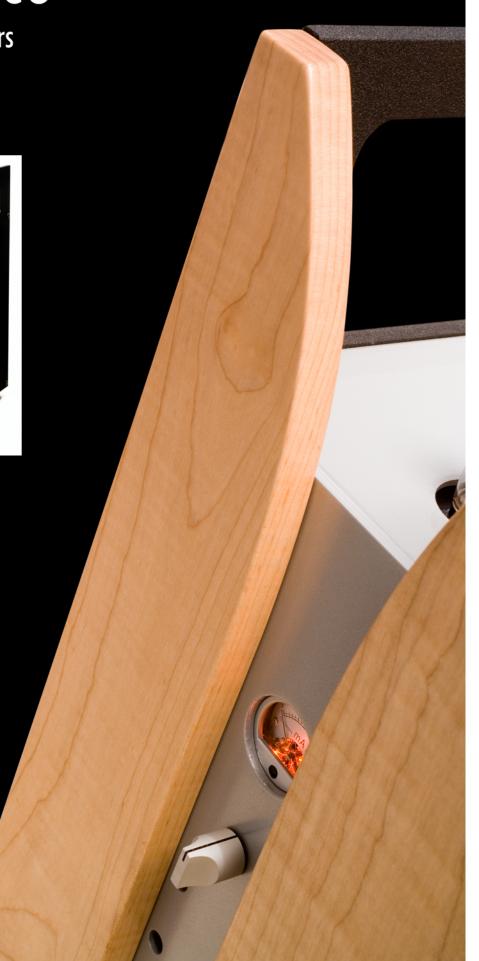


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Because these speakers are so fast, Jim suggested that tube amplifiers might not be the best match for the ZB 109s and I concur.

The Manger driver goes from about 80hz all the way up past where dogs can hear, (35khz) so they need a little help with a woofer.

The ZB 109s are crossed over to an 8" woofer at 140 Hz and have a rated impedance of 4 ohms, with the low frequency range being 40hz at the -3db point.

While I had excellent results with all of the solid state amplifiers I used the ZB 109s with, I settled on the new preamplifier and amplifiers from Boulder, the 810/850 combination for almost all of this review. The speed of those 200watt monoblocks was a great match for the ZBs along with cabling from ED. Running Springs Mongoose power cords were used throughout and a RSA Jaco provided clean power. My digital sources featured the new Wadia 531 DAC and the Metronome Technologies CD-3 Signature CD player in addition to my ModWright Denon 3910 for SACD and DVD-A playback. LPs were spinned on my trusty LP-12 with a Shelter 90x and the Ray Samuels XR-10B phono stage. Everything but the ModWright Denon was connected in balanced mode as the Boulder gear is balanced only.

Mr. Ricketts told me the speakers were broken in, so I got right down to critical listening straight away. I did not notice a change in the speakers character after the first day or so of being unboxed. (which like not having to lift heavy boxes, was also a treat!!) (continued)



The Sound

Because I like panel speakers so much, I found myself giving the ZB 109s a lot of couch time. I must say, the Mangers do sound an awful lot like an electrostatic speaker, but with some bonus features.

First of all, these are way easier to set up than any panel I have ever owned. Thanks to

the traditional cabinet, they will work well in anywhere from about a 10 x 12 room to a 16 x 24

room with minimal adjustment, though they will benefit from a good sub in a larger room. (more about that later) I had great luck with my corner setup as well as the more conventional rectangular setup. As I was reading the Manger tech info, they claim that this driver does not "beam" like a panel speaker does.

They aren't kidding. If you have a pair of Martin Logans, Magneplanar or Quads you know that the sound is very different sitting than standing. Not so with the ZB 109s.

One of the biggest strengths of this speaker is that the sweet spot is so big, it's almost nonexistent. Unless you get really off axis, the sound is great anywhere in the listening area; it's kind of like those funny paintings in the scary movie where the eye follows you wherever you go! The Mangers are great for having a couple of friends over; everyone can enjoy them and not fight for the primo spot on the couch!

The high frequency response of this speaker is incredibly defined, yet very smooth and not grainy at all. Cymbals and percussion sound very natural because of the fast rise time and decay very naturally. Listening to some of my favorite King Crimson, Yes and Frank Zappa records, all which

The Mangers are great for having a couple of friends over; everyone can enjoy them and not fight for the primo spot on the couch!

feature quite a bit of powerful drumming really shows how well the Mangers handle this type of program ma-

terial. Often times speakers will fall down when pressed with very complex musical selections, yet this is a test that the Mangers pass with flying colors. I do feel that the 35khz high end response helps contribute to the airiness of these speakers even though normal humans can't hear that high. It's very similar to the way a subwoofer going down so low adds weight to the sound without you really hearing it.

Before I go any further, it's important to dispel why these speakers aren't the best match for a tube amplification. It's not really an impedance thing that I could tell, (Manger claims a very flat 4 ohm curve) but because the Manger driver is so fast and it is at a bit of a disadvantage, having to cross over to a cone driver for the bass, the tube amplifiers I tried just couldn't reproduce the lower registers fast enough, so it made the difference in response time between the woofer and tweeter seem more evident and the drivers seem less coherent. (continued)

I used these speakers with the new F3 from Nelson Pass, the Conrad-Johnson Premier 350 and the new Boulder 850, all with fantastic results. The Pass amplifier was very good at lower levels and thanks to the ZB 109's 89db efficiency, would play fairly loud in a small room. But the high current capabilities of the C-J and the Boulder amplifiers really made these speakers sound a lot bigger than they are, thanks to the amount of speed and control they offer in the bass region.

Should you want to add a tube preamplifier to the mix to add a touch of warmth or romance, that is no problem. Swapping the Aesthetix Callisto for the Boulder preamp offered a different presentation that was equally enjoyable, though different from the Boulder. But if you have a tube power amplifier, I would suggest an extended audition or consider making a switch to solid state.

I was always impressed with how well these speakers did with resolving small details and spatial cues. Again, dipping in the pile of DVD-As, I was listening to **Chicago V**, which sounds really dreadful on LP, but the remastered version is quite nice. Again, a disc with a fairly complex textural arrangement, the small details came out in the mix, with a very big sound, in all three dimensions. Hall & Oates **Abandoned Luncheonette** (MoFi LP) also had a very magical quality to it thanks to the resolution of these speakers.

Moving right along to discs recorded in this century, I spent a fair amount of time listening to Musical Soiree at Aimola (home of Jean Sibelius), Works for Violin and Piano by Pekka Kuusisto and Heini Karkkainen. I received this as a gift from Sami Penttila (the man responsible for designing Penaudio speakers) at CES and it is a wonderful recording. Again, these speakers do such a great job with the textural complexity of these instruments that are so hard



to capture on recording in a way that they sound tonally correct.

Bruce Springsteen's **Diamonds and Dust** along with a few of my other favorite vocal discs just kept reminding me how NATURAL the ZB 109s sounded in my room. Just so you know that these are not just a speaker for this type of music, I did give them the heavy metal brain damage test, which they also passed admirably. This speaker is capable of playing quite loudly if you have the clean power on tap.

Very Minor Limitations

The only real limitation of this speaker is its lack of output much below 35hz. Depending on the kind of music you listen to, this may not even be an issue. I honestly feel there is no shame in a \$7500 speaker that doesn't reproduce that last bit of bass, especially when it does such a fantastic job everywhere else. I did spend a little bit of time mating these speakers with the extraordinary REL B2 and this gave me a

system that would go all the way down to 20hz. I would highly suggest that you try these speakers as is and if you love them as much as I did, spend a lot of time with them and your music collection before going down the subwoofer path.

There is an ever so slight bump in the midrange response that is confirmed by Manger's own measurements, however it is not enough to make the speakers sound colored. It does give them just a slightly forward sound and with most recordings was not something I was even aware of. However, when listening to a recording that already has a bit of a bump in it, this becomes a little more pronounced.

The \$7500 Question, Answered

Because I have a daughter to send to college in a few years, I can't buy every great pair of speakers that spends time at TONE HQ. But the Manger ZB109 is one of my favorites. This is a pair of speakers that gets our highest recommendation.



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MANUFACTURER:

Manger Zerobox 109s Importer: TMH Audio PO Box 751681 Dayton, OH 45475 937-439-2667 www.tmhaudio.com

PERIPHERALS:

Preamplifiers: Boulder 810,

Aesthetix Callisto

Power Amplifiers: Boulder 850 monoblocks, Conrad-Johnson Premier 350, Pass Labs First Watt F3

Analog Source: Linn LP-12 (Cirkus/Trampolin/Lingo) with Shelter 90x and Ray Samuels Audio XR-10B phono preamplifier

Digital Sources: Metronome CD-3, Wadia 531, ModWright Denon 3910

Interconnects: Audience AU24 (RCA and XLR)

Power cords: Essential Sound Products, The Essence Reference

Power Conditioning: Running

Springs Jaco

Vibration Control: Symposium Ultra Platforms, Rollerblock Jr.s

FAVORITE TEST TUNES:

Bruce Springsteen – Diamonds and Dust (Dual Disc)

Pekka Kuusisto and Heini Karkkainen – Sibelius, Works for Violin and Flute (CD)

Hall and Oates – Abandoned Lunchonette (MoFi LP)

Jean Michael Jarre – The Concerts for China (LP)

XTC – Black Sea (LP)

The Market Share of the Control of t



unich's probably larger, London is better-known, but Milan's TOP Audio Show is – by a large consensus – the very best show in Europe. Imagine this happening anywhere other than Italy: over 20,000 attendees, for a specialist A/V show – not dumbed-down mid-fi dreck. Families in attendance. Females who don't look like they were dragged along by their husbands or boyfriends. Decent snacks on sale that don't require a mortgage (including – no kidding – a three-course Chinese meal for 7 euros and sublime espresso for 1 euro...). Halls established by category, with all the plasmas in one huge rotunda, custom installation in another, mass-market in a third hall, and high-end audio and A/V in huge "boardrooms" or bedrooms for the smaller makes.

They think of everything: The signs in front of the rooms identify the exhibitor as either two-channel audio or multi-channel A/V, so you can skip what doesn't appeal to you. The show guide is absolutely comprehensive and cross-referenced. The rooms look like the exhibitors give a damn. You pinch yourself and imagine you've gone to heaven. Then you want to kick some UK and US butt for their inability to do the same. *(continued)*

The author with distributor Marco Natali (photo courtesy of AudioReview's Marco Cicogna)



TOP Audio 2006 held some amazing surprises, like an "economy" turntable from V.Y.G.E.R., and the first demos of Nagra's long-awaited CD player ... my pick of the show. And you have to keep your ears open, and your command of Italian polished:

Sonus faber will be releasing a "baby" Stradivari Homage, 30 percent shorter and half the price!!!! You will read it here first.

Whatever it takes, you must visit this show. Second honeymoon coming?
Relatives in the old country? A long-awaited trip to the Italian Grand Prix at Monza?
Plan it around this. And if you really do your homework, you can find a sublime 1995
Tignanello for 51 euros ●

At last, Nagra's CD front-end, housed in the same machined aluminium chassis as its familiar PL-L and PL-P preamplifiers and available in three forms: CD Transport, the CD Player with fixed level outputs, and CD Concept, which is CD Player with full-function, built-in pre-amplifier. www.nagraaudio.com



Pierre Bolduc of **Audiophile** magazine, leading 80 Italians in a sing-a-long to ... TOSCANIN!!! ast issue, we had a great article on chairs for you to sit in while you are enjoying your system. In addition to our usual collection of cables and other gadgets, here is a chair you need for setting up your hifi:

The Snap-On JC80

www.snapon.com About \$85

It's perfect for organizing records, mounting cartridges or rolling behind your equipment rack to plug things in or out. The cool little drawer beneath the seat cushion is a great place to store a few screwdrivers, a pliers and perhaps a really strong set of reading glasses for when you get near that stylus! You might even want one for the garage as well!

Should you live on a hilly street, you can really have a blast with your JC80 (get some kneepads) as long as you realize that this activity is not an approved method of use by either Snap-On or TONE, but the guys at Jackass think it's really cool. Rock on!



Audience power Chord

www.audience-av.com

\$475, 6 Foot Length



I have been using the Audience powerChord in a couple of my systems for a while now and have been very pleased with their character. They are very well built, featuring Wattgate IEC sockets and a very high quality Marinco plug on the other end. My experience with everything I used it with was very positive. This is a power cord that you can use with any kind of gear and get good results, it is very neutral sounding.

These can also be ordered in different terminations as well as with the 20 amp IEC for those of you with mega powered amplifiers.

One unique feature of the power-Chord is that it does not use any shielding. While the Audience designers claim that this allows more musical detail to pass through, if you have interconnects that don't have much shielding, you might pick up a slight bit of noise or hum. I only noticed this in one instance when I was being intentionally sloppy with cabling. Should you round out your system with the AU24 series of interconnects and speaker cables, this will not be an issue at all.

The powerChord is definitely worth giving a listen in your system. (continued)

Clearaudio Simple Matrix Record Cleaner

www.musicalsurroundings.com \$700

Our classical guy, Dan Babineau has the big brother to this machine, the \$3200 Clearaudio Matrix record cleaner in clear acrylic, no less! But he is even more obsessed than I am. If you have the disposable cash, go for the big boy Matrix, it's amazing, (and it's pretty quiet too.) but for those of you with real world budgets, the Simple Matrix is the next best thing.

Very well built, with an aluminum-laminated case, the secret to this record cleaners success is its ability to clean in both directions, just like the Matrix. At first glance, you might think that this is no big deal, but I assure you after cleaning about 100 records with the Smart Matrix, from brand new to incredibly dirty, this is the WAY TO GO!

You do have to manually empty the fluid tank from time to time and the Simple Matrix does have an overheat sensor and a three year warranty. I performed a few marathon-cleaning sessions, waiting about a minute or two between records and never had any trouble.

I can't suggest this one highly enough. Priced in the same ballpark as the other cleaners that only go in one direction, the Simple Matrix is a homerun. That second pass is the magic! Across the board, my records are much cleaner than they were before.



ED-213 Speaker Cables

www.empiricaldesign.net \$440.00 for a 8 foot pair

■ ran across the ED cables (perhaps not the best name choice, but there we go again) when reviewing the Daedelus Audio DA-2s in this issue. Lou Hinkley told me these were his favorite cables and I can see why. They are very neutral, yet revealing without being harsh and that is an excellent achievement at this price point.

Mechanical construction was quite good too. These cables are not large or imposing, yet because of the geometry are equivalent to the cross-sectional area of a pair of 13-gauge conductors. All in all, these are very good looking cables.

Break-in was relatively quick and these worked well with any amplifier that I tried them with, tube or solid-state. Personally, I really liked them a lot with a few tube amplifiers that seemed just a touch too warm. The 213s gave up every last bit of high-end extension that these "overly tubey" amps had to give, yet were not grainy when used with solid-state amplification. They worked particularly well with the Naim Nait 5i/CD5i system in my living room matched with my Penaudio Serenades. Again, if you are buying a pair of speakers from Lou, these cables, along with their interconnects are a fantastic match.

I always like suggesting cables that sound great, are well made AND not overpriced. The ED speaker and interconnects I had the privilege of auditioning succeed on all three levels. Regardless of your choice in gear, I would suggest giving these cables an audition with your system.



Vinyl-Zyme Gold

RECORD CLEANING FLUID

www.ttvj.com

Reasonably priced, different sizes to choose from.

■ had heard a lot of good things about this cleaner before I got a chance to give it a try and I must say I was not disappointed. I've tried a few other things that are quite good, but Vinyl Zyme seems to be really outstanding at cleaning older, slimier records.

Considering I've been buying a fair amount of budget LP's lately, this stuff has really come in handy. You can purchase it in three different concentrations: Regular, Heavy Duty and Concentrate. An 8 oz. bottle of extra strength is \$15, while an 8 oz. bottle of regular strength is \$10. (continued)



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easy-to-follow video instructions. Listen to your tunes anywhere you go with a Podfreq[™], Podfreq mini, or Podfreq nano. Charge your iPod[®] while on the go with our USB Power Adapter. Sonnet iPod accessories let you love your iPod even longer!



iPod Batteries

Easily upgrade your iPod battery with specialized tools + video instructions



your tunes with any FM radio!







Charge your iPod anywhere; includes matching dock cable Use your iPod, iPod mini, or iPod nano to play



ifreq

Buckle Up. Enjoy the Tunes.



Like Sonnet's award-winning Podfrēq, ifrēq offers superior sound and ease-of-use. Simple controls and a large, backlit display are integrated into ifreq's body, which plugs directly into a car lighter jack. This design makes it easy for you to tune both ifreq and the vehicle's radio to the same frequency, and play your iPod music library over the vehicle's sound system.





www.sonnettech.com

You can purchase 2 oz of concentrate for \$40 and this will be enough to make 1 gallon of extra strength or 4 gallons of normal strength. Got that straight?

I had a few really dirty, fingerprinted records that were deemed unplayable, so this seemed like the perfect place to start. The key to this cleaner is to spread it out and let it sit on your record for about 30 sec to a minute, so the enzyme-based cleaner (hence the name...) can do its job.

Initially, I was cleaning in both directions with the heavy duty cleaner, but after a bit of experimentation found that on all but the scummiest records, using extra strength in one direction and then following up with regular strength in the opposite direction worked very well.

For the future, I will be experimenting mixing the concentrate with the purest water I can find and possibly a glass container for my mixture. Remember, I told you I'm pretty obsessed. I'll report my findings at a later date on our new website.

I was particularly impressed with the spray bottles that Vinyl-Zyme comes in. This makes it very easy to apply the juice in a very even manner. Bravo on this one! So, whether you have a fair share of really dirty records or just need to do some normal cleaning, I suggest giving Vinyl-Zyme a try. (continued)

Tannoy TS-10 Subwoofer



This subwoofer really packs a wallop for being approximately one square foot. Don't let the low price fool you, this is by far the best budget sub I have ever heard and it is extremely flexible to boot. I use a pair of them in my third system with my 2nd Rethms and they are fantastic. The small size makes them extremely easy to position in your room for maximum pressurization.

Even if you only use one, you will really appreciate the flexibility the TS-10 offers. With RCA and XLR inputs built in, you also have a lot of control. Phase, level and crossover frequency are infinitely adjustable, so you can easily dial this one in to your environment. Tannoy claims a -6db response at 29hz, but I think it is a bit conservative in my room, as I was able to easily play the 30hz test tone on my Stereophile test disc and still get some useable output with the 25hz tone.

Because the massive 10" driver fires downward, if you really are rocking out, I suggest a bit of mass loading. I use a piece of Sorbothane-like material (thanks to Skeptical Roy) on top of each woofer so I don't scratch the textured dark grey rubbery surface with a small cinder block on top. It isn't the tidiest solution, but it works great!

The TS-10 has a 300-watt amplifier, so it can keep up with most anything you throw at it. Again, for \$499, this is one of the best bargains in audio, even if you buy a pair. Depending on your application, Tannoy also makes the 12" TS-12 and the smaller 8" TS-8. ●

Retrospective:

The Good Old Days of Vinyl

Back when the CD wasn't even a consideration on the drawing boards yet, we had records and tapes. And by tapes, I mean reel to reel tapes. Sure, the cassette was around, but that was never really a high fidelity medium. (at least not the prerecorded versions, anyway)

In the '50s through the late '70s, that space on a record sleeve was often used to advertise upcoming releases, sell sampler LPs or just promote the virtues of music being available on vinyl. I'm sure the ad copyrighters never saw the train coming.

Here's a couple of fun ones from the vault to share....

Here's How Records Give You More Of What You Want:

- **The Best For Less.** Records give you top quality for less money than any other recorded form.
- They Allow Selectivity Of Songs And Tracks. With records it's easy to pick out the songs you want to play, or to play again a particular song or side. All you have to do is lift the tone arm and place it where you want it. You can't do this as easily with anything but a phonograph record.
- They're The Top Quality In Sound. Long-playing phonograph records look the same now as when they were introduced in 1948, but there's a world of difference. Countless refinements and developments have been made to perfect the long-playing record's technical excellence and insure the best in sound reproduction and quality available in recorded form.
- They'll Give You Hours Of Continuous And Uninterrupted Listening Pleasure.

 Just stack them up on your automatic changer and relax.
- They're Attractive, Informative And Easy To Store. Record albums are never out of place. Because of the aesthetic appeal of the jacket design, they're beautifully at home in any living room or library. They've also got important information on the backs—about the artists, about the performances or about the program. And because they're flat and not bulky, you can store hundreds in a minimum of space and still see every title.
- If It's In Recorded Form, You Know It'll Be Available On Records.

 Everything's on long-playing records these days...your favorite artists, shows, comedy, movie sound tracks, concerts, drama, documented history, educational material...you name it. This is not so with any other kind of recording.
- **They're Your Best Entertainment Buy.** Every album is a show in itself. And once you've paid the price of admission, you can hear it over and over.
- **They Make A Great Gift.** Everybody you know loves music. And practically everyone owns a phonograph. Records are a gift that says a lot to the person you're giving them to. And they keep on remembering.

And Remember...It Always Happens First On Records.

Manufactured by Columbia Records/CBS, Inc./51 W. 52 Street, New York, N.Y./ ® "Columbia." → Marcas Reg. Printed in U.S.A.

ннс:

Retrospective:

The Good Old Days of Vinyl

Enjoy the music you want-when you want it ... AND HEAR IT RIGHT!

On Stereo Phonographs

YOU CAN PLAY ALL TYPES OF RECORDS, MONAURAL AS WELL

AS STEREO. Many priceless performances by some of the greatest artists of the century were recorded before stereo was perfected.

Because stereo phonographs use the most advanced pickups and multiple speaker systems, they add a new dimension of pleasure to all recordings, including those which are not in stereo.

On all Other Phonographs

PLAY ONLY THE REGULAR MON-

AURAL LPs. Almost all the latest-releases are available in monaural versions.

Play stereo albums only on instruments which are equipped with the special types of pickups required.

WIRLIE ★ STRIKE® records, available exclusively as RCA Victor stereophonic albums, are your assurance of greatly enhanced listening pleasure.

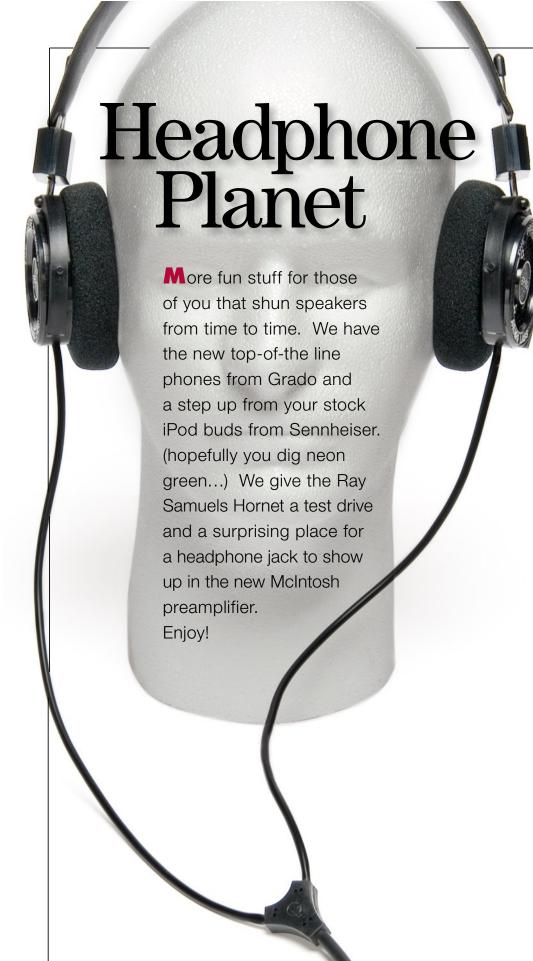
MIRACE * STRACE® record grooves contain the antistatic agent 317X which helps to keep them free from dust, one of the chief causes of surface noise and premature wear.

This record is designed to give you many years of trouble-free listening pleasure.

TO INSURE LONGER LIFE
AND ENDURING SOUND QUALITY,
OBSERVE THESE SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS
FOR PROPER RECORD CARE . . .

- ★ Always handle records without touching the playing surfaces.
- ★ Keep your records free from dust. Return them immediately after playing to their protective inner sleeves and album covers.
- ★ Never store records at an angle or expose them to heat. Keeping them in an upright position, or lying flat, helps prevent warping.
- ★ Have your stylus checked regularly; if it is worn or damaged, your records and their reproduction will suffer
- ★ Records may be cleaned with a lint-free, damp cloth. Never rub! Use a light, circular motion.
- RCA's new "Red Seal" Magnetic Tape is used in recording RCA Victor albums and pre-recorded tapes. This superlative product of Radio Corporation of America, produced by today's most advanced techniques, is now available for home use.

TMK(S) ® Radio Corporation of America . Marca(s) Registrada(s)



The Grado 1000

Introduced at the NYC Head-Fi meet, the long anticipated Grado GS1000s are finally here. While Grado has always been a champion of offering extremely high performance at too good to be true prices (both in headphones and phono cartridges) the GS1000 is at the higher end of headphone pricing, at \$1000.

And they are worth every penny.

I have always liked the open sound of the Grado phones, and all of their models share what I would call "The Grado Sound." As you go up the price ladder, you get better construction and more refinement, plus you would never mistake any of their models for something else. If you are a Grado fan, you know that the wood body means you are in the top of the line, and that can expect something special.

The GS 1000 has much larger foam pads that the RS-1 or RS-2 and I feel that this adds to the airier presentation. You actually have a little bit of wiggle room inside the headphone, so you can position it on your head for the perfect listening position. This extra bit of air also helps extend the bass response. (continued)





If you liked the RS-1 or RS-2, you are going to freak out over the GS1000. In addition to their usual great packaging, the GS1000 comes with a 15-foot extension cord that really comes in handy for couch dwelling!

I started my test sessions (on the couch) with the headphone output of my Ah! Tjoeb 4000 Tubed CD player and knew that I was on to something immediately. These phones had a BIG sound and that was what really drew me to them at the Head-fi meet.

Thanks to their 32 ohm impedance, they work really well with my 300B amplifier right off the 8 ohm tap. These phones were worth putting the Western Electric tubes in and I immediately cued up one of my favorite headphone discs, The Art of Noise **Daft**. Granted, this is not an audiophile selection by any means, but it has a lot of really cool stereo effects that you can take advantage of much better with a pair of headphones on.

At the end of track 8 right before it fades into Moments in Love, there are two girls giggling and going "Boo....Boo" that bounces all over the place. Moments in Love has a great bass track that can sound muddy on speakers or phones with lousy bass definition and the GS1000s passed with flying colors. The Fairfield Four's Standing in the Safety **Zone** is a much better recording than **Daft**, and is a great way to listen for midrange beauty. Again, the GS1000s were superb here and did a fantastic way of putting a three-dimensional space right inside my head, almost fooling me that I was listening to a pair of speakers! That's really the highest compliment that I can pay the GS 1000s.

As I'm not much of a loud headphone listener (must protect the ears after all...), I can't comment on how well the GS1000s sound at earsplitting volume, but under normal circumstances they sound very

dynamic, doing a great job with low level detail as well as being very fast, going from soft to loud effortlessly. Another favorite disc I listen to a lot for low-level spatial information is Tom Waits' **Mule Variation**. This was really a treat, listening to all the little things that Tom Waits has floating around the mix! I also went back to the past and shook the dust off of my 5LP collection of Laurie Anderson's **Live In The USA**. Again, great dynamics and spaciousness.

The extremes of the frequency range are very well covered too. The highs are so smooth yet defined; you might even mistake these for electrostatic phones! Listening to the old jazz classic direct-to-disc recording, **The Three**, featuring Shelley Manne on drums was fantastic; those cymbals had an extremely natural decay that was very relaxing to listen to. No slouch with bass either, I think you will be very pleased with the GS1000s. This was the big difference I noticed between the RS-1/RS-2 and these phones besides the airier presentation, more weight.

Whether you are looking for another pair of headphones for your collection, or trading up to a better set, the GS1000 is worth a serious listen. *(continued)*

JD'S HEADPHONE RIG:

Pacific Creek SE300I
ModWright Denon 3910
Running Springs Haley
Audience Power Chord (s)
Audience AU 24 interconnects
Modified Rega P25
Shelter 501mk. II
Hagerman Trumpet Phono Stage



Next up, lets go from large to small, the Sennheiser MX75.

For those of you in iPod land, chances are you are looking for an alternative for the OEM earbuds that came with your iPod or other MP3 player of choice. I pulled out my trusty iPod shuffle and realizing I had way too much KISS and AC/DC, decided to reload some new tunes on it at a higher kb/sec rate.

These buds will only set you back about 40-50 bucks, depending on where you buy them, so they are not a big expense. I scanned a few other reviews and most of what I saw spent a lot of time complaining about the lime green color, which just happens to be my favorite color in the whole world, so for me this was a non-issue.

So, how DO they sound, compared to the stock buds?

Pretty darn good, after all these are the folks that brought us the HD600 and 650! I tried these on two different levels; on one hand I was just using them with an iPod to see if they would offer a distinct improvement over what comes out of the Apple box and the MX75s

easily pass this test. To get all hifi on you, I plugged them into my McIntosh C220 and tried a few CDs on for size.

While just a touch less efficient than the iBuds,

the Sennheiser phones have less of a bump in the midbass response, so at first go, they might sound a touch thin. However after about 5 minutes of listening, you realize they have a lot more detail and much better imaging than what you were used to with Apple. Also, if you just use one of the EQ presets on your iPod (I suggest the Latin setting, however shuffle users are out of luck) you can get a touch more bass while retaining all of the midrange clarity and spatial capabilities the MX75 has to offer.

Definitely a great value for \$40-50, and if you like lime green as much as I do, you will be styling with these phones. If you don't like lime green who cares, you are listening to them not going to a fashion show!

Headphone Amps Big and Small

If you are still thinking small and whether you want to give your iPod a HUGE step up in sound quality, or you would just like your headphone rig to not take up much space, consider the Hornet from Ray Samuels. At first you might think, "Wow \$350 for this little thing?" but don't let the small size fool you, it packs a lot of sound into a tiny package. Inside the Hornet is a 9V rechargeable battery and comes with a wall wart power supply that doubles as a charger.

NOW, PAY ATTENTION, THIS IS IMPORTANT!!

Should you be one of those hifi types that does not read instructions, I'm going to warn you right now. ONLY use the type of batteries that Ray supplies or you will screw up the charging circuit and possibly the Hornet. And that will probably make Ray as mad as a hornet when you call him up and say that you blew the darn thing up. Also, while you can use an alkaline battery (about 45 hours of music) or a Lithium battery (about 120 hours), you CAN NOT use these with the AC adapter/charger either or bad things will happen. Don't say I didn't try to help you out.

GOT THAT? Okay, let's rock.

The Hornet has a great sound, even if you decide to make it your regular rig. Bass is tight and well controlled and even with my reference GS1000s the Hornet did a great job. Highs were nice and smooth, yet extended. Listening to **The Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Songbook** was a real treat. Big sound and great imaging. Going back to some of my favorite rock records was equally good; the Hornet possesses great transient attack.

I really like listening from a battery source; it makes for a super-quiet listening experience!

For many of you, this may be all the headphone amp you ever need and as a bonus, you can take it anywhere. On a recent road trip, I sequestered myself to the back seat with an iPod full of uncompressed tunes, the Hornet and my GS1000s and had a great time all by myself. If you have a good pair of phones for traveling, the Hornet is the ultimate luxury. Take a spare lithium battery and you can go around the world about 10 times before you run out of juice! Highly recommended and they come in a number of cool colors in addition to the basic black you see here.





Sneak Preview: The McIntosh C220

Before everyone started making linestages, you could buy a full function preamplifier, that had a phono preamplifier AND a headphone amplifier all in one box. The new C220 from McIntosh brings back this tradition with their newest preamplifier. You will have to wait for the December issue to find out all the other stuff you might want to know, but I'll tell you this much, it's a great preamplifier and at \$3200, is a steal, considering all the functionality it offers.

For now, I just want to tell you about the headphone section. Call me nostalgic, but I think it is really cool to see a headphone jack on the front of a piece of hifi equipment. I know all the reasons for getting all of this circuitry out of the box, but not everyone is so maniacal about this stuff, they just want to listen to music!

Rest assured that the headphone section in the C220 will keep you happy, unless you want to buy a megabucks external headphone amplifier and even then the C220 is your friend, because you can switch the two outputs from the front panel. Easy as pie to make one of them your headphone amp and one your main power amp!

Stay tuned for the full report next issue!! ●

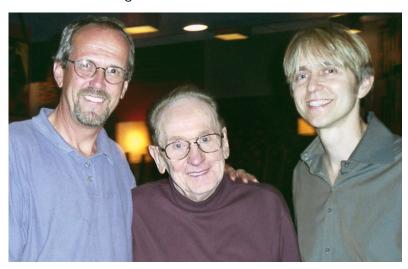
My Mom & Les Paul

— William Lemke

Many of you in the audience look to the Les Paul guitar as the holy grail of six stringed instruments; some of you even own and cherish more than one Les Paul and I agree with you wholeheartedly. In addition to creating the guitar that bears his name as well as inventing multitrack recording, you probably have your own bits of Les Paul trivia but I've got one up on you... Les Paul used to carry my Mom's books home from school!

That's right, back in Waukesha, Wisconsin (where I still live) in the late '20s my Mom and Les were good friends when they were about 12 years old, right before his professional music career took off and well before the famous guitar was invented.

I earn my living with a camera, but I have been playing guitar for years. I have a number of guitars in my collection, but you know what my favorite is! One day when my parents were visiting about 15 years ago, my Mom saw the name on the headstock of my Custom and she said, "He was a really nice boy..." You can only imagine how I freaked out to find out that Les Paul used to go to school with MY Mom. (continued)



Bill, Les and Eric



Great Sound. Great Price.





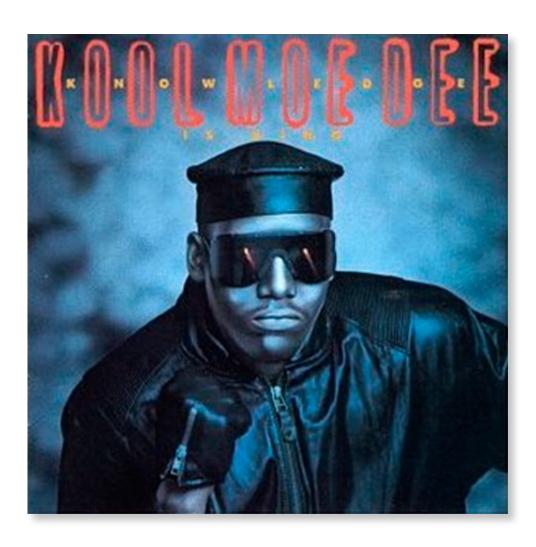
Fast forward the clock to a few weeks ago when I was in New York City with my daughter. We decided to stop down at the Iridium Jazz Club on Broadway to check out Les' show. Believe it or not, even though he is 90 years old, he plays every Monday night and does two shows, one at 8p.m. and one at 10! Even with arthritis in his right hand, he still can crank it out.

As Les always has guests, this particular evening, he would be joined on stage by Eric Johnson and another friend, who I was not familiar with. In between tunes, Les was quite the comedian, making a rather funny joke about Viagra that isn't worth repeating here...

The irony of the evening was that I left my new Canon EOS 5 back in my room, because I didn't think that they would let me in the club with a camera! But, as a photographer that is never without a camera of some kind, I did have my trusty point and shoot in my pocket, so I managed to at least get the shot of Les and I. He is very friendly and hangs out to chat with the audience for a while after the show.

To make the evening even more special, I asked him if he remembered my Mom and he did, remarking "I haven't talked to her in about 70 years!!" As it was only 7:30 p.m. in Arizona, I lucked out and got my Mom on my cell phone. I handed the phone to Les and they chatted for about 15 minutes. Upon handing the phone back to me, he was kind enough to sign the pick guard from my black Les Paul Custom. Definitely an evening to remember! ●

Digging Deep to the Roots of Rap - Nicole Wilson



If you watch as much TV as I do these days, you know how much programming on MTV and Vh1 is geared towards the life and achievements of old school rap artists. I always find these shows educational because the first rap album I bought was... don't laugh...MC Hammer's Hammer Time. The first rap video I saw was Nuthin' But A "G" Thang of Dr. Dre's The Chronic. After Dr. Dre came OutKast with ATLiens and 2Pac's All Eyez On Me and I bumped into KRS-1 right around age 16.

We all saw Run-DMC and Aerosmith together for *Walk This Way*, but is that really all this generation needs to know about old school hip-hop? I watch rappers from Public Enemy and Run-DMC on reality TV and recognize the authority they acquired through their music, but has their contribution to hip-hop been discounted? If my generation loves rap so much, then why do so many of us not know any of this genre's pioneering artists? Can you be a Trekkie only giving tribute to the Next Generation? In a quest for knowledge and with the prodding of another old school fan who hooked me up with a handful of old albums and began digging deep to the roots of rap.

The true pioneer of this adventure is Kool Moe Dee. His career began in the late seventies with the group Treacherous 3 which shared the same record label Enjoy with Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five. He spent the early years perfecting speed rapping, which is now slow as a dial-up connection to us high speed kids who listen to artists like Twista. KMD went solo putting out his first album in 1986 and two albums later he released **Knowledge is King**. (continued)

Although a couple of tracks aren't bad, his style is so old school it seems a little bland for me. Pump Your Fists has KMD rapping about racial injustice with a menacing tone in the music; the other songs are a major brag fest. The beats lack originality and groove, and his sound is definitely dated without any chance of survival. There is not much to this album for a kid like me, yet I understand that at some point in time his purpose was meaningful. He was the first rapper to ever perform in the Grammys which still makes him a rap icon. Kool Moe Dee's style was sophisticated and bad ass for its time and when LL Cool J came on the scene with a similar style, it started a rivalry between the rappers. The evidence would be the cover of Kool's second album where LL's signature Kangol hat is underneath the tire of a jeep.

Ok, what about LL Cool J? Ladies Love LL came on the scene right after Run-DMC and has been a commercial success ever since. Walking With A Panther from 1987 has the hits Going Back To Cali, which Rick Rubin helped produce, and Big Ole Butt which displays some humor and is not far off from the lyrical themes of his current albums. Once again, the style is a little slow and though some of the rhymes are dated, the energy is live on *Droppin' Em* and there are even a couple ballads that'll make you giggle. LL Cool J has definite sex appeal that makes those smooth rhymes slide into your ears. He was one of the first artists to really show "the softer side" of such a tough rapper, contributing to his strong character, a trait that continues even today.

Roll out the red carpet for the true Kings of Rock: Run-DMC truly is the life of the party for their hard hitting rap success that chiseled the mold for all hip-hop artists today.

Raising Hell from 1986 is an excellent album!

Rick Rubin and Russell Simmons produced this wonderful album and the music contains the best blend of street rap. hard guitars riffs and straight rock and roll. The highlights are It's Tricky and Walk This Way which gave Run the crossover success which defined their legacy. There is nothing soft or subtle about their music or their rhymes; Jam Master Jay does a

phenomenal job scratching and mixing; it's a block party through the whole album. *My Adidas* explains the true faithfullness to their Adidas sneakers. Unabashed adoration for a label seems ridiculous now but coming from this trio, it seemed so right. **Kings of Rock** is so much fun, that you wished your could have hung out with these guys. Interesting fact: while being one of the most clever rap outfits, these guys never used the F-word, not even once. That's true creativity.

Rev. Run and DMC finish each other's rhymes which is a signature move and the music features street talk without all the crudeness you have to watch out for these days. Run-DMC made the way for so many other artists because the energy from the music is invigorating and they made a bold statement about music and about society. Without Run-DMC who knows how long it would have been before artists like Chuck D could have found an audience.

I was curious about Public Enemy because everyone thought that Flavor Flav

was really something. If you don't know who Flavor Flav is by now then you must be living under a rock. Between the Surreal Life series on VH1 where he dates Bridget from that Rocky movie, and the TV show The Flavor of Love where he dates, well everyone, this sidekick is so overexposed its hilarious. I'm glad that Chuck D was the brains of the operation and he delivers something very special for Public Enemy's debut album **Yo! Bum Rush the Show** in 1987. (continued)

MUSIC







Once again Rick Rubin sits in as co-pilot and helped to shape this album at Def Jam Records. Right about now we are catching on that Rick Rubin has the magic touch! The format is similar to Run-DMC, but Chuck D kicks it up from street sound to dangerous with his aggressive rhymes. Public Enemy makes Run-DMC look like a lazy day in the park compared to Chuck's socially militant lyrics. On this album, Chuck put social consciousness on the map while Flavor Flav put screwball antics on the map for future rappers like Ol' Dirty Bastard from WuTang Clan. The music is even edgier with that rock and roll sound mixed with more sophisticated beats. Public Enemy No.1 is hard hitting and is a definite display of Chuck's momentum that blasted them into the

Dr. Dre has produced contemporary artists like Eminem so we forget he was in the group N.W.A. Becoming the gangster album to open the flood gates for all topics on the street, **Straight Outta Compton** came out in 1988 and the world would understand they were rappers from the ghetto that didn't care about anything but making money and getting some tail. (continued)

mainstream.



The album has a juvenile adolescence as they speak about not giving a damn, but that is its appeal in many respects. For the first time the public gets a real view of the everyday life in Compton for a bunch of thungs; from the drugs and whores, to the violence and police discrimination.

The title song *Straight Outta Compton* put the album on the map but songs like *I Ain't the One* and *A Bitch is a Bitch* really put Ice Cube out in front. I think that he has the most appeal with his rhymes and his voice, but the lyrics sometimes are a bit difficult for the ladies. Another unfortunate listening hazard is the fact that Eazy E died from AIDS which makes some of his sexual lyrics a little hard to stomach. You can't listen to gangster rap without a little nausea, can you?

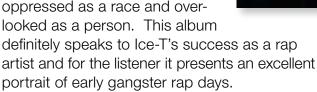
I always crack up when I see Ice-T on Law and Order playing a cop because when I was a kid, Ice-T was seen as the spawn of Satan himself for producing the song *Cop Killer*. Subconsciously I never purchased his albums due to the "the cop killer" story told by a friend. Little did I know that Ice-T is one of the most sophisticated and eloquently spoken rappers in the industry.

When listening to **O.G. Original Gangster** from 1991, you are on a metaphorical tour bus of South Central Los Angeles and you see it all.

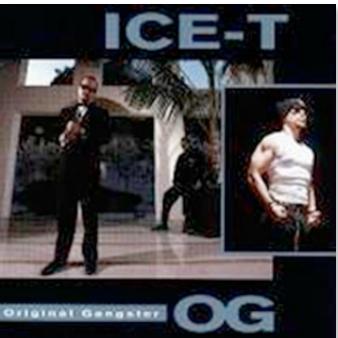
N.W.A. gave us a glimpse of the ghetto with graphic lyrics, but Ice-T talks about the mentality that is created in ghetto conditions. The shock is in the ideas of the song rather than just lyrical content. His lyrics are direct and in your face. He is tough and his rhymes are not as elementary as his predeces-

sors nor does he just rap about the decadence

of money. In the midst of this album is concern for the "economic prison" he refers to in Escape From the Killing Fields. He throws in his definite opinions on government and war on You Shoulda Killed Me Last Year which is startling and refreshing all at once. That being said, there was the success of New Jack Hustler which has a swanky seventies beat and tells the tale of Ice-T as a promising hustler making money and shinin' up the Benz. O.G. is a well rounded intriguing album that presents so many different views of growing up being oppressed as a race and over-



When Tupac Shakur, Notorious B.I.G and most recently Jam Master Jay were murdered, I understood how gangster rap went soft and now hip-hop artists search for positive methods to change point of view instead of the promise of violence. Our TV stars and reality celebrities may look a bit awkward at times (FlAvor FLAAAAAV) but the spectacles are a faint reminder that hip-hop began with a bad ass attitude, slick rhymes and an anxious audience waiting to learn.



Arrested Development

— Jerald O'Brien

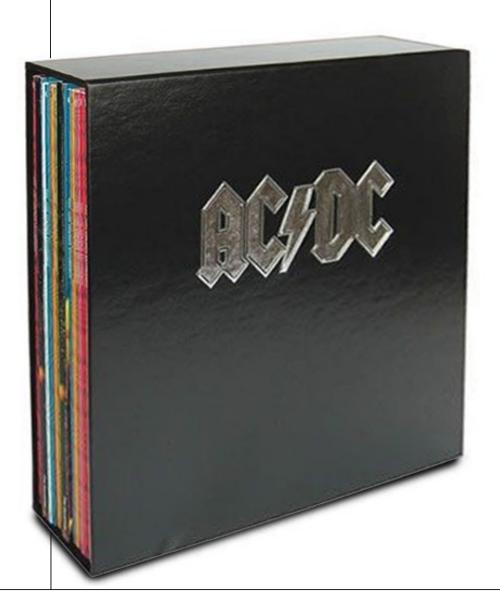
Just read an article in Esquire magazine the other day about the 50 things that men over 30 shouldn't do and while a lot of them were true (many very amusing) there's one thing that I hope all of you don't outgrow: **Your want to rock.** While my musical horizons have expanded tremendously since college days, there are still days when AC/DC and Led Zeppelin still just get the job done better than anything else, which leads to a couple of my choices for this issue.

Our new classical guy, Dan insists that even though he has almost 10 thousand classical LPs, he really likes to rock out, so I bet (and lost) that he couldn't give me two current rock CDs that impressed me. Featured here are a pair of CDs that should appeal to those who like to rock, old or young. And just for giggles, I have a really crappy surf album for you too. What have we learned here? Don't write the old dudes off, chances are they've been rocking out since you were just a couple of cells.

The AC/DC Box Set (LP) Epic

If you love AC/DC, chances are you either have really old worn out LPs or dreadful CDs from the '80s and '90s. Being the meticulous metalhead that I am, my original pressings of these records are perfect, so I was able to do a very scientific comparison of old and new versions and I did it over at our publisher's house on his new SME 10.

George Marino at Sterling Sound remastered these and did a fantastic job! Don't do what I did and buy a couple to see if you like them first, just buy the whole box and get it over with. (continued)





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And don't keep em in the shrinkwrap either, these all beg to be played. Granted, some of AC/ DC's later work got a bit derivative, but it's always a cool thing to have the full collection of an artists work. And let's face it, you'll never get to find every Shostakovich album on the Earth, but you CAN have all 15 AC/DC albums in one tidy box set.

Extended listening on the big system revealed significantly more air, bloom and weight, however they still sound a bit compressed. Those of you with average systems will be in pig heaven, because most of all these records are all pressed on new, quiet 180gram vinyl! Compared to the original first pressings, these are still a lot better. The early records are somewhat close tonally, but have a lot more noise. while the later records are quieter, yet much more compressed. Overall, the box is outstanding and the only exception to the rule is a Japanese pressing of For Those About to Rock; it smokes the original domestic and the remaster.

Snow Patrol – Eyes Open (CD) A&M

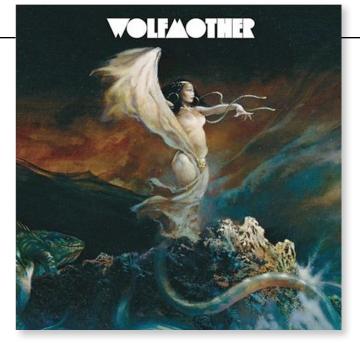
Quick, who's your favorite band from Ireland? U2, nope. Del Amitri, getting warmer, but still nope. Snow Patrol! That's right and a little fashion forward to boot. Actually, I feel really stupid NOT knowing about this band, considering that they've been around since 1999, but I can't know everything.

This one was one of Dan's picks and I really enjoyed it. I looked at their very elaborate website which tells me that these guys are big stuff now and I suggest you go there for some Snow Patrol trivia and a complete discography. Turns out these guys have backed up U2 on tour and their first album is called **Songs for Polarbears**.

The CD sounds pretty good and is nowhere near as compressed as some current releases are, so that's a plus. How would I describe their groove? 50% fresh ingredients, 40% Del Amitri, 8% Jet and perhaps a pinch of Matchbox 20 thrown in just to round out the mixture.

I know I'll buy the rest of their CDs. Check it out if you haven't heard about these guys. My friendly local record merchant (Music Millennium in Portland, Oregon) even threw in a free concert DVD, **Live at the Opera House** with five cuts that were filmed in Toronto!





Wolfmother - Wolfmother (CD)

In the best tradition of Australian bands. we have Wolfmother. Produced by the same guys that produced Jet, there does seem to be a bit of a resemblance, at least in the marketing approach. Granted, this CD rocks enough for me to lose the bet, however on further reflection, I'm still on the fence. It all seems just a bit calculated to me. (Get your Wolfmother tote bag before they are gone!!) The PR is just a little bit too slick and whoever wrote the website did too much name dropping for me. As if I give a crap that their music videos were filmed on the soundstage as Star Trek The Next Generation. But hey, guys who like the '70s as much as I do can't be all bad.

Until I get to see these guys live, I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. Their website compares them to Led Zeppelin, Soundgarden and Jet (who is also compared to Led Zeppelin and AC/DC, so it all becomes somewhat inbred after a while).

Regardless of all the BS, this band does really rock and after a few listens, I swear I'm hearing some Mott the Hoople and a little bit of TRex in there somewhere, so at least these guys are copying from the best. Going to have to get my hands on the current release on vinyl. If you like heavy music, I think you will enjoy this one.

Led Zeppelin – Led Zeppelin III

(LP) Classic Records

Most of you know everything there is to know about this record, so no need for me to restate the obvious. While I don't have original pressings of all the Zep albums, I have pretty early ones, and the Classic remasters are WAY better, in addition to being really quiet.

As intriguing as that cool 44 record Zep box set is, you can't get one because they are totally sold out, and the few people that have them want something in the neighborhood of two grand on Ebay. If you aren't a Zeppelin maniac and just have a few favorite albums, you are in good luck. Classic Records has almost all of these records still available individually, so you can get the four or five you want for \$33 a pop and call it a day. Classic should also be commended for doing such a great job at reproducing the artwork here, right down to the spinning disc inside the front cover. Very cool!







The Phantom Surfers – 18 Deadly Ones (LP) Norton Records

Now out of print, this is where it all began for this infamous band from San Francisco. Why would I buy a record with a bunch of goons wearing khakis and black masks? Our music editor Norwood Brown, is an old surfer and I was feeling nostalgic. Besides, how much could it suck for three dollars?

Trust me, you can still buy a really lousy record for three dollars. But it grew on me after a few spins and it was worth the money just to watch our man Norwood laugh so hard he snorted a whole bunch of beer out of his nose! It's the small pleasures, I tell you.

Sounding very much like it was recorded on the Radio Shack cassette recorder I had in eighth grade, the good news is you will not be worried about VTA settings when listening to this one. A quick check on the web revealed that these guys actually made records for quite a while, though I don't think I'll be searching out any more of them.

If I had to summarize, The Phantom Surfers sound like a mix between the Ventures on Quaaludes and The Munsters.



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IF THIS IS A WASTELAND, THEN I WANT TO GET WASTED

"YES, I'VE BEEN TO WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL!"

And I plan to go again! As a matter of fact I'm scheduled to attend a concert on September 29 with Esa-Pekka Salonen at the helm conducting Mahler's Third. This is a gigantic work and will feature Michelle DeYoung singing Mezzo, with the Women of the Pacific Chorale; John Alexander, artistic director and the Los Angeles Children's Chorus; Anne Tomlinson, artist director. If I were rich I'd take you all with me to this

concert as this grand symphony defines all that is great about Mahler: his devotion to nature and his innocent, almost child-like approach to music and life. It will be spectacular!

Several years ago one of my friends from the East coast came to visit me in Los Angeles. She had played with several major orchestras and always had an opinion on the "classical music scene"!? This was pre-Esa-Pekka Salonen and pre-Disney Hall. (continued)

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"Los Angeles is a cultural wasteland," she proclaimed. "People in Southern California just don't get it like we do on the East Coast," she went on dismally. At that time I had heard about the possibility of the LA Philharmonic getting Esa-Pekka as a full time boss! So, I placed a small wager with this so-called authority of the classical realm: I bet a great bottle of red wine and concert tickets to the event of my choice. I bet that the Los Angeles would again be a major force in the world of classical music just as it had under several other brilliant conductors in the past. Needless to say the wine was superb and she finally fulfilled the second part of the bet and provided me with tickets to the up-coming Mahler Third.

Words cannot express how grateful I am to Mr. Salonen, the LA Philharmonic and everyone involved in getting Disney Concert Hall alive and well! Rivaling, and in some cases exceeding the acoustics of many major concert halls in America and abroad, Disney Hall is a must for anyone who enjoys music – PERIOD!! BRAVO!

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Well, not really all that different, but we did get through the "Bs" last issue and I promise to make some giant leaps as we proceed through the alphabet of the hundred or so influential composers of Classical music. (continued)

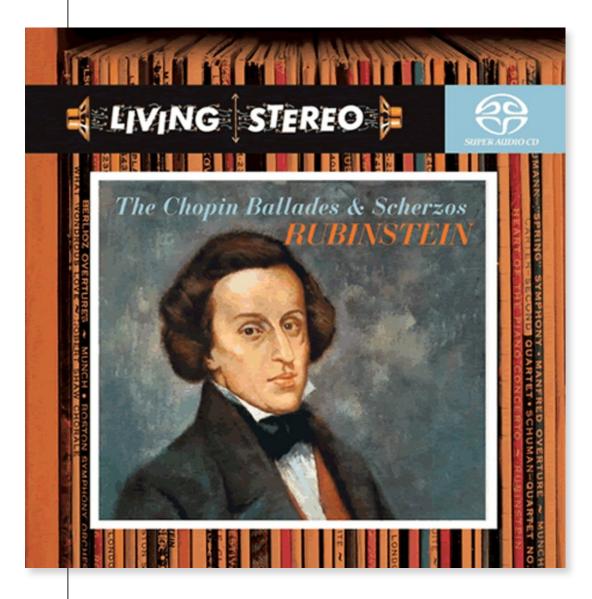
You do not have to travel to California to enjoy classical music and as matter of fact it can be just as rewarding in a small venue. For instance, while not exactly classical, I did manage to catch Eric Bibb at the San Juan Capistrano Library and the show was fantastic. Classic gospel and soulful blues sung by a baritone angel. Just Eric and his Scottish-made guitar: beautiful tonality, texture and the best right hand I've seen in years. You have to get out and see it live to really appreciate this gift from God - music. Eric Bibb sang: "We are all walking to heaven" and I say we should listen to music and enjoy the journey.

Due to popular demand, we are going to change the format of this column, ever so slightly. From now on, I will list my favorites for each composer right after the description so it will make your record or CD purchasing easier! I was easy on you the first time around as we "Buzzed through the Bs". I listed very easy to find CDs that could be located anywhere in the world.

In this installment I'd like to click it up a notch and include some LPs for those of you out there with analog rigs. Please note that I won't select some \$300 "Hot Stamper" that may very well be impossible to find. And I encourage you to check out you local used record dealer because in this game you never know what you might turn up!

Ultimately the key here is the music no matter what the source, so get out and uncover some gems of your own!

The first composer that I'm going to discuss spent plenty of time in small venues basically redefining piano music forever:



FREDERIC CHOPIN: with mazurkas, nocturnes, polonaises, preludes, sonatas, waltzes and many other forms for solo piano Chopin became a national hero of Poland and brought the piano once and for all into the forefront of classical music. Chopin's music is an exercise in extreme tempo and subtle energy. This grip on the music is unmistakable and really does capture the flavor of his native country. Although Chopin studied abroad, notably in Paris, he never let go of the rhythmic excitement of his roots and created an atmosphere forceful yet sometimes withdrawn. *(continued)*

"I'm a Believer."

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Robert Silverman

Classical Pianist / Stereophile Recording Artist / Tetra Believer



There is great emotion in Chopin's music from the rambunctious Polonaise in A flat major, Opus 53 – *The Heroic* all the way to Sonata number 2 in B flat minor, Opus 35 – *The Funeral March*, Chopin is able to captivate us with his many changes in tempo and mood.

Everyone knows his work for solo piano but do not be afraid to check out his two concertos for piano as well as his Opus 13: Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra in A major on Polish Airs.

Dan's Favorites: Selecting the many works of Chopin has been made very easy as there are many fine compilations of work... And everyone has their favorite performer from Vladimir Askenazy to Krystian Zimerman. The historic classic performance for Chopin is the RCA Victor Living Stereo Cat.#61396 with Artur Rubinstein playing the ballades and scherzos. This disc is a real deal in the SACD format and yes you can play it on your standard red book CD player with nice results. From here it's pretty much pick your poison as there are an amazing amount of keyboard "hotshots" laying down this incredibly complex but beautiful music. For another historic source pick up EMI's Cat#: 67549 with Maurizio Pollini performing the nocturnes, a ballade, a polonaise and the 1st concerto. For something a little more modern try also on EMI Cat.# 45620 with Polish-Hungarian born Piotr Anderszewski playing mazurkas, ballades and polonaise to the highest degree. (continued)

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AARON COPELAND: No other American composer living or deceased has been more influential in what we now consider the "American sound of classical music" than Aaron Copeland. If you can explain to me how this little gentle giant of a man could single handedly capture the sound of our manifest destiny, this brave new world that was beaming with raw enthusiasm and vigor, I'll buy you concert tickets to the LA Philharmonic! (come on readers, take him up on the challenge! –ed.)

Aaron Copland

music for piano
Passacaglia
Variations
Sonata
Fantasy

Raymond Clarke

Copeland, along with Leonard Bernstein spoke to America and the rest of the world about the music of America. From Appalachian Spring to Billy the Kid Copeland transformed the melting pot of American music that encompassed folk, jazz, blues & Latin music into one sound or genre. The simple power of Fanfare for the Common Man coupled with the dancehall crazed sound of El Salon Mexico beautifully illustrates Copeland's ability to get it just

right. Listen to the solo trumpet in *Quiet City* early in the morning or late at night and feel the calm of a world that finally gets to rest.

He was incredibly prolific writing in many styles that included an opera, a variety of chamber music, symphonies, chorales, a killer concerto for clarinet, film music and even some remarkable piano music – notably a sonata and a fantasy. I cannot stress the fact that without Aaron Copeland, the American sound would be sadly lacking.

Dan's Favorites: The world really is a great place simply because you can find a great deal of amazing classical music recordings and all you have to do is fire up your computer, get on the net and order on up. This is definitely the case with the music of Aaron Copeland, with historic recording where Copeland himself conducts his own work; try the Sony Classics DSD recording of many of his works that includes the magnificent baritone of William Warfield singing Old American Songs. With Copeland's good friend Leonard Bernstein at the baton you get a stunning performance of Appalachian Spring, the two ballets that Lenny and the New York Phil get to dance on their own and a powerful Fanfare. Catalog # here is 63082 on Sony Classics.

I see that our friends at Sony also offer an SACD version of one of my favorite Copeland LPs the disc Cat# 87327 with Bernstein again. This one includes El Salon Mexico. For a more modern approach pick up the Telarc Cat.# 80339 with Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pop. This one includes Quite City - what a great recording!! And last but not least, on a rather small label – Divine Art we have a rare gem with a great assortment of Copeland's piano music that will surprise you. Catalog # 25016 with Raymond Clarke at the piano shows the dark almost existential side of Copeland with jagged cliffs for a sonata and powerful percussive notes that send me to heaven. I like Pierre Boulez piano music a lot but the tension and foggy atmosphere that Copeland creates in his Fantasy blows me away. And Raymond Clarke should be highly commended on a spectacular performance! (continued)



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CLAUDE DEBUSSY: Debussy was to modern classical music what Michael Schumacher is to formula one racing: intense, reserved, incredibly well prepared and always a winner. There was some strange potion in the wine that was consumed in France at the beginning of the 20th century and from this exotic substance came Impressionism in both painting and music. Neither Debussy nor Ravel ever admitted to falling under the spell of impressionism but it is apparent that this new form of expression had some impact on their work. Tracing the steps historically through Debussy's work we see an atmosphere that is subtle on the outside but incredibly complex inside.

Once we begin to realize just how revolutionary Debussy's music was in his day, we begin to understand exactly how hard he had to toil to bring his brilliance to life. Listen to an early work like Marche ecossaise sur theme populaire. A few years later came one of his most famous pieces: Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune or Afternoon of the summer fawn. It is this natural atmosphere that Debussy creates that sets the hook in our psyche.

You never see it coming and then BAM! you transcend into this dreamy world full of texture and grace. **Debussy is no wimp, feel the power of the sea in his La mer** or the reassured elegance in his three Nocturnes, that paint three distinctively different pictures of the night from a roaring party to the serene calm of the night sky. Debussy has always had a great effect on me for mood and tranquility and it all seems to flow so easy. (continued)

For excitement, take a festive trip to Spain, specifically *Iberia* with his Images for Orchestra #2. Debussy was very innovative; just listen to *Jeux* or *Games*. His rhythms and texture are unequalled even today.

How about a Rhapsodie for Saxophone, which was unheard of in those days just to wind things up? Jazz traveled quickly across the pond and Debussy and Ravel ate it up like fine French

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

n Sonata - Cello Sonata - Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp - Syrinx for Flute solo

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brie. Chopin brought solo piano to the forefront and Debussy championed the cause with many fine pieces. From the "Preludes" all the way through to the "Etudes" Debussy carved out a huge number of technical masterpieces. Just get behind the piano and start to read the language of a true genius; he even wrote one for my kids - Children's Corner.

Dan's Favorites:

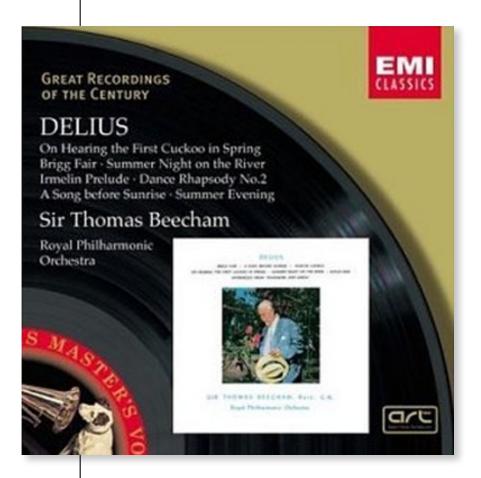
For some reason I like Debussy recordings that were conducted by

French conductors. Ansermet, Boulez, Founet, Froment, Martinon, Monteux or Munch (who was born in Strasbourg, Alsace-Lorraine and sat on the fence between France and Germany in both temperament as well as his approach to music). Also an occasional Andre Previn, Bernard Haitink or even Leonard Bernstein works well now and then. The Supraphon release, Cat# 3421 with Fournet and the Czech Philharmonic is a fantastic performance with almost all of the energy, tonality and vigor of some of the above mentioned French conductors.

The quick picks to get started are Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland giving all they have to bring you the *3 Nocturnes, La Me, Jeux*, and the clarinet rhapsodie. Talk about a desert island classic! The second choice is a re-release of the Angel LP box set, cleaned up a bit and ready for action; on Brilliant Classics Cat. #92765. This 4 disc CD set will give you plenty to listen to and then it's up to you where to go next, as there are many, many readings and performances of Debussy on CD. The EMI Classics, Cat. # 67313 with Stokowski is another good starting point with a very top notch performance by the London Symphony Orchestra.

Then there is the piano music, chamber music, operas, and chorale music. For the piano music there are many good choices. One of my old stand-bys is an LP of Charles Rosen's work on Epic. I also admit a weakness for two Frenchman and one crazy Italian. I have some of Francois Samson's original mono recordings of both Debussy and Ravel. These recordings for me are still benchmark performances. Don't forget Pascal Roge who always seems to capture the thick atmosphere of Debussy's piano music. One tidy little box set on CD, Cat. # 443021 on London gives you Roge at his best, and it's a bargain to boot.

Last but not least we have one of my all time favorite pianists – Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and in this case playing the Children's Corner. I played the grooves off several copies of the LP on DG and the CD is still a great performance, Cat. #415372. For a more modern recording pick up the Complete Piano Music on ARTS MUSIC, Cat. #47840 with Jean-Pierre Armengard. For the chamber music check out a wonderful collection on Dg Panorama, Cat. #469130 with an amazing group of performers and conductors. Finally, you simply must purchase the Quartteto Italiano performing a revolutionary quartet - Debussy's Quartet for Strings in G Minor, Opus 10. Catalog number here is 464360 on Msi Music. The original LP of this performance raised the bar for me forever. (continued)



FREDERICK DELIUS: Who would ever believe that this grumpy old man could write some of the beautiful music ever composed? Many times referred as the "English Debussy", Delius painted some amazing atmospheres with his music. He even lived in America for a time and wrote a very innovative suite. It seems his father was quite well off and sent Delius to sunny Florida to manage one of his orange plantations. While I'm not sure how hard he worked the orange crop, Delius was taken in by the music of the workers, mostly African, and he inserts some of these rhythms and syncopations into the Florida Suite.

Delius is known for his rich textures and neverending air like in pieces like *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* or *Walk to the Paradise Garden*.

As their titles imply, Delius was into the outdoors, specifically an English garden, and no one creates this environment better than he. Because I have enjoyed the Northern Counties of England, specifically the Yorkshire Dales, I really like the **North Country Sketches**.

Delius was very prolific and lived a long life. He supposedly was very mean to his family and extremely bitter as he became long in the tooth. But you'd never know it listening to the romantic atmospheres that he has left for us to enjoy!

Dan's Favorites: The good news here is that Delius wrote a great deal of music in his long life and the record companies have made it easy for us by offering great collections of these fine works. My first pick features Sir Thomas Beecham on EMI, Cat. #67553 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In these recordings, Beecham really gets right to the soul of Delius and the RPO certainly takes his lead to put us all with nature. Andrew Davis and the BBC on Apex, Cat. #89084 nails Delius' tribute to Paris as well as other favorites. One last suggestion is to find a copy of Sir John Barbirolli and the London Symphony recorded at either Kingsway Hall or good old Abbey Road studios. EMI Cat. #65119 features all the goodies from Delius. You cannot go wrong here! (continued)



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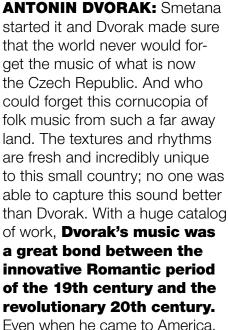
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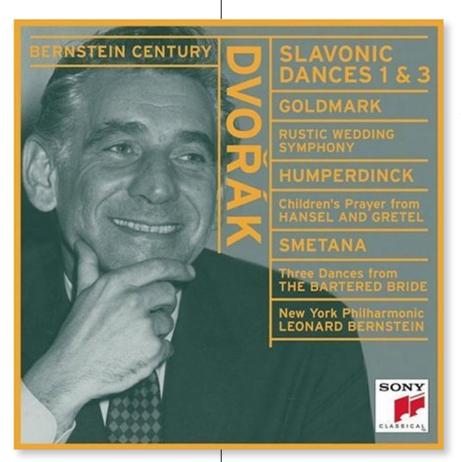
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Even when he came to America, Dvorak got the root of his compositions from the commoners, the people that worked the land and the folk music that they played.

Johannes Brahms had a big part in getting Dvorak established and respected in the musical community of his day. Dvorak greatly admired Liszt and Wagner and was equal in his musical innovation, power and style. From his Opus 55: no. 4, Als die alte Mutter or Songs my mother taught me to Opus 92 the Carnival Overture we hear Dvorak's bohemian roots. I especially like the 7th & 8th symphonies for their raw authority offset by nature. We hear a bird chirp as a grand forest engulfs us.

Like Delius, Dvorak visited
America and the result of this sojourn was very obvious in his 9th
symphony where again he drew
his inspiration from folk music.
This time it was American folk
music and it really stands out. In
the second movement of the 9th
Dvorak directs us inward to reflect
on our lives and few do it better.
(continued)



He closes down this monumental work with this sound of the *New World* and it is very powerful. There's just plain fun with his many Slavonic Dances as well as his *Humoreque* in F sharp major. – Bohemian piano at its finest.

In his life Dvorak wrote operas, choral music, concertos for cello, piano & violin, piano music, a series of symphonic poems, extensive chamber music, nine symphonies and even organ music all with his distinctive Bohemian flair.

To me Dvorak has always been underrated, much like Arnold Bax, we are only now realizing just how brilliantly prolific this humble man from Czechoslovakia really was!

Dan's Favorites: "Where to start?" is the burning question when it comes to Dvorak, as there are many unbelievable performances of this utter genius from Bohemia. One simple beginning is to pick up a copy of Vaclav Neumann and the Czech Phil on Supraphon performing the symphonies 7, 8 &9. These are powerful examples of just how good it can get as Newmann and the Czech Philharmonic breath incredible life and energy into this extraordinary music. The Czech woodwind sections create their own air and these performances will be hard to beat. I also like some of Kertesz and most all of George Szell's Dvorak symphonies, especially on vinyl.

But don't forget the symphonic poems, the *Slavonic Dances*, the *Serenade for Strings*, the

concertos, the quartets and finally the overtures. Does anyone her want to go to a carnival? Start out slow get yourself a copy of the Talich Quartet performing the American string guartet and Opus 97, Quintet in E flat major on Calliope, Cat. #9331. Now you'll feel the structure of a true innovator – inert energy, beautiful tonality and melody upon melody from a gorgeous old world. Jump into the fire with Dvorak's music for cello. I like the Supraphon, Cat. #1467 with Jira Barta playing cello accompanied by Jan Cech on piano. How about Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic on EMI, Cat. #58019 performing four symphonic poems? This is the music of fairy tales where goblins and witches roam the land. The Szell CD to get is on Sony, Cat. #63151 and contains the last three symphonies, a rousing Carnival Overture and a few Smetana pieces for good measure. Enjoy!

EDWARD ELGAR: If Elgar had cut himself shaving he would have bled the green blood of his beloved England. No one composer exemplified a love for the Emerald Isle more than Elgar. He loved all things English; the King and Queen, the pomp and circumstance of military ceremonials and the Worcestershire countryside. Edward Elgar was the savior of English symphonic music as England had previously been dismissed by many critics at the time for their inherent lack of serious symphonic music. Yes, Vaughan Williams, Britten, Walton and my buddy Arnold Bax aided the cause. But it is the structure of Elgar's two symphonies that puts the English symphony firmly on the map forever!

The performances in the day were ostentatious affairs with every influential dignitary present. Elgar apparently had two distinct personalities; the outgoing powerful master of the English symphony and then the introvert who was riddled with dark depression and self doubt. But the breadth of his work was magnificent and even fun at times. *(continued)*

His Opus 36, Variations on an Original Theme or Enigma was composed one night while sitting at the piano. In this piece, Elgar uses music to laughingly paint a picture of his many close friends and ends with a theme tying all of these fine people together into one great kindred spirit. And his Cockaigne Overture illustrates his kindred spirit for his favorite city London. Visit-

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ing a park where lovers embrace and a simple band is playing and then, much like the two sided spirit of Elgar, we are sent into a English church to reflect and hear the power and majesty of an organ as we celebrate this love of a great city. Do me a favor and check out the Romance for Bassoon as well as Edgar's Concertos for piano, violin, and cello. You will not be disappointed!

Dan's Favorites: Let's shift gears

and focus on the grand master of English classic music. At a time when the critics of the day thought there was no hope for English symphonic music, Elgar smashed down this enigma forever with his two symphonies and diverse offering of English orchestral music, chamber music, and song. Everyone knows by now how much I like Andre Previn's work as a conductor. The Philips CD set, Cat. #454250 is a great place to begin with Elgar's the two symphonies, the five *Pomp and Circumstance* marches and Opus 40, the Cockaigne Overture, *In London*

Town. Now that you're in the mood for something noble and stately check out Elgar's Concerto for Violin in B minor, Opus 61. For this one I like Nigel Kennedy, Vernon Handley and the London Philharmonic, Cat. # 45793. This disc also contains wonderful reading of Opus 47, Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet and String Orchestra.

Next we have all of the chamber music and it is extensive. Okay wise guy, let's see you play Opus 22, (6) Very Easy Melodious **Exercises in the First Position for Violin** and Piano. Kennedy and Peter Pettinger make it sound easy on his Chandos release catalog #8380. There's other challenging, but very satisfying work on this disc as well! You can hear Nigel Kennedy's teacher play opus 61 as Yehudi Menuhin absolutely consumes this score and even impresses the master himself as Elgar conducts the Violin Concerto and the Enigma Variations. This historic mono recording can be found on EMI, cat. #66994. And by contrast, check out the DVD on the Bbc/Opus Arte label, cat. #917, that's right a video presentation in documentary form. Here Sir Andrew Davis helps us take the enigma out the Enigma Variations and does an exemplary job of interpreting the music and life of Sir Edward, a true English hero!

I'll report back to you next issue on my excursion to Walt Disney Concert Hall to hear Mahler 3. Incidentally, our publisher occasionally comes up with wild and crazy ideas. Perhaps he might care to place a wager with me on some controversial topic? Maybe a bet involving free concert tickets to Disney Hall might be appropriate? (no way, I always lose bets with this guy – JD)

That should be enough to keep you busy buying records and CDs until we meet again, enjoy! ●

Audiophile Pressings

— Jeff Dorgay

We have a pretty wide range of stuff this issue. From Los Lobos to some great jazz and Megadeth thrown in just to mix things up! Watch for a future article when we explore the mono cartridge option; it really helps the presentation tremendously. Thanks to my new mono setup, all of the albums from Classic were enjoyed in their full glory!

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Megadeth - Countdown to Extinction MOFI 24kt gold CD

Really, Mr. O'Brien should be reviewing this one, but he was out of town when the MoFi box arrived, so I jumped on it right away, as I too enjoy this band. Actually, when it really gets down to brass tacks, he's more of a Metallica fan and I prefer Megadeth.

First, I have to congratulate Mr. Shawn Britton at MoFi for doing such a great job on this CD and to MoFi themselves for having the guts and the sense of humor to produce this in the first place. If this isn't 180 degrees out of phase with Patricia Barber, nothing is.

Originally released in 1992, many fans argue that this record was the pinnacle of Megadeth's collective output. For me, it was a really kick ass album that was over compressed and poorly mastered. Not any more! If you are truly a lover of metal, this is your cup of tea. Now you can hear all those layered screaming guitars the way they were meant to be heard!

Reading the liner notes, it sounds like Dave Mustaine really had a great time working on this project, so I hope that we might see more of this kind of thing from MoFi in the future.

If you dig this kind of music, buy this one before it's gone, you won't regret it! *(continued)*



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Patti Smith – Horses (Speaker's Corner LP)

I always get funny looks at CES when someone wants to put a nice female vocal on. They are usually thinking of Patricia Barber or Diana Krall and I'm thinking Chrissy Hynde or Patti Smith.

As much as I love The Pretenders, it really was Patti Smith who broke the ground for all of the kick-ass female rockers to come after her. While many considered her music punk rock at first, Patti Smith was always much more profound than the punks for my money.

My original pressing of this on Arista is in good shape, yet pretty awful sounding, so this re-release on Speaker's Corner is a real treat. Whether you are discovering Patti Smith for the first time, or you are an old fan back to reminisce, this one is a MUST BUY for your collection. (continued)

Kenny Burrell - Midnight Blue

Classic Records LP (stereo)

I have to be straight with you, I'm really a rock & roll guy, but there are certain people in the world of jazz that I could listen to for days, and Kenny Burrell is one of them. Though the liner notes mention that this record has more of a bluesy groove, the production on this is very sparse and another Blue Note with Rudy Van Gelder at the helm.

Granted, not being a jazz connoisseur, I don't know the nuances of some of these performances, compared to others as well as the jazz nerds do, but I love listening to this record. The guys at Classic did a fantastic job on this and the high end is nice and smooth. Thanks to the 200g Quiex SV-P pressing, it's also nice and quiet! One quick cleaning before play and it was a wonderful experience. If you are a mono fanatic, this one is also available in Mono at the same price.

Off the topic of the music for a second, here's a bit of trivia that you might have not known: at the end of the Blue Note period, graphic designer Reid Miles moved to California and started a new career in the '70s as a studio photographer and shot a lot of famous, elaborately produced covers, including **Chicago's Greatest Hits** and Cheap Trick's **Dream Police**, to name a few. He also shot a series of really cool ads for Kawasaki Motorcycles in the early '70s.





Los Lobos - Good Morning Aztlan (MoFi LP)

I couldn't agree with Michael Fremer more; one of the reasons I like records so much is that you can hold the artwork in your hands and check out the photos. It just feels so much more like art than a CD, no matter how cool the packaging. Even before you take a listen, just take a couple of minutes and check out the pictures and read the liner notes on **Good Morning Aztlan**, I guarantee you will enjoy it.

Los Lobos is a band that I never got warm and fuzzy with until I saw them live in the summer of '99, opening for John Hiatt. These guys are fantastic musicians live as well as in the studio.

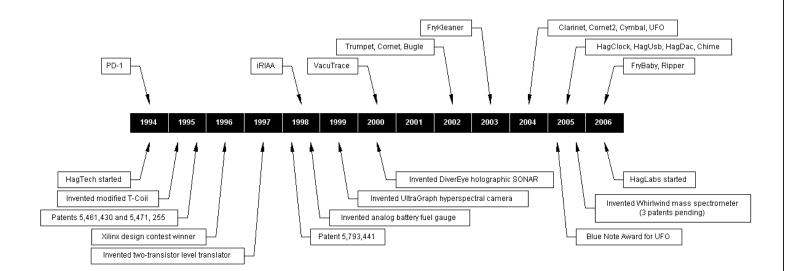
This record has a gutsy, powerful tone right from the first track. The whole album is exquisitely produced by John Leckie and again those liner notes talk about "a lot of tube microphones being used in the process."

What I enjoy the most about Los Lobos (now that I'm a fan) is that their records really mix it up stylistically and are texturally very dense. There's a lot of music happening here! The other thing I appreciate about this band is that to me, they really don't sound like anyone else and that's the highest compliment I can pay any band. The SACD is quite good, but the LP reviewed here gets my nod. (continued)

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The Amazing Bud Powell Vol. 3

- Classic Records LP (mono)

I'll keep harping on you, get your hands on a mono cartridge and slap it on even a reasonable turntable and you will be thrilled at how much better these mono albums sound! We'll get more technical on it at a later date, but what you really get with a mono cartridge is the weight of the presentation that you just don't get using a stereo cartridge.

If you could find the original mono pressing of this in pristine shape, it would truly be a museum piece and priced accordingly. Thanks to the folks at Classic Records, this is as close as you can get to owning those records and they are on nice, clean surfaces.

While the Jazz sophistos might tell you that Bud's best work was pre-1954, he still sounds pretty amazing on this album to me. Classical editor Dan says that Powell was one of the best Jazz pianists, period.

So, put this one on your short list and enjoy it. But remember, if you procure a mono cartridge, it will be a much more amazing experience! (continued)



Gerry Mulligan & Scott Hamilton – Soft Lights, Sweet Music (MoFi LP)

Read issue four for the full review, but suffice to say the most magic is in the LP on this release. Now you might think I'm just a little bit crazy for having this in both digital and analog formats, but considering I have about nine different copies of **Dark Side of the Moon**, this is nothing! Even if you have the SACD, if you own a turntable, you owe it to yourself to get the viny!!!





Bob Dylan – **Modern Times** (Columbia LP)

While we are on the subject of people that are old, yet still rock; the discussion wouldn't be complete without mentioning Bob Dylan. I'm a peripheral Dylan fan, someone who doesn't own every single record. There are a handful of Dylan records that I really treasure (and a number that I think really suck) and **Modern Times** definitely falls into the treasure category.

Mastered by Greg Calbi at Sterling, the CD is not bad, but the LP really has the warmth that we analog people really love. Following in the tradition of recent new vinyl, this one comes as a 2 LP set, so there aren't more than three songs on a side, adding to the fat sound.

This is one of those rare records where I felt every track was quite good. Some of it has an almost Randy Newman mixed with Tom Waits kind of groove, but it is definitely Dylan through and through. As much as I'd like to get profound and lay on the music reviewer clichés, I just wonder who Bob Dylan was talking to when he was writing these songs in his head. lacksquare

Current Classical

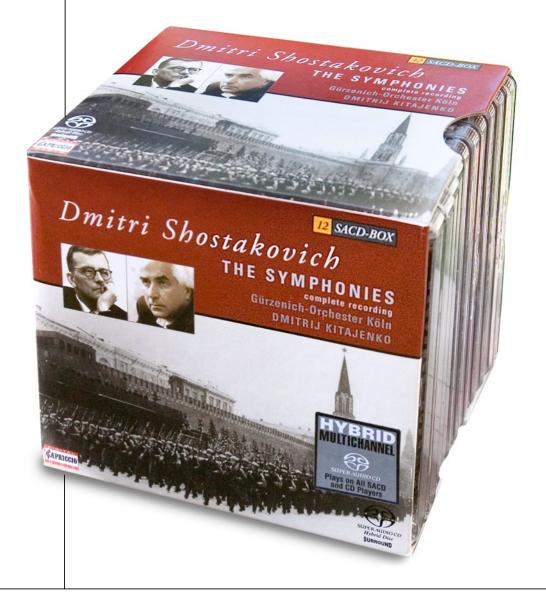
— Dan Babineau

Being a Shostakovich fanatic is not exactly cost effective. You have to travel extensively to catch live performances taking place in many exotic locations around the world. (And I used to make trips to Europe just to see this music performed) Next you have to visit used record stores and search the internet to locate NOS (new old stock) recordings that are historic masterpieces. Prices on these museum pieces have gone out of control thanks to a lot of factors but mostly supply and demand. Finally, you have to purchase as many of the new Shostakovich recordings as possible and compare them to these NOS benchmarks.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONIES 1-5

Gurzench – Orchestra Köln Dmitrij Kitajenko, Conductor Capriccio Digital: DDD

While there are plenty of new recordings out there but the new 10 disc box set from the Germany company Capriccio is really special. The set retails for \$150 and at \$15 a disc will satisfy even the stodgiest Shostakovich fan in a cost effective manner. Capriccio managed to get one incredible Russian conductor, another Dmitrij, but in this case Dmitrij Kitajenko and one incredible orchestra, the Gurzenich – Orchestra Köln to record all of Shostakovich's symphonies 1-15. (continued)



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- TAS #131: The Mangers (ZeroBox 109) otherwise were outstanding, even stunning. Their coherence is total. Almost no other speaker comes close in this regard. The Mangers also have extraordinary clarity, transparency & resolution. Instruments such as the banjo, which have distinctive, emphatic initial transients, had extraordinary lifelike character."



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The performances are some of the best readings that I've heard since Maxim stepped up on the podium and the recording and sonics will give your hifi rig a swift kick in the behind. Recorded in Köln at Studio Stolberger StraBe, these SACD surround CDs can also be played on the SACD stereo and conventional redbook CD machines. Bill and Lew at Conrad-Johnson hooked me up with their latest UDP-1 multiplayer so I was set for one powerful ride.

Yes, I played ALL ten discs and it was an absolute pleasure. Kitajenko and the Gurzenich Orchestra's presentation of these forceful symphonies was spot on across the board. Start out by listening to disc number 10 which just happens to be the 10th Symphony in E minor, Opus 93. From the first notes it becomes obvious that the bass section of the Gurzenich will easily handle the backbone of these extravagant pieces. **The** inner detail of the strings is extraordinary and then the all too important woodwind section that Shostakovich always relies on, lifts us up out of hell and brings light to apparent doom! Play the first movement of the tenth and get ready to explode. Send your spouse and kids out for ice cream, grab your remote tight and feel the dark passion and power of the Beethoven of the 20th century!

My personal favorites are the 1st, 5th, 6th, 9th 10th 13th &15th. (continued) But these symphonies are always my favorites. Yes, I like the 8th but only when I'm really angry at someone. And quite frankly the seventh sounds a little simple for my taste, perhaps a little too pseudo "Nationalistic"? The sound quality of all of these CDs is superb. Accurate tonality, fine inner detail, dead nuts quiet and beyond dynamic. There are also a variety of historic black and white photographs displayed along with liner notes for each performance on each CD case. Some of the photos send shivers down my spine almost as much as these stalwart performances. Please patronize these fine musicians, Maestro Kitajenko and all of the people at Capriccio that were involved in producing this landmark effort!

And don't forget, this month we true believers celebrate the 100th birthday of Dmitri Shostakovich! Pay your tribute in whatever way you see fit...

ED. NOTE: Dmitri fans, rejoice; this box set is available at CD Universe for \$97! www.cduniverse.com

"Better than a James Bond movie"

SPEAKERS CORNER'S RE-RELEASE OF MERCURY LIVING PRESENCE: RUSSIAN RECORDINGS



Back in the day when curtains were made out of iron and wars were cold it was next to impossible to enter Communist Russia without the aid an authentic version of James Bond. Impossible unless you are a team of five determined associates from the Mercury Record Company and Fine Recording Inc. with a mission. Their impossible mission was to travel to the Soviet Union and record some of the finest Russian classical music available. The story behind this amazing feat reads like a James Bond thriller as this team from Mercury Living Presence beat all the odds that politics and economics could throw at them. The result of their efforts has successfully brought the some of the most legendary recordings of Russian music ever made! (continued)



The Mercury recording team employed revolutionary three channel recording techniques and used 35mm magnetic film made specifically for audio recording.

These diverse, magnificent recordings were released by Mercury in 1962 and were immediately embraced by music lovers around the world. I have some of the originals and still use them as the gold standard for performance and sound. I admit I've always had a partiality for Mercury recordings. Mercury's diverse catalog of amazing performances, packed with gorgeous tonality, raw energy and inner bloom has kept me up way past the wee hours of morning, with one caveat: they could sometimes be a tad noisy. More recently there is this other little obstacle called the "TAS/HP list" that nicely helps used record dealers inflate the price of these beauties. I realize that TAS and HP have only the best intentions with their list and God knows I agree almost whole heartedly with the TAS list favorites. But what a dent it has put in my pocketbook!

Up until now, that is! You see, the very fine people at Speakers Corner have assembled a "revolution in a box". Yup, five incredible LPs with an encore to boot all collected in a tidy wooden box at a cost of \$150USD.

That equates to \$30 a record and will automatically bring your record collection and your soul to a new high! All four piano concertos provide benchmarks in performance and sound much guieter than my originals. Being a Shostakovich freak, I had to play the grooves out of the quartets that are not stringing or bright as they sometimes can be with re-releases. And if you haven't heard the Balalaika Favorites get yourself ready for sheer joy! The wood box also contains a nicely made booklet with great black and white photos and intriguing interviews with the members of the Mercury recording team. Some of the interviews read like a great spy novel. And the stories of the recording process, (with all of the trials and tribulations of working in a Communistic country), really makes these recordings even more special! The bottom line here is that five recording engineers brought down the "Iron Curtain" and gave us this glorious music for all time.

Highly Recommended Thank You Speakers Corner!

Mercury SR90300

Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3 Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.1

Mercury SR90305

Byron Janis: Encore

Mercury SR90390

Shostakovich: String Quartets Nos. 4 & 8

Mercury SR90310

Balalaika Favorites

Mercury SR90329

Liszt: Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2

Club Mix

Scott Tetzlaff

It's a Small World, After All....

While having lunch the other day, some pals were discussing an impending trip to DisneyLand. Everyone at the table shared a common fear: The 'Small World' attraction. We agreed it was the music that was most frightening – possibly developed by a brainwashing expert on loan from the department of defense.

That conversation (and snibbits of that accursed song) were still echoing in my mind while rooting around in my refrigerator, later that evening. Upon opening it I found: French and German cheeses, Sambal (Indonesian Shrimp paste), Italian beer, some curried chicken, 4 types of scary hot Mexican stuff...and Greek yogurt – all living peacefully, right next to each other.

It's like a nutritional league of nations in my fridge!

This got me thinking even further. Have you noticed how the internet, international trade, and a very mobile population have converged to 'shrink the world' lately?

I read a marketing paper a while ago that was describing one of the aspects of Generation 'Y'. It said 'diversity was expected'. Not that it was preferred, it was clear to point out – diversity was just so omnipresent for young people these days, that it fades into the background. (Why, yes, of course there would be kim chee, mini tacos and a chai tea in my school lunch bag...)

As for me, I'm not that jaded when it comes to that sort of thing. I get really excited when I find a cool matchbook from China or a weird coin from South America mixed in with my change. Being in the advertising business, I'm a sucker for interesting packaging, so a trip to the local Japanese market can be an adventure that lasts all afternoon...

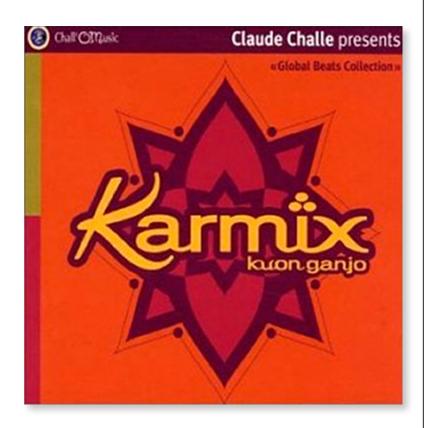
I also like to participate (cheerfully, I might add) in the national sport of Sweden, which last time I checked involves assembling furniture with a small allen wrench.

This overall appreciation for diversity spills over into music, as well, because in my generation, diversity was acquired. So, in that spirit, let's take a look at some tunes from places where 'football' means something completely different.

La Revancha del Tango by Gotan Project

Extremely groovy tango music with a touch of electronica added. This is the first effort by these guys, released a while ago in Europe. Very nicely done - not too heavy handed or over produced. You might be surprised to find some older material buried in there, like an update of the *Gato Barbieri* theme to the movie 'Last Tango in Paris'. There's also a rework of the old Frank Zappa tune, *Chunga's Revenge*. This CD is very much a staple of every Art Director's office I've been in over the last year or two. No one knows why Art Directors seem to buy CDs like a single living organism. It's just one of those laws of nature. Consequently, you might recognize little pieces of this music woven into many TV shows, movies and commercials. But this one's a good pick and that's why they use it so much. *(continued)*





Kuon Ganjo by Karmix

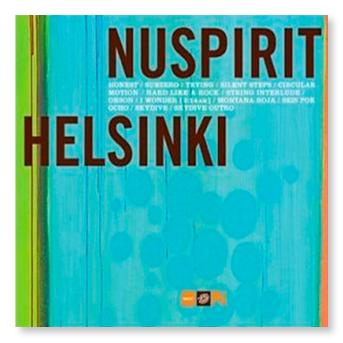
This is absolutely, hands down, the best Eastern music fusion CD I've ever heard. Even if you're not crazy about this kind of music, you might want to give it a listen. It's a combination of Middle Eastern, Indian, and urban beats with a liberal amount of mixing and scratching thrown in. The whole album has a very lush, sinuous feel to it. (Trust me, I don't use the word 'sinuous' in a sentence lightly). There are lots of CDs of this type circulating out there these days - with various amounts of traditional vs. modern influence, but what sets this one apart is the balance between old and new. It's relaxing while still being very energizing. Word of caution: You may not one to play this in front of anyone you don't want to see 'bust out a belly dance move'. Don't say I didn't warn you!



by Fantastic Plastic Machine

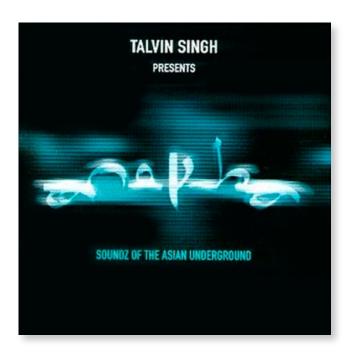
Goofy, Kitschy, and Retro all in one package. It's a Japanese CD about American and French popular culture. Or it's a soundtrack of a Japanese person's visit to a theme park while using psychoactive substances. You decide. Either way, it's very fun to listen to. There is no way you can listen to the whole thing and not get a little silly. The lounge remix of Joe Jackson's song Steppin Out is a ton of fun. You might even want to wear some sort of Partridge Family outfit while listening to enhance the mood.

Fantastic Plastic Machine



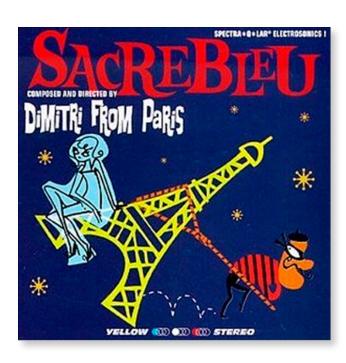
NuSpirit Helsinki by NuSpirit Helsinki

Who's your favorite Finnish Jazz collective? I'm thinking mine is **NuSpirit Helsinki**. Since they're a collective, there's a pretty wide variety of 'Nu Jazz' and electronic styles represented on this album. If you're a fan of older school jazz like **The Crusaders**, or newer groups like The Brand New Heavies, this might be a good choice for you. A big plus for the album, some of the tracks have vocals from Lisa Shaw (her soulful voice shows up on a bunch of tracks from the Naked Music series, Lazy Dog series, OM Records and on and on). Suggested use for this CD: This is a perfect background for having friends over after being out for the evening – it goes easily from night to dawn. (continued)



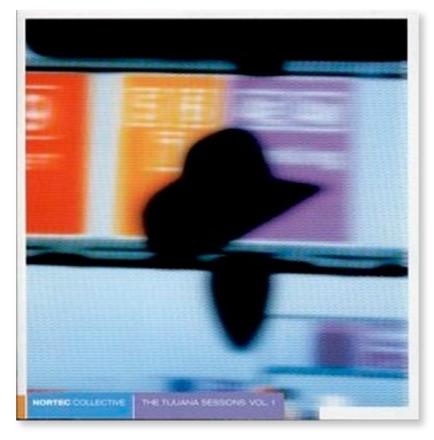
Anokha - Soundz of the Asian Undergroundby Talvin Singh

Here's a big serving of 'drum and bass' done with a very Indian influence.
Talvin has collected a really nice representation of Indian flavored club tunes. I especially like the cuts that are his, plus the ones from the group **State of Bengal**. This is another CD that manages to be both relaxing and energizing. This would be great for spicing up your yoga class.



Sacrebleu by Dimitri from Paris

This is quite possibly the Frenchiest CD ever made. I mean that in a good way. The sound bytes, the pacing...even the pieces that are not at all French sound like they were chosen by someone from France. There are a lot of great lounge and bossa nova tracks on this CD. One of my favorites is Une Very Stylish Fille - with sound clips from 'Breakfast At Tiffany's'. There's also a track that has the most archetypical giggling French girl on the phone anyone has ever heard. It makes my toes curl a little. I'm not sure why.



TiJuana Sessions (Vol.1) by Nortec Collective

Mexican Electronic Music. Yes, You read that correctly - Mexican Electronic Music... and really cool electronic dance music at that. This is a group of DJs that perform locally in the TiJuana area to rowdy crowds of students stumbling across the border, looking for fun and it's a very good soundtrack for that sort of thing. There are little flecks for Mexican music styles mingled with the dance music (um pah pah, cowbells, etc) Make no mistake though, this is very modern dance music, with hints of other south of the border styles. Should you like to explore further, they've come out with a new CD – **TiJuanna Sessions (Vol 3)**. As of right now, there is no (Vol 2). That just makes me chuckle. *(continued)*



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Greg Petan, Ultimate Audio Magazine





The Richest Man in Babylon by Thievery Corporation

Ok, Let's say you want most of the world represented on one CD. The Richest Man in Babylon is such a good choice you almost need a passport just to listen to it. The Thievery Corp is based in the USA (Washington DC to be specific), but this album of theirs in particular has music from all over the globe. Brazilian, Afro, Reggae/Dub, Persian and Indian influences - the list just goes on and on. You might think it would be really disjointed, but there's a really nice musical thread that holds it all together. I would be really hard pressed on this one to pick a favorite track. It's one of those CDs where every one is a gem. The more you listen to it, the more you find in there.

Here's eight that should keep you busy for now. Stay tuned till next issue. ●

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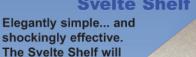
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Between The Lines

Norwood Brown

Somehow discussing rock & roll always distills down to

The Beatles and The Rolling

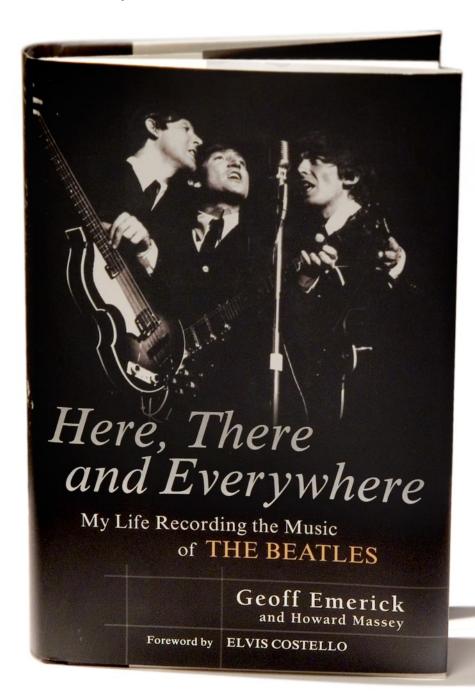
Stones. I won't even try to argue about which one was more significant, as I really enjoy both. No matter which camp you are in, both of these books will give you a bit more insight into their respective careers.

The Stones book is more autobiographical about the band itself and its members with a ton of great pictures and the Geoff Emerick book is more of a techie guys account of how the tracks got laid down in addition to some choice details on the relationship of the group itself.

(continued)

Here,There and Everywhere

Geoff Emerick and Howard Massey Published by Gothan Books



Here, There and Everywhere may be best remembered as one of the Beatles' greatest compositions, but it is now also a must read account, first hand at that, of Geoff Emericks' time spent as one of the Fab Fours' main studio engineers. Not only did Geoff witness and help execute the first fabled sessions at the EMI London studios, now known as Abbey Road, but he was also a main instigator and troubleshooter for the Beatles in helping each artist achieve their desired sounds and effects. We must all remember that prior to Geoff's tenure with George Martin, the studio-recording environment was strictly regimented with "traditional" formulas used for each sound's results.

Each engineer had a written protocol that they must adhere to or face possible job termination. The ultimate goal in the recording world was to capture the best possible fidelity with the fewest "takes" and certainly the least errors or damage to expensive equipment. With John, Paul, George, and Ringo, this was all about to change. The Beatles came in to the Emi Studios and made the environment their own like an artist's studio in some '60s college environment. Had the group's international acclaim not been secured, none of the studio's staff would have gone out on such creative limbs.

I do not wish to divulge here in this review all the amazing suggestions or "studio tricks" that Mr. Emerick and Mr. Martin employed, but believe me, they are all in this book. (continued)

For this article I will share with you one amazing story, centered on the historic Revolver sessions of 1966. The song is "Tomorrow Never Knows" a Lennon composition whose title is taken from a malapropism Ringo said.

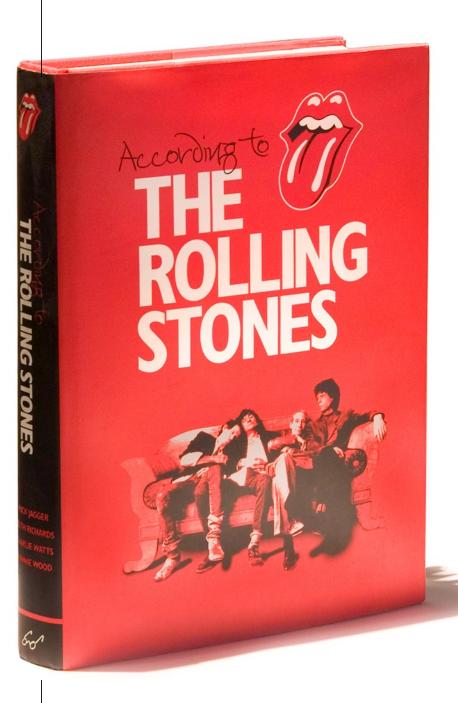
John wanted his voice to sound transcendental like the Dahlia Llama preaching from a mountaintop down to the valleys below, with lots of reverberation in between. As Emerick points out early on in his accounts, Mr. Lennon never liked the sound of his own voice so he was constantly looking for ways to alter his voice. I find this astounding since John had one of the greatest voices and musical ranges in Rock and Roll's history. So Geoff set about breaking the studio rules and ran Mr. Lennons voice through Leslie speakers. When the Beatles heard the results all were impressed with Emericks handy work and from that point on Mr. Martin and EMI looked the other way when Geoff would modify the equipment and ignore the old recording traditions.

Interestingly enough, at the end of the book Mr. Emerick says "Some of the newer high-resolution digital audio systems sound pretty good to my ears, almost as good as analog tape." (italics added by the editor...)

As a veteran player, having gone through many recording sessions, much of what we take for granted was originally pioneered by Geoff, George Martin, and the rest of the engineer crew at EMI. They did much of it first, and did it best. That's a take for now.

According To The Rolling Stones

Written by the band with guest essays Published by Chronicle Books



This one is more of a history book of The Rolling Stones with some guest speakers sitting in on the session. I have read a number of these accounts, and this one is straight from the horses collective mouths.

According To... offers up a lot of trivia for Rolling Stones fans, and a lot of great pictures. This one is definitely more of a coffee table book that you can just pick up and page through whenever you have a minute. It covers the Rolling Stones history from day 1 to somewhere in 2003, so it is fairly current, but does not cover Keith's recent tree incident. It also has a great glossary at the end of the book describing all those that were peripheral to the band. Interesting note: Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page are mentioned, however Bill Wyman is not. Hmmmm.

The band members offer some interesting commentary, some profound and some contrived, but they are The Rolling Stones after all. What were you expecting?

This one's been showing up at Barnes & Noble on the discount shelf, so it can be had for about \$20. If you love rock & roll, this is one of the best things you can do with a Jefferson. ●

Slummin'

Jeff Dorgay

It's been another good round of music and audio oddities. A defunct band, a dead format and a surprisingly brand new tube manual make up this month's choices. Just when you thought I would run out of fun stuff, it just keeps showing up! Keep your eye on those garage sales, you never know where fun is lurking!

Holy Molar Picture Disc — \$6 Music Millenium

This one jumped out at me while I was buying the new Dylan LP on vinyl. The very hip guy at the counter just looked at me sideways and I said "How can I NOT buy a record with a tooth in it?" Of course I knew not what I was in store for. Turns out this band that finally ended up in San Diego in 2002 had amassed quite a local following and this record is somewhat in demand on Ebay.

What does it sound like? Kind of your basic hate-rock with a lot of deep droning screams that you can't possibly understand. Even my 12 year old couldn't understand it, so I didn't feel so bad. For all I know they are saying "I love the Care Bears", but they sound pretty pissed off.





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Mini Disc Recorder — \$30

I'm a sucker for dead formats. (or "other formats" as they say on EBay) I have cassette decks a plenty and more than one open reel deck, but the mini disc was a fun idea like the home DAT recorders that never quite launched. Unfortunately, the iPod really killed mini disc, but the coolest thing about it was that you could make mix discs, iust like a cassette deck.

So, when I saw this lonely mini disc player sitting there with a \$30 price on it, I had to buy it. It even came with 10 blank discs, still in the shrink wrap!



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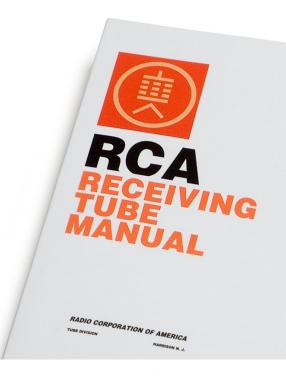
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TRIANGLE ALTEA Es

The RCA Tube Manual — \$11 Powell's Technical Bookstore www.powells.com

I had picked up an much older and more tattered version of this book at a garage sale for a quarter, but I somehow misplaced it!! Time for fall cleaning at the TONE offices. Portland, Oregon is the home to Powell's Books, which is the largest independent book store on Earth, with seven stories of new and used books and a Technical Book Store right down the street.

Whether you are the next Lew Johnson out there hiding amongst us, or just a hobbyist with a yearning for what goes on inside those glass bottles. the RCA tube manual is a must. Flipping through the pages you wonder, where have all these other tubes gone?



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