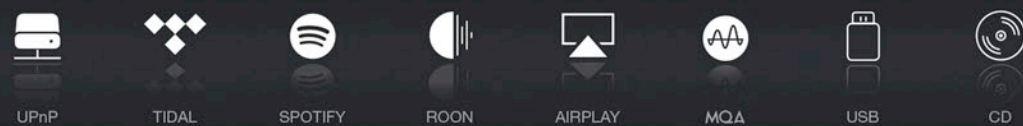


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Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio Magazine



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Audio



**Approachable
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three major players:

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VPI
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Technics
DIRECT DRIVE TURNTABLE SYSTEM SL-1200GR

no.89

june 2018



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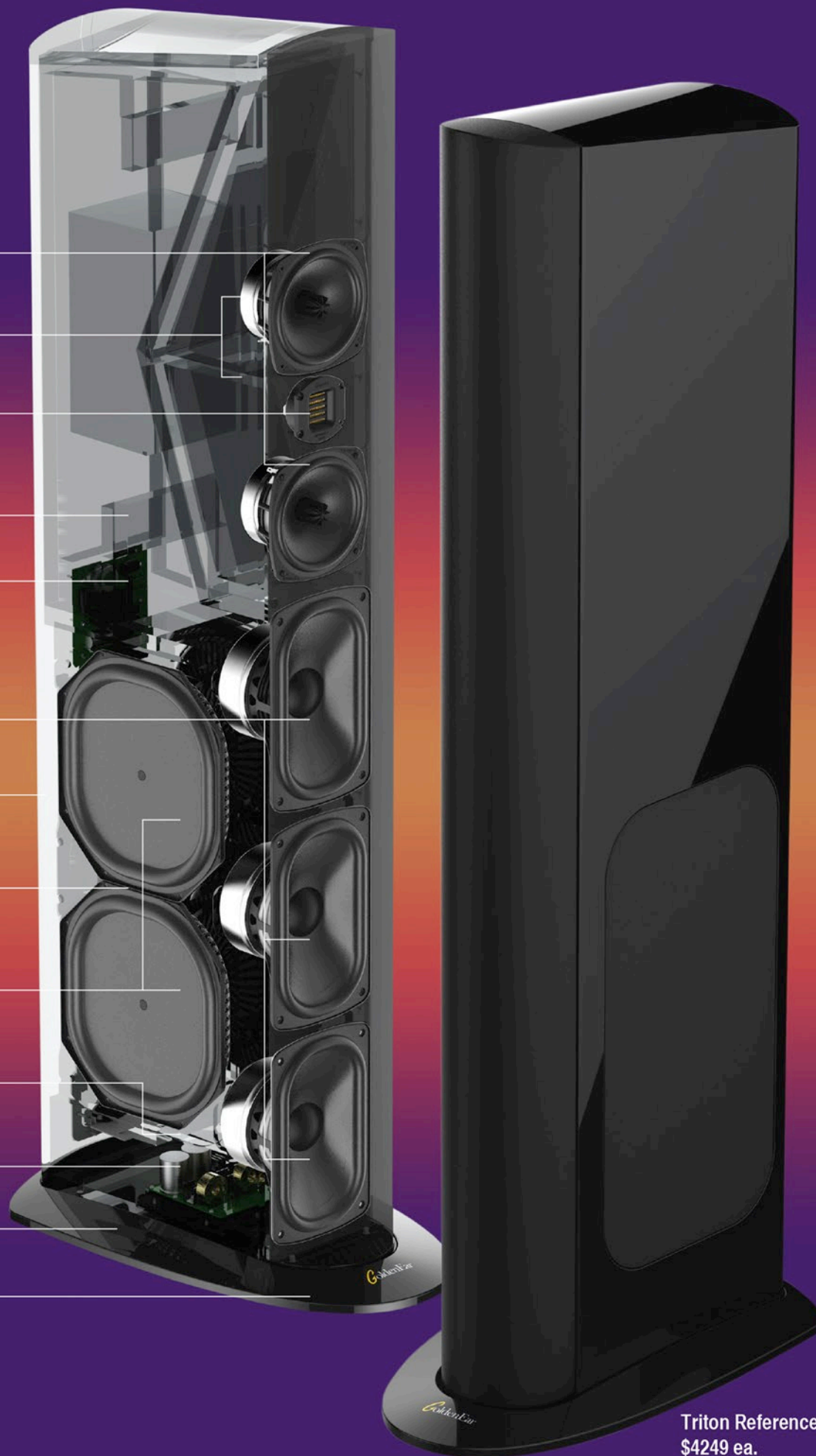
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– Jeff Dorgay, *Tone Audio*

“A remarkable amount of transparency, life and soundstage detail ... fully competitive with some substantially more expensive speakers”

– Anthony Cordesman, *The Absolute Sound*

GoldenEar’s Triton One is one of the best selling high-end loudspeakers ever, consistently thrilling listeners and reviewers alike and winning an enviable and unmatched collection of the industry’s most prestigious awards, including “Loudspeaker-of-the-Year” and “Product-of-the-Year” from key publications all around the world.

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“Undeniably stellar ... Yes, it does deliver the sort of performance previously delivered only by cost-no-object speakers.” – Dennis Burger, *Home Theater Review*

The Triton Reference is an evolution of everything that we have achieved with the Triton One, but taken to a stunning new level of sonic performance and sophisticated visual design. All the components in the T Ref: including larger, more powerful, active sub-bass drivers with huge “Focused Field” magnet structures, upper-bass/midrange drivers with “Focused Field” magnet structures, and High-Velocity Folded Ribbon tweeter with 50% more rare earth neodymium magnet material, are brand new, and have been specifically developed for use in the Reference. The powerful 1800 watt subwoofer amplifier, with level control to fine tune the bass to your room, and 56-bit DSP control unit are a significant evolution of those in the Triton One and our SuperSubs.

There are a myriad of other significant upgrades and refinements, including: new internal wiring with a specially developed twist, further development of our signature balanced crossover including

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“The Triton Reference presents a serious challenge to speakers in the multi \$10K range”

– Robert Deutsch, *Stereophile*

Visually, the Reference offers a strikingly beautiful upgrade to the classic Triton styling, with a gorgeous hand-rubbed piano gloss-black lacquer finished one-piece monocoque cabinet. Sleek, statuesque and refined, the Reference is simply an elegantly gorgeous statement piece that will excite listeners with its dynamic visual presence, as well as its extraordinary sonic performance.

Sonically, the Reference has been engineered to perform with a dramatic and authoritative voice, comparable to speakers that sell for ten and more times its surprisingly affordable price. T Refs completely disappear, with superb three-dimensional imaging that will open up your room, stretching from wall to wall and beyond, and depth that makes the wall behind them seem to vanish. The astonishing bass is rock-solid, with low-frequency performance that is tight, quick, highly impactful and musical with extension flat to 20Hz and below. Another GoldenEar signature is a silky smooth high end that extends to 35 kHz with a lifelike sheen but no trace of fatiguing hardness, sibilance or stridency so common with lesser tweeters. Tremendous time and energy has been put into the voicing of the speaker and the seamless blending of the drivers, for unmatched musicality with all types of music, and home theater perfection. Rarely do speakers excel at both, but with their world-class neutrality, the Reference absolutely does. A special bonus is the Reference’s extremely high 93.25 dB sensitivity, which gives them tremendous dynamic range and allows use with almost any high-quality amplifier. You must experience T Ref for yourself!

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In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

The Early Rolling Stones

With so much excitement for the new Stones vinyl box set, perhaps it's time to revisit the early LP's? This is great one to pull out of the collection and enjoy.



Bowers & Wilkins



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www.bowers-wilkins.com/700series

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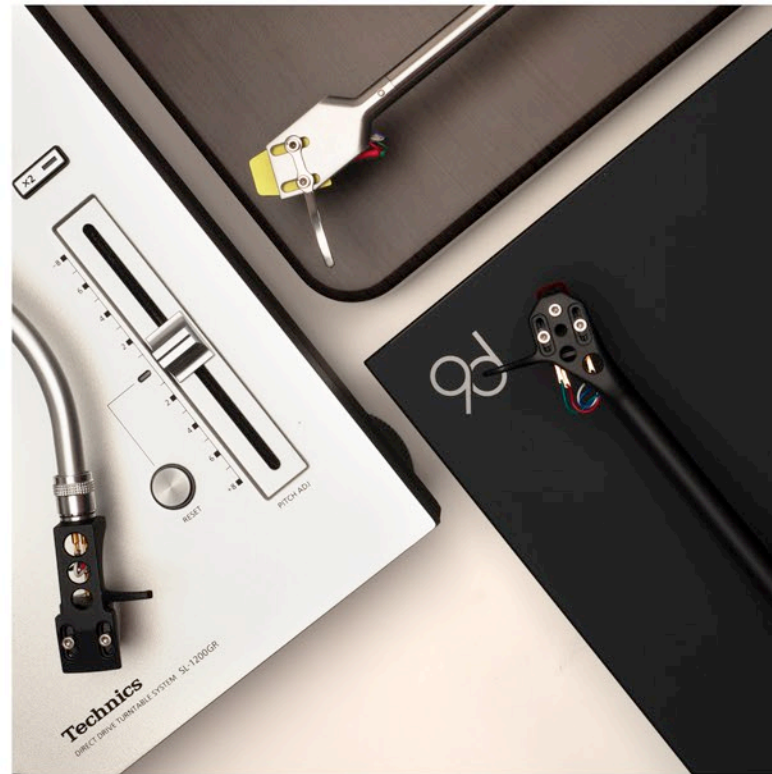
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Cover:

We investigate four top turntables, that are a small step up from entry-level in terms of price, yet offering a quantum leap in performance.

You know these three, and the one to the right is new.



Audio TONE2.0



There's a newcomer in the analog world... Read on.



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SOUND VISION

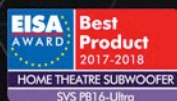
"Subterranean bass shook my room on its foundation. Hit with such force that I could feel the impact. Response is taut; notes don't linger and their natural resonance is reproduced faithfully. Highly recommended."

home theater review . com

"I was so impressed by the low-frequency output that I kept cranking up the volume to see which of us (me or the sub) would cry uncle first. In the end, I lost. SVS has another undeniable winner on its hands here."

CNET

"Reference-grade subwoofer that doesn't merely dish out room-rattling home theater effects, it's also very musical. I've never heard bass like this in the CNET listening room! I highly recommend it."



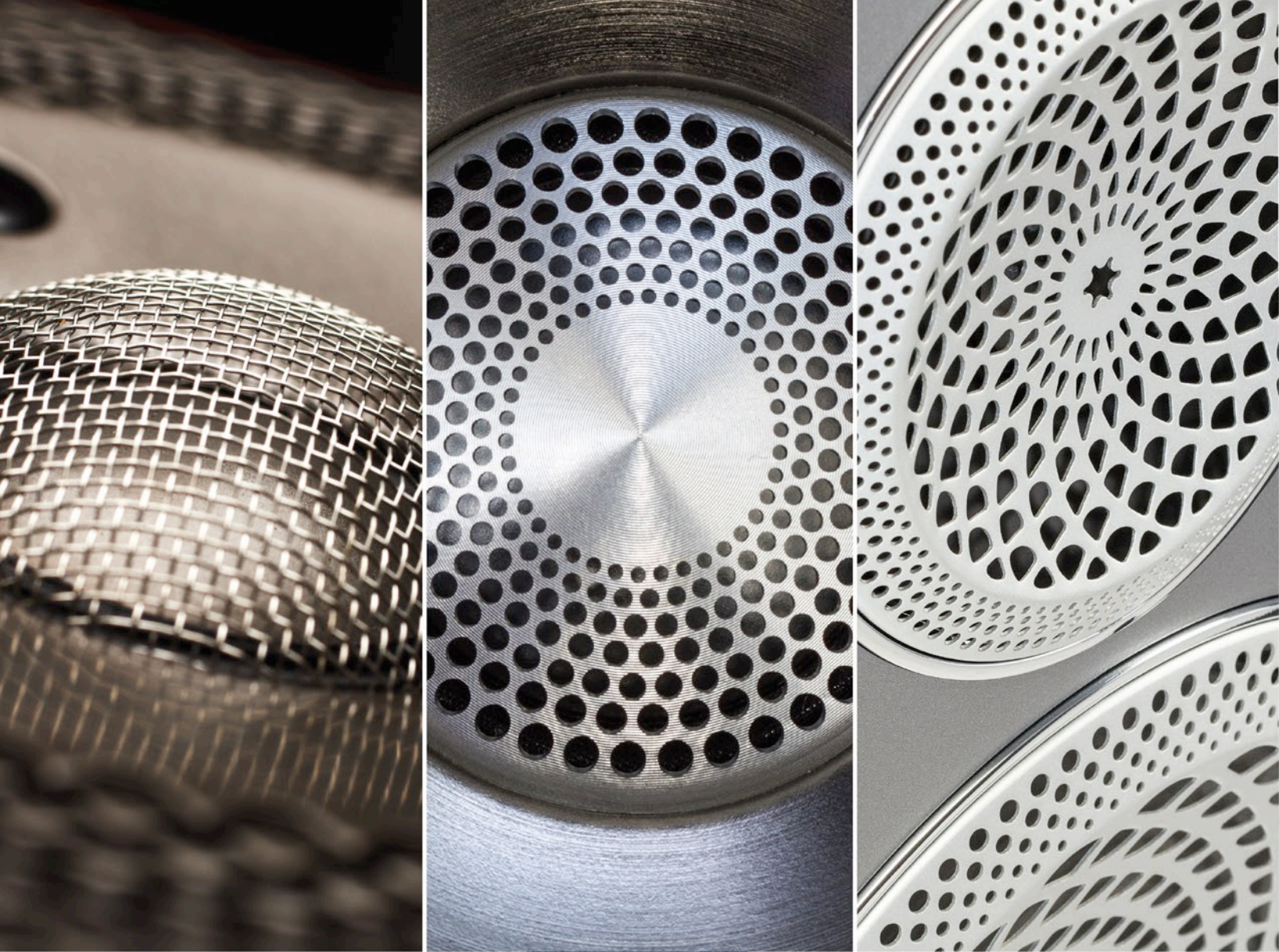
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no.89

P u b l i s h e r s L e t t e r

First of all, I hope that those of you that are in the half of the world experiencing summer, that you've actually shut your hifi off for a few days and made some kind of pilgrimage outdoors – somewhere. Even if it's just a quick drive or hike down the street to get a coffee. Or maybe buy some more records!

Speaking of records, we've got two back to back analog issues in store for you. What started as my usual "let's do a cartridge issue because I'm tired of lifting power amplifiers" issue, generated so much interest and a flood of new, exciting gear, we decided to produce two analog issues in a row. I hope that's not a problem. In our usual random fashion, this issue is primarily more approachable/affordable analog, with next issue (#90) going to have its pages dominated by higher priced goodies. I still can't believe how strong analog is in the year 2018, and that's a lovely thing for consumers and manufacturers. There's more great choices than ever, regardless of your budget.

Our cover features four really exciting turntables, from all over the world. The Technics 1200 is known to all – DJ's and audiophiles alike. The \$1,600 1200GR is a logical extension of what the 1200 might have been had Technics produced a Mk. 6 instead of discontinuing the table a few years ago. Rega's P6 (\$1,900 with cart) has been around for decades now, as has VPI. Their new Cliffwood table at only \$900 with cartridge is perfect for the music enthusiast wanting something better than the entry level tables for a few hundred bucks, but not quite ready to become a fully obsessed turntablist – as are the other three on our cover. Rounding out the picture, we have a newcomer from Mobile Fidelity and Music Direct. Like I said, great choices.

I'd also like to take a second to introduce a few people that have joined this wacky joint called TONEAudio in the last few weeks/months. Singer/songwriter Emily Duff from NYC is producing our "Can't Get it out of my Head" column, Gautham Raja hails from Southern California to help with more reviews, along with Eric Neff from my home state of Wisconsin. My good friend T.Scott Stromberg, from Texas returns to the band in Spinal-Tap like fashion, illustrating the Aural Report column.

Finally, Roy Hall of Music Hall will be enlightening us with whisky choices and great storytelling. If you've ever spent time in the Music Hall booth at a hifi show, chances are you've had a drink with Roy. His taste in food and spirits is exquisite. His column will be affectionately called "Bring Your Whisky Home."

As always, I hope you enjoy the issue. Thank you for tuning in.

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Rammstein -
Du Hast

Kiss - Detroit Rock City

Tom Jones - If I Only Knew

Jeff Beck - Big Block

Ren & Stimpy -
Happy, Happy, Joy, Joy

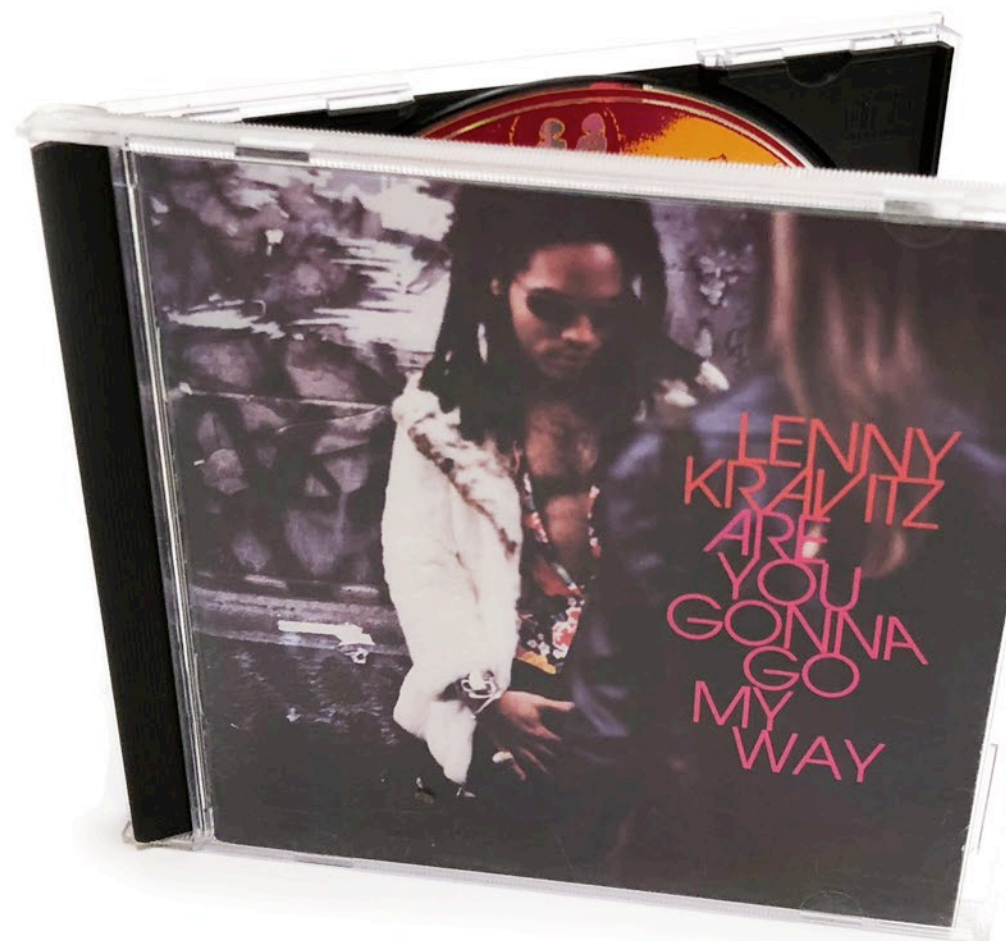
Pat Travers -
Crash & Burn

Public Enemy - My 98

Alice In Chains -
No Excuses

Van Halen -
Humans Being

Lenny Kravitz-
Are You Gonna Go My Way?



You all know I'm a car nut, and as much as I love the sound of a high-revving engine, it's nice to take a good collection of tunes on the road.

Here's a few of my favorites when I'm in the middle of nowhere, going way too fast.

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Great sound for less than a G!

The Pro-Ject Debut Recordmaster

By Jeff Dorgay

Music continues to branch out, taking its own path, yet for all the available streaming services, you still cant get *everything* you want in a digital stream.

Even if you're slightly more dinosaric in your digital music listening, with a gaggle of files on a NAS drive, some of your favorite vinyl treasures are still out of your reach. You never know when that urge to hear The Bliss Band is going to strike, and your hands just might be unavailable. I'll leave the thoughts of TMI to you.

In my day, we used to archive our favorite tunes to tape. Those of you checking my age bracket box remember, you'd get that new album home, and not wanting to wear it out, a fresh Maxell XLII or TDK SA was unwrapped and a pristine copy was made. Yep, just as todays youngsters argue about file formats, we argued about tape formulations. It never goes away, does it?



Pro-Ject has come up with something really cool for those of you facing this dilemma in the year 2018.

Their new Debut Recordmaster combines friendly elements we already know; the Debut turntable, and an Ortofon 2M Red along with an analog to digital converter (ADC) that is capable of rendering your tunes to digital files in up to 24/192 or DSD. Thanks to the built in phono stage, you can connect it to any analog source that has a high level input, or you can even plug into a sound bar, via the digital outputs. (USB and S/PDIF) As usual, Windows users will have to do a bit of shuffling with drivers, but once that's out of the way, you're rocking your favorite records.

Pretty cool, eh?

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Great sound for less than a G!

Now, the only real choice is what color? The color choices aren't quite as wide as the standard Debut, but the four at your disposal should fit in nearly any decor scheme with ease. As Sammy Hagar elegantly said, "green aint me compared to red." At least arguing about what color to make the turntable is way more fun than arguing about politics. Am I right?

Much has been written about the Debut, so to give you a quick once over, it's a great basic deck, and thanks to the Ortofon 2M red, the sound is very neutral. Those feeling the urge to upgrade, can easily substitute one of the 2M cartridges further up the range, though you will need some kind of alignment protractor to get a perfect fit. Tracking force will not change. And yes, we did have to try it - the 2M Bronze shown elsewhere in this issue does make for a good sonic upgrade, though it nearly doubles the price of the table.

Kudos to Pro-Ject for offering the ability to produce high resolution files, but for most of us, selecting the 16/44 option is going to be just fine. Digitizing a handful of files at CD quality resolution proved excellent for casual use in my music server and perfect on my mobile devices. Those wanting archival results will want to move upstream, but for the target audience, the Debut Recordmaster is a perfect fit. It will play records effortlessly, and make on the go files, when you want to take your records with you.

And you can still use those analog outputs to make a mix tape.

The Pro-Ject Debut Recordmaster
\$699 (in color) \$749 (walnut)

www.sumiko.net (US Distributor)
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The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...

Parasound JC3 jr.

\$1,495

By Eric Neff

Value, it is a term that can connote a solid deal. We comb stock market research for a value stock. We look for value when we buy homes or cars. It is something smart. However, sometimes, in the audio world, it can be faint praise for the audiophile. Value to them means you did not get cutting edge. You found something that was a compromise between performance and price. Something perhaps good but you wished you could afford something better. Your friends may not be as impressed as you wish they would be. And yet that term when applied to certain brands and components can actually be what you want it to be. A true deal on a no apologies piece. One your friends will appreciate and, after they have gone home, you will deeply appreciate what it does in your system when it is just you and your best music. The JC3jr is one such component coming from a brand that has excelled at both quality and value for years; Parasound.

Brinkmann Audio Nyquist Mk II

One Step Closer



Photo © MichaelRasche.com 2018

*"If after all these years, digital has still left you slightly cold,
I assure you the Brinkmann Nyquist will not."*

- Jeff Dorgay, Tone Publications
Review of the original Nyquist

"But best of all, the Nyquist is extremely compelling musically..."

- Robert Harley, The Absolute Sound, December 2017
Review of the original Nyquist

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The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...

Arriving on the scene a couple of years after its big brother the JC3+, the goal of the John Curl, Carl Thompson and Parasound was to bring the strengths of the JC3+, great sound and incredible flexibility for use with most any cartridge, to a more affordable price point. Initially, expectations were to deliver the unit at a \$2000 price point vs the \$2995 of its big brother. However, upon completion Parasound determined they could deliver at an amazing \$1,495! Half price with nearly 80% of the performance. I was certainly intrigued hearing about the unit and arranged a review piece asap.

Once the JC3jr arrived I was pleased to see it had the same great aesthetic in the style that the other Parasound components had but in a much lower profile 1U chassis than the JC3+. My review unit was silver and can also be purchased in black. The front only has a power button and a Mono/Stereo switch with the position designated by Blue (Stereo) or Amber (Mono) lighting. On the back are Single Ended L/R inputs and a choice of Single Ended or Balanced (3 pin XLR) outputs. Going back to the definition of Value the JC3jr offers up variable or fixed impedance choices, variable Moving Coil impedance options from 50 Ohms to 550 Ohms and three gain select options of 40, 50 and 60 dB in Single ended at 46, 56 and 66 dB in Balanced. I am not aware of any under \$2000 Phono Pre's that offer as wide a range of configurations as the JC3jr. Other than a super low voltage moving coil (maybe 0.2 or lower) this incredibly flexible device should work with virtually any cartridge you would choose to use.

I removed the Moon 610LP by Simaudio Phono pre from my system and connected the JC3jr to my VPI Prime Signature table with HRX 3-belt option and Analog Drive System. The cartridge is an Ortofon Cadenza Bronze. Experimentation revealed the Single Ended output setting, using 60dB of gain and 125 Ohms of impedance to work best in my system. After about 75 hours over a few weeks of listening and break in I dug into review mode.

I have been enjoying Vanessa Fernandez's Use Me a lot lately. "Cool Cat" is a laid-back tune that evokes a beautiful evening on the beach. Cool breezes setting the mood. Vanessa's incredibly pure voice backed by guitar, drums and bass. The music flows by evoking moonlight reflecting off calm ocean waters. What struck me was the extremely black background. The JC3jr offered up the signal without and hash or background noise. Clearly the stated S/N at 94 dB was in evidence. This is a very quiet unit. Moving on to the title track the driving funk of the band expertly framed Vanessa's soulful voice, within a large soundstage. This was center table at the club level image precision. Snare drum crispness and high-hat shimmer were not only accurate but perfectly positioned relative the singer. I had to run through the entire album in one session.

Over the last few weeks switching out the five times more expensive Moon 610LP for the JC3jr had me listening for performance differences. "I Am The Highway," from Audioslaves' self-titled album (2017 repress), via the Moon delivers bass with great authority via my Vandersteen Treo CT's.



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The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...



I felt the bass to be a bit shy using the JC3jr. But, not five times less. The Moon somehow offered an even blacker background but when using the JC3jr I never felt like anything interfered with the clarity of the presentation. Both units provided excellent midrange and positional clarity. Both were using high quality parts throughout. The JC3jr gets high marks for its use of Vishay-Dale resistors throughout the audio path. I have not seen this level of quality at this price anywhere else. Value indeed.

Pulling out Steve Winwood's 2016 repress of *Arc of a Diver* the title track has a guitar solo that reveals the sonic image accuracy of the JC3jr; it's the image size of the guitar that really grabs you. I have two Stratocaster's on my wall and the guitar that was sonically in front of me was the same image size as what I have on the wall. I am not looking for some mega image. I appreciate scale and context. I received them both clearly with the jr.

Reaching for some energy I moved on to Lacuna Coil's Gothic metal album *Dark Adrenaline*. The first side features their anthemic track, "Trip the Darkness." It is a powerful song featuring crunching guitars, powerful bass and intense double bass drum's backing the twin vocals of Andrea Ferro and Cristina Scabbia. The JC3jr did a credible job delivering its energy. It could not keep up with the Moon 610LP but once again there was nothing to detract from enjoying the music. The Moon gave more (power and crunch) however, I thoroughly enjoyed the Jr's efforts.

The JC3jr checks off the boxes; Quality parts, check, configuration options for a wide variety of cartridges, check, great sound, check. Money left in your wallet to buy more LP's? Double Check! This is the definition of Value they way I would think of it from a stock pickers perspective. No downside. Value means I don't compromise. It is a deal. By that definition the Parasound JC3jr is a big deal. Get your hands on one today and see. Highly recommended!

The Parsound JC3jr.

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Respecting HiFi's Past...

Words and Images by Paul DeMara

Going mobile with cassettes.

Retro is cool and guess what, cassettes are back. Case in point, AC/DC just re-released *Back In Black* on cassette for record store day 2018. I'm also noticing that many of the local record stores around Vancouver are now carrying new and used cassettes along with CD's & LP's. For many, cassettes are the next logical step if you want to bring that warm analog sound with you while walking or jogging. The fun part of listening to cassettes is you'll hear the album the way the artist intended. The bonus is you can make your own mixed analog tapes from LP's.

Vintage home cassette decks are fairly easy to find; however the challenge for many is finding a portable player that works well and offers great sound. Sadly in 2018 there are no major manufacturers making brand new high-quality portable cassette players. Going vintage is your best option.

The question I often get from my vintage audio FB friends is, "What's a good portable cassette player?" To help answer that question, here's a rundown of a few of the early Sony Walkman's that I often suggest looking at along with a few compelling reasons to choose a specific model.

The most famous and arguably the most relevant is the 1979 Sony TPS-L2. During the 70's battery powered cassette recorders were fairly common but weren't designed for walk around portable use and didn't offer stereo playback. We own a Sony Bravo because the TPS-L2 kick-started the entire portable music trend. This first Sony Walkman changed the game because with stereo sound and lightweight headphones it brought high-quality portable stereo sound to the masses.

The TPS-L2 paired with a newer set of high-quality headphones offers an enticing analog listening experience. It offers a relatively modern feature set as well; this first generation Walkman sports dual headphone jacks, independent sliding volume controls, and a Hi / Low tone switch. There's also a cool orange "Hot Line" switch. Pressing this button drops the music volume and engages the built-in microphone, so you don't have to take your headphones off when ordering your favorite beverage at Starbucks.

The main challenge with the TPS-L2 is it's somewhat susceptible to movement. Shaking and rolling while walking or running can cause tiny speed variations, better

known as "wow and flutter". This happens because the capstan is belt driven and tends to pick up the momentum of the unit twisting when walking or jogging. Holding the unit in your hand helps but doesn't completely eliminate the effect. Sony solved this issue with "Direct Drive" technology Walkmans. Their features are up next.

After the incredible success of the Sony TPS-L2, Sony wanted to reduce weight, shrink the size by 25% and eliminate the wow and flutter issue. Sony's solution was a "DD" or Direct Drive design, removing the belt from the motor to the capstan and replacing it with a rubber tire seated directly on the capstan, driven by a sideways mounted motor. This transport is much less susceptible to tiny speed variations while walking or jogging.

Features wise, the first DD units offered two headphone jacks, top mounted volume control and a regular/chrome switch. Later units added Dolby B and a bass boost switch. The final hurrah was the black "pro version" WM-DC2 including Dolby C, quartz lock motor, amorphous super long life heads and a line out jack but sans the bass boost switch.

For sports minded music enthusiasts there was a yellow splash proof Sports DD version which is the only DD unit featuring a built in FM tuner.

For best sound playback I usually record with Dolby B on and playback with Dolby B off. I don't suggest recording in Dolby C unless your unit supports it, and even then levels have to be exactly right or you'll hear a breathing sound during playback.

Choosing the right vintage Walkman DD unit is all about deciding what features matter most. I find them all to sound very similar. If you like serious bass then I'd search for units with the bass boost switch aka "Mega Bass". Your choice of headphone is probably the most critical part of getting the sound you like best.



Old School

Respecting Audio's Past!

To help sort things out I've summarized the feature sets in the table below. One last thought, if you're planning on buying any of the above mentioned vintage Walkmans it's best to look for one that's been serviced. The original TPS-L2 has belts and they'll likely need to be replaced. With Sony DD units there's an issue with the center gear. It's a plastic over metal design and often the plastic shrinks and cracks leaving a gap in the gear which gives you an audible click click click sound. Ideally you'll want to look for a DD unit that has had the center gear repaired or replaced. If you're a DIY kind of person there are replacement gears available on Ebay along with Youtube videos demonstrating how to change or repair the center gear.

Last but not least, don't forget that cleaning your heads with tape head cleaner every 10 hours keeps the highs sounding crisp. I've noticed older cassette tapes tend to clog heads fairly quickly. A tape head demagnetizer is also worth considering. I generally demagnetize the heads every 50 hours or so. Happy hunting and don't forget to bring along an extra set of AA batteries. Nothing worse than running out of power while rockin' out to your favorite tunes.



Feature set summary

TPS-L2 - Dual headphone jacks / Dual sliding volume controls / Hi Low tone switch / Talk Line mic button

WM-DDII - DD anti roll / Dual headphone jacks, / Dolby B switch / Norm - CrO2 switch

WM-F5 - DD anti roll / Dual headphone jacks / Splash proof / FM Tuner / Local - DX switch / Norm - CrO2 switch

WM-DD30 - DD anti roll / Dual headphone jack / Quartz locked drive motor / Dolby B switch
2 level Mega Bass / Norm - CrO2 switch

WM-DC2 - DD anti roll / headphone & line out jack / Quartz locked drive motor / Amorphous tape head
Dolby B & C switch / Norm - CrO2 switch

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Electrostatic
Headphone System

TONEAudio
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"This is one of the most incredible
personal listening experiences going."

Jeff Dorgay, TONEAudio



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Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

XTC-
Garden of Earthly Delights

King Crimson -
Neal, Jack, and Me

Jhene Aiko - LSD

Frank Ocean -
Fertilizer

Bruce Wooley and the
Camera Club - Video Killed
the Radio Star

James Gang - Funk 49

Warren Zevon-
Lawyers, Guns, and Money

Steve n' Seagulls -
Thunderstruck

Joe Strummer and the
Mescaleros -
The Redemption Song

True Democracy -
Steel Pulse

Cartoonist for the "Aural Report"
column, T.Scott Stromberg calls
Texas home, and has always had
an incredibly eclectic range of
musical taste. (That's why he's
always been a bud!)

Here's a few from his iPhone...

no. 2 Texas



Premium sound solutions for every space.

MartinLogan excels at doing things that have never been done, like integrating exotic Folded Motion™ driver technology, inspired by our legendary high-end electrostatic designs, into the affordable Motion® Series and reference Stealth™ Architectural Series. Smooth, refined sonic performance with stunning dynamic range and jaw-dropping clarity – MartinLogan magic in an application to suit every lifestyle.



EM-ESL X



Motion 40



Motion 60XT



Motion SLM



Edge



Axis



Vanquish



Motion Vision X

martinlogan.com



Rega
Planar 6
\$1,995/pr.

www.rega.co.uk



Don't let the modest looks fool you. The Rega P6 has undergone years of refinement to become the turntable you see here. A tour through Rega's factory reveals workers dedicated to making their products better, more efficiently, and less prone to failure.

Some features, like the machined subplatter and white rubber drive belt from the top RP8 and RP10 tables, now show up as part of the P6.

It's no surprise that Rega founder Roy Gandy is a former automotive engineer - every part of the P6 has a purpose. Anything not contributing to the performance has been eliminated. And everything that remains has been lightened, refined, and rethought to deliver maximum performance.

Rega tables have always delivered a fast, neutral, dynamic sound, but the P6 offers a dramatic leap ahead from the last model to have this designation.

It's as if this were a completely new table. Combining improved machining and manufacturing techniques with Rega's new Tancast 8 polyurethane foam used for the plinth.

The new motor is fine tuned to the outboard NEO power supply, allowing speed change between 33 and 45 rpm at the push of a button. Long gone are the days of removing the platter of your Rega table to manually put the belt on a different pulley! And even the glass platter has been updated to a new, dual layer design.

We say, keep it all Rega. Add the Ania MC cartridge. Rega's FONO MC, and rest assured you've got maximum analog synergy.

For more in-depth analysis, visit the TONEAudio website. Just click here.

Those wanting full specifications for the P6, click here.

T H E F I N E A R T S

In celebration of 40 years in the pursuit of high-performance in audio, conrad-johnson is pleased to present our new limited production ART150 (stereo 150 Watts/channel) and ART300 (mono 300 Watts) amplifiers, each a virtual window on the emotional experience of live music right in your home.



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Rega's Ania MC cartridge tips the scale at only \$795, but offers performance well beyond most of its competitors that are similarly priced. Thanks to Rega's unique three-hole mounting, you can save yourself the bother of cartridge setup and order your P6 with the Ania already mounted.

Then all you need to do is quickly set tracking force, anti-skate and start playing records! Analog doesn't get any more plug and play than this.



HIGH
PERFORMANCE
IS OUR *Forte*

WPK



Klipsch
HERITAGE
Classic

for more information visit KLIPSCH.COM



Rega P6

The Good:

Elegant simplicity
Stunning sound
Ultra simple setup
Compact form factor
Decades of refinement = high quality

Not so much:

Limited upgrade path
No color choices

The Verdict:

One of the best turntables for its price
is still a class leader. Better than ever.

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Slave to the Rhythm - Grace Jones

Cassette playback just keeps gaining momentum around here. It's starting to become an issue tradition! Where were you when this was released?



EAT

European Audio Team's C-Major

Exceptionally engaging, endearing sound.*

"It looks stunning...
Best of all it sounds fantastic."

Highly recommended.

Exceptional Value Award Winner

Jeff Dorgay
Tone Audio

"...screams sophistication,
obviously a luxury product...
a winner and a wonderful
component. Combine such
elegance with high-tech
materials and exemplary
finishing -- as EAT has in
the C-Major -- and you've
got a winner."

Highly recommended.

*Jason Thorpe
SoundStage Hi-Fi!

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Technics
DIRECT DRIVE TURNTABLE SYSTEM SL-1200GR

Technics
SL1200GR
\$1,600

www.technics.com



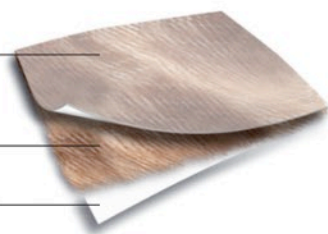
THE PERFECT MATCH!

300 SERIES & KANTA

Fiber glass 0,04mm

Flax 0,4mm

Fiber glass 0,04mm



FOCAL FLAX DRIVER TECHNOLOGY

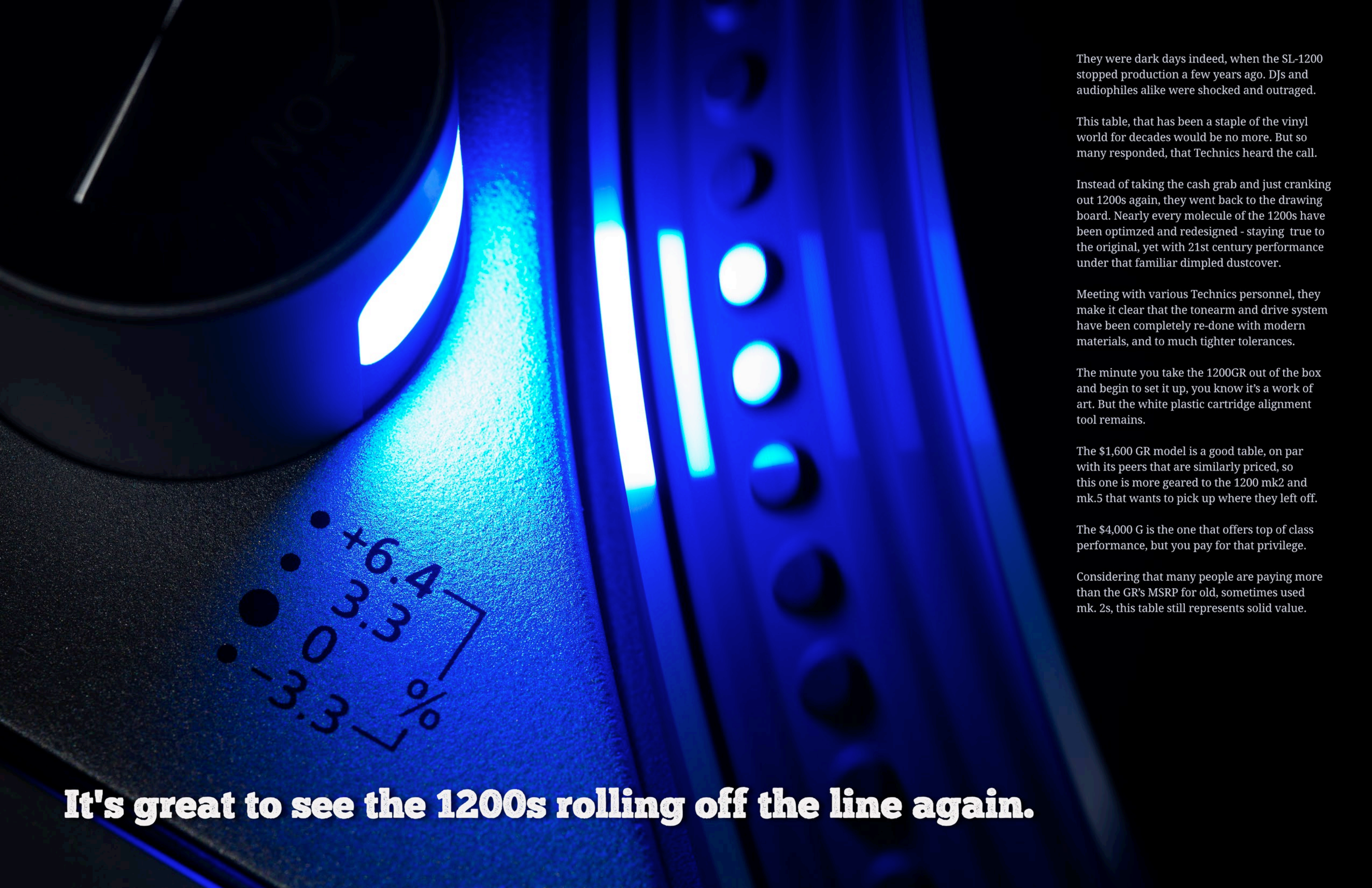
"F" cones are made of high-quality flax fibers core enclosed by two thin layers of glass fiber.

They satisfy the key criteria of a high performance diaphragm : high internal damping, high velocity of sound and high flexural rigidity.

Flax cones are designed and manufactured in France and Focal use this driver technology into Car audio, Pro audio, Home speakers and Custom integration.

Subtle Changes Abound.





They were dark days indeed, when the SL-1200 stopped production a few years ago. DJs and audiophiles alike were shocked and outraged.

This table, that has been a staple of the vinyl world for decades would be no more. But so many responded, that Technics heard the call.

Instead of taking the cash grab and just cranking out 1200s again, they went back to the drawing board. Nearly every molecule of the 1200s have been optimized and redesigned - staying true to the original, yet with 21st century performance under that familiar dimpled dustcover.

Meeting with various Technics personnel, they make it clear that the tonearm and drive system have been completely re-done with modern materials, and to much tighter tolerances.

The minute you take the 1200GR out of the box and begin to set it up, you know it's a work of art. But the white plastic cartridge alignment tool remains.

The \$1,600 GR model is a good table, on par with its peers that are similarly priced, so this one is more geared to the 1200 mk2 and mk.5 that wants to pick up where they left off.

The \$4,000 G is the one that offers top of class performance, but you pay for that privilege.

Considering that many people are paying more than the GR's MSRP for old, sometimes used mk. 2s, this table still represents solid value.

It's great to see the 1200s rolling off the line again.

PH-10

the most awarded phonostage ever



TONEAudio



CONNECT 2 ARMS & CARTRIDGES

With two separate RCA inputs you can connect two different tonearms and adjust settings independently for each single cartridge.

SELECT THE GAIN

PH-10 offers 4 different GAIN levels -3dB, 0dB, +3dB, +6dB to find the best output level for MM and MC cartridges.

TFT DISPLAY & SKC - SINGLE KNOB CONTROL

SKC is a unique technology that matched with TFT display allows quick control of the unit's functions through the single knob joggle.

3 EQUALIZATION CURVES

To get the best out of any record it's crucial to use correct EQ curve: PH-10 offers the RIAA, the DECCA-LONDON and the AMERICAN-COLUMBIA, as well as the "enhanced" curves to enjoy the best vinyl experience ever.

CHOOSE BETWEEN 9 LOADS

Perfect matching is easy and quick with 9 different loads: 10Ω, 22Ω, 47Ω, 100Ω, 220Ω, 470Ω, 1000Ω, 22KΩ, 47KΩ.

ELEGANTLY FUNCTIONAL

Made of solid machined aluminium, the shell body guarantees low frequency resonance, feedback vibrational control and low magnetic inertial field.

GOLD NOTE
Italian Music Experience

Technics SL-1200GR

The Good:

No belt required
Built like a tank
Major history
Excellent speed accuracy
Easy to set up

Not so much:

Still confused with the original and it's flaws.

The Verdict:

A true contender for the price, though not as much of a clear cut winner as the \$4,000 1200G is in it's category



VPI's Cliffwood
\$900 (with cartridge)

www.vpiindustries.com



THE COMPONENTS OF EXCELLENCE: LASTING VALUE

Before you buy a new audio component, consider why some people would rather own a used McIntosh than a new anything else.



Made in the USA

"The best source I know 'for all things McIntosh' is Audio Classics in Vestal, New York. They do a lot of restoration work on McIntosh products and are an authorized McIntosh dealer and service center."

Jim Hannon, VP/Group Publisher & Senior Writer, *The Absolute Sound*

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Hours: Monday-Friday 8-5:30 EST - Other Hours by Appointment

VPI has been making turntables for decades. Think about that for a second when you're considering a table made by a newcomer.

Now that VPI is in its second generation, Mat Weisfeld has taken VPI to new heights. Opening up to a younger generation than that of the previous VPI owners, he's designed a number of tables more in the reach of new analog enthusiasts.

The Cliffwood, named after the city that made VPI famous, (or maybe the other way around) is a high value table that incorporates a solid tonearm and motor/platter/bearing combination.

Leaning heavily on economies of scale and a highly talented work force, VPI is able to sacrifice a bit of margin and bring a fully realized design with cartridge (produced for VPI by Grado Labs) that will only set you back \$900.

It comes out of the box ready to roll. All that you need to do is double check stylus force. Ours was right on the money.

Everything but a dust cover is included and it's a wonderful thing that the Cliffwood does NOT have a wall wart power supply, making it that much easier to integrate into your system.

A tonearm cable is supplied, and like VPI tables past, they use an interconnect style connection, rather than a DIN plug.

Should the upgrade bug hit (and it will) there are a number of great cables at your disposal. Just tell whoever you are purchasing a cable from, that you are using it for tonearm duty

We've got a lot more to tell you about the Cliffwood on the TONEAudio website. Just click here.



AUDOLICI From Portugal



A25M Integrated Amplifier



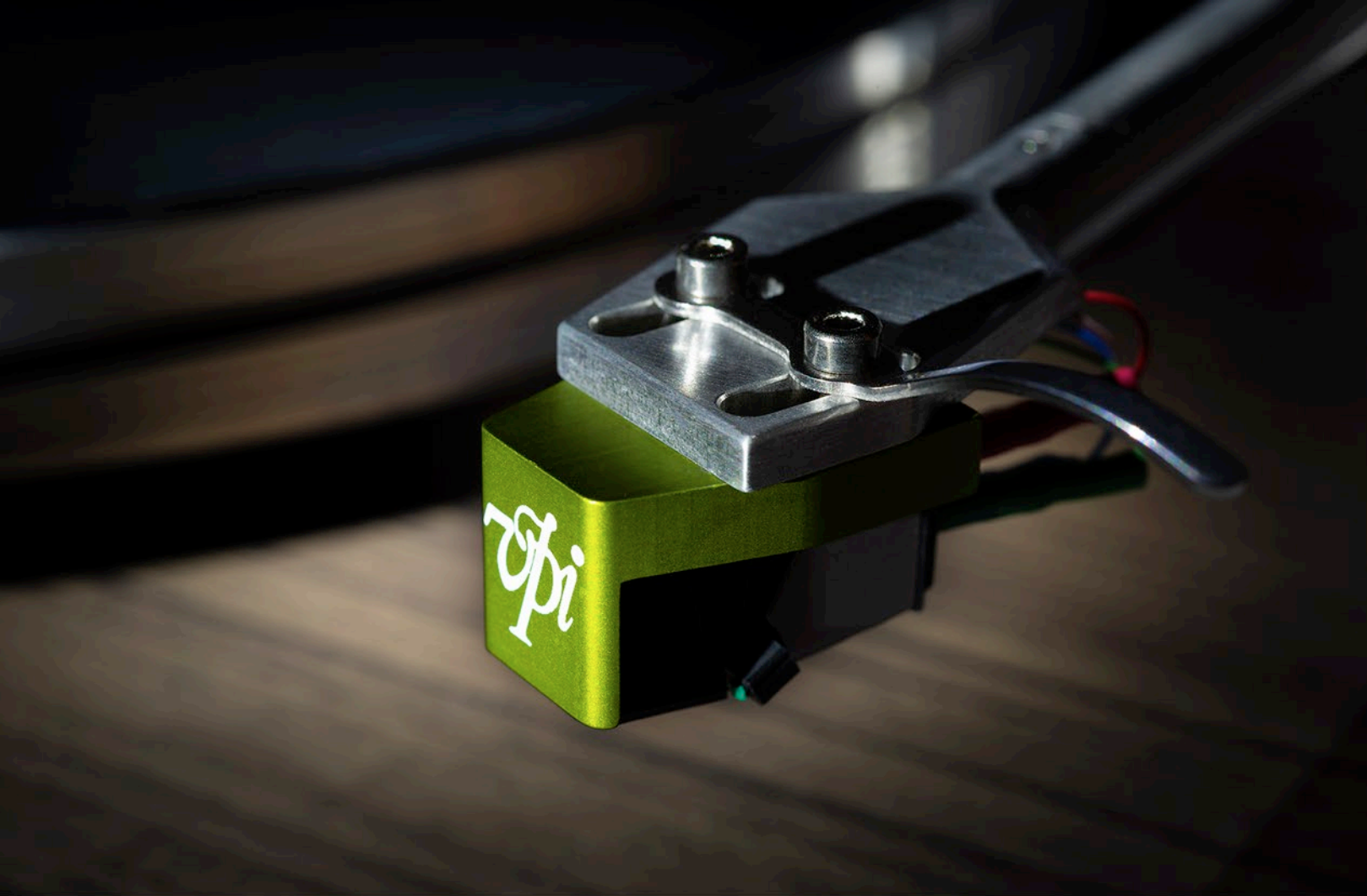
I50 "Swing"
Integrated Amplifier



AVP-01 PreAmplifier



harold@soundconsultant.com
608 208 3536 USA Distribution
www.soundconsultant.com



The VPI Cliffwood



The Good:

Great sound
Next to no setup required
Great manual
Excellent dealer/support
network

Not so much:

No dust cover, if that's
a priority

The Verdict:

Head of the class for \$900

www.vpiindustries.com

In House

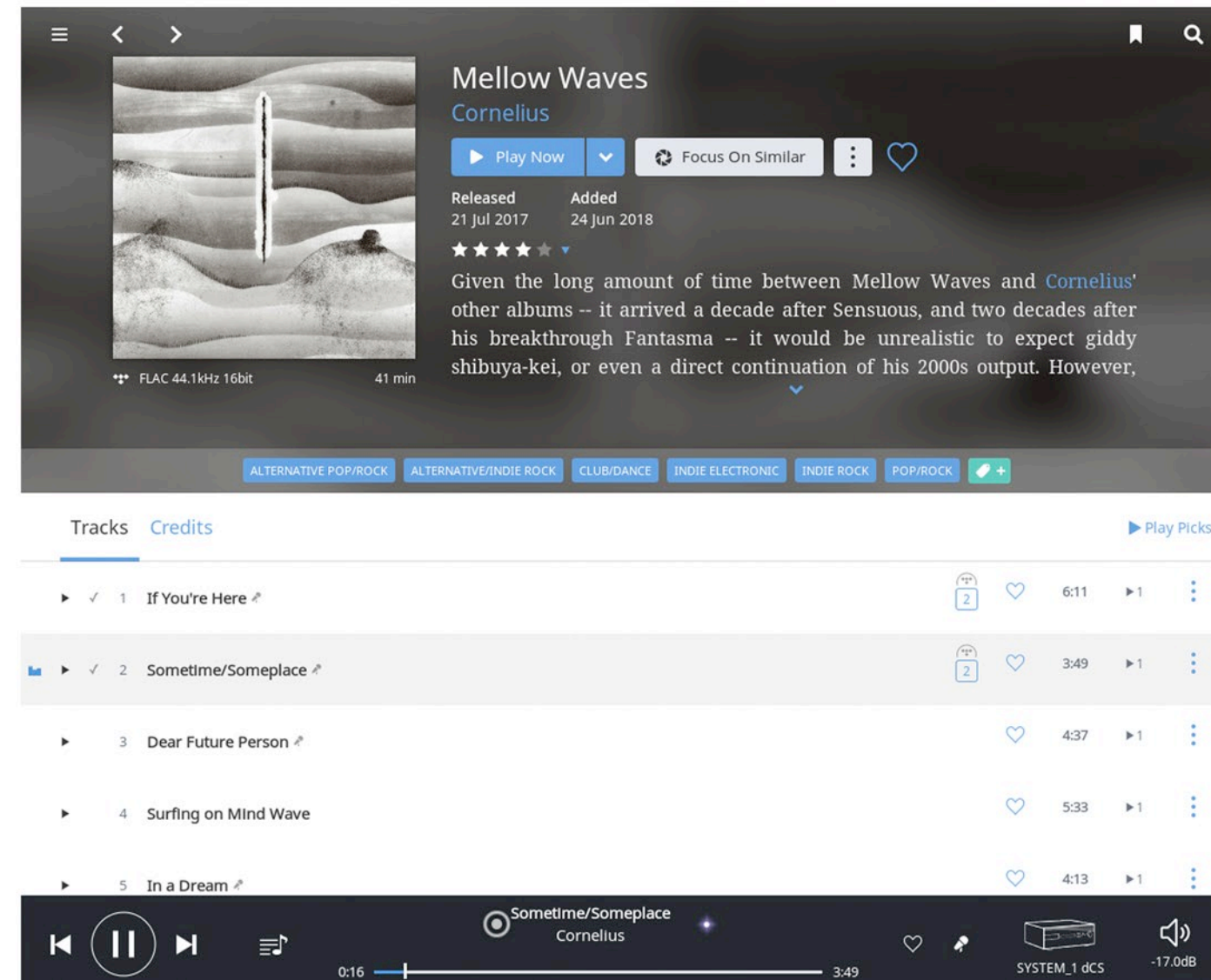
The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Mellow Waves - Cornelius

Sometimes, the best interruption in the middle of the work day, is a Facebook post with someone talking about an album *they* love. With TIDAL, it's only a click away.

Pretty soon, you've got a new favorite and a new rabbit to chase.

Thanks to Joshua Dellinger from the McIntosh Townhouse for this distraction.



Mellow Waves
Cornelius

Released: 21 Jul 2017 | Added: 24 Jun 2018

★★★★★

Given the long amount of time between Mellow Waves and Cornelius' other albums -- it arrived a decade after Sensuous, and two decades after his breakthrough Fantasma -- it would be unrealistic to expect giddy shibuya-kei, or even a direct continuation of his 2000s output. However,

FLAC 44.1kHz 16bit | 41 min

ALTERNATIVE POP/ROCK | ALTERNATIVE/INDIE ROCK | CLUB/DANCE | INDIE ELECTRONIC | INDIE ROCK | POP/ROCK

Tracks | Credits | Play Picks

Track	Duration	Actions
1 If You're Here	6:11	✓, 2, ♡, ▶, ⋮
2 Sometime/Someplace	3:49	✓, 2, ♡, ▶, ⋮
3 Dear Future Person	4:37	♡, ▶, ⋮
4 Surfing on Mind Wave	5:33	♡, ▶, ⋮
5 In a Dream	4:13	♡, ▶, ⋮

0:16 | 3:49 | SYSTEM_1 dCS | -17.0dB

Where Have all the Good Stereos Gone?



We know. Sorting through the jungle that is pre-owned hi-fi gear can be tough. Myriad Internet forums and online shopping sites just don't offer the expertise required to make sound decisions.

That's where Echo Audio comes in. We have more than 20 years of retail experience in selling hi-fi equipment the way it should be sold: In a brick-and-mortar environment that provides you with personalized attention.

While we will certainly ship any of our gently used classics directly to your door, we invite you to stop by our shop in beautiful downtown Portland, Oregon to browse our inventory in person. Thanks to an in-house service department, we not only service everything we sell, but every piece of used gear is thoroughly checked before being put on display. Consider our white-gloves treatment your guarantee against potential problems.

So, when you are looking for high-quality, lightly used hi-fi gear, look no further than Echo Audio. Be sure to check out our Web site for current products and new arrivals.

echo)))
audio

www.echohifi.com 888.248.echo

MINE: it should be yours

Welcome to MINE:

We're not just crazy about music and hi-fi here at TONE. While we can put many labels on our ethos, claiming to be music lovers, audiophiles, or perhaps even qualityphiles, that doesn't even cover it. Having me so many of our readers from all over the globe, as we are well into our 13th year, I'd say our readers are playful and inquisitive to say the least.

You've told us you like automobiles, motorcycles, fine art, bicycles, toys, cameras... Well, you get the picture. Lumping this all under a banner labeled "Style" seems too limiting. Let's face it, we're all a little selfish when it comes to our stuff.

So, let's call it what it is - MINE! And we'll be sharing more of our favorite stuff as we go.

The Revolution Diver

\$399

www.indiegogo.com

When industry buddy (and watch lover) Walter Schofield sent me a note that he had developed a watch of his own, I had to buy one, and share it with our readers.



When it comes to wristwatches, it's often a lot like fine automobiles - you have a couple tucked away that are favorites for a special occasion, and a daily driver or two.

The Revolution really fits the bill for the latter category. Built and priced perfectly, this is a watch you can enjoy guilt free in any situation. And should you forget the five-figure timepiece at home, this one will do just fine.

SERIE S

HEAR WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING



Featuring the Serie S flagship S/5 with 12" Continuous Cast™ cone bass engine.

Visit rel.net to learn more about REL and find an authorized dealer near you.

“THERE WAS **NOTHING SUBTLE** ABOUT WHAT IT DID FOR THE SOUND; THIS WASN'T BASS REINFORCEMENT, IT WAS FULL-ON BASS MANAGEMENT. THE S/3 PROVIDED **A SOLID UNDERPINNING** OF THE LOUDSPEAKERS, ALLOWING THEM TO **OPEN OUT AND CLEAN UP** IN THE MIDRANGE AND TREBLE, IMPROVING THE APPARENT STAGE WIDTH, THE **CLARITY AND DETAIL** ACROSS THE MIDRANGE AND, NATURALLY, **A DEEPER BASS** OF BOTH DEPTH AND TONALITY.” | *NICHOLAS RIPLEY, HI-FI PLUS*



Old School Sneakers
Onitsuka Tigers

\$49 - \$79/pair
www.amazon.com

With sneakers costing what cartridges used to cost, it's nice to take a trip in the way back machine now and then.

Though the leather on these doesn't feel quite as good as the ones in the 70s did, putting on a pair of these is still a fun trip down memory lane.

MINE: it should be yours

MINE: it should be yours

GHA Premium Takeup Reels

\$169-\$229/ea (finish dependent)
www.gigharboraudio.com

You've invested heavily in an open reel deck, so take the last step to analog coolness with a reel (or two) from Gig Harbor Audio. Proprietor Erik Owen always has his eye open for stylish and functional solutions.

A huge RTR fan, Owen searched far and wide for a source of metal reels and finding none, decided to produce his own. They've done the same with racks, cables and speaker stands at GHA, so stop by and see what they've done.

Available in black and silver, these gorgeous reels are produced in limited quantities, and Owen says he has "another batch done soon."

We think the lack of screws makes these reels super cool, an excellent finishing touch. Now if he'd only make them in carbon fiber! (Erik, are you listening?)



MINE: it should be yours

Sustainable Excellence: Timber Nation Audio Racks

\$600 and up
www.timbernation.com

Finding an audiophile grade equipment rack that isolates your hi-fi components from ground and speaker vibrations, reduces resonance, is aesthetically pleasing, while staying affordable, is a tall order. Some audiophile grade racks easily surpass the cost of a decent system. I found a solution with Timber Nation's Chris Futrick.

TN produces hand built solutions in standard configurations, or can build to spec, fitting your gear perfectly. Made from top quality, sustainable woods, finishes range from maple to tiger wood. Of course, the more exotic woods cost more, but two-shelf maple racks start at as little as \$600.

Racks ship flat in 2 boxes, one for the shelves and another for the posts. Assembly is quick and painless, taking about 30 minutes from start to finish and requiring only a philips head screw driver and a bit of muscle. Timber Nation suggests 2 people for easier set up. I did it myself, shhh...don't tell.

words and photo by Michael Corsentino

Setting the record straight since 1978.
40 years of American craftsmanship
from our family to yours!



VPI
made in usa

MINE: it should be yours

The 8 Is About to Return...

\$TBD, but estimated upwards of \$100k
www.bmw.com

BMW had two surprises at this year's 24 Hours of LeMans.

Their M8 GTE, announced earlier in the year, was here in full race trim to to the distance at the world's most prestigious endurance event. Running as high as second place (in class) they ultimately turned in a 12th place finish.

Perhaps bigger news for regular customers was the unveiling of the production version of the M850i Coupe, with a lot of new bits under the bonnet, particularly a new twin-turbo, 523hp V-8. The package is rounded out with xDrive and active four wheel steering.

A full blown M version is being hinted at later on, with the 600hp motor front the current M5. We shall see. But for now, this is big news for BMW lovers at the top of the food chain.

Watch for a test drive/report as soon as these are available at MyBMWHabit.com

Telefunken 6922/E88CC
Made in Ulm, Germany in 1968, these are the most sought after and rarest 6922 type ever. An incredible upgrade to your gear. Find a HUGE inventory of vintage tubes only at:
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All models in stock now.

PrimaLuna HP

The World's Finest Tube Integrated \$4399

KISEKI

Purple Heart N.S.
~~\$3499~~, \$3199

FOCAL

Scala Utopia V2
Limited to stock on hand.
~~\$33,999~~, \$19,999



MANLEY

Chinook SE MKII Phonostage
Now w/ Four Gain Settings
45dB 50dB 60dB 65dB
~~\$2599~~



VPI Super Prime Scout

10.5" Machined Arm + VTA On the Fly — ~~\$3500~~, \$2899

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MINE: it should be yours

Only the Faithful Need Apply: The 75mm f1.25 Noctilux-M Aspherical

\$12,795
www.leica.com

Leica cameras probably enjoy a bigger cult of personality than anything in high end audio.

The images they capture are breathtaking, due in major part to the fanatical level of care that exists in every aspect of their manufacture. While you might argue (probably unsuccessfully) with any Leica owner as to their validity, there is no question that there are no lenses built better than what Leica brings to the table.

Part of that Leica mystique, if you will, comes from high, maximum aperture performance. If Bigfoot is lurking or aliens are creeping in by the light of a single candle, the only camera you'll catch it with is a Leica Noctilux lens. And thanks to the super quiet shutter of a Leica, you'll handily escape without the monsters detecting you.

While so much excitement usually surrounds the 50mm f.95, the super slim depth of field it offers wide open, makes pictures somewhat of a game. The 75mm offers a near similar effect, while allowing you to take a step back. For those that can afford it and use it to its full potential, this should prove the ultimate portrait lens.

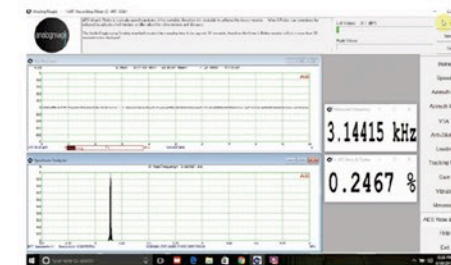
Or at least offer mega bragging rights.



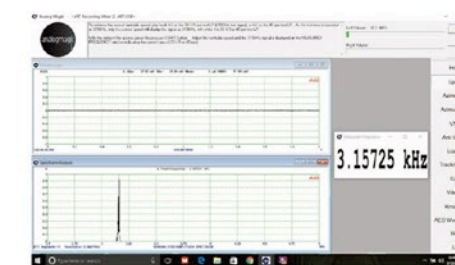
analogmagik™

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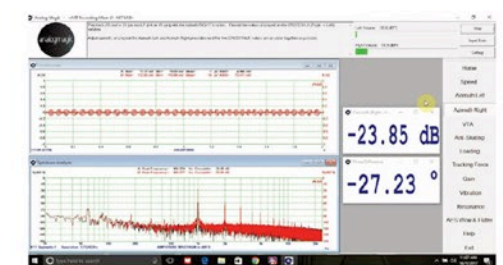
Anyone Can Be A Setup Guru



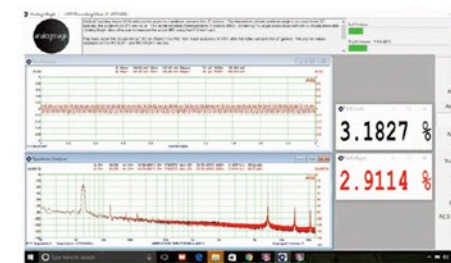
WOW & FLUTTER



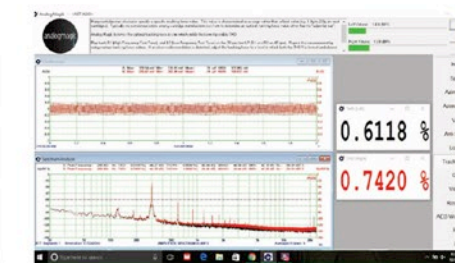
SPEED



AZIMUTH



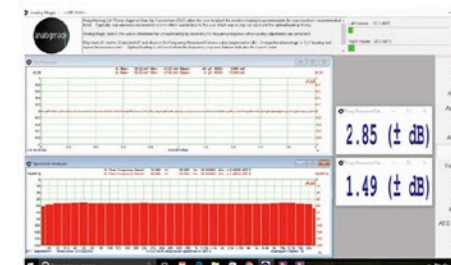
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VTF



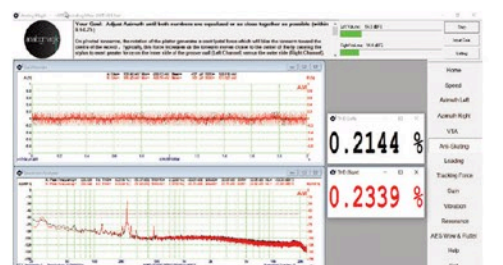
RESONANCE



LOADING & GAIN



VIBRATION



ANTI-SKATING



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EU Distributor :
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The Classic SB

VINTAGE DESIGN MEETS MODERN TECHNOLOGY



We have turbocharged our EISA Award-winning "the Classic" to bring you this upgraded package - The Classic SB.

It includes key new features:

- Electronic speedcontrol
- Sumiko Blue Point No.2 cartridge
- Top grade Clamp It
- Leather It mat

ELECTRONIC SPEEDCONTROL



SUMIKO BLUE POINT NO.2 CARTRIDGE



For more information, visit www.pro-jectusa.com

MINE: it should be yours

Dynaco ST-70 T-Shirt

\$25
www.gigharboraudio.com

Celebrate your enthusiasm for one of hifi's most classic designs. If you don't have a Stereo 70, at least you can have a shirt.

Fortunately, we got both from our pals at Gig Harbor Audio. They happened to have a mint Stereo 70, which you'll be reading about very soon.

MINE: it should be yours



Analog Majik's Cartridge Torque Wrench

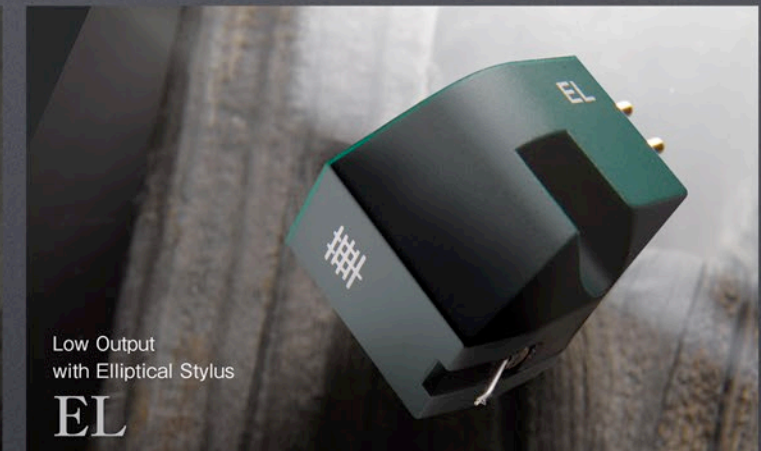
\$150
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Analog Magik's Richard Mak leaves nothing to chance with turntable setup. Precisely tightening your cartridge to the headshell is the last step to achieving optimum performance. To take this even further, Mak includes two custom sets of Teflon washers for precise results.

HANA



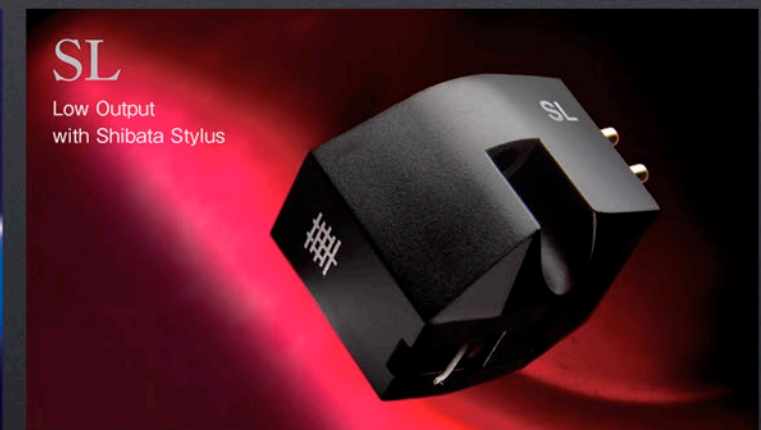
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- The Absolute Sound Issue 279 January 2018

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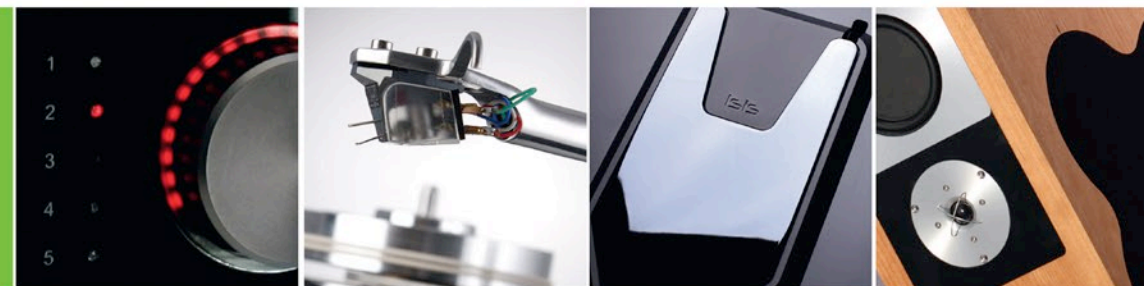
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Can't Get it Out of my Head...

by Emily Duff

The other morning I woke up realizing that I had listened to an entire album, in sequence, in my sleep. The best part of this is that it wasn't a dream about sitting and listening to a record. This record was the "soundtrack" from my dream. Like any obsessed music lover, I went straight to my collection and grabbed that LP, **Ray Charles'** *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, and I haven't been able to get it out of my head since. No surprise with such great hits like "Bye Bye Love," "You Don't Know Me," "Just a Little Lovin'," "Careless Love," "Hey Good Lookin'" and so many others, that this record is on repeat. If this is any indication that my Dream Music Supervisor is looking for acknowledgement, well then, good work! This record is pure GOLD and somebody might want to look at this collection of songs for a musical.

Speaking of sequence, I am very old school when it comes to how a record is structured in its track order. A stunning example, and a record I simply cannot stop listening to since it came out in 1995 is **Emmylou Harris'** *Wrecking Ball*. Produced and indelibly stamped by the very talented Daniel Lanois, *Wrecking Ball* is a start to finish journey both in its storytelling and sonic tapestry with songs written by Neil Young, Rodney Crowell, Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Kate, and Anna McGarrigle, Julie Miller, David Olney, Gillian Welch, and of course, Emmylou. Each song unfolds like a ballet, a perfect nod and a bow into the next, so seamless that you sometimes don't feel the emotional punch in the gut stunning you later as you catch yourself humming the tunes, recalling their impact. Nuclear fairy dust is how Emmylou delivers it. Bad news delivered by an angel. It's almost too sad to listen to but I can't stop myself from reaching for it just about every day.

Perhaps it's because I was just back in Muscle Shoals, Alabama making a new record at the legendary FAME Studio, but I have been wearing out my copy of *The Fame Singles Box*. This cool set of 45rpm singles comes complete with a letter from the desk of "Florence Sheffield - Press a nd Promotions" dated June 28, 1968. The letter references their biggest stars to date, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Joe Simon and Clarence Carter to name a few.

It then goes on to list the newer artists in this collection: Jimmy Ray Hunter and The Del Rays, Jimmy Hughes, James Barnett and Art Freeman. The Classic Muscle Shoals Sound right here in the format it was intended to be heard. "The Girl That Radiates That Charm" was also recorded by the great Arthur Alexander as well and is worth the price of the box itself. Jimmy Hughes' "You Might as Well Forget Him" was written by Tommy Roe and was made popular by The Tams.

Paul Thorn is a serious force of nature. His live shows are like tent revivals where sin and temptation are baited and goaded to enter at their own risk. That smile. That voice. His guitar chops and his unbelievable band always make Paul a sure thing when it comes to purchasing a concert ticket. I never miss a show when he's in town. His new record *Don't Let the Devil Ride*, is a groove-fest in the highest order. Everything about this record is stellar and if you don't run out and buy it right now you're just



plain bonkers or suffering from oppositional defiant disorder. Either way, stop depriving yourself and get on this train, it's going somewhere very cool..

So cool that it lead me straight to **Allen Toussaint's** 1975 masterpiece, *Southern Nights*. Straight from the top with "Last Train," this record pays dividends. I don't need to write too much about this one; you just need to hear it and you won't be able to get it out of your head! Peace.

Emily Duff is a singer you won't be able to get out of your head. And she's got a new record coming out soon. Find out more at: <https://emilyduff.bandcamp.com>

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Aural Report

by Jeff Dorgay

Car guys love to banter about tires, brake pads, suspension components, you name it. There's a zillion ways you can trick out your car if that's your game, and while we can get somewhat opinionated at times, it's all in the name of good fun. And chances are that even if some of those in your circle don't approve of your choices, if you provide the beer, there's a good chance they'll come over on Saturday and help you install a set of coilovers.

Not so in the hifi world. It's always been pretty contentious. Just as people still haven't learned to watch out for motorcycles on the highway, audiophiles love to argue about cable.

In a love/hate way, of course.

I don't even need to put gas on this flame to start a war. Nothing, I repeat, nothing polarizes audio enthusiasts like cable. (Well maybe room treatments can twist some undies...)

For the record, I do think premium cable does make a difference. I think good quality wire combined with connectors that make a solid connection, that are well executed will reveal more music than off the shelf stuff.



What's the best cable? For me, it's the cable that does the least bit of harm to the signal from the components you've spent your hard earned money on. Who's cable is the best? Heck if I know. I've used quite a few things over the years and I've settled on Cardas, Tellurium-Q, Nordost, and WireWorld.

And it's not a coincidence that these are the only cable companies I've offered ad space in our pages. I know all of these people personally, know what they do, and appreciate their consistently. But then, I'm not an audio enthusiast that likes to geek out that much.

I have four systems that all exhibit a certain level of performance to evaluate components at varying price and performance points.

Because every component in your system has different properties, some will interact with cables more than others, and I've seen the most variation in speaker cables and oddly enough, tonearm cables.

This isn't going to be a long discussion on various cable. There isn't a Nomex suit in the world able to hold back the fiery rage that will follow, and honestly, you've got better things to do with your life than argue with me or anyone else about cables. It will just lead to madness, trust me.

So here's my short list of suggestions, take them for what they are worth. First, don't spend crazy money on cable until you've optimized everything else you can. Don't overlook obvious stuff like leveling your turntable, and making sure your speakers are in phase. Don't laugh.

Find a good dealer that will not only give you a little bit of help and guidance, demand to bring said cable home for a few days to audition in your system. For all the talk of long cable break in, 24 hours of passing signal through will get you in the ball park. If you don't hear major improvement don't write the check. It's that simple. If you're straining to hear a difference, don't write

the check. No matter what all the people on whatever forum you visit say.

Finally, if you can, try and get away from using cable as a tone control and a fix all for your system's foibles.

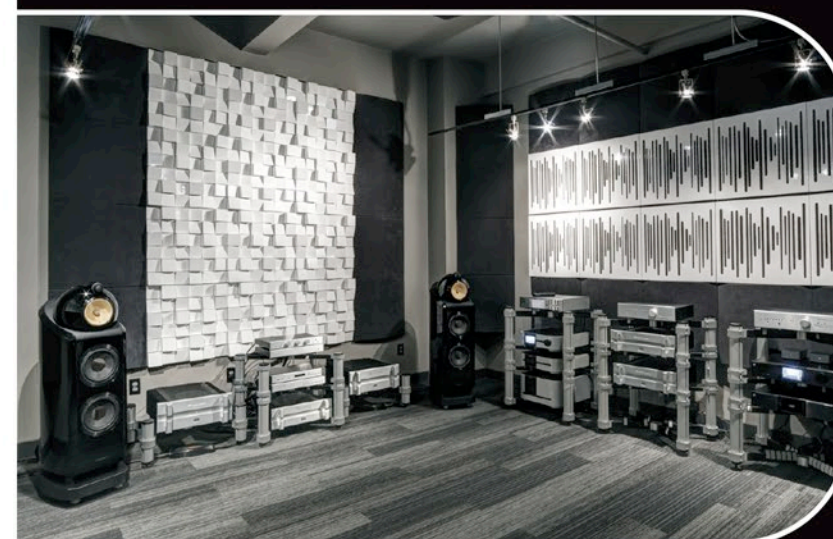
Crazy as it seems, consider listening for the cable that reveals the most music to you, without altering the tonal balance one way or another. That's my approach, and I'm sticking to it. The right cables can take your system the last click to nirvana if chosen with care. You've all got brains in your heads and shoes on your feet, so I'll leave it to you as to how much of your hard earned cash to spend, regardless of who's cable you choose.

Call up a friend, have them come over and listen. It might be more fun than you think.

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Audiophile Pressings

by Jeff Dorgay

I always joke with my more religious friends, "if you could ask God one question what would it be? They always come up with fairly altruistic or esoteric questions like "who really killed Kennedy," or "how much time do we have left?" That kind of stuff.

Me, I'd ask the simple question, "Beatles or Stones?" But I'm a simple man, and that would answer the question forever. I like that kind of resolve.

I once asked that question to the late rock photographer, Jim Marshall and he said, "Fuck that, Allman Brothers, that's the world's best rock & roll band." Having been the guy that shot the cover of the famous *Allman Brothers Live at The Fillmore* cover, he might have been just a little bit biased.

A similar bias seems to invade Stones fans, if asked to choose between their earlier catalog and later work. The box we have here does include the widely acknowledged *Exile on Main Street*, along with all of the records that occurred after it.

Me, I'm more of a Beatles guy, but I don't have a hard time admitting that Keith Richards is one of the world's greatest musical geniuses (as well as a longevity in the face of adversity expert), so I'm equally fond of the whole catalog, and I don't mind saying I love *Bridges to Babylon*. And I don't mind saying *A Bigger Bang* sucks. Flame suit on.

Rather than do an exhaustive comparison with *Exile* (and if you're a mega fan, you probably have ten copies anyway) suffice to say the sonics are very good. The entire set was half speed mastered at Abbey Road, and is in keeping with the other pressings we've heard that have come from this famous house.



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Audiophile Pressings

by Jeff Dorgay

Box sets are always cool, but as our resident collector Tom Caselli is fond of saying, "it's the little details that really make the difference." This Stones box delivers the goods, with voluptuous printing quality, and a recreation of the zippered *Sticky Fingers* cover that will blow you away.

Considering that you're getting 15 LP's (some 2-disc sets) for \$399, this has to be the rock bargain of the year. Even if you are only a moderate Stones fan, you should consider adding this one to your collection.

TONE publisher Jeff Dorgay ironically loves the Rolling Stones but only has three box sets of their work.

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Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into



Kathleen Thomas has been in the audio business since she was a kid, having worked for Sumiko, AQ, and now Elac.

If you've been in one of her rooms at a recent hifi show, you know she always plays great tunes.

Here's a few of her current favorites:

U.S. Girls -
Velvet 4 Sale

Ezra Furman -
God Lifts up The Lowly

Aldous Harding -
Imagining My Man

Suuns -
X-ALT

UNKLE -
Looking for the Rain

Efrim Manuel Menuck -
LxOxVx/Shelter In Place

Big Thief - Haley

Low - Nothing But Heart

James Blackshaw -
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Jeff Dorgay Tone Audio

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Music Hall mmf 9.3

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**Music Hall makes plug and play analog easy,
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Music Hall products have always stood for value and the mmf series of turntables have won fans and critics the world over.

Owner Roy Hall is a man that gets straight to business and the mmf 9.3 reflects that.

After a quick survey of the bits at hand, the mmf 9.3 goes together quickly and only requires minor adjustments to start spinning records.

The factory affixed Goldring cartridge proved to be accurately set up and a good tracker as well. All in all, a fantastic combination for just over \$2k.

Please click [here](#) to read our full review.



Music Hall mmf-9.3

The Good:

Great sound, great synergy with
supplied cartridge.

Accurately set up out of box -
easy plug and play table

Not so much:

Could use a few more pictures
in the manual to make assembly
easier.

The Verdict:

What's not to love?

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Olympia



Moonstone



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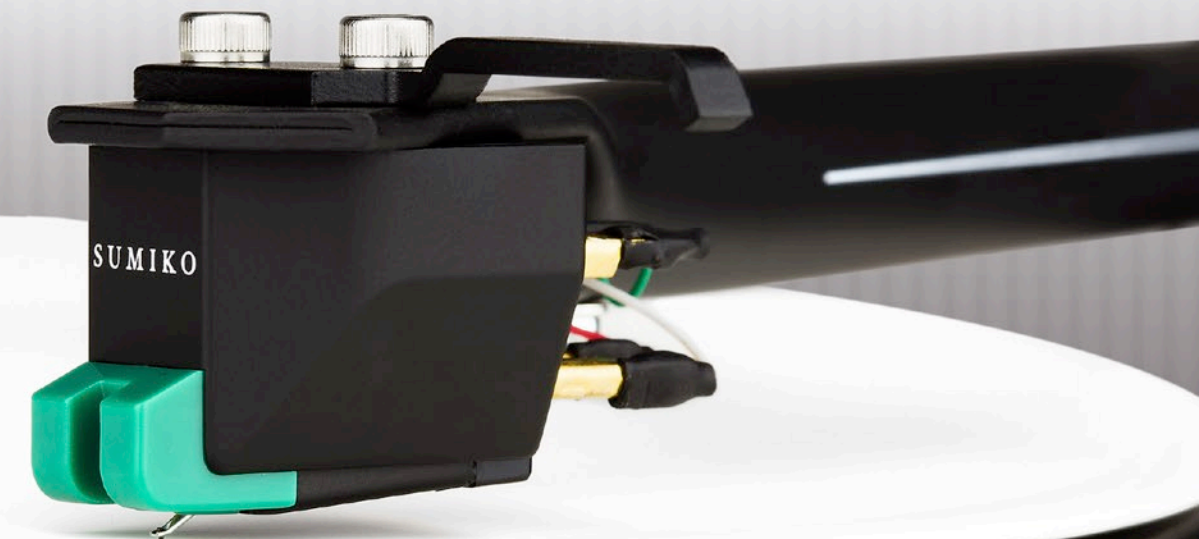


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In House

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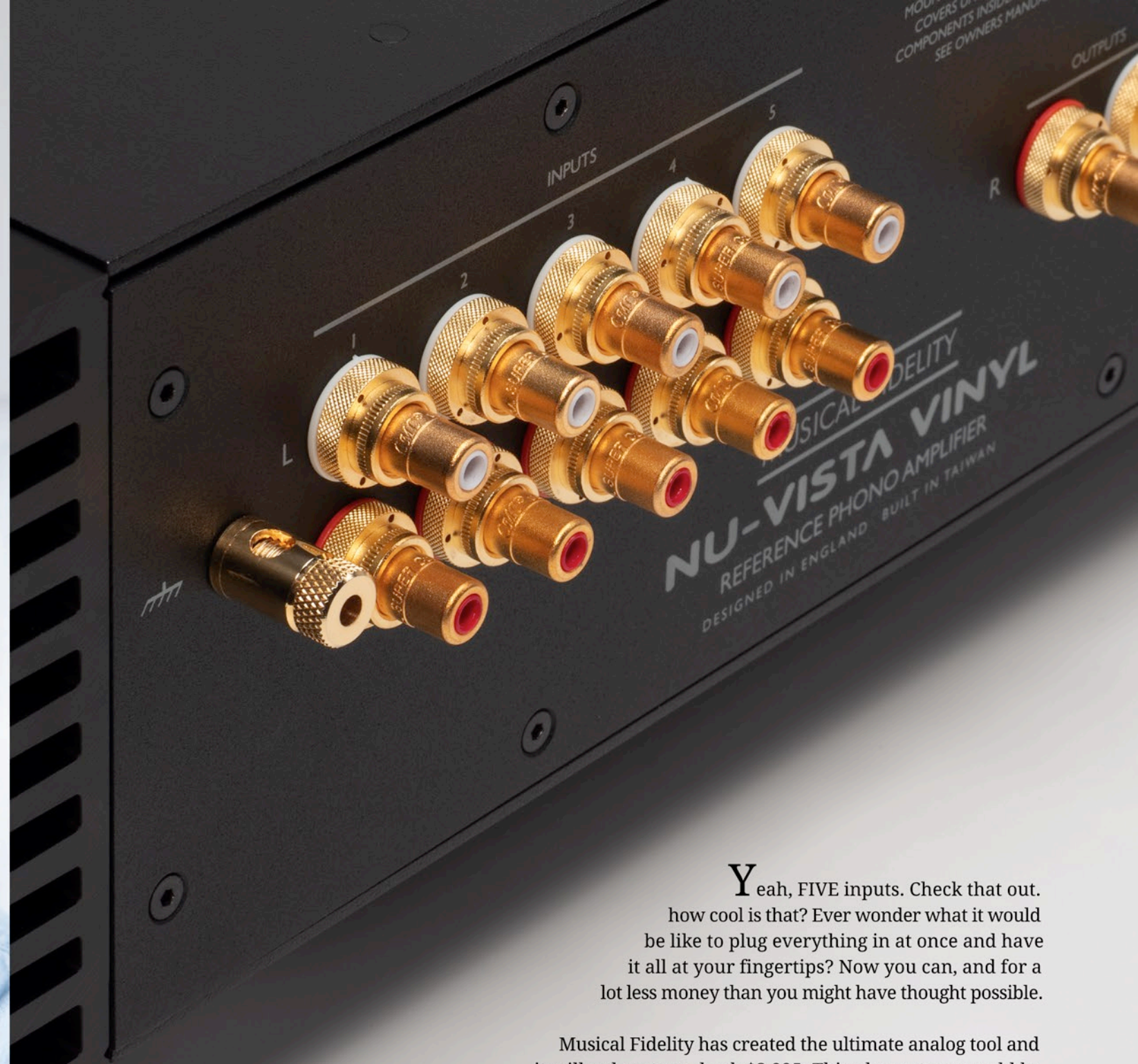
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Yeah, FIVE inputs. Check that out. how cool is that? Ever wonder what it would be like to plug everything in at once and have it all at your fingertips? Now you can, and for a lot less money than you might have thought possible.

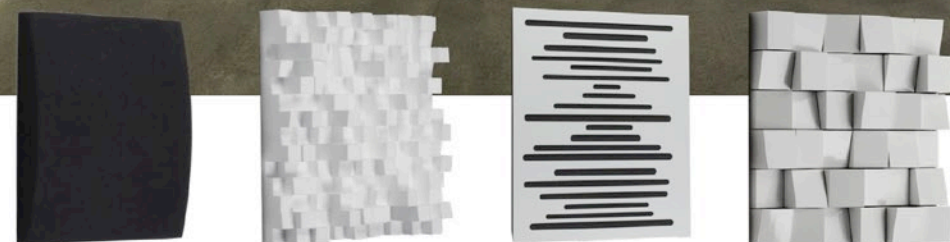
Musical Fidelity has created the ultimate analog tool and it will only set you back \$2,995. This phono stage would be the deal of the century if it sounded half this good and only had one input. But this all vacuum-tube phono stage has five. And yes that is as much fun as it sounds.

You don't have to have an arsenal of mega turntables to enjoy the Nu Vista. And thanks to balanced XLR and single ended RCA outputs, you can use it as an analog command center to power two systems, or those embracing the return of analog tape can use that extra output to drive a record input on deck of your choice. To put it mildly, we love this preamplifier.

To read more, click [here](#) to visit the TONEAudio website.



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Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista Vinyl

The Good:

Five inputs
All inputs configurable as MM or MC
Superior sonics
High value for performance offered

Not so much:

Zero

The Verdict:

Did we say five inputs?
Did we say only three grand?



Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Surgeon -
The Primary Clear Light

L.S.G./CJ Bolland
Netherworld - CJ Bolland Mix

Jack Ladder -
Blue Mirror

GAS - Rausch 5

Minimal Violence -
Untitled Workout

Father John Misty -
Dissapointing Diamonds Are
The Rarest of Them All

Darren Nye -
Things She Said

David Byrne -
Gasoline and Dirty Sheets

Magazine -
The Light Pours out of Me

Ben Salter -
Back Yourself

John Darko is one of the most intriguing guys covering the world of audio today, and his musical tastes are equally interesting.

Here's a list of some of his recent favorites. Be sure to visit his site Darko.Audio., and his new podcast series.



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Take Your Whisky Home!

by Roy Hall

The man with the whisky bottle kept filling my glass. I was thrilled; a 14 year-old drinking alcohol for the first time. It was a synagogue party and I had discovered the joy of sponge cake and scotch. Ultimately, this was not a good combination, as I staggered home drunk—or as we called it in Glasgow, legless. This was my first hangover and it turned me off scotch for about 9 years.

In 1971 I moved to Israel, where a Scottish friend reintroduced me to the stuff—this time a single malt whisky. (This friend, I subsequently found out, used to be a Mossad agent. But that's beside the point). It was a bottle of 18-year-old Glenfarclas, cask strength, and it was delicious. Thus started my journey into the wonderful world of single malts. After that whenever I travelled to Scotland, to the chagrin of my wife, I visited a different distillery. This story is just one small part of my lifelong exploration of uisge beatha, the water of life.

Most Scotch whisky is foul tasting. Right off the still it is disgusting, and after a few years in the barrel it is usually horrible and only worthy of blending. A man called Andrew Usher and his brother John are credited with making blended whisky palatable. Their blend was a mixture of malt whiskies from Glenlivet and Royal Brackla, plus some other non-descript malt and about two thirds grain whisky. They were not the first to make blended whisky, but they were the most successful. Making this rotgut drinkable put scotch on the world map.

Whisky is basically made from distilled beer. You malt (germinate) some barley, chop it up, add hot water and yeast, and let it ferment for a while. Take that “beer”, run it through the still, and voila, you have...? It's not whisky. It's really moonshine. Stick it in various types of used oak barrels, and pray it tastes good at the end.

To tell the truth, it's not really as haphazard as that. Now that a few large companies make it they have found a way of standardizing their product. For instance, after germination, when the enzymes and sugars are released, heat is applied to stop this process. In the old days burning peat, which was the cheapest available heat source in Scotland, did this. When peat burns, a lot of smoke is created and this smoke would often penetrate the barley and affect the flavor. Thus each batch was slightly different from the previous one. This artisanal effect made trying newer bottlings most interesting (similar to comparing vintages in French wine). Most of the distilleries in Islay in those days did their own malting but now they have the Port Ellen Maltings, a one-stop shop for seven of the eight distilleries on the island. The individual distilleries instruct the factory how many phenols they want. This ensures a consistent amount of ‘smokiness’ to the barley and thus a consistent taste. This tinkers with the “terroir” and, even though the whiskies still tend to be good, I feel something is lost in this standardization.

Malt whisky was the only whisky made before the invention of the patent still. Somehow, through luck and later, skill, some of the distillers started making and bottling single malt whisky that was drinkable. And that's the best part of this tale.

The best way to experience scotch is to go to Islay yourself—go to Laphroaig, Lagavulin, and Ardbeg. The flight from Glasgow is short, and the plane is filled with locals. This is a small island, and these three distilleries are about a mile apart from each other. They all use similar barley and water, the climate is the same, and their whiskey barrel warehouses are all buffeted by the Atlantic Ocean; yet, their whiskies taste totally different.

Take Your Whisky Home!

by Roy Hall

When I've visited, the only immediate difference I could discern was the shape of the stills. I learnt later that most distilleries are superstitious about the shape of their individual stills and when they have to replace them, they re-create them exactly: bashes, dents and all.

I like the whiskies that Laphroig makes. Their 10 year-old is the most popular but I find it rather raw and unfinished. (Although its ubiquity makes it perfectly acceptable in an emergency.) On the other hand, the 15 and 18 years are superb. But my all time favorite whisky is Lagavulin 16 year-old. It has intensity and a complexity that is rivaled only by fine cognacs and armagnacs. It is so peaty, salty and sea weedy that it is not for everyone, especially novices. But, once you arrive there, hopefully after a lifetime of tasting, you will understand what I mean. Ardbeg make very peaty whiskies. The one that I liked the best, 'The Beast' is now no longer available but some of the others are very popular but not to my taste.

I visited the island in 2012 and the French company Remy-Cointreau had just purchased Bruichladdich. I noticed that they had casks from Chateau d'Yquem and also some used burgundy barrels—not the standard bourbon or sherry barrels. The investment in making malt whisky is enormous. You have to wait years before the product is drinkable. This can be 8 or 10, 12 or even 15 years; in fact, you can't even call it whisky before it is 3 years old. So there is an enormous push among distillers to produce what they call "New Style Whisky," or, young whisky that is made drinkable. Bruichladdich have a bunch of them and they do this by putting the distillate in non-traditional barrels and hoping the flavors of the casks soften the harshness of the raw spirit. As somewhat of a traditionalist, I so far have not tasted any that I like.

Bowmore is also in Islay, and its distillery is cool. It sits in the center of the town of Bowmore and abuts the banks of Loch Indaal. It is over 200 years old and is the oldest on the island. The owners built a leisure center and swimming pool adjacent to the distillery, and gave it to the local municipality for free. The waste heat from the still warms the waters of the pool. Very ecological! Their whiskies are tasty but again, I feel the younger ones are unfinished and have a slight afterburn. I would start at the 15 year old and work upwards.



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Take Your Whisky Home!

by Roy Hall

Once, on touring the facility, I noticed that they had a bottle of whisky on sale for 1,000 pounds (approx. \$1400). I queried my guide and he said, “We advertised it for 500 pounds and no one bought it. This year we doubled the price to 1,000 pounds and we sold 3 bottles.”

When I think back to that drunken day in 1961 I realize that I have been a lover of whisky for almost 50 years.

This romance started in earnest when I brought a bottle of malt whisky to my very first hi-fi show. It was an 18-year-old Macallan. In those days (over 30 years ago) it was affordable and rather unknown. (Now a bottle costs in excess of \$200, which in my opinion is overpriced by \$100.) This started a trend and to every show I have attended I bring a bottle or two. I now judge the efficacy of a show in which I exhibit by the amount of bottles we serve. A good show is 8 bottles and an even better one is 10.

This generosity has caused some problems over the years.

One morning, Sam Tellig of *Stereophile* Magazine fame visited my booth where he drank more than one shot of whisky. He then went to lunch and shared a bottle of wine with his host. That afternoon he attended a “ask the writers seminar” and being drunk, made a real fool of himself. That evening a memo was sent out to all the staff at *Stereophile*. “No writer is allowed to visit Roy Hall’s booth before 5 in the evening.”

Every few years I return to Scotland and stay with my old friend Ivor of Linn Products. More than once we have sat down with a good bottle of malt and reminisced. It’s a funny thing, but in sharing these special moments, even though the bottle is usually empty, neither of us is ever drunk.



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MoFi
UltraDeck+
\$1,799 and up

www.mofielectronics.com

photos courtesy mofi electronics



**After decades of making
great records, Mobile
Fidelity makes a great
turntable.**

Mobile Fidelity, and their new electronics division came up with a winner right out of the chute. Rather than waste a lot of time reinventing the platter, they got some of the best minds in the industry to assist them on their quest.

The result is a truly finished product, right down to the packaging. No aspect of the UltraDeck+ feels like you're going to have to wait for next years model to "get the last few bugs out." The Ultra Deck+ rocks right now.

You can order it with one of two MoFi MM cartridges pre-mounted for the ultimate in plug and play indulgence, or it is available sans cartridge, so those of you that prefer to go your own way.

Regardless of your path, you'll love the UltraDeck+. We certainly do.

And you can read our full review very soon.



MoFi UltraDeck+

\$1,799 - Table only
\$1,999 - w/ultra tracker MM cart
\$2,199 - w/master tracker MM cart

The Good:

Top shelf build quality
Great attention to small details
Great sound
One of the easiest to set up

Not so much:

The MoFi cartridge is good, but not excellent.

The Verdict:

A spectacular first effort. These guys have done their homework. A table you'll be proud to own.



Sumiko MM Cartridges

\$149 - \$599

www.sumikoaudio.net

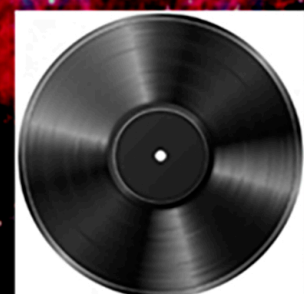
The crew that brought vinyl nirvana to a number of enthusiasts with the Oyster and the Pearl, have a new range of MM jewels, building on the sonic reputation of the originals. Four new MM cartridges, all with user replaceable styli.

For those on an upgrade path, the three cartridges beneath the top range amethyst all share the same body and generator, so an update is only a plug-in stylus away.

All four possess a neutral tonal balance, with great dynamic. Resolution, trackability and smoothness increase as you go up the range.

Watch for our full evaluation soon.

EVERYTHING CHANGES...



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— Robert Deutsch, *Stereophile*



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- DiaLogue Premium Integrated \$3399
- DiaLogue Premium HP Integrated (pictured) \$4399
- Award-winning preamps and poweramps also available

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Go to primaluna-usa.com to get an inside look at our products. You will understand why critics around the world say PrimaLuna makes the best-engineered and best-built tube components you can buy at any price. info@primaluna-usa.com 909.931.0219

Hana SL
\$750

www.musicalsurroundings.com



The entire Hana family of MC cartridges has the audiophile world re-thinking what a great MC cartridge should really cost.

At only \$750, this .5mv output MC features a shibata stylus and an unmistakably clean sonic profile.

We've been living with this one for a while now, and after installing it in a number of turntables, are convinced that the performance lives up to all the great reviews.

Full review to follow, but the short answer is buy one.



TelluriumQ Black and Black Diamond Phono

\$500 - \$2,000

www.telluriumq.com

We've had great luck with TQ's top range Silver Diamond speaker cables and interconnects in our main reference system, and equally great results with their entry level cable in other configurations.

Bottom Line: Tellurium Q makes fantastic cable, regardless of your budget.

With this being an all analog issue, they were kind enough to send us their Black and Black Diamond phono cables for review. The initial results are stunning, but we are putting them through the paces with a number of different turntables to give you the final scoop.

So far, the results have been excellent, and these cables can be configured with RCA connectors at both ends, in case you have a Technics or VPI turntable, or with a variety of DIN plugs, should you have something else.

It is also worth noting that Tellurium Q has just won "The Queen's Award For Enterprise," and were called to Buckingham Palace to receive their award. We're looking forward to seeing the photos!

Watch for our full review soon.

Channel Islands PEQ-1 mk. II w/high current power supply

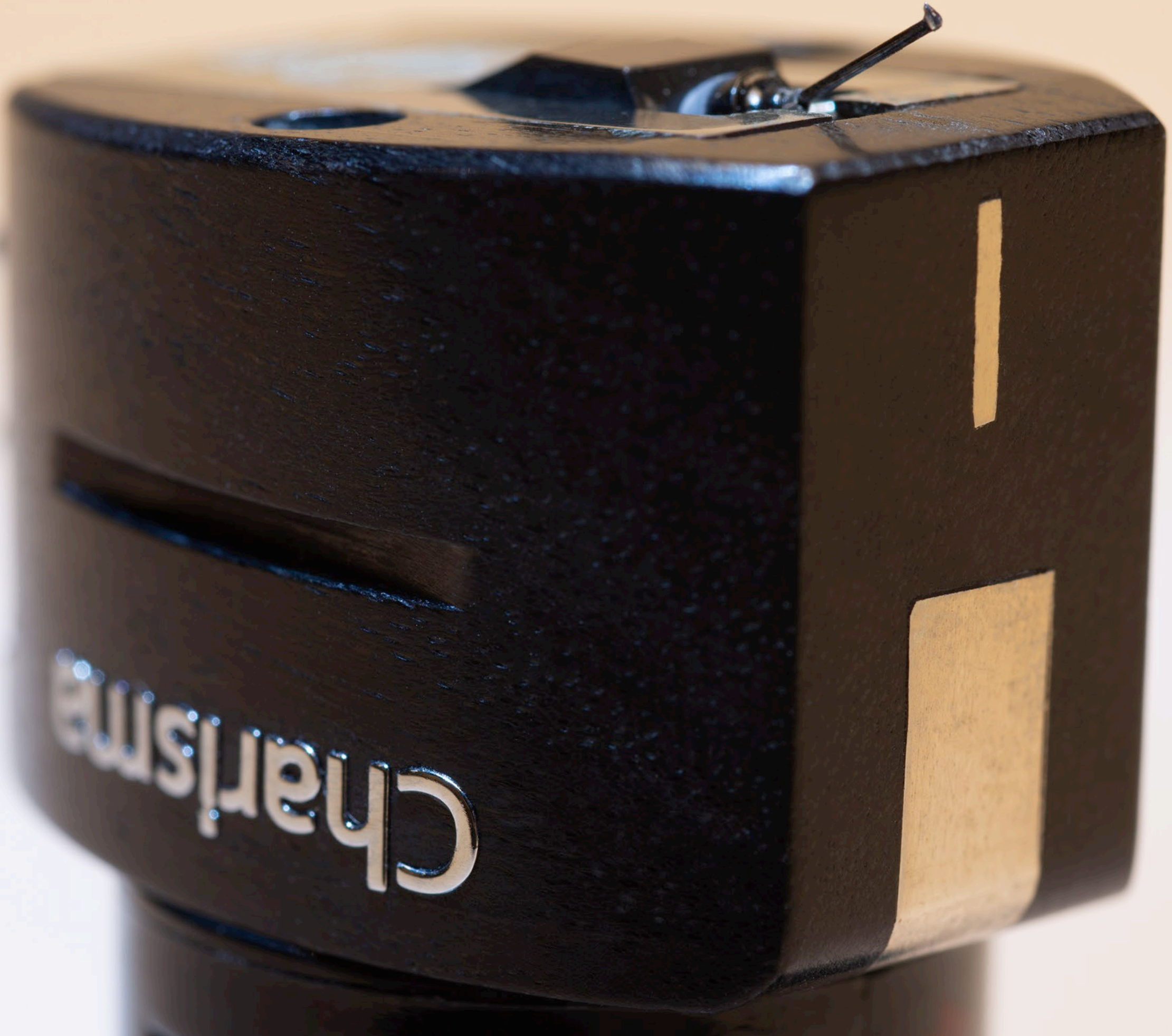
\$995 +\$295 for PS
www.ciaudio.com

Channel Islands has made a major reputation on great gear that doesn't break and doesn't break the bank either. The current version of their PEQ phono stage is a perfect example. By itself, even with the wall wart supplies, it's one of the best phono preamps you can find for just under a thousand bucks, but adding the AC-15 MKII power supply takes it to a new level of performance.

Every aspect of the PEQ is improved, and after a lot of listening, this \$295 power supply easily doubles the performance, making the two box pair our favorite budget MM/MC phonestage.

Review shortly.





Clearaudio Charisma MM v.2

\$2,000

www.musicalsurroundings.com

Vinyl lovers often bump into the MM vs MC question, and there's not always a "right" answer. Often, the toughest part hinges on your hardware. If you don't have a phono stage with enough gain, requiring an upgrade, the choice becomes blurrier, especially if you have a MM phonostage you're happy with.

The arguments on both sides are valid. A MM cartridge doesn't need the extra gain, and often has a bit more dynamic punch than a comparably priced MC, yet the latter often possesses more low level detail retrieval.

The line gets even blurrier as the price tag increases.

We've found the Clearaudio Charisma to be a stunner, regardless of which side of the MM/MC debater you're on. Combining what Clearaudio has learned making cartridges like the Goldfinger, they've come up with a MM having plenty of low level detail, yet not at a loss for dynamic swing either. It's certainly one of our favorites.

[Click here to visit Clearaudio's website](#)

[Read our full review here.](#)

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(530) 878-5350 - www.passlabs.com



Ortofon 2M Bronze

\$440

www.ortofon.com

Sometimes we forget the classics

Ortofon's 2M series has been around for a while now, but it's still no less valid.

This \$440 MM cartridge still delivers the goods, offering a wide frequency response and explosive dynamics, combined with great tracking.

In short, a great all-rounder that's an excellent upgrade from the basic cart that you may have started your analog journey with.

And thanks to a user replaceable stylus, this is a reasonable cartridge you can live with for the long haul.

Check one out at your favorite Ortofon dealer.

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

UFO - Rock Bottom

Thin Lizzy -
Opium Trail

Motorhead - Lost Johnny

Aerosmith - Combination

Judas Priest -
Saints in Hell

Santana - Stone Flower

Malo -Cafe

Latin Playboys -
Manifold de Amour

Los Lobos -
Luz De Mi Vida

Blue Oyster Cult -
Veteran of The Psychic Wars

I've never met TONE reader
Andrey Medina, but I follow him
on Facebook. He's got a great
sense of humor and wears some
of the best rock t-shirts ever!

So thanks Andrey, for sharing
a playlist with us!



no. 5 Texas

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M5Si \$1999

The M5si is a real high end amplifier. At 150wpc, with high current delivery, it will drive virtually any loudspeaker easily.

M6Si \$2999

The M6si offers such excellent performance, facilities and power that unless you are seeking the most exotic high-end sound quality you would never need another amplifier. Internally, the M6si is configured as 2 independent monobloc power amps with a separate pre amp.



All models are available in black or silver finish.

For more informations visit www.musicalfidelity.com

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Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

Gold Note IS-1000

\$5,000

www.goldnote.it

We're almost done with a number of integrated amplifier reviews, for those of you that want a compact, yet high performance solution.

The new IS-1000 from Gold Note is fab. It sounds great, is easy to use and incorporates a phono stage derived from their award-winning PH-1000, along with a streamer and DAC.

Power comes from a 125 watt per channel, class-AB amplifier stage that takes no prisoners. This beauty sounds as good as any separates you might be considering.

SCANSONIC HD



*"Speaker DNA
- from the
best of
families"*

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Paradigm Persona 3 Speakers

\$7,500/pair

www.persona.paradigm.com

Packing all beryllium drivers based on the award winning Persona 9H floorstanders into a compact cabinet makes for an incredible stand mount speaker.

MartinLogan Dynamo Subwoofers

\$399.95 - \$1,699.95

www.martinlogan.com

MartinLogan has always made incredible subwoofers because they've had to keep pace with their ESL speakers. The new Dynamo's are a step beyond, with optional wireless capability, Anthem Room Correction (ARC©), all controlled by your favorite iOS or Android device.

Pure Audio Project Voxative

\$15,000/pair

www.pureaudioproject.com.com

We love our PAP Trio 15 horns a ton, so now it's time to investigate how they work, configured with the Voxative Field Coil driver. This is part of the intrigue with the PAP speakers, you can change the configuration at will!



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Luxman PD-171A

\$6,995

www.luxman.com

A number of famous vintage Luxman turntables are direct drive, yet the new PD-171A you see here is belt driven.

No matter, this combination of analog refinement delivers beautiful sound, with speed controls at the ready and a tonearm with removable headshell, catering to the analog lover that likes to mix it up in the cartridge department.

A master of understatement, the beauty is in the details. The PD-171A is exquisitely built and finished. Every where you look, or touch, the surfaces are machined to perfection.

This table is as enjoyable to operate as it is to just gaze upon. Be sure to give yours a place of honor.



Clarity by Design

Transparent Uncolored Accurate.

This is what made the sound of the original British Broadcasting Corporation monitors legendary. Graham Audio has made it their mission to continue this legacy, and to bring the Chartwell LS3/5 and LS3/5A, the Chartwell LS6, the LS5/8 and LS5/9 to a broader global audience.

Drawn from many years of BBC research, and through the engineering genius of Derek Hughes, these speakers have been recreated using state of the art materials and technology under license from the BBC. A new addition to this series is the Chartwell Sub 3, a bespoke compact, passive sub-woofer designed to be used in conjunction with the LS3/5 monitors.

Graham Audio are also proud to announce the VOTU, their flagship 1000 watts per channel, high-end monitor for large studios and listening rooms. Effortless dynamics and vast detail come as standard.

...hear the difference



Distributed in the United States by: Graham Audio USA
www.grahamaudiousa.com | info@grahamaudiousa.com



CHARTWELL
A DIVISION OF
GRAHAM AUDIO

Setlist

Photo by Phil Greenhalgh



Phil Greenhalgh was front and center to capture Liam Gallagher at the Manchester Arena last December. Here's the list:

1. Rock'n'Roll Star
2. Morning Glory
3. Greedy Soul
4. Wall of Glass
5. Paper Crown
6. Bold
7. For What It's Worth
8. Rockin' Chair
9. Some Might Say
10. Slide Away
11. D'You Know What I Mean?
12. I'm Outta Time
13. Come Back To Me
14. You Better Run
15. Universal Green
16. Supersonic
17. Be Here Now

encore:

18. Cigarettes & Alcohol
19. Wonderwall
20. Live Forever

Setlist

Photo by Jeff Dorgay



Staffer Ken Mersereau and I took a long drive to the Oregon coast for a dark and stormy night of the Decemberists on April 30, 2010.

Oddly there are no references to the set which went on for almost three hours. Does anyone know the rest?

1. The Crane Wife 3
2. Shiny
3. The Engine Driver
4. Red Right Ankle
5. Sons & Daughters

Dealers That Mean Business:

You've read all the reviews, you've argued with the internet pundits,

and you're ready to write a check. Now what? If you're a slightly used customer that likes to shop for the best bargain you can find on Audiogon, this article is not for you. And, controversial though it might sound, I'm not against Audiogon. If you want a gently pre-owned preamp, love music, and just don't want to buy new, I get that – as long as you know what you're getting into. Audiogon can be a great place to buy pre owned gear if you know exactly what you want - and don't expect ANY service. But someone has to buy it new, so you can buy it used – remember that!

If you are the customer that likes to buy new, loves the feel (and the smell) of taking it out of the box for the first time, knowing no one else has touched it, I get that too. Personally, I'm about 50/50 on this experience, as I am with cars. Ask anyone who's bought a preamp or a used car from me, it's usually pretty pampered.


However, if you are going to spring for new gear, you need a good dealer. Someone who understands you, your music and most of all your perspective. You need someone to help you find the right components that will work together as a system, help you set it up in some cases, and offer support when things don't work out as planned. There's no substitute for experience, and a great dealer knows their products, and knows what will work best for you.

Nearly every audio system that has failed to achieve the greatness expected of it can be traced back to poor component choice (system and/or room) synergy and poor component setup. I've been to hifi shows, homes, and dealers all over the world – hearing sound good, bad, and somewhere inbetween. It always boils down to these two factors if something isn't truly broken, and it rarely is.

The solution is easy. Find a great dealer. While there isn't a hifi shop on every corner like there was back in the 70s, there are still some truly great dealers out there that will help you put together a stunning music system, regardless of your budget. And I'm on a mission to find as many of them as I can for you.

I'm starting with the folks I know, in this new section of the magazine. Most of the establishments in this list are running full page ads in the magazine – and there is a caveat. I will not accept advertising in this magazine from a dealer unless I've been to their place, seen the shop and have talked to a cross section of their customers to know they provide superior service. In most cases, these are hifi shops that I, or someone on the staff has purchased gear from as well.

These are not just people wanting to buy space in TONEAudio. Every one of these dealers carry my personal endorsement, and I hope that will help you on your journey. As we go forward, look for the "TONEAudio Approved Dealer" sticker on your favorite establishment. Know a great dealer, that you've had superior service from? Let me know, I would like to pay them a visit and add them to the list.



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David Michael Audio, Detroit MI | Don Better Audio, Cleveland OH | Goodwin's High End, Boston MA | JS Audio, Washington DC
Musical Artisans, Chicago IL | Music Lovers, San Francisco CA | Ne Plus Ultra, Austin TX | Arizona Hi-Fi, Phoenix AZ
Canada dealers: Audio Eden, Toronto ON | Element Acoustics, Vancouver BC | Filtronic, Montreal QC

Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

Sarasota, Florida - Suncoast Audio
www.suncoastaudio.com
7353 International Place, Unit 309
Sarasota, Florida 34240 941.932.0282



New York City, New York - Noho Sound & Stereo
www.nohosound.com
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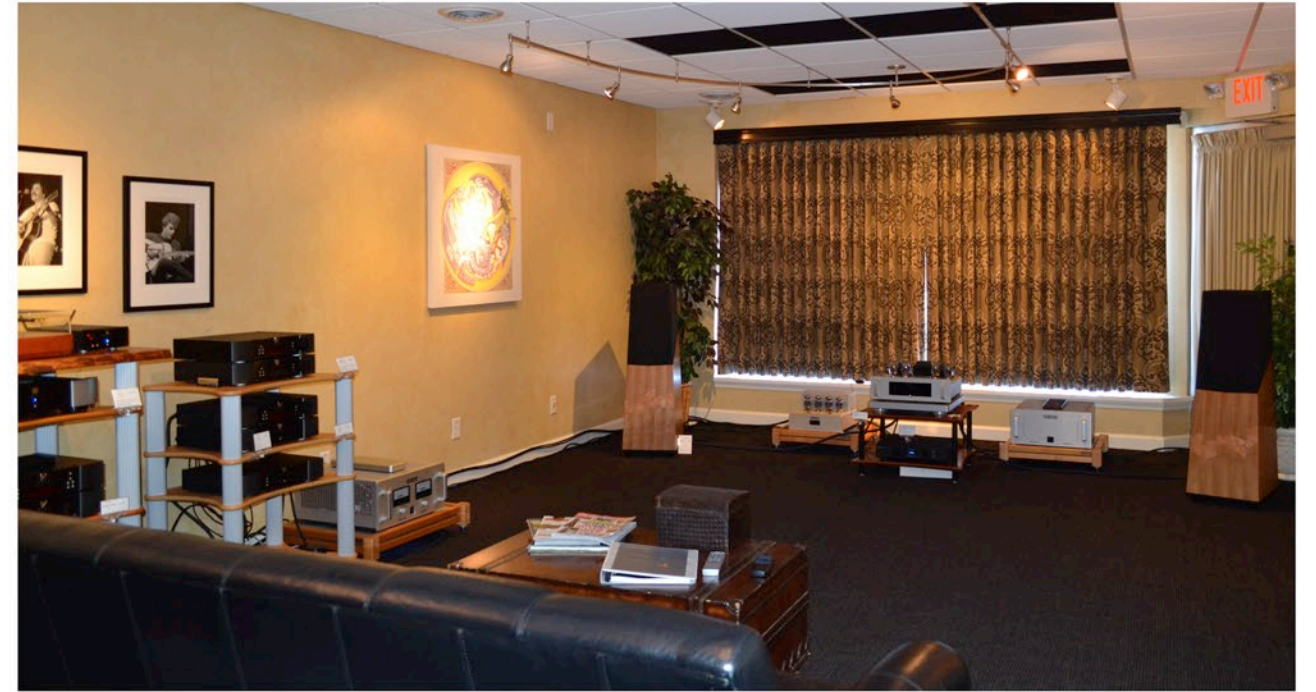
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin - Ultra Fidelis

www.ultrafidelis.com

7125 West North Avenue

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

414.221.0200



Portland, Oregon - Echo Audio

www.echohifi.com

1015 SW Washington Street

Portland, Oregon 97205

888.248.3246



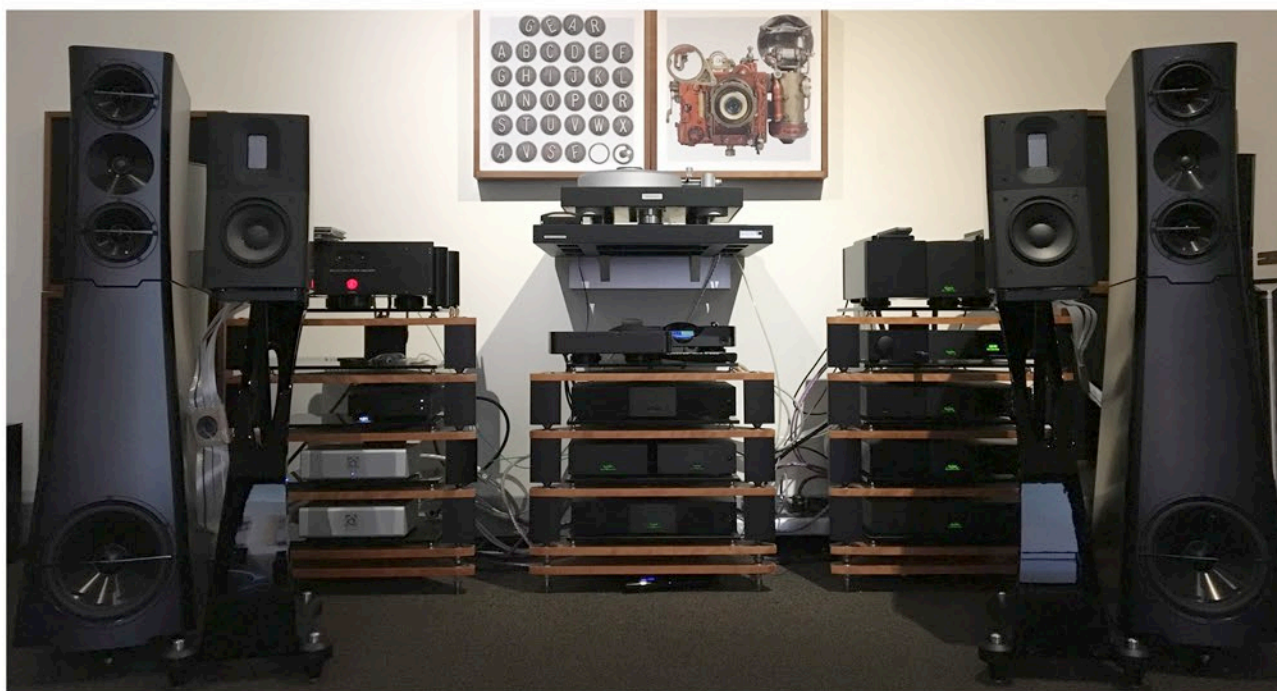
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San Francisco - AudioVision San Francisco

www.audiovisionsf.com

1628 California Street
San Francisco, California

415.614.1118

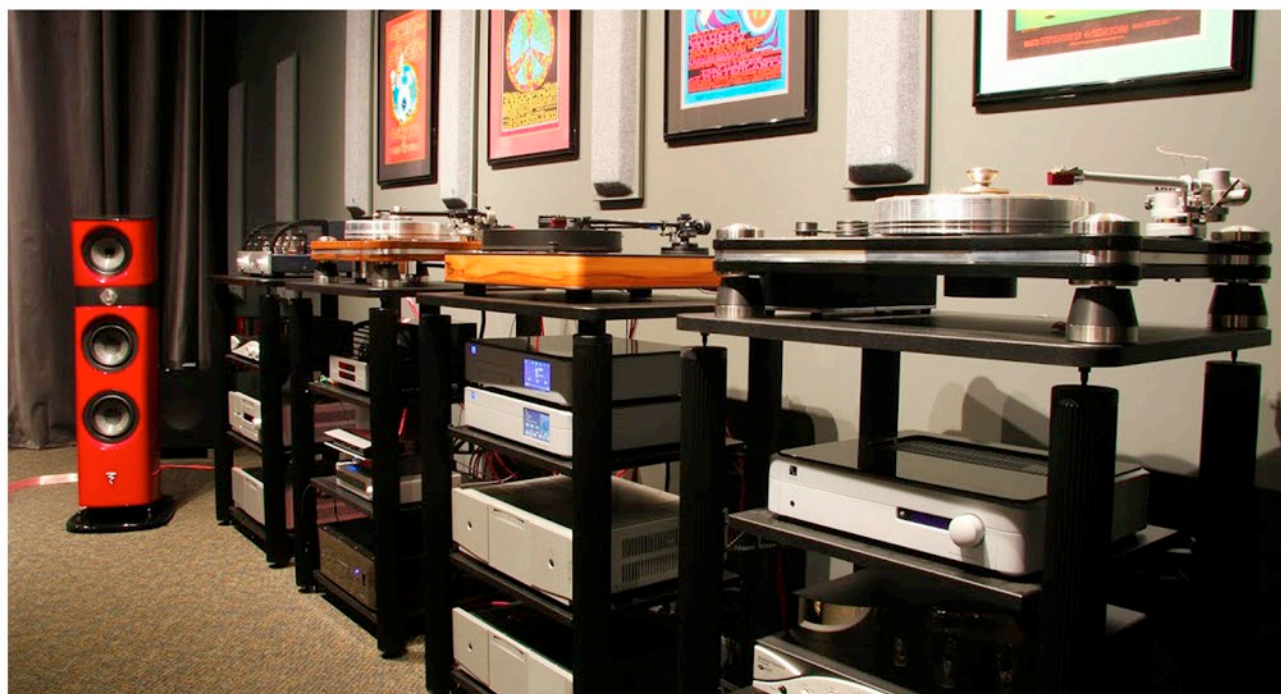


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Audio Waves
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audiowaveshifi.com

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

You Can Never Go Fast Enough - Various Artists

This contemporary tribute to the 1971 cult classic, featuring James Taylor, does a great job at recreating the vibe of the era. And, little known fact, our publisher learned to drive in a 55' Chevy. A righteous way to end the issue.



Sonus faber

SONETTO

Italian Poetry

sonusfaber.com

Socially Speaking

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---Jeff Dorgay, TONE Audio



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Where to find the gear you've seen in this issue.

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Gold Note	www.goldnote.it	Triangle	www.triangle-fr.com
Golden Ear	www.goldenear.com	Upscale Audio	www.upscaleaudio.com
Graham Audio	www.grahamaudiousa.com	Vicoustic	www.audioplusservices.com
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Last Word

Our parting thought to ponder.

The Furutech DeMag

Still one of the most controversial analog accessories ever. Still works great and never ceases to astonish naysayers. Still glad I bought one. Worth it.



GRAND PRIX AUDIO Monaco Turntable v2.0

A new achievement in analog



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-Jeff Dorgay, Tone Publications

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