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Buon gusto

- 26** Wines— Let's discover the world of dry white wines and sauternes of Château Bastor-Lamontagne

Product Reviews

HEADPHONES

- 6** **BOWERS & WILKINS PX7 S2**
Total Freedom - Wireless Listening

- 10** **FOCAL CELESTEE**
A Very Personal Listening Room



20

Product Reviews

LOUDSPEAKERS

- 48** **SIMAUDIO MOON VOICE 22**
Simaudio's New Voice

NETWORK PLAYER/STREAMER

- 52** **WATTSON AUDIO - EMERSON ANALOG
& EMERSON DIGITAL**
Two Small Devices To Know

Home Theater

SUBWOOFER

- 58** **Miller and Kreisel V12+**
Taking Reference to a New Level

What's New? 64

Rhythm & Music

- 42** Classical Music
14 Blues
56 Jazz
62 Progressive Rock



34

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

- 16** **TB-140 DE KORA**
A Ray of Sunshine For your Musical Day

- 20** **LUXMAN L-507**
A Device Offering Musical Comfort!

LOUDSPEAKERS

- 34** **HARBETH SUPER HL5PLUS XD**
Classic, Future-Oriented Loudspeakers

- 38** **KLH MODEL 5**
A Modernized Classic



52

Ah, young people...

We often hear this comment which, let's admit, is rather disapproving. I have sometimes made this comment, like many others. But when you think more about it, today's young people are pretty decent. They live in a different setting compared to us at their age. They face the same problems that we all face, because they are an integral part of our society. I am sparing you the long list of challenges that we all face. Young people, on the other hand, are in the midst of growth and development and are not yet fully equipped at this stage of their lives. Having done some research, evidence shows that family matters to them, and this to an important extent, because when asked about their favourite hobbies, and what came as a surprise to adults, time with their family was in the top 5 list! Nice surprise, isn't it?

All this to tell you that I recently learned that the young daughter of a friend accompanies her father on his various visits to specialised shops in order to listen to the new audio systems announced. She appreciates this time spent with her father, in the first place, but she is also developing a critical sense of the various devices that the duo discovers during these visits. The girl's friends also appreciate that her father lets them listen to their choices of music on his sound system. They, too, are beginning to enjoy listening to music played on devices other than their mobile phones. Of course, the phone remains by the nature of the device, the tool of choice of their listening, but already, they know that there is better. This is a good way to get closer to young people in a very positive way. Enjoying a good music listening session together in order to better exchange on other subjects that are important to them. It's a very small start, but oh! how interesting it will be to continue, at various levels, in our beautiful world of audio.

Let us now turn to the content of this edition, which offers a range of articles that are equally interesting. We want them to show you a lot of new equipment that might interest you or a member of your family. Two articles focus on headphones, the **Focal Celestee** and the brand new wireless **Bowers & Wilkins PX7 S2**. Two other articles cover two integrated amplifiers, namely the **Kora TB 140** (a French company met this year at the **Munich High-End** exhibition) and the brand new **Luxman L-507 Z** (a Japanese company whose products are available in several audiovisual shops). Three articles have been written on stand-mount loudspeakers: the **Harbeth Super HL5+ XD**, the **KLH Model 5** and the all-new **Simaudio MOON Voice 22**. The subjects of the last two articles are two streamers (*Emerson* and *Madison*) by **Wattson Audio** as well as a subwoofer, the *V12+* by **Miller & Kreisel**. Regardless of the origin of the product, Quebec, Japan, the United States or Europe, in audio, we always end up making magnificent discoveries likely to please us and meet our various needs and/or expectations. Don't forget to read the articles on new music presented in the *Rhythm & Music* section, as our collaborators have chosen excellent releases.

So, I invite you to a time of rest and reading to discover all these systems chosen for you. Enjoy your reading, and above all have a beautiful *Holiday Season*, which will arrive at our doors shortly. Allow the team at **TRENDS, Electronics & Design** to offer you our *Very Best Holidays Wishes* of Love, Peace and Health to you and all your loved ones.

L. Beauchamp

Co-publisher and
Public Relations Manager

Total Freedom - Wireless Listening

By ADRIEN ROUAH

I will always be surprised to have gone through a rather prolific technological period in the field that fascinates me, that is, audio. I lived the era of vinyl records of course, but also those of magnetic tapes, large reels or tape cassettes, of compact discs with, to complete the journey, that of digital music servers. But who could have foreseen that I would be carried away by the wave of nomadic listening that allows me to walk, work, travel or do nothing, listening to

*music from my mobile phone and that it would choose music played in my headphones, without resorting to wired connections. Admit that I am – and you too, people of my age, greatly privileged! And it is this privilege that I am going to tell you about today, namely a pair of wireless, noise-reducing Bluetooth headphones, from the workshops of the very respectable manufacturer of **Bowers & Wilkins** loudspeakers.*





Designed in the United Kingdom, made in China, which tells us the points of origin. Although I have heard that **B&W** has not only manufacturing plants in China, but also a whole range of concepts and engineering. Knowing the reputation of the famous brand, not to worry, the work will be well in line with the products offered.

Packaging and presentation

The packaging is very serious, with a super rigid box that encloses a black shell with white interior, also rigid, where the items are comfortably and easily accommodated – our headphones and some complementary wires, well hidden in a discreet compartment. The presentation of this packaging comes from the world of IT, it takes its source where customers choose this type of device the most! The manuals are succinct – the quick start manual and the warranty manual are part of it, with a nice presentation as well. For more information, we can use our Internet connection.

Aesthetics and finishing

It is simplicity that is strong in the case of the Px7 S2 by **B&W**, an elegant simplicity of the 'I want to be very chic but rather versatile and with class' variety. Like a man

dressed in a beautiful shirt worn with jeans – but branded jeans, all the same! The model I received was black and ringed with a chrome-plated plastic ring on each shell, which corresponds to the description I give you here. The **B&W** headphones also have a few mesh parts for the back of the earpieces and the top of the head. The earpieces are trimmed with faux leather, just like the part that rests on the top of the head. The finish is admirable, as is the case for all the parts of this pair of Px7 S2 headphones. In fact, it is very easy to summarise, from the packaging box to the product itself, via its transport and protection shell, there are only compliments to be given!

Hardware provided with the earphone pair

The carrying case is supplied with two USB-C cables, one of which is equipped

with a male connector of type 1/8, if you want a wired connection, the preferable connection in some cases.

Ergonomics, comfort and technical aspects

The positioning of the main controls is judicious. They are not numerous, but need to be perfectly placed, because let's not forget that these headphones will be the receiver of our favourite music as well as being the witness of our telephone conversations. There is therefore, on the left earphone, the only ambient noise attenuation setting that offers 3 modes, namely *None*, *Low* and *Maximum*. I experimented with the Px7 S2 without the attenuations offered, and I found it already very satisfactory from the point of view of proofing against ambient noise.

With the use of noise reducers, the weak position seemed sufficient to me. After having tried the *Maximum* noise reduction offered, I have returned to the *Low* position, because the headphones are

BOWERS & WILKINS PX7 S2 HEADPHONES



already insulating thanks to the very concept of their earcups. The second function of the left switch is to switch to the voice assistant function of our smartphone. On the right earpiece, you will find the classic *Volume +* trio, multi-function navigation and playback and volume button. The last one is a switch that allows the switching *off/on* and *Bluetooth* search. The additional controls will be chosen on the **Bowers & Wilkins Music** application, an application that is very simple to use, albeit a little rough, with mainly the assignment of the button of the left earpiece, automatic standby and serious and acute corrections whose adjustments are a little limited. In fact, and this is getting rather personal, I think that depending on the origin of what we listen to, I would have liked to have had at my disposal a more complex equaliser in order to perfect my adjustments and especially to modify some sound recordings that were too brilliant.

Strictly speaking, the transducer section is made up of loudspeakers 40 mm in diameter which **B&W** has tilted slightly backwards, which will be translated, when listening, into a slightly wider sound stage. These two transducers have a membrane made of bio cellulose – a natural enzymatic

fermentation obtained from coconut milk, a biotechnology first developed in the medical sector to make masks for heavy burns patients. It would be pretentious of me to talk about the richness of the sound produced by this type of material, but I can still see a certain similarity with the happy return of the cellulose pulp and therefore, the return of paper diaphragms in our conventional electrodynamic transducers. The research and development department of **Bowers & Wilkins** is also to be commended for the considerable contribution of innovative ideas in the field of acoustics, which is visibly perpetuated for headphones.

As for the comfort of the *Px7 S2*, which may seem a bit heavy at first, once they are fitted, and fitted properly, they are comfortable. We must, of course, think of every possible opportunity to wear them, since they are supposed to accompany our nomadic instincts! The wide cranial arch, the memory foam surrounding our ears as well as the ergonomic shape of the earcups all contribute to ensuring real comfort. For the duration of a film equivalent to that of a concert or two compact discs, there is nothing to be said, they are fine. But we don't move much during these home performances. What about a walk with music? And this is also fine, considering that a good



serious hold is often preferable to a pair of headphones that will not stay in place, especially if you walk at a brisk pace. As for the battery life, it is rather excellent with many hours of listening possible – about thirty according to **B&W**, and a super-fast recharging of around 15 minutes!

Listening

I really swept away all the musical possibilities offered through different media. Today with the Internet, concerts are at home, sometimes old concerts, sometimes concerts that we missed, or even concerts for which we would not even have moved. My preference has been, in the case of the *Px7 S2*, for concerts by **Michel Jonasz** or diversified performances by *Playing for Changes* which are models of sound recordings for me. By adding their personal sound imprint, the **B&W** headphones makes live performances even more exciting. By going from dialogues to musical accompaniment during films, I got caught up in the game of forgetting out of interest, rather a sign of a pleasure that goes beyond the simple listening of an editor who analyses the entrusted product! The *Px7 S2* still has a strong signature that some listeners will modify – especially in the bass, which is quite generous. For my part, I find that it mainly displays a medium rich in details, with a clear but not aggressive high. Once the correction of the bass was done, I found the whole curve suitable for all kinds of music. And the *Px7 S2* headphones are enjoyable in their entirety.

Conclusions

It is hard to be disappointed by a company that has been working in the field of audio for so many years. Of course, we expect excellence from them, especially if we are already a loyal customer of loudspeakers. And the **B&W Px7 S2** headphones are excellent overall. They will have the important task of helping you entertain yourself at all times, while leaving you free to answer phone calls. But who would have imagined this would be possible, about fifty years ago? So let's welcome it, let's live our music while

doing something else, other than sitting, in intense action or walking. Let's adopt entertainment as we move. I, who am an unconditional listener with headphones, felt in agreement with what **B&W** proposes, which offers the most complete wireless equipment. And then, I bow to a listening quality with total freedom of movement that I did not know or that I did not believe to be so easily and pleasantly accessible. Thank you **Bowers & Wilkins** for this discovery!

The positives

Elegance of presentation
Very nice finish
Easy to set up

Long battery life
Rich and versatile sound result and definition
Very comfortable when well fitted

The negatives

Limited settings for serious and acute corrections

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NAIM UNITI ATOM HEADPHONE EDITION COMPACT ALL-IN-ONE PLAYER
AND **FOCAL CELESTEE** HEADPHONES

A very personal listening room

By YVES BÉRUBÉ

*Many of us listen to music in an environment that is not just dedicated to music. In fact, most people have to share the available space with family and children, giving the listening room a multiple vocation in addition to listening to music or even a video. Some of us would like to enjoy our digital music collection at all times, even when the household is asleep. Space constraints or sharing with the family do not justify making significant compromises on the quality of listening. There are several good devices that can deliver high quality music, in a small space and for private listening. The marriage between **NAIM's** Uniti Atom Headphone Edition and **Focal's** Celestee headphones is a very good example of excellent quality components that can form the basis of your personal listening room.*

Let's discover them together!

With the current global economic climate, more and more investment firms are becoming owners of manufacturers in the field of high fidelity. For several years now, we have been seeing in the audiophile market several marriages between a loudspeaker manufacturer and an electronic device manufacturer, and we are offered quality chains with these components on display and demonstration in audio exhibitions and shops. Sometimes we'd be





curious to go to different marriages, but that's not the point of this product review. The British manufacturer **Naim** has been at the forefront of the audiophile market for about 40 years. It is widely recognised as a leader in offering a full range of products ranging from electronic devices to acoustic loudspeakers, turntables, stands and brackets, cables and applications specific to its products.

The French company **Focal** has also existed for about 40 years and does not need any introduction, just like **Naim**. It is a world-class company that is renowned for the high quality of its speakers, both in high fidelity and in the professional studio, even in the automotive field, as well as for its headphones.

The two companies have been united for a little more than 10 years within the **VerVent Audio** group. Unlike several investment holding companies, **VerVent Audio** in addition to **Naim** and **Focal** owns some of its distributors, particularly in Europe. Together, they offer systems that combine the strengths of each of the companies including **Naim's Uniti Atom Headphone Edition** and **Focal's Celestee** headphones evaluated in this product

review. Here is a great example of collaboration and quality produced through shared efforts.

Technical description

The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* network player, the smallest of the *Uniti* series by **Naim**, is an *all-in-one* device with high-resolution streaming capabilities to which loudspeakers can be connected, since it also has a 40 W amplifier and an *RCA* (or *XLR*) output for connection to a preamplifier. Volume control is a large, very elegant, illuminated rotary knob located on top of the device, which gives it a certain charm. The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* also comes with a full two-way remote control and a free app running on **Apple** and **Google** devices. For this product review, I only used the features specific to the headphones connected to the Internet network controlled by the **Naim** application and a **Roon** server.

On its front side, the **Naim** multi-source player features a beautiful 5-inch bright display, four buttons and a motion sensor that lights up when the user approaches the device. The network reader supports known digital formats allowing *PCM*

resolutions of up to 24 bits / 96 kHz, 64 *DSD* and 128 *DSD*. Digital files can be stored on a network drive, an external drive or a *USB* stick connected to the two *USB* inputs (type A) of the **Naim** (one at the front and the other at the rear). At the rear as audio input, the *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* offers two *TOSLink* optical inputs, a digital *RCA* input, a pair of analogue *RCA* inputs in addition to the two *USB 2.0* inputs and, at the output, a pair of *XLR* connectors and another *RCA* to the preamplifier. As **Naim** does not support *MQA* encoding, I have chosen to limit the product review to recordings that are part of my personal collection in order to obtain the best possible musical quality. The **Focal Celestee** Closed Back Headphones are located just below the **Focal Stellia** Headphones, at the top of the manufacturer's range and sold almost three times the price of the *Celestee*. It is equipped with M-dome wideband speakers in aluminium and magnesium. The navy blue headphones have a very chic look and the pads as well as the hoop are made of full grain leather, which could cause discomfort due to heat for some people.

NAIM UNITI ATOM HEADPHONE EDITION COMPACT ALL-IN-ONE PLAYER
AND **FOCAL CELESTEE** HEADPHONES

Unpacking and installation

One of the pleasures of receiving a new device is unboxing it in order to discover what is inside. I must admit that **Naim** and **Focal** did not compromise on this. The various components are carefully packaged, each object has its place and nothing can move or be damaged during transport. Once everything was unpacked, I connected the network wire (it also works with *WiFi*) and then connected the device to the wall. I was able to make connections with *Roon* and streaming sites using the Naim app downloaded to my tablet. The *Celestee* Headphones are relatively lightweight even though they cannot be considered bulky, compared to their competitors. You could wear it all day without fatigue as long as you don't move too much. The cable provided is of better quality than the cables usually offered by **Focal**, but it would benefit from being a little longer than 1.2 m. I received completely new devices for this product review, I put them in *break-in* for a week to give them the time they needed to express themselves at their best.

Listening impressions

Harmonium's *Heptade* album enjoyed a remix in 2016 for its 40th anniversary as the forgotten master tapes were found in a filing cabinet at **Sony** the previous year... The first *CD* version had been made from the vinyl record, so a better digital version was long overdue. After the release of the original album, **Serge Fiori** did not believe he could write a new album, *Heptade* being the pinnacle of what he thought could be composed. **Fiori** has therefore remained more discreet, despite some interesting releases, notably with **Richard Séguin**. When listening with headphones, it is difficult to place the instruments on a stereo image as when listening to the album with loudspeakers, but it is easy to discern the location of the different instruments. The recording of *Heptade* was made at **Serge Fiori's** country house, and the exact placement of the instruments was not captured at this time. We can only appreciate the overall performance. **Fiori's** voice is put forward on most of the tracks and the whole is balanced, both in terms of the voices and the instruments. The



most popular tracks like *Le Premier Ciel*, *Comme un Fou* and *Comme un Sage* are very pleasant to listen to even if on some passages, the instruments are doubled on both channels. Balancing voices with instruments, the drums are always respected and the **Naim / Focal** duo always remains musical. I have always enjoyed the sound of the guitars on the original vinyl version and they are well reproduced here. The strings vibrate and the impact of the fingers or the pick (mediator) are present.

Dead Can Dance's album *Into the Labyrinth* is part of my usual toolkit that allows me to evaluate the quality of the components I have on review. It is an album that I have enjoyed for years and the musicality of **Lisa Gerrard** continues to charm me. If a component, or a set of components, succeeds in getting through this album, it usually ends up in my listening room. *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* musical track is absolutely sublime with the **Naim / Focal** ensemble because the voice of **Lisa Gerrard** a capella also makes it possible to appreciate the acoustics of the room where the recording was made. You feel like you're attending a private concert. One can hear her breaths, the movements of her mouth and tongue ensuring a perfect pronunciation. We have the same impression with the track *The Carnival Is Over* where **Brendan Perry's** voice is accompanied mainly by percussion or the duet in *Emmeleia*. It is a little

more difficult when we have parts with several instruments. For example, the well-known *Yulunga (Spirit Dancer)*. In this case, voices and maracas are found more in the back than when listening with loudspeakers, the bass is more pronounced in this musical track and leaves less room for medium frequencies. I am not in a position to say whether it is the network player or the headphones that gives this result, because I wanted to keep the whole set-up as is. Please note here that I am very familiar with this recording after having listened to it regularly for several years. This is not a major problem of the **Naim / Focal** duo and most buyers will be very satisfied with the musical quality. Listening to the album *High-res Headphone Blast Vol.1* from the company **2xHD** offers a compilation of some of its best recordings with a particular flavour for listening with headphones. The first track features a symphonic orchestra with *Paintings from an exhibition by Mussorgsky*. At the opening, the bass is clear without being too present, but would benefit from having a little more precision in the deepest frequencies. That's a lot to ask of headphones with 40 mm speakers, but other headsets have lighter, deeper bass without surpassing the other capabilities of the *Celestee* as a whole.

Holly Cole's piano and voice on the second track are quite charming, the balance of the timbres is very natural. The singer's voice is a little in front of the piano

and we appreciate the result thanks to the *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* and *Celestee* pairing. The rest of the album demonstrates the abilities of **Naim** and **Focal** and together, these companies have been able to provide performances in all musicality.

Conclusion

Naim's *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* and **Focal's** *Celestee* headphones form a high-profile marriage capable of delivering quality music without the need for a dedicated space. The 7 kg weight of the **Naim** does not make it a portable device, but it can be easily moved to the desired location in order to enjoy listening to your favourite music. The *Uniti Atom* is both a network player, a DAC and a headphone amplifier in a single, carefully constructed case, which has all the capabilities required for quality music listening. Its 40 W amplifier and RCA or XLR output to a preamplifier allows the owner to evolve towards a system with loudspeakers without having to replace all of their devices. The **Focal Celestee** closed type headphones will satisfy the most demanding audiophiles in addition to being an attractive navy blue full-grain leather headphone. As **Naim** and **Focal** are part of the same family, it is easy for audiophiles to go to a **Focal** dealer shop and try it out to see the quality of this set. Who knows? Perhaps this set will be the starting point of your very personal listening room?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Focal Celestee Headphones

Price: \$1,299

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labour

Naim Edition Uniti Atom Headphone Network Player

Price: \$4,899

Warranty: 5 years for electronic components and 2 years for mechanics

Manufacturer/Distributor: Focal Naim Canada, Tel.: 1 866.271.5689, <https://www.focalnaimamerica.com/>

Mediagraphy

Dead Can Dance, *Into The Labyrinth*, 4AD, 0093624538448, B00UA1NBJ6, AIFF, 16/48

High-res Headphone Blast Vol. 1, Various artists, 2xHD, 2XHDF1230, AIFF, 24/96

Harmonium, *Heptade XL*, Sony Music, B01LTHLR50, AIFF, 16/48



Blues

By PIERRE JOBIN



BREEZY RODIO **Underground Blues**

Wind Chill Records, BLO-15

Following his excellent album *Sometimes The Blues Got Me*, released in 2018 on the **Delmark** label, **Breezy Rodio** released his sixth release, *Underground Blues* produced by **Anson Funderberg**, in Austin, Texas, on the **Wind Chill** label. **Rodio**, a Chicago resident with a tributary style and inspired by the *Chicago Blues* of the 1950s and 1960s, by **Muddy Waters**, **Howlin' Wolf**, **Buddy Guy**, **Elmore James**, etc., walks in their footsteps with the same type of band and instrumentation: guitar, bass, drums, piano and organ as well as harmonica. Like his predecessors, the lyrics of his songs talk about the facts of life in a sensitive and personal way. *It's the Blues, Baby!*... **Funderberg** defines **Rodio's** style as does *Chicago West Side Modern Blues*... *Shuffle*, *jump blues*, *boogie woogie* and other styles enamel this record with their authenticity and their blues got soul in a congruent whole! The band is coherent, with a nice synergy, which demonstrates well the listening and the *know-how* of the musicians.

Rodio, Italian by birth, was affected, like many others, by the blues during adolescence. He was seized in an irrepressible way, so much so that he made it, since, his way of life and expression pinned to his soul! His expressive singing, distinctive voice and fluid, subtle and passionate guitar playing make him a worthy and authentic representative of the *Chicago blues*. **Breezy Rodio** has his own bag of tricks, his own stories and the feeling, dexterity and know-how to tell them through music. Moreover, *Bluesoned*, the last song of the record, a slow instrumental blues music track with a singing guitar, interspersed with strands of revealing monologues, sums up well and exemplifies on its own all the talent and commitment to the blues that distinguish this *bluesman* at heart.

CLIFF STEVENS

Better Days

Red Flag, RF558-2

The first time I heard **Cliff Stevens** was on the *Preservation Blues Review* compilation that featured the best blues & roots artists in Montreal or based in Montreal in 1997. Five more albums and twenty-five years later, this British-Scottish guitarist returns with *Better Days*, this excellent opus that presents him at the pinnacle of his art, both in terms of writing solid and inspiring lyrics, as well as his guitar playing that touches on stylistic excellence, as well as his moving and consistent vocal interpretation. **Cliff Stevens** elegantly embodies the congruence of an artist who has paid his *dues to the Blues* and continues on this demanding path. In this new chapter of his adventure on the roads of the blues, he was able to surround himself with some of the best musicians available: **Sam Harrison**, on drums, **Serge Dionne**, on bass, **Eric Sauvé**, on organ and piano, **Pat Loiselle**, on harmonica and **Kim Feeny**, on backing vocals. The musical tracks that touch me more or stand out from the crowd, for me, are the mid-tempo blues of *Better Days*, the well balanced *Passion* with its acoustic slide and harmonica, the dancing *No Room Left For You* for its biting realism, as well as the *I Believe* ballad with its spiritual shades for its magnificent words and inspiring vocal arrangements. In fact, there are no weak tracks on this record, which is organically bound and masterfully concocted from beginning to end. Ah! yes, *Light Of An Angel* is a superb ballad in the rules of the art. The electric slide playing is touching and of a beautiful sensitivity. In short, **Cliff Stevens** writes, plays, sings and produces an inspiring album that exudes simplicity and class. *Better Days* is packed with classics. To do this, he was able to ally himself with dedicated accomplices who were open to collegiality... **Cliff Stevens**, as for me, is a secret that is still too well kept



STEVE HOWELL & THE MIGHTY MEN

Been Here And Gone

Out Of The Past Music, OOTP017

Steve Howell and the Mighty Men released his recent album *Been Here And Gone*. **Howell**, the East Texas native guitarist and singer, has a well-stocked track record of a career of over 45 years, a *Texas Academy's 2011 Historical Significance Award* and nine albums to date, according to what I have found. His band was completed by **Chris Michaels** on electric guitar, **Dave Hofpauir** on drums and **Jason Weinheimer** on bass and organ. These seasoned musicians offer us a cool, rich and textured sound approach that unfolds in nuances and carefully-placed notes. **Howell's** warm and evocative voice connects, smoothes and illustrates, rather than making a big noise. *Been Here And Gone* is an album of twelve covers, including five instrumentals. These covers, restored in an original and personal way, bring back to the forefront more obscure hits and titles dating from the beginnings of blues and jazz to the music of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This experienced artist and his companions concoct a whole assembly of musical tracks in a variety of styles with a complementary result in a softened and expressive dynamic. Examples of more famous songs include *Candy Man*, popularised by Reverend **Gary Davis**, *I Believe To My Soul* by **Ray Charles**, *Such A Night* by **Clyde McPhatter** and *The Drifters*, covered by **Elvis Presley**, *Black Is Black* by **Lost Bravos**, and *Walk Don't Run* by **Johnny Smith** (1954), covered by **Chet Atkins** (1956), the most popular version of which is that of the **Ventures** in 1960. *Been Here and Gone* by **Steve Howell and the Mighty Men**, if you want to listen to good music in Zen mode!



A RAY OF SUNSHINE FOR YOUR MUSICAL DAY

By JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

*Here is an amplifier that is a real little revolution. The **Kora** TB-140 amplifier is a device that uses hybrid tube and transistor amplification technology, in a circuit configuration that has never been seen before. Called Square Tube, the **Kora** TB-140 circuit avoids the vast majority of problems that are common to tube amplifiers. Made in the Toulouse region of France, with unwavering rigour, these new **Kora** amplifiers demonstrate listening qualities that may seem contradictory or even impossible to reconcile. So, let's take the time to go through this new line of **Kora** hybrid amplifiers, of which the TB-140 is the youngest. This one gives us some excellent surprises.*

The most sophisticated audio historians will remember **Kora** as a French manufacturer of tube electronic systems. **Kora** has designed and manufactured a whole range of tube electronics, including some very ambitious models. For many years, the brand was mainly present on the French domestic market. It was in 2017 that **Bruno Vander Elst** bought the brand and made a complete change of direction, in terms of both the design and production

of the devices. From then on, **Kora** products will be hybrid amplifiers based on the famous *Square Tube* circuit that I will have the opportunity to describe in detail in the technical part.

Rather than working alone and trying to make everything *in-house*, **Bruno Vander Elst** and his team chose to partner with other specialist companies. In the Toulouse region, there is no shortage of high-tech companies and the **Kora** team has been able to surround itself well. For example, the electronic cards are manufactured by a company in Toulouse called **Team 31**. This manufacturer, specialised in aeronautical and military electronics, is able to assemble printed circuits with one of the strictest levels of tolerance, for flawless quality. The frames are made by **Gravlor**, a French leader in precision machining to the nearest micron. The final assembly and the various tests are carried out by the **Kora** team in Toulouse. In the

end, it is a product entirely made in France and assembled with an almost manic care. I had the opportunity to meet **Bruno Vander Elst** at the **Munich** show this year. The man is above all a top technician, passionate about tube electronics systems and fan of **Altec** vintage loudspeakers. What surprises us most when we talk to him is to see how the reliability of **Kora** devices is at the heart of his speech. Indeed, and as he says so well, these are expensive devices, so they must work perfectly. A statement that we would like to hear more often! Now let's take a moment to see how this famous *Square Tube* works.

Technical description

The **Kora TB-140** is a hybrid amplifier, that is, it uses tube and transistor technologies to amplify the audio signal. Usually, hybrid amplifiers use tubes for the preamplification stage and sometimes for the first stage of the amplification. The **TB-140** by

Kora, with its *Square Tube* circuit is quite different, using four small tubes, two **ECC83** and two **ECC82**, hence the name *Square Tube*. These are double triodes configured in a symmetrical push-pull circuit. This circuit allows the positive voltage of the tubes to push and the negative voltage to pull on the diaphragm of the loudspeakers. This ensures absolute control of the movement. The voltage amplification is thus carried out entirely with tubes. We are therefore dealing with a true tube amplifier, since all the amplification is carried out by these tubes. The transistors are only there to supply current and ensure the necessary power, which is 70 W. Moreover, the transistors play the role of the usual output transformers by ensuring a buffer stage between the loudspeakers and the tubes. The **Kora TB-140** amplifier thus avoids all the usual problems encountered with output transformers: phase rotation, loss



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of control in low frequencies, as well as an obvious loss of transparency and clarity. Another very interesting aspect of this amplifier is that the tubes are supplied by a fixed voltage at very low voltage. This allows, according to the designer, for the assurance of an unparalleled longevity and reliability for many years. In addition, **Bruno Vander Elst** argues that there is absolutely no need to attempt to replace the original tubes with those of supposedly superior quality. By the intrinsic design of the circuit, this will not change the sound of the device. In addition, as the tubes age, the sound of the circuit will remain the same regardless of their age. All these beautiful circuits are powered by a 300 VA toroidal transformer of great quality. Filtering is provided by four 22,000µF

capacitors, which should ensure excellent current storage when necessary. The main board is a feast for high quality parts, including, among others, **SCR** capacitors found in **Nagra** electronics. The **TB-140** by **Kora** has four line entries and a fifth for a turntable, in moving magnet format. A preamplifier output is also available. The jacks for the loudspeakers are really of excellent quality and allow only one pair of speakers to be connected at a time. At the front, a single multifunction button provides volume control, inputs selection and their calibration. A clearly readable display makes it easy to navigate the menus of the device. For a tube amplifier, the **TB-140** by **Kora** is a resolutely modern device, with a tube preheating circuit, a

sophisticated *stand-by* mode and everything you need in a protection circuit.

Unpacking and installation

The **TB-140** by **Kora** is a real pleasure to unpack and install. The tubes are already assembled in the factory. So, there is no need to open the device to install them and thus no risk of error. The two booklets supplied with the device are simply exceptional. One is the instruction manual itself. It is very well written and presented. The other is an explanatory booklet on the device technology, which really goes in the technical description of the product in quite a bit of detail. The clarity and the quality of the layout of the two booklets deserve a mention. They are serious and well-documented and this gives the owner of the device a sense of trust. Well done!

The **TB-140** by **Kora** comes with a remote control that takes over all the functions of the main button. This device generates practically no heat and does not seem to be very sensitive to the microphone effects of vibrations. Nevertheless, be sure to install it on a good audio cabinet, it deserves it. Oh yes, I got my best results from the **TB-140** by simply using the power cord provided by the manufacturer, connected directly to the wall. So, before you ignore it and leave it in the box, take the time to try it according to your configuration, you never know!





Listening impressions

No tube effect in terms of sound

If you think you've heard everything about tube amplifiers, if you think you already have a clear idea of the sound of **Kora's TB-140**, you'll have a surprise. Here is an amplifier that has no tube sound quality, in the pejorative sense of the term. The **TB-140** is fast, degreased and has a firmness of bass worthy of a **Bryston 3B**. It has an iron grip on the loudspeakers that is a bit confusing at first. In addition, it is able to dig the loudspeakers into the bass, which is simply stunning. With my small **Piega** loudspeakers, I almost felt like I had gained a whole octave more in the low frequencies. The designer's promises regarding the control of the loudspeaker diaphragms are definitely fulfilled.

With **Bob Scaggs' Thanks to You**, the bass line, present throughout the song, never runs out of steam. The singer's voice sits between the loudspeakers with a mind-blowing focus and a perfect understanding of the song's lyrics. This hybrid amplifier has no reason to envy any transistor amplifier. Power and control are really there when they are needed. I pushed the **TB-140** by **Kora** with small loudspeakers with difficult impedance, but it didn't flinch or even get hot. A friend, present during a listening session, suddenly mused to me *my God, it must be crazy with the larger models*. Having heard them, I can confirm that this is the case.

Not so transistor-like in terms of sound

The **TB-140** by **Kora** is basically a tube amplifier and it has the qualities thereof. It releases this indefinable atmosphere in the medium which gives the impression that the music floats between the loudspeakers. With the new album *Opening* from the **Tord Gustavsen Trio**, the place where the trio plays is rendered with a lot of transparency and three-dimensionality. It is precisely this type of sound that tube amplifier enthusiasts love and the **TB-140** excels in this respect. The piano notes take forever to go out and you really feel like you can hear the recordings in the deepest depths. The cymbals are particularly well rendered, somewhat like some tube amplifiers operating in

a single stage. In fact, the grain of the **TB-140** is extremely fine. It is capable of a surprising level of delicacy, which makes listening very addictive. The records queue up, one behind the other, with really very little hearing fatigue.

In addition, the **Kora** is capable of an excellent level of transparency that gives the stereophonic image a spectacular depth. It's just like a good tube amp. The most interesting aspect about the sound of the **TB-140** is its unique ability to combine the contradictory qualities of two amplification technologies. What more could I ask for?

A phono input of good level

The **TB-140** by **Kora** is equipped with a phono moving magnet input. At first, I thought it would only be a convenience, but finally this one pleasantly surprised me. It is surprisingly quiet and has a lot of gain. The result is dynamic and detailed, with an excellent balance of channels. In addition, this phono stage focuses mainly on the musical signal and does not overemphasise the surface noise of the records. Since the level of the inputs is adjustable on the **TB-140**, it will be possible to adjust it so that it is practically at the same level as that of the line inputs. This phono input is a nice bonus, which would be perfect for listening to a good quality turntable.

Conclusion

The new generation of **Kora** amplifiers is a real success. Already with the entry-level **TB-140** model, the *Square Tube* circuit delivers a unique sound that combines the best of two technological worlds. Modern and complete, built with aeronautical rigour, the **TB-140** will surprise more than one. With its luminous and warm sound, it will brighten up your listening sessions for many years to come. An integrated amp unit to listen to absolutely!

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$6,590

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Atelier Audio,

Tel.: 514.658.4894, <https://atelier-audio.com>

A DEVICE OFFERING MUSICAL COMFORT!



By GEORGE DE SA

In this crazy go-go world that we live in, where yesterday is already too late, and most everything we purchase is single use and disposable, it is so refreshing to spend time with products designed for appreciation over the long term, if not the long-long term. I'm talking about products carefully thought out, designed, and built with the intention of enlivening our spirits and giving us an opportunity to gain a greater appreciation of art and beauty. Once such notable company, aimed at delivering these bespoke products for audio aficionados, is **Luxman**. A name familiar to most audio enthusiasts as well as any considering themselves to be an audiophile.

Luxman has been in the business of creating audio products for decades, in fact, just short of a century now, having its start in Japan originally under the name **Kinsuido**,

in 1925. It's amazing that **Luxman** by 1975, was already celebrating a half-century in the audio industry and introducing its first high-end product, the *M-6000* amplifier. As much as **Luxman's** history is interesting, this year, at the **Munich High-End Show** - May 2022, **Luxman** launched their new *L-507Z* integrated amplifier. Integrated amplifiers have been garnering a lot of attention in recent years as technologies have enabled them to achieve top-line performance from smaller and often more affordable packages than separates. The new *L-507Z* integrated amplifier isn't quite a fully featured/one-box solution; it has no streamer, *DAC* or digital connectivity. However, the **Luxman L-507Z** does check all boxes in the analog domain, having a high-performance preamplifier and amplifier, along with headphone amplifier and a *MM/MC* phono stage.

Before I move on, I must give thanks to **Audio by Mark Jones**, the local **Luxman** dealer that so graciously provided the *L-507Z* for this review. I've known **Mark Jones** for several years, his passion for audio and the brands/products he represents is contagious. Friendly and knowledgeable dealers are a so great to have.

Technical / Features

The **Luxman L-507Z** replaces the former *L-507uXII* but this is not just a new iteration, rather, it's a clear technical evolutionary step forward; a new generation of **Luxman** amplifiers. The highlight of the new *L-507Z*'s is the implementation of **Luxman's** all-new **LIFES (Luxman Integrated Feedback Engine System)** amplifier feedback circuit. **LIFES** succeeds **Luxman's** long-lived and successful **ODNF (Only Distortional Negative Feedback)** feedback circuitry that has been used in their amplifier products since 1999. **LIFES**, according to **Luxman**, delivers excellent dynamic characteristics without feeding back any of the original audio input signal to the main amplifier and thus, produces a very natural sound, aspiring to a non-feedback circuit. Distortion with **LIFES** is less than half that of the former **ODNF** feedback circuit, no small achievement. The *L-507Z* is the first **Luxman** product to use **LIFES** and therefore the *L-507Z* is very special, as it serves to usher in **Luxman's** next-generation of amplifier products. The **Luxman L-507Z** incorporates the company's latest **LECUA 1000**, 88-step, electronically controlled volume attenuator, combined with discrete buffer circuitry for the preamplifier output that is optimized to drive the integrated power amplifier. The output stage of the *L-507Z* features an EI-type power transformer and **Luxman's** newly developed, large-capacity filter capacitors (10 000 μ Fx 8), in combination with a 3-stage **Darlington** triple-paralleled *push-pull*, **AB** power output that delivers 110 W + 110 W (8 Ω) and 210 W + 210 W (4 Ω) and stated distortion of just 0.03%. That distortion rating is less than half of its predecessor and also half that of

Luxman's current top **AB** integrated, the *L-509X*. Damping factor in the *L-507Z* is improved to 300 by direct wiring of the speaker terminals with **Luxman's** proprietary **OFC** wire.

The *L-507Z* employs **Luxman's** *Beeline* construction that takes the shortest optimal route to propagate audio signals from input through to speaker output. The *L-507Z* does achieve a low-noise rating with a stated *Line (IHF-A)* signal-to-noise rating of 105 dB.

Luxman's **MM/MC** phono amplifier circuit with a signal-to-noise rating of 91 dB / 75 dB respectively is included with the *L-507Z*.

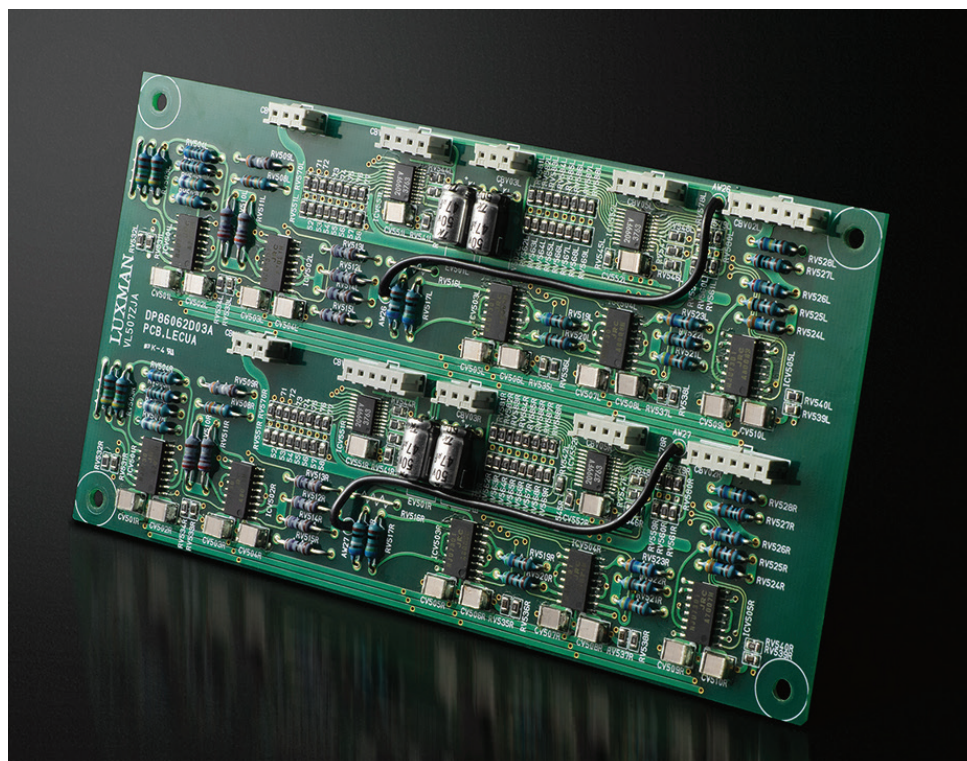
In addition to the phono stage, there is an integrated headphone amplifier with both 6.3 mm and 4.4 mm jacks, which have independent left and right ground wiring that **Luxman** claims to improve stereo separation for an enhanced three-dimensional stage. There are also control buttons for *loudness*, *mute*, *line straight* (direct signal bypass of tone controls etc.) and *separate* (decouples preamp and power amp).

The back of the *L-507Z* provides a well laid out set of connectors, including phono input, 4 RCA line inputs, 2 pairs

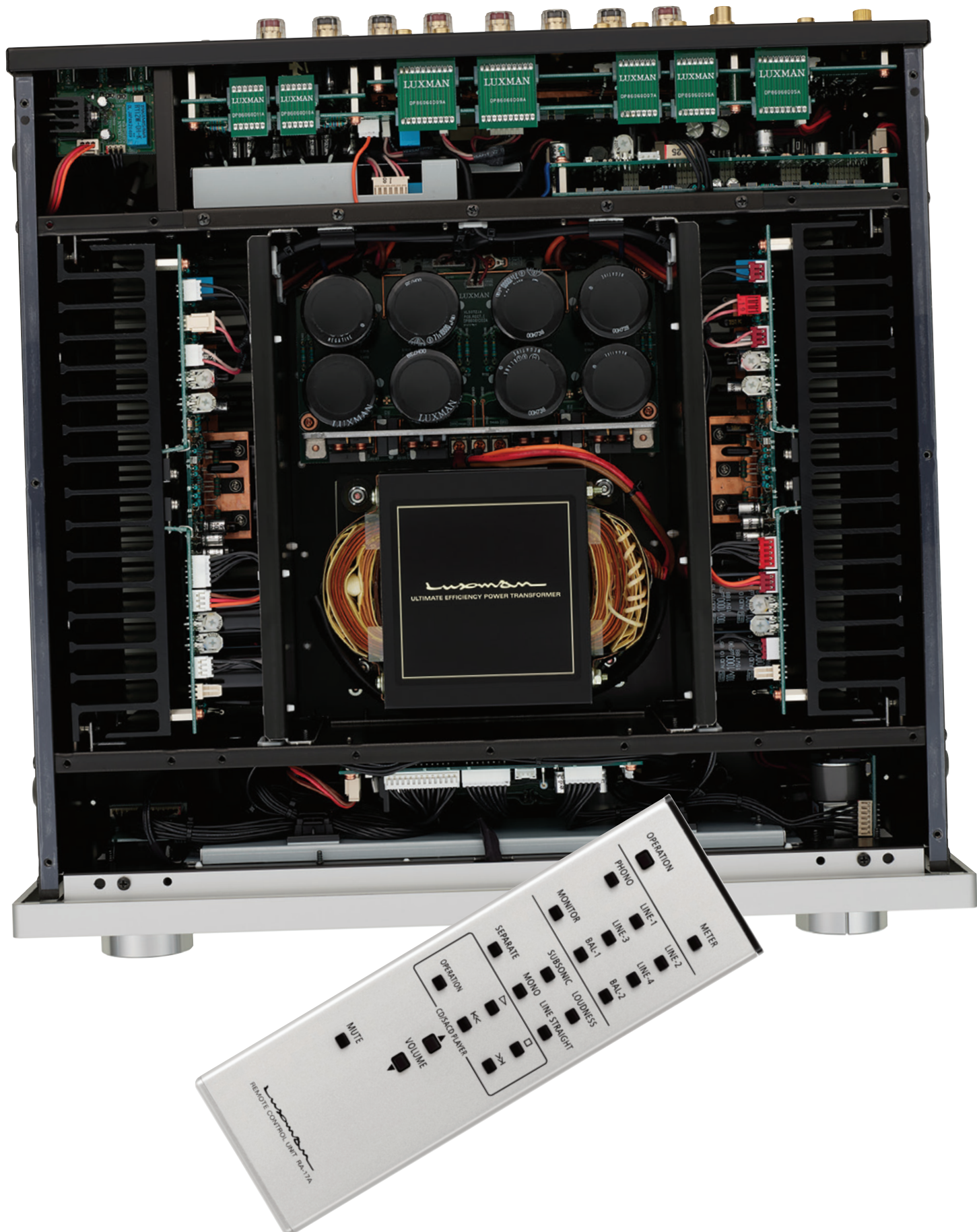
of **XLR** inputs, **RCA** pre-out, **RCA** main-in, left / right **A** and **B** shrouded loud-speaker binding posts and **IEC** power inlet. Worth noting is that the *LINE-1* **RCA** input is made from a copper alloy which delivers the conductivity of copper and durability of brass, and is 20 mm, which remaining inputs are 18 mm pitch.

The front face hosts large rotating input and volume control knobs, and buttons for power, separate, **MM/MC** line straight, and mute. There are retro styled control selectors for **A/B** / **A+B** loudspeaker selection, bass, treble and balance, along with the pair of aforementioned headphone jacks. A pair of lighted needle-type analog **VU** meters provide a tribute to **Luxman's** solid state integrated amplifiers. These meters are a fast twitch and white **LED** backlit. An 88-step, red **LED** attenuator indicator allows precise tracking of volume position. Lighting on all meters can be individually turned off and on, using the remote.

The front dress panel is 5/8" billet aluminum with slightly rounded corners and a 45-degree receding chin and embossed **Luxman** logo. The front panel is complemented by tasteful silkscreened lettering, polished silver control knobs, and a



LUXMAN L-507 Z INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER





beautiful, beveled meter window. Build is *top notch*, with body and chassis passing the knuckle wrap test. The top has a tasteful hairline metal finish with twin cooling vents, though not as luxurious as the top of the *L-509X*, it is well in keeping with the overall aesthetic. Care has been taken right down to the feet, the *L-507Z* having cast iron footers that are designed to minimize vibration via their density gradient, gradually decreasing from the center to the periphery, reducing the potential for resonance.

Overall, the **Luxman L-507Z** looks the part and oozes retro classic beauty that I'm sure will find owners proud to display and admire. **Luxman** has done a spectacular job with carrying over their heritage design elements into a contemporary form that is both a pleasure to look at, as well as touch.

An elegantly styled and robust aluminum alloy infrared remote control (*RA-17A*) that controls all main features is also included.

Setup

The **Luxman L-507Z** was evaluated in my dedicated room with my **Dynaudio C2 Signature** loudspeakers. Cables included those from **Audio Sensibility** and **Furutech**. Sources included a **Rega Apollo CDP**, **Bryton BR-20** as streamer/DAC and a **VPI Scout 1.1** turntable. And my **Bryton 7B³** amplifiers and **Gold Note PH10/PSU-10** phono stage were used for



comparative purposes. With media including **Tidal HiFi** streaming, *CD*, and vinyl *LP*. The **Luxman L-507Z** was used exclusively in *Line Straight* mode, which defeats the tone, loudness, subsonic controls and balance circuits. I found the *Line Straight* did provide the best performance.

Listening

First impressions of the **Luxman L-507Z** were that of musical comfort. Musical comfort, what's that? Perhaps more a feeling than a sonic description but an apt description just the same. Think of

sitting down in a chair or on a couch that immediately soothes and comforts you, letting you relax completely. That feeling is just what I got as my first impression of the **Luxman L-507Z**. As soon as it warmed up, all I heard was soothing, svelte and pleasurable sound, musical comfort. With the *L-507Z*, there was the music only and no craving for anything else. While I could force myself to start analyzing and assessing, with such a level of musical engagement, why the heck would I want to? What I did want to do was just sit back and bask in the music from the *L-507Z* and perhaps

LUXMAN L-507 Z INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



that might be the greatest complement to offer. But, yes, I know, you're looking for more, so let's move on.

I began evaluating the MM phono amplifier of the **Luxman L-507Z**. I used my trusted **Dynavector 10x5** high-output MC cartridge with my **VPI** table. The **Dynavector** matches best to an MM stage, given its high output, so that's what I went with. On **Leonard Cohen's Popular Problems** album, I was immediately struck by the impressively low noise floor of the **Luxman** phono stage, a noise floor competitive with many a standalone phono stage that have come my way and so, you can count on **Luxman's** stated 91 dB signal-to-noise

rating. The track *Almost Like the Blues* presented the shakers in a downright physical manner, sounding clear and granular but also very lifelike. Percussion, such as the slaps on the bongos preserved the resonance and accurate timbre of the instrument, while the electric bass guitar plucks were rich and full, while maintaining their characteristic elasticity. **Leonard's** deep and ominous tone was capably presented by the **L-507Z**, the texture and trembling distinctly revealed. The reverb of the recording was judiciously present, yet the **L-507Z** never lost focus on the main attraction – **Leonard's** baritone expressions. The piano notes on this track possessed

a notable warmth both in resonance and the ivory gleam of the keystrokes. Moving to something all-together different in pace, I listened to an original vinyl pressing of **INXS'** album *Kick*. Spinning the track *Devil Inside*, I was impressed with the control and definition that the opening drum beat beats possessed – sounding solid with toe-tapping bounce. The track was presented with an accurate sense of speed, while dynamics were very well characterized, if just slightly shy of visceral impact that I get with my own reference **Gold Note PH-10/PSU-10**. I noticed that the **Luxman's** phono stage directed focus to the main elements in the music, while delivering detail as a cohesive aspect to be listened for, as opposed to be listened through. Music overall through the **L-507Z** phono section possessed a great sense of ease, flow and liquidity.

Moving over to digital, and an old favourite CD, **Stacey Kent's Breakfast on the Morning Train**, I put on *Ice Hotel*. Here, the **Luxman** presented **Stacey's** gorgeous girlish voice in a captivatingly smooth and sweet manner. Piano notes had a striking glow with extended sustain. The twinkle of the chimes was metallic yet full, no thinness to be found here as well as no upper treble theatrics. The **L-507Z** presented image outlines in a contoured manner, absent of hyper-detail and knife-edge focus that can make images sound cookie-cutter. The





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soundstage was respectable in size and elements were all well separated, holding their own apparent physical spaces. The **Luxman** masterfully negotiated the boundary between a realistic rendition of the female human voice without drawing attention to the close-mic presentation of this recording.

On, **Marie Spaemann's Lovesong (Tidal HiFi)**, the **L-507Z**, **Spaemann's** vocals were embodied through the **Luxman**. The midrange was striking, so velvety smooth, with a dollop of natural warmth that served to create a believable illusion of **Marie** singing before me in the flesh. Most interesting is how adeptly the **Luxman** presented her breaths and the sibilants – letting them be heard without highlighting them. The warmth of midrange was there, but not in any way overripe. Details and variations in tone were evident and not blurred or obscured and all the while sounding mellifluous. I must also speak to the sweet, sultry and rosin-infused texture of the cello, heard on the

opening of the track *Prelude*. The instrument as well as **Marie's** angelic vocals were deliciously depicted. As I have alluded to, the **Luxman L-507Z** plays music with a balancing act between transparency & detail vs. smoothness & liquidity. In so doing, the **L-507Z** creates a most realistic presentation of the players and the stage, while still allowing one to hear upstream changes in sources, yet never coming across as analytical. Yes, the **L-507Z** is precise but in a fluid manner, delivering musical beauty without sacrificing timbral accuracy nor essential musical detail. The more I listened, the more I was drawn into the manner the **Luxman L-507Z** delivered the upper frequencies. The treble was extended but didn't draw unnecessary attention to the rarified frequencies, which most often are a source of coolness. Soundstages, as a result were had a slight warmth to the air within and though well sized were not immense. There was clarity on cymbal strikes in the absence of overhang, brassy but not crystalline

and without any haze or hiss to their sound. With this controlled upper treble also came some forgiveness of lesser recordings.

Conclusion

How to sum up? The **Luxman L-507Z** is a smooth sounding integrated amplifier that delivers music with well-balanced detail that never sounds analytical. It provides textured, full and firm bass that favours fluidity and flow over iron grip. Power and dynamics are solid and sure-footed, yet absent of aggressiveness or grit. Its midrange, oh, its midrange is just gorgeous – fluid, authentic and never dry, absent of any sugar coating, and without thickness or over-saturation. The **L-507Z** presents the mid-frequencies in a delicate and nuanced manner while confining the recording chain itself to the backstage. If you are a music lover, the **Luxman L-507Z** may be your joy; if you're an audiophile, it may likely be your passion; but what is most certain, **Luxman** with the **L-507Z**, has captured the heart and soul of music.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Retail Price: \$12,599 CAD

Warranty period on new products: 3 year(s), parts & labour (pls see web site for all conditions and exceptions)

Distributor: Luxman America Inc.,
T.: 518.261.6464, <https://luxmanamerica.com>

Buon Gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

LET'S DISCOVER THE WORLD OF DRY WHITE WINES AND SAUTERNES OF CHÂTEAU BASTOR-LAMONTAGNE !

I recently had dinner with **Jean-Marc Dulong** from the **Château Bastor-Lamontagne** in Sauternes. I had the opportunity to talk with him about this magnificent and legendary region, and to taste a vertical (the same wine on various vintages) of his Sauternes wines, as well as his white wine of the 2020 vintage.

You will find in this article, my notes on this appellation and on the wines of the house.



Buon Gusto... suite

So, what is a Sauternes?

According to the wine expertise manual of the ITHQ (Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec), a *Sauternes* is a sweet white wine made from manual harvests by successive sorting (the grains are collected one by one according to their level of maturity) of grapes affected

by noble rot (*Botrytis Cinerea*) and whose sugar level is greater than 45 g/l of residual sugar.

The appellation

The *Sauternes-Barsac* vineyard, which is part of the city's region, is located 40 km upstream of Bordeaux. It is located in the

Graves wine-growing area and covers 2,200 hectares of vines in five communes: *Sauternes*, *Bommès*, *Fargues*, *Preignac* and *Barsac*.

The *Sauternes-Barsac* vineyards benefit from a micro-climate and the influence of two rivers, the Garonne and the Ciron. The latter is a tributary of the Garonne, which takes its source in the Landes, which makes its waters particularly fresh. At the end of the summer, this will create a thermal shock with the warmer waters of the Garonne and the soil of the *DOC*, which is able to conserve heat.

The famous *Botrytis Cinerea* mushroom

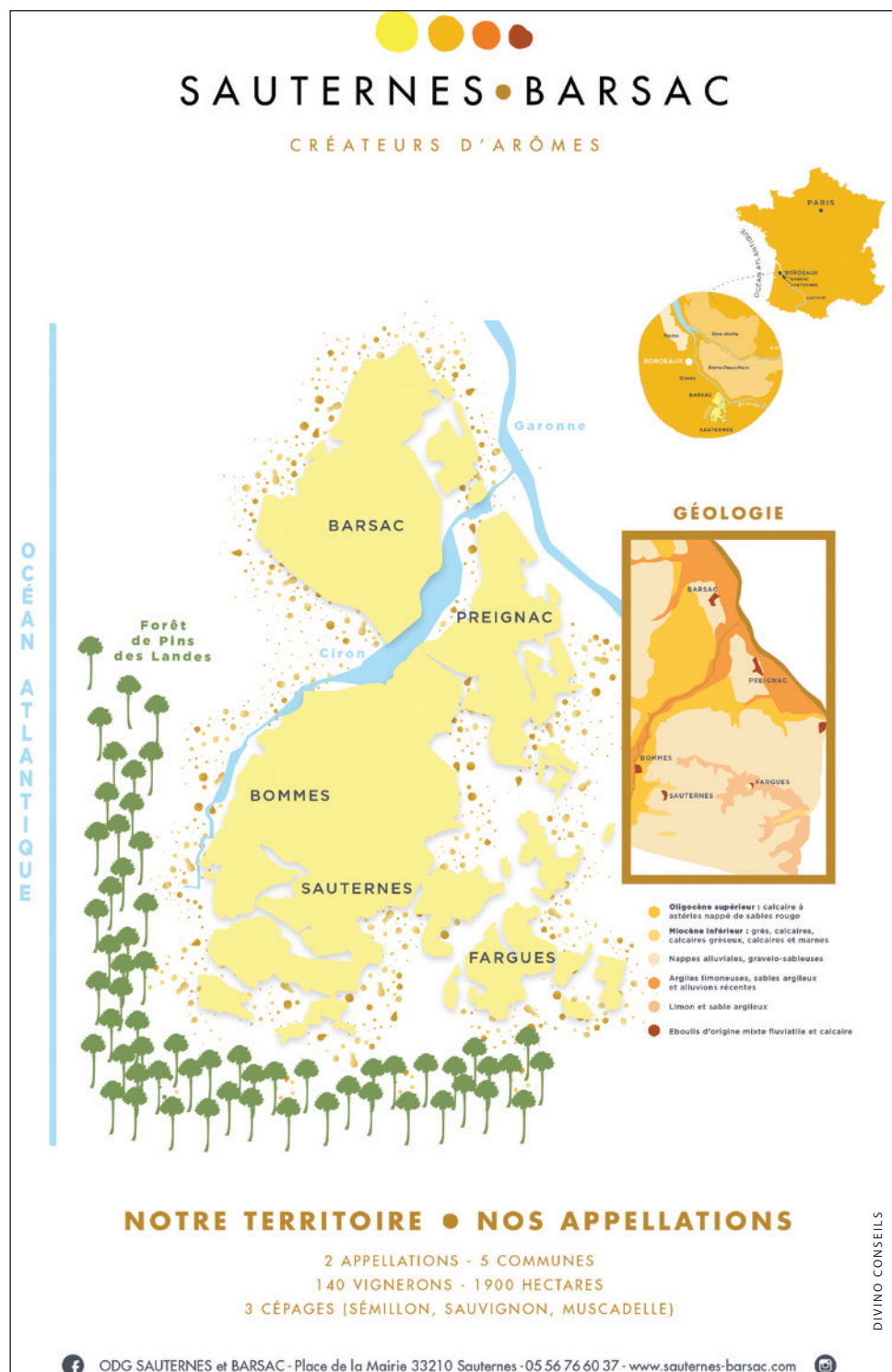
Morning mists and fogs cover the vineyard, creating a humid climate that is conducive to the development of a microscopic fungus known as *Botrytis Cinerea*. Noble rot sets in.

Without this mushroom, *Sauternes* wines would not have the reputation they have today. A *Botrytis*-specific process begins. In the afternoon, the hot and dry climate allows it to perforate the skin of the grapes which is then very fine, and to promote the evaporation of the water contained in the berries. These will naturally concentrate as sugar and flavours. We will then obtain juices rich in sugar and flavours at the pressing stage.

The harvest is done manually by harvesters who carefully harvest the berries sweetened by the *botrytis*. Since the fungus does not affect the vineyard in a homogeneous way, it will be necessary to count several successive sortings (passages), in order to select the grains which have reached a perfect maturity, and thus to obtain the best concentration of aromas.

Grape varieties

The complementarity of 3 authorised grape varieties (*Sémillon* 80%, *Sauvignon Blanc* 20% and *Muscadelle* (a few percent)) creates an incredible aromatic universe, flowers and fruits, a complex and balanced bouquet. The primary flavours are usually almond, quince, mango, pineapple, roasted peach, dried apricot and passion fruit. Like the *Sémillons*, there are notes of beeswax, almonds and hazelnuts.





Trends

For some time now, there has been a consumer trend towards less sweet wines and alcoholic products, as sugar has acquired a rather bad reputation over the years. *Sauternes* wines, with their high residual sugar levels, have been affected by this trend and, as with *Port* wines and *Loire* sweet wines, sales have suffered. In addition, climate impacts have affected yields in recent years. Positioned as a luxury wine, it continues to appeal to many savvy consumers around the world. While several properties have been abandoned, several new investors are taking over and have faith in this nectar of the gods.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne is part of this breed of new investors, who bring knowledge and investments to raise the already high quality of wines and offer consumers unparalleled products. As an example, we are already looking for even more freshness in the production of wines by adding a higher proportion of *Sauvignon Blanc*.

In addition, a long-term programme for the renovation of the vineyard is being implemented, i.e.: uprooting vines that are too old and/or located on medium-quality terroirs and new plantations.

Sources: <https://www.bordeaux.com/fr/Notre-Terroir/Les-Graves-et-Sauternais/Sauternes>
<https://www.sauternes-barsac.com/les-vins/>
<https://maisondusauternes.fr/sauternes-barsac/#:~:text=Le%20vignoble%20de%20Sauternes%2Dbarsac,%2C%20Fargues%2C%20Preignac%20et%20Barsac.>

Château Bastor-Lamontagne Sauternes

It is necessary to return to 1711 to understand the history, former property of the king of France, the domaine of Bastor, listed in 1453, was yielded on July 3rd 1711 to **Vincent de La Montagne**, councillor in the Parliament of Bordeaux. Several years later, in 1936, the château was sold to **Crédit Foncier de France**, then in 2014, the **BPCE** group sold the castle to the **Moulin-Houzé** and **Cathiard** families. Finally, it was in 2018 that the **Helfrich** family became owner of the château (**Grands Chais of France**).

This château is located in the commune of Preignac, in Gironde. The vines extend over 50 ha in one holding, on a gravel-sandy terroir. It is, more specifically, located on the 2nd terrace of the Garonne. The average age of the vines is 45 years. They are composed of **Sémillon** (80%) and **Sauvignon Blanc** (20%), part of which is *Sauvignon Gris*. The vineyard is subdivided into about thirty plots, mostly located in the commune of *Preignac*.

The estate undertook an organic conversion in 2010 and obtained its *Ecocert* certificate in 2013.

Obviously, the harvests are manual with about 80 people performing from 4 to 6 sortings from mid-September to mid-October.

Extraction is carried out by pneumatic presses. The musts are then selected after a slight settling. Fermentation is carried out for a period of 3 to 4 weeks in barrels or stainless steel vats. Finally, the wine is aged in barrels of stave oak for a period of 13 to 18 months (from 20 to 30% new).

Buon Gusto... suite



Tasting

This tasting began with a dry white wine from **Château Bastor-Lamontagne**.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne

Decisively modern in style compared to other Bordeaux whites, it is aromatic and reveals on the nose citrus notes, floral with a slight hint of grapefruit and a very discreet weave of noble herbal notes.

On the palate, we are surprised by this beautiful, almost lively acidity that combines with citrus flavours, exotic fruits and a chalky mineral sensation. Very tasty with a lot of freshness!

30 tedpublications.com/en november-december 2022

Beautiful pairings could be made with seafood, oysters and shellfish.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne Bordeaux, white wine, 2020

Grape varieties: Sauvignon blanc 70%, Sauvignon gris 30%

Sugar: 1.9 g/l

Alcohol: 12%

Price: \$21.90

SAQ [Québec Liquor Corporation] Code: 11593981

<https://www.saq.com/fr/11593981>



Sweet wines

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France

Obviously, it is the youngest of the tasting and it is not completely open. Although the vintage was difficult due to blight attacks, it is very beautiful with pleasant floral notes, as well as notes of mango, pineapple, peaches, honey, candied fruit and beeswax on the nose.

The palate is slightly oily and unctuous texture, with a nice concentration of stone fruit flavours (apricots, peaches), citrus, honey and exotic fruit notes. Good balance between fresh acidity and residual sugar.

The 2017 vintage has been available in 750 ml at a price of \$58.75 and in 375 ml at a price of \$29.95 around August 2022.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France

Sauternes, organic sweet wine, 2019 (2017, available)

Grape varieties: Sémillon 77%, Sauvignon blanc 23%

Sugar: 110 g/l

Alcohol: 13.5%

Price: \$58.75

SAQ [Québec Liquor Corporation] Code: 11131444

<https://www.saq.com/fr/11131444>

Buon Gusto... suite

Château Bastor-Lamontagne





Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, organic sweet wine, 2016.

This is the first vintage of the new house. This complex 2016 is revealed on the nose with notes of ginger, candied citrus, honey and yellow fruits. The palate contains notes of barley sugar, brown sugar, and tire-éponge that combine with notes of citrus and apples. A fragrant finish.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, sweet wine, 2011.

This is the vintage I liked best! This wine is discovered on the nose in expressive and fresh notes of melon, pineapple, candied lemon and fruits with white and yellow flesh (peach, pear).

On the palate it is elegant, balanced, with a nice freshness ensured by an acidity that is very present.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, sweet wine, 2009.

This vintage is another that's one of my favourites. It reveals notes of pineapple, flowers and honey on the nose with some notes of maple syrup.

On the palate, the flavours are somewhat more intense than the 2011, with a lot of lightness, opulence and elegance. Nice balance with acidity.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, sweet wine, 2006.

On the nose, it gives aromas of walnuts and hazelnuts, honey and beeswax with some floral notes. The palate is gourmet and well balanced.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, sweet wine, 1988.

On the nose, nice notes of honey, pineapple and orange. On the palate, the balance between acidity and residual sugar is enjoyable.

Château Bastor-Lamontagne, France, Sauternes, sweet wine, 1986.

The last of my favourites, this 1986 reveals itself with notes of mushrooms, honey and yellow fruits. The palate is slightly oily, elegant with apricot flavours, without any heaviness.

Pairings to be made with sweet wines

Nice pairings can be made with fish with white or butter sauce, white meat or a curry roast, rabbit or veal kidneys grilled with lemongrass. As for cheeses, a Roquefort, a parsley-infused cheese, a goat or sheep's cheese would all pair well. And desserts including all kinds of fine fruit pies (apples, lemon, red berries), dark chocolate cakes and fruit salad.

The wines of **Château Bastor-Lamontagne** are represented by the **Hektars** agency.

HARBETH SUPER HL5PLUS XD ACOUSTIC LOUDSPEAKERS

CLASSIC, FUTURE-ORIENTED LOUDSPEAKERS



By JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

*The **Harbeth** Super HL5plus XD loudspeakers are among the most classic loudspeakers available on the market. They have always existed, in fact since the foundation of **Harbeth**, when they were simply called HL Monitor. Again and again offered in the **Harbeth** catalogue, the Super HL5plus XD is*

*the latest embodiment of the classic two cubic foot box, designed by designer **Allan Shaw**. This model, which has delighted many music lovers around the world, has evolved considerably in recent years. So, let's take the time to see and listen to what new musical colours its designer wanted to give it*

Harbeth is a British manufacturer of loudspeakers. Based in Lindfield, in the English Sussex, the company designs and manufactures a complete range of loudspeakers. Technological choices, the appearance and the sound signature make them the epitome of the British loudspeaker. The company was first founded in 1977 by a of British acoustics pioneer, **Dudley Harwood**. It was later bought by **Allan Shaw**. The latter continued the work begun by his predecessor in the field of plastic materials for loudspeaker cones. In addition, under the direction of **Allan Shaw**, the company was significantly modernised while maintaining the spirit, the style and the sound that have made Harbeth products famous.

More than thirty-five years ago, **Allan Shaw** was one of the very first to use computer-aided design to design the basic layout of its different loudspeakers. **Harbeth** subsequently developed a plastic injection moulding technique for the manufacture of the cones of his woofers. These significant investments have resulted in **Harbeth's** renowned material, the *Radial*. Nowadays, **Harbeth** has become an ultra well-organised manufacturer, with a system of assembly in batches of models. Although the company has remained rather modest in size, it was able to develop exceptional rigour in the equipment of the various components during assembly. Thanks to unique measurement systems developed specifically by **Allan Shaw** and his team, **Harbeth** is now able to produce speakers with virtually unparalleled consistency. In addition, **Harbeth** is committed to the wellbeing and loyalty of its staff. Some employees have been part of the team for over thirty years. It's an accomplishment that **Allan Shaw** is very proud of.

Technical description

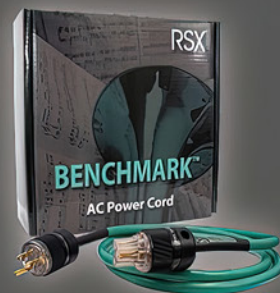
The **Harbeth Super HL5 plus XD** are large loudspeakers that need to be placed on a stand. These are vented speakers and the latter emerges at the front of each loudspeaker. The cabinet uses a construction technique based on an old way of doing things, very typical of the **BBC's** old designs. Indeed, the cabinet of these



The following are emails between RSX's designer and the editor of Positive Feedback Online. They are unedited and unchanged except for format.

Hello David,

Have you had a chance yet to listen to the new RSX Benchmark AC Power Cords I sent you? At just US\$200, they're the first RSX cables where the actual cable part can be machine-made instead of assembled from multiple component materials by hand. That saves us a lot of money in labor, and I've put all of it into better materials and higher performance. The terminations, of course, are still all done by hand, using our own special connectors. What do you think?



Roger

Hi Roger... Yes, I've had a chance to listen at some length to your new RSX Technologies Benchmark AC Power Cords. Since you sent two samples to me, I used them to supply our PS Audio PerfectWave SACD/CD Transport and our PS Audio DirectStream DAC stack. I run a lot of SACDs through there on a regular basis. The AC end was plugged into the very fine RSX Technologies Power8 Power Distributor, which in turn was fed with your Beyond AC Power Cable. Given that the prior power cables were very expensive reference-level products, and considering the very low price (for audiophileland!) of \$200.00 per cord, I was quite surprised that your Benchmark Power Cords did so well by comparison. They punched well above their price class, sounding more like AC power cables in the \$1,000.00 - \$2000.00 range than their actual (surprising) MSRP.

Right out of the box, it was clear that the Benchmarks were going to need some break-in. They sounded congested, bass-shy, and rolled off initially. 25-50 hours of break-in cured that first impression, however. They started to bloom about 10 hours in, and then really opened up by 50 hours...not bad at all for break-in.

Once shaken down, I got a clear picture of the Benchmark Power Cords. Dynamics were excellent. Transparency was good, which in turn led to solid performance in the areas of detail, imaging, and soundstaging. They also did a creditable job with harmonic structure...much better than I would have thought, frankly. I'd say that audiophiles on a limited budget for AC power cables should be digging in on the RSX Technologies Benchmark. At \$200.00 per, this is one of those rare no-brainers in high-end audio. Benchmark is a price-performance killer!

All the best,

Dr. David W. Robinson
Editor-in-Chief
Positive Feedback



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loudspeakers is of a small thickness. The idea is to let the cabinet resonate in harmony with the speakers, rather than trying to eliminate the resonances.

Allan Shaw asserts that it is virtually impossible to eliminate the resonances from the cabinet of a loudspeaker. According to his theory, with a rigid and dense cabinet, all the designers can do is move the resonant frequency upwards, where it would be even more damaging.

The *Super HL5 plus XD* woofer, of a good size, is 8 inches in diameter. Combined with the 2 ft³ internal volume of the loudspeakers, they are able to provide a significant amount of low frequencies.

It is made from **Harbeth's** favourite material, *Radial 2*. This injection-moulded plastic-based material ensures impeccable clarity and frequency response with respect to the medium. Much of the sound signature of the **Harbeth** loudspeakers revolves around the installation of this famous *Radial 2*, which is exclusive to **Harbeth**.

The *Super HL5plus XD*s are almost three-channel loudspeakers, since the high-pitched frequencies are broadcast by two tweeters. One is made of aluminium and supports the lower range of the high frequencies. The second is made of

titanium and covers only the highest harmonics of the treble.

All components used in the manufacture of a **Harbeth** loudspeaker, including filters to switch speakers, are rigorously measured and matched. A tedious process that ensures that the speakers you receive will exactly conform to the original standard. This is a quality guarantee that few speaker manufacturers are able to offer. Moreover, when you unpack your loudspeakers, you will find that the serial numbers are the same, with the exception of the *L* and *R* suffixes, which designate left and right.

Unpacking and installation

These large loudspeakers require a support, preferably made of wood, 12 to 16 inches high, depending on the height at which you are sitting. This setting is quite important to obtain a good listening quality. What's more, you'll need a good amplifier, powerful enough, so that **Harbeth's** *Super HL5 XD*s reach dynamic heights. At my home, they ended up about 12 inches from the back wall, slightly turned towards my listening position. As such, the instruction manual, which recommends placement very clear of the walls, would probably benefit from update. Indeed, these large loudspeakers can now accommodate a positioning close enough to the walls, which may please your partner and facilitate their integration into your decor.

Listening impressions

A brand new, more neutral colour

The use of these **Harbeth** loudspeakers for my listening sessions was quite a surprise to me. When I was assigned this product review, I thought I was going to be in known terrain and my landmarks were going to be easy to find. Oh, but no! The *Super HL5plus XD* are loudspeakers that have evolved considerably since my last experience. With this new model, we will have to forget any preconceived ideas about Harbeth loudspeakers. The brand has accustomed us to a rather warm sound, a rather fat bass that overflows a little and a somewhat recessed medium. The **Harbeth** *Super HL5plus XD*s arrive with a rather different sound offering. The sound stage has now migrated to



the front of the loudspeakers, the low frequencies have considerably firmed up and the treble now appears under a new light. The *Super HL5plus XD*s are now animated by a new vitality that surprises. With the album by pianist **Steve Kuhn**, *Wisteria*, the jazz trio is right at my feet, with a very present piano that is not lacking in bite and that is restored with a beautiful dynamic. Indeed, these new **Harbeth** loudspeakers are equipped with a very lively medium, which gives a very holographic presence to the sound stage. The treble remains well measured and rarely overflows, as **Harbeth** loudspeakers have

« With percussion effects rising very high in frequency and bass lines descending super hollow, the **Harbeths** give in to it to their heart's content. It is now a pair of loudspeakers that is capable of handling a lot of power and sounding at a more than respectable volume. »

accustomed us to. On the other hand, the small details of percussion in the cymbals tickle my eardrums with a finesse and a new light unknown on a **Harbeth** loudspeaker. Thus, what gives the impression of having been lost in terms of depth of stereophonic image has turned into a listening session which seems to be closer to the musicians and a more intimate one with the *Harbeth Super HL5plus XD*, as though the usher of the jazz club found you a table right in front of the stage, very close to the musicians.

A sound offer worthy of a studio

If one day, I learn that a pair of **Harbeth Super HL5plus XD**s are being used in a recording studio, I won't be surprised at all. With their ultra-neutral sound offering, these loudspeakers are able to tell the whole truth about a sound recording. They are incredibly transparent and do not hide any fine details of the music. Hence the name *XD*, a suffix which designates eXtended Definition. **Dominic Miller's** *Second Nature* album shows how far the *Super HL5plus XD*s can go deep into the mix of a musical track. This album, impeccably produced, extremely modern in its sound, is a pure pleasure to listen to with these loudspeakers. With percussion effects rising very high in frequency and bass lines descending super hollow,

the **Harbeths** give in to it to their heart's content. It is now a pair of loudspeakers that is capable of handling a lot of power and sounding at a more than respectable volume. The **Harbeth** loudspeakers often dragged with them an old-fashioned sound that certainly didn't lack charm, but that didn't necessarily appeal to everyone. This new version of the **Harbeth Super HL5** offers a much more modern sound alternative, which will come with its share of new requirements in order to put them to work. You will need to pair them with a powerful amplifier with a fleshy sound. Thanks to this more neutral sound, it will

now be possible to use certain tube amplifiers and obtain a surprising marriage. This was the case during the **Harbeth** demonstration at the **Munich Show** in May 2022, where the *Super HL5 XD*s were plugged in with **Manley** monophonic tube amplifiers. The result was astonishing and charmed many.

Surprises, almost every album

The **Harbeth Super HL5plus XD**s are true musical chameleons. They literally change colour from one album to another. Some of which I was sure would not sound good on these loudspeakers, which were instead revealed under a new light. This was the case of the **Doors** album, *L.A. Women*, which was retransmitted with incredible accuracy, a lot of *punch* in the medium frequencies and an excellent stereophonic effect. The reproduction of this album, dating from the early 1970s, does not fall into the trap of sounding too old. On the contrary, the *Super HL5plus XD* can give us an interesting experience that is very listenable. Rather than focusing on the quality of the recording, the **Harbeths** succeed in the tour de force of focusing on the musicians' play, the voice, the diction and the melody. Here's a high-definition loudspeaker that won't snub your music from another era. A quality which, in my opinion, is absolutely fundamental.

Conclusion

Harbeth's Super HL5plus XDs have definitely changed a lot, that's for sure. They have evolved into a much more modern sound and will appeal to a clientele who never thought they would be interested in **Harbeth** loudspeakers. With their superb neutrality, their first-rate transparency and their ability to adapt to all types of music, the **Harbeth Super HL5plus XD** look to the future and the fans who will adopt the new sound, will benefit from it for years to come.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$8,500

Warranty: 4 years, parts and labour when the warranty card has been sent to the manufacturer.

Distributor: Tri-Cell Enterprises, Tel.: 905.265.7870, <https://tricellenterprises.com>

Mediagraphy

Steve Kuhn, *Wisteria*, ECM, Tidal file.

Dominic Miller, *Second Nature*,

Rutis Music Ltd, Tidal file.

The Doors, *L.A. Women*, Electra, EKS-42090

KLH MODEL 5 ACOUSTIC LOUDSPEAKERS



A modernized classic

By ADRIEN ROUAH

*In the Sept/Oct 2021 issue of **TRENDS, Electronics & Design Magazine**, I presented a pair of Heresy V loudspeakers from the American manufacturer **Klipsch** with, as an introduction, an update on the misconceptions spread about this type of loudspeakers. I invite regular readers of the magazine to reread this article and for others, to obtain (before or after the reading of*

*today's presentation) this copy of the magazine, available in a digital version. Because, that's right, in this issue I'm going to present a pair of **KLH** Model 5 loudspeakers that are part of this same American family, the one that made me passionate about audio and what I will always enjoy talking about of course, how it performs during a listening session.*

Some will judge the look of this pair of loudspeakers as rather vintage, with reason. But the word vintage evokes a rather old technology, while in the case of the *Model 5* by **KLH**, if we speak of exact replica in dimensions and in general presentation, the whole concept of the model has however been updated to today's taste. This *Model 5*, manufactured since 1968, is presented with its own supports, delivered in each box containing a *Model 5* loudspeaker. These black metal supports, of square tubular shape, also offer an inclination that positions each cabinet 5 degrees backwards, not to direct the transducers towards the ears – as I read, but to ensure a good phasing of the moving coils that will be aligned with this recoil. The magnetic protection grids, perfectly maintained, are made of period fabric, chosen in colour harmony, and also with a concern for good acoustic transparency. Despite a more than classic presentation, the look is still very pleasant thanks to this particular touch of *déjà vu* that combines elegance and discretion, with an indisputable timeless side.

Technical description exterior and interior

Although the general presentation is practically the same as what is known from its predecessor, the current *Model 5* has undergone some technical changes and some beneficial updates. Once the grids have been removed (thanks to **KLH** for the small latch that facilitates this operation!), we discover 3 transducers of very good quality and, in the first place, the woofer with a diameter of 10-inches and a solid cast metal frame, with an inverted half-rolled suspension. The membrane is of the treated paper type.

The medium also has a solid injected frame with an inverted half-rolled suspension and its membrane is made of treated paper. This medium transducer has its own chamber, which makes it completely independent of the volume used by the woofer. The tweeter chosen by **KLH** is a metal dome model, protected by a grid. The three transducers are equipped with magnets of a very respectable size and they are all of a very good quality of manufacture. I emphasize here the perfectly executed flush mounting of each



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transducer. This perfect flush mounting has its *raison d'être* for each register of this 3-way loudspeaker. For the woofer, the flush-mounting, added to the inverted half-rolled suspension, makes it possible to dispense with edge effects detrimental to good listening. The frequencies will escape from the cone and will not be disturbed by a convex suspension. It will be the same for the medium, even more sensitive than the woofer to this phenomenon. As for the tweeter, it has become a staple to see it systematically flush-mounted.

KLH adopts here the principle of the enclosed cabinet for the woofer load, a principle also called acoustic suspension. It is thanks to the joint effort of **Edgar Villchur** and **Henry Kloss** (the **K** of **KLH**) who worked together to produce the enclosed or acoustically suspended speaker, and this closed principle will be developed and marketed under the name of **Acoustic Research**.

At the rear, there is a plate that supports the single terminal block and the 3 position attenuation adjustment. The veneer, mahogany on the model which was made available to me, is made of real wood and is present on the 5 sides of the cabinets. Inside, the *Model 5* is reinforced by a half-height wooden panel and the damping, of both the woofer and the medium

transducer, is entrusted to **Dacron** foam, with which the inner walls have mainly been coated. The crossover is particularly neat – and updated with its premium components soldered onto a printed circuit board. **KLH Model 5s** breathe very well done work, especially work done to last.

Preparation for listening

As I always do, and out of respect for the designers of this *Model 5*, I am moving towards listening as it is conceived by the manufacturer **KLH**. So, I install the loudspeakers on their supports and leave the grids in place. Concerning the sensitivity setting, I first place it on the *HI* position corresponding, according to the designers, to the linear position, i.e.: without any level of attenuation. The *MID* position corresponds to – 1.5 dB of attenuation and the *LOW* position to –3 dB. These attenuations all act from 400 Hz and cause a real correction on all the rest of the useful band, which will accentuate or correct the behaviour of the *Model 5* in each listening room. In my case, I chose the *HI* position with the grids in place and the *MID* position without the grids. But here again, it is the acoustics of my room that impose this choice. Your home will also impose its own choice! All the following descriptions are taken from my listening sessions without the grids with the setting in *MID* position.

Films and music

From now on, it is first by listening to vinyl records that I begin my listening sessions. Normal, you might say, with vintage! And a record from back in the day, please! because it is with these that I discovered most of the American loudspeakers, **The Stooges** with the album *Funhouse*, and the title *1970* that propels your editor into a state of full youth! No time to lose for this *Model 5*, we enter into the subject immediately. Ah, only good memories and a very nice performance from **KLH**! It's confused as hell, but perfectly dissected by these loudspeakers that I tickle musically speaking. If you only knew how many loudspeakers have literally been on death's door with the **Stooges**! But don't be fooled, it's not a question here of hurting a pair of loudspeakers, let's say rather, that I don't see why we would only listen to soft jazz or some very high-pitched acoustic music during tests, right? And as such, my presentations have been made in this way since I began writing. A good loudspeaker pair is, first of all, for me a device that is capable of retransmitting (or reproducing) well all sorts of music. The nervous music test was passed successfully, I would even say brilliantly, because I have trouble quenching my thirst for pop...

Then comes a classic vinyl with an equally emotionally charged orchestration, **Verdi**, with **Rigoletto**. This record enhances very easily the room effect which is concrete. We virtually see the protagonists moving around the loudspeakers. A perfect retransmission of the musical images, we admire the quality of the acoustic result of the *Model 5* by **KLH**. The voices are beautiful, both feminine and masculine, a sign of a perfect grouping of the three transducers. This is a very strong point for me. Now let's get the *CDs* to participate in the demo! I start off with *Romanian Tribute to Jimi Hendrix*, to be a connector of the time periods! From *Who Knows* to *All Along the Watchtower* to different versions of *Hey Joe*, and despite the compressions, the *Model 5s* are doing admirably well on their mission. Listening is pleasant, despite a record that was deliberately recorded as very live.

All right, let's calm down a little and get back to less stringent performances. With **Johanne Cantara**, unknown as a brand





like **KLH** may be for some of you, we enjoy her music and her soft voice that calm and put our pair to work, but in another way. An excellent guitarist, the musician covers here some titles such as **Serge Gainsbourg's** *Le poinçonneur des Lilas*, or the classic *The Girl from Ipanema*. The **KLH Model 5** also lends itself to musical simplicity.

And I always continue smoothly with another lady who captivates our ears perfectly. *Entre eux deux*, this is the title of **Melody Gardot's** album, which comes to us with a nice fluidity. And it sounds good with this pair of American speakers, which are very comfortable for this experience. The piano has all the desired extent, with this subtle and light touch specific to **Melody Gardot**. We are witnessing a nice performance by the *Model 5* which are very easily forgotten. It's the music that captivates us and we let ourselves go to reverie, which is no small compliment. We are totally in the intimacy of a

performance, especially when the artist is almost whispering in our ears. In the song *Fleurs du dimanche*, in the introduction, you can perfectly feel the harmonic roundness of the piano bass register, and it is even more bewitching as soon as the singer enters the stage. The feeling of space is also very good and the room effect does not disappoint the listener at all. Then came some live concerts from the Internet, with first-rate recordings and others, less interesting in quality, but always exciting in musical terms. However, and even if the differences were significant, **KLH Model 5s** have always been up to the challenge, even giving the appearance of musical complacency that will be beneficial to new buyers. Therefore, we can easily use these **KLHs** for everyday entertainment, as well as enjoying our favourite records, and the music we appreciate for its phenomenal recording qualities. The *Model 5s* can multitask perfectly! Music lovers who are less demanding in

terms of recording quality will be as satisfied as audiophiles who will see, with the **KLH Model 5**, that one can easily be picky and precise with models that have been around for over 50 years! And this is exactly what I have already experienced with the product review that I invited you to reread at the beginning of this article.

Conclusion

The lucky buyers of these *Model 5s* will surely smile when their visitors congratulate them for the care taken over the years with this vintage model. With the congratulations received, it should be said before any listening that this is what was done half a century ago, and that it was also this company that set the premises for democratised listening in our living rooms. This relaunch of the old brands, updated or not, symbolises, for me, a fair return of things and above all, a fair return of quality that seemed a little forgotten in addition to the idea of democratizing audio. The readers who follow me regularly know what I mean by that. For newcomers, reading **Trends Magazine** will help to understand that this pair of *Model 5s* is for me what can be considered a total commercial success, with the goal of honourable musical sharing focussed primarily at quality and pleasure. Offered at an unbeatable price, including its feet, I tip my hat to **KLH** and wish for it to become, with the model offered today, the vintage of tomorrow... in fifty years' time.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3,750 per pair

Warranty: 10 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Motet Distribution,

T.: 514.335.3131,

www.motetdistribution.com

Mediagraphy

Vinyl Records

Stooges, Funhouse, Elektra, EKS 74071

Verdi, Rigoletto, Dir.: C.M. Giulini, Deutsche Grammophon, 2740 225

Compact discs

Various, Romanian Tribute to Jimi Hendrix, Zaka Music 2005

Johanne Cantara, C'est merveilleux, JC, 2010CD

Melody Gardot-Philippe Powell, *Entre eux deux*, DECCA 4508810

Classical

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS



RECORD OF THE MONTH

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

The Nine Symphonies

Siobhan Stagg, Ekaterina Gubanova, Werner Güra, Florian Boesch, Accentus, European Chamber Orchestra, Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

DG 5 CD 486 3050.

Interpretation: ****

Technique: ****

The **DG** catalogue welcomed the complete **Beethoven** works by **Karajan, Boehm, Kubelik, Bernstein** and **Abbado**. We will add the flop **Andris Nelsons** and, from **Archiv**, the renowned journey by **Gardiner** through ancient instruments. Is **Yannick Nézet-Séguin's** box set another full version? No, not really.

The difference is the use of a chamber orchestra surrounded

by a compact, precise and rather matte sound. The first attempt of its kind, the **Tilson-Thomas** full version, made 40 years ago for **CBS**, failed precisely because the engineers had wanted to make the sound of the orchestra bigger. This is not the case here. **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** plays with tonicity, precision and the ability to react quickly to the slightest of his impulses as part of a musical discourse that greatly revalues instrumental individualities and the role of wind instruments. Not only is there historical legitimacy to this, but it also turns its back on the Karajan aesthetic and its screen of strings. The fact that the conductor uses a new edition of the scores has little impact on ordinary people.

Full-toned and exciting, it rubs shoulders with **Paavo Järvi**, even more athletic.

THE SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH

GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony no. 4

Sabine Devieille (soprano), Les Siècles,

François-Xavier Roth

Harmonia Mundi HMM, 905 357

Interpretation: ****

Technique: *****

François-Xavier Roth continues a *Mahlerian* journey shared between the Gürzenich of Cologne (3rd and 5th) and Les Siècles, orchestra on ancient instruments, put to use with great success in *Der Titan*, the original version of the 1st *Symphony*. This *Mahler* uses German and Austrian wind instruments from the turn of the 20th century and gut strings. With about sixty musicians and this configuration, the balances are revived.

The claim on the back of the record is not a lie *The polyphonic transparency within the great Mahler orchestra had not yet revealed all its secrets!* It was essential that the sound relay accurately and clearly these original timbres and these more modest volumes. As in **Yannick Nézet-Séguin's Beethoven**, there is an increased presence of wind instruments that gives the first two movements an unprecedented freshness, while the gut strings give the *Finale* the ideal voice-orchestra proportions. On the other hand, the 3rd movement may be shocked by its lack of silkiness and a certain form of rigidity. It is exciting nonetheless.



LOUIS LORTIE, ARTIST OF THE MONTH

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

LOUIS LORTIE

Works for piano, Volume 7

Chandos, CHAN, 20241

Interpretation: ****

Technique: *****

This 7th volume of **Louis Lortie's Chopin** integral in progress at **Chandos** was recorded on **Fazioli** piano at Potton Hall in October 2021. As with the **Haydn** records by **Jean-Efflam Bavouzet**, it is therefore a total mastery of sound parameters (piano adjustment, positioning of the instrument in the room, microphone) that presides over the recording. At the heart of the program are the *Mazurkas*, specifically *Opus 17, 30, 63* and *68*. **Louis Lortie** added the *Boléro*, the *Tarentelle*, the *Rondo op. 16* and the *Rondo à la Mazur*. It is the set of the full versions, we cannot have the capital works of the composer in each CD. This program is therefore devoid of so-called essential or popular works, with the exception of the *Polonaise héroïque*. **Louis Lortie** defends a clear, brilliant and extroverted **Chopin**, very effective in simple tracks like the *Rondo op. 16*. For those who want to acquire the *Mazurkas*, there is the classic **Rubinstein** but also, and above all, the selections of **Iddo Bar-Shai (Mirare)** and the dark **Pavel Kolesnikov (Hyperion)**.

Classical Music... suite

LOUIS LORTIE, ARTIST OF THE MONTH

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
LOUIS LORTIE AND HÉLÈNE MERCIER

Duets for piano

Chandos, CHAN, 20228

Interpretation: ***

Technique: *****

The **Lortie-Mercier** duo is back with an incredibly generous record with a perfect programme (81 min). On it, there is the *Petite Suite*, the transcriptions for 2 pianos of the *1st Arabesque* of the *Ballade slave* and of *The Fille aux cheveux de lin*, the *Six Épigrapes antiques*, *Marche écossaise*, *Andante cantabile* to finish with the transcription for 2 pianos by **André Caplet** of *La Mer*. The first thing that fascinates is the larger and finer sound universe, almost timid compared to **Louis Lortie's** solo records, including the **Chopin** recital. In fact, the recording was made at Snape Maltings on two **Bösendorfer** pianos. It is all in vapours and scrolls without a *hitch*, enough **Bösendorfer** might say the critics of these elegant instruments, criticised for a certain softness. Fans of an impressionist **Debussy** will love it. Let's bet that a **Philippe Cassard/François-Frédéric Guy** tandem (if we could ever dream of such a record from **La Dolce Volta**) would throw a sharper light on these scores.



BOX SET OF THE MONTH

SÁNDOR VÉGH

The recordings with the **Camerata Academica of the Mozarteum of Salzburg**

Capriccio, 6 CD, C7422

Interpretations: **** and *****

Technique: ***

This box of 6 CDs, costing about forty dollars, includes the latest recordings of **Sándor Végh** (1912-1997), a legend of music. This Hungarian, a pupil of **Jenő Hubay** and **Zoltán Kodály**, founded the *Hungarian String Quartet* at the age of 21, before creating the **Végh Quartet** in 1940, which lasted until 1980, marking the performance of the **Beethoven** and **Bartók** quartets. **Sándor Végh** was also known for playing on the *Stradivarius* that had belonged to **Paganini**. Alongside his work as a chamber musician and uncompromising teacher, **Végh** developed an activity as a chef from the 1960s onwards. He directed the *Camerata Academica* in Salzburg from 1978 until his death. These **Capriccio** recordings, well known, date from 1989 to 1994. They contain **Schubert's** *Symphonies nos. 5, 6, 8 and 9*, transcripts of the *Quartets op. 131* by **Beethoven** and *op. 111* by **Brahms**, *La Nuit transfigurée* by **Schoenberg** and a CD of **Bartók, Berg, Stravinsky**. The sound in Salzburg is a little dry, but it is the musical voice of a great, who knows all the arcana of these scores that he directs with heart and fervour.



DVD OF THE MONTH

RICCARDO ZANDONAI

Francesca da Rimini

Sara Jakubiak, Jonathan Tetelman, Ivan Inverardi, Charles Workman. Direction : Carlo Rizzi

Production: Christof Loy. Deutsche Oper Berlin, 2021

Naxos, NBD, 0142V

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

Italian composer, pupil of **Pietro Mascagni**, **Riccardo Zandonai** (1883-1944) remained in the history of music only for this opera of 1913. He was certainly influenced by his predecessors, but also marked by both the French composers of his time (**Debussy** and **Ravel**) and by **Wagner's** music. This is why *Francesca da Rimini* is sometimes given the (flattering) nickname of *Italian Tristan*. The new version easily dominates a frugal videography that includes a version of the **Met** (1984) with **Renata Scott** and **Placido Domingo (DG)**, now visually obsolete. Performed in Berlin in March 2021, this production may be more refined than it would have been in non-pandemic times, but the elegance of the stage features is perfect, and so is the interaction between the singers, to which the rare physical credibility of the couple formed by **Sara Jakubiak** and **Jonathan Tetelman** is added. Beautifully balanced stage, impeccable lighting, blazing musical direction, it is now or never the time to upgrade this underestimated score.

NEW RELEASES

JOSEPH HAYDN

**The Last Seven Words of Christ
on the Cross (Choir Version)**

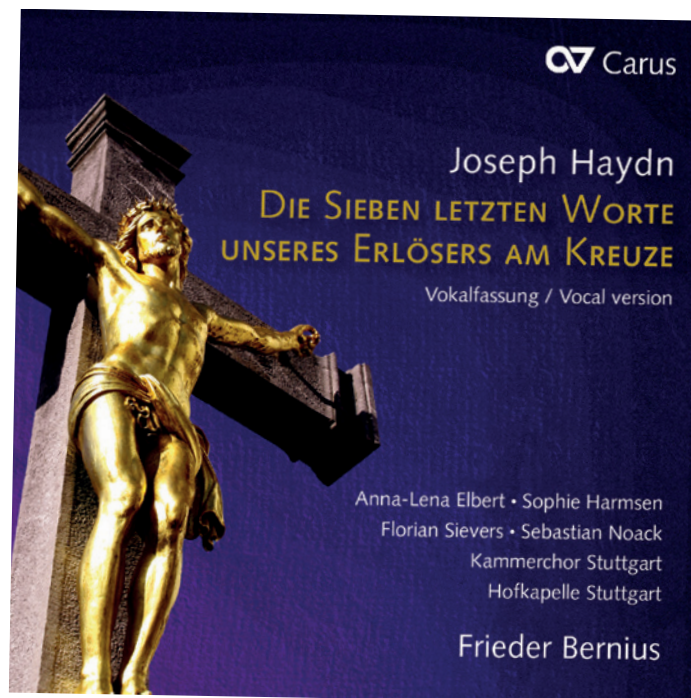
**Anna-Lena Elbert, Sophie Harmsen, Florian Sievers,
Sebastian Noack, Kammerchor Stuttgart Hofkapelle
Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius.**

Carus, 83.520

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

There are several versions of **Haydn's** *Last Seven Words of Christ*: for quartet, for orchestra and even for piano alone. The one for soloists, choir and orchestra transforms the work into a kind of oratorio. **Bernius** had already recorded this score 40 years ago for **Haensler**. This new rendering is much more expressive, even exalted. In fact, the comparison of the two recordings shows how much a great performer manages to refine his art. This is evident when one looks at the rhythmic acuity of the orchestra and the expressive warmth of the choir. In short, the musical eloquence, quite simply, in an absolutely perfect sense of proportion. As with **Brahms' German Requiem** or **Mozart's Requiem**, **Frieder Bernius** offers us a landmark reference.



Classical Music... suite

NEW RELEASES

JONATHAN TETELMAN

Arias

Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria,

Karel Mark Chichon

DG, 486 2927

Interpretation: ****

Technique: ****

The star tenor of **Zandonai's** *Francesca da Rimini* at Berlin's **Deutsche Oper**, our *DVD* of the month, is also **Deutsche Grammophon's** newcomer of the year. This is a good thing and the American-Chilean makes a better impression than his colleague **Freddie de Tommaso** at **Decca**, while the *Debuts Recitals* of tenors follow one another. Facing the radiant **Pene Pati (Warner)**, **Jonathan Tetelman**, who has waited for his voice to mature by earning his living as a *DJ* in a club in Manhattan, is a rough diamond with physical singing, whose repertoire overlaps quite widely with that of **Benjamin Bernheim**, another tenor *DG*. **Tetelman** has enormous means, but less elegance than **Bernheim**. We see him moving more towards the roles of **Verdi's** operas. It remains to be seen if his voice will be able to keep up, because judging in *Carmen's* rendering, everything is not yet fully achieved in terms of vocal training and finishing.



RECUERDOS

AUGUSTIN HADELICH

Augustin Hadelich, Cologne's WDR radio Symphony Orchestra, Cristian Macelaru

Warner, 0190296310768

Interpretation: *****

Technique: ***

What a violin! who dazzled us with his pandemic recording of **Bach's** *Sonatas and Partitas* brings out the radiance of the lyricism of the 2nd movement of **Prokofiev's** 2nd *Concerto* with extraordinary intensity. To capture this sound, the microphones are a little close, which captures the soloist's breathing, a defect that tends to irritate listeners to a great degree. But we still wanted to present this *CD*, because the program is fascinating, combining the 2nd *Concerto* by **Prokofiev** and the *Concerto* by **Britten**, one of the greats of the 20th century, still largely under-estimated. A Spanish part combines the *Carmen Fantasy* by **Sarasate** and *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by **Tarrega**. This record, released at the end of August, is undoubtedly, by its expressive power, one of the great violin *CDs* of the autumn.



**EMMANUELLE DE NEGRI,
EXIT and HEMIOLA ENSEMBLES,
EMMANUEL RESCHE-CASERTA**

Trionfo Romano

Roman Feast in Honour of Louis XIV, 1686

Chateau de Versailles, CVS 071

Interpretation: *****

Technique: ****

Emmanuel Resche-Caserta invites us to a real orgy of sound with these works by **Arcangelo Corelli** and **Alessandro Melani**. The single title of *Sinfonia grande con le trombe* (Grand Symphony with Brass) will give you an idea of the splendour of what will go down in history as one of the most impressive public celebrations held in Baroque Rome. It was given in honour of **Louis XIV** in 1687. Why the King of France? *To establish its prestige as undisputed protector of the Catholic Church.* The orchestra of the famous **Corelli** performed *Sinfonie per il Re Cristianissimo Lodovico il Grande* played by trumpets and timpani. This album, recorded in June 2021 at the Palace of Versailles, aims at the rendition of this celebration by adding a *Cantate* in honour of the King of France composed by **Alessandro Melani**. It would be impossible to be more sumptuous.

GIULIA NUTI

The Fall of the Leaf

English Music for keyboard palyed on zither

Arcana, A 532.

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

This album with a perfect autumnal title brings together works from the second half of the 16th century, the time of **John Dowland** and **William Byrd**, the most famous composers of the program. The interest lies primarily in sound, since the harpsichordist **Giulia Nuti** plays this repertoire on a zither dating from 1590. The sound recorder **Fabio Framba** chose to capture this delicate instrument up close to give it body, harmonic richness and a sound like a sip of the sun. What is the difference between a zither and a harpsichord, since to the ear they sound identical? In fact, it is a matter of the arrangement of the strings, which are oblique here with respect to the keyboard. The zither was the common form of harpsichord in Italy, which is where this sumptuous instrument comes from in an exemplary state of conservation. The admirable performance of **Giulia Nuti** offers a record that will tell a lot about the fidelity of timbres of *Hi-Fi* systems.



SIMAUDIO'S NEW VOICE



By MICHEL DALLAIRE

*It is always a renewed pleasure for me to test a system from a local manufacturer. The company **Simaudio** from Boucherville no longer really needs any introduction and its reputation goes far beyond North American borders. I am quite familiar with MOON products, but this time, what I am being offered to test is a product that completely goes beyond the traditional activities of this manufacturer. At the last **High End Show** in Munich, the folks at **Simaudio** decided to add a loudspeaker to their already well-stocked catalogue. The new Voice 22 is designed to accompany the ACE All-in-One music player. Let's see together how a company specializing in the production of electronic systems can still surprise us by putting on the market a two-way stand-mount loudspeaker. The Voice 22 has just made its appearance in the loudspeaker market and is already making a name for itself on social media.*

Another stand-mount two-way speaker! This is at least the reaction that one could have at the sight of this loudspeaker with a relatively conventional look. But let us not get too hasty in our judgment of the small Voice 22. Even though this lovely loudspeaker appears to us as

a simple two-way comprising a 155 mm woofer and a 30 mm flexible dome tweeter, it can hide a few tricks inside its cabinet. The idea behind this project is not for **Simaudio** to officially become a loudspeaker manufacturer, but rather to find the ideal loudspeaker that could be used with its ACE all-in-one amplifier. At this manufacturer, we want to create a

completely MOON high-fidelity system which would make it easier for the consumer when it comes to choosing a pair of loudspeakers. The design of the Voice 22 is therefore homemade, but its manufacture is entrusted to an Indonesian manufacturer that is associated with the loudspeaker manufacturer **SB Acoustics**. The products of this manufacturer are used by several

other brands of loudspeakers. The transducer models that equip the *Voice 22* are therefore not available as a kit in the **SB Acoustics** catalogue, because they were designed from a specifications specific to the **Simaudio's** *Voice 22* loudspeakers.

The hidden secrets of the *Voice 22*

Its secrets are not really hidden, since they are widely published in a video document available on **YouTube**. By making an incursion inside the cabinet, we can see that the woofer / medium is of a good quality with its aluminium moulded basket and its polypropylene cone reinforced with minerals. Its suspension is wide enough to allow good movement and its magnet is well sized. The frequency crossover

circuit utilizes a double layer printed circuit board as well as quality parts, such as carefully selected polypropylene film capacitors.

What's new in the *Voice 22* is a patent-pending technology called **CGB**, which stands for (**Curved Groove Damping**). The side walls of the loudspeaker are traversed by a spline hollowed out of the wood fibre panel. This spline adopts a sinuous and irregular path. There is no symmetry in the shape of the spline between that of the left wall and that of the right. These splines are then filled with a very heavy damping compound of the silicone type. This technique aims to effectively prevent the side walls from vibrating.

The four walls that form the sides, the front and the rear of the *Voice 22*, are however connected to each other and reinforced by a horizontal panel located in the center of the loudspeaker between the tweeter and the woofer. The latter comprises four rectangular holes which allow free passage of air, but each having different dimensions in order to break the standing waves inside the cabinet. The other novelty of *Voice 22* comes from the fact that the speaker can be isolated from the surface on which it rests by means of a removable base. This insulating platform has a wide **Poron** rectangle that absorbs vibrations while protecting the surface of any piece of furniture on which it would be placed. This rectangular



« The restoration of the 24-bit / 44.1 kHz *FLAC* file by the *Voice 22* loudspeaker is quite impressive. I get an unusual level of clarity and definition for this type of loudspeaker and its price category. The cohesion between the two transducers is successful, so much so that the very varied African percussion is clearly delivered to me on each side of the singer in a stereophonic image that forms in front of the loudspeakers and that goes well beyond the frame of the latter. »

base is smaller than the total area of the loudspeaker. Its downwardly rounded sides give the impression that the *Voice 22* is literally floating in the air once placed on a piece of furniture.

A solid 24-inches high metal stand is also available as an option. It is specially dedicated and adapted to the opening in the base of the loudspeaker. By using this support, you get a better integration in your listening room and it is not necessary to install the insulating base under the loudspeaker.

View from the outside

The dimensions of the *Voice 22* are 20 cm x 35 cm x 29 cm with a weight of 10.5 kg. It is available in two mirror lacquer finishes in black or white. The contour of the two speakers is unified by a metal ring that adds class to its design. The cabinet is solidly constructed from *MDF* panels with a thickness of 19 mm. The load is in bass reflex with a tubular vent that opens to the rear. The two ends of this tube are flared in order to eliminate the noises of turbulence from the air circulating therein. The connection terminals are of a good quality of the **WBT** type and they accept banana forks and sockets. The loudspeaker protection grid is attached to the cabinet by means of magnets that are invisible on the surface.

On the front face, it can be seen that the two speakers are as close as possible to each other. The proximity between the two transducers allows better cohesion between them so that they are as close as possible to the ideal of a point emission source. The other advantage is that the transition between the two speakers is facilitated when designing the frequency crossover. The tweeter is surrounded by a horn loaded part which serves as a waveguide in order to improve its dispersion. This horn moves the dome of the tweeter back with respect to the front speaker in order to place the latter as much as possible in the same plane as the acoustic centre of the woofer / medium.

The cut-off between the tweeter and the woofer / medium is at 1,500 Hz, which is very low for a two-way loudspeaker. Normally, this frequency cut-off

is between 1,800 Hz and 2,500 Hz. This cut-off of the tweeter at a low frequency of 1,500 Hz combined with its horn has the effect of improving the directivity of the *Voice 22* and widening its angle of diffusion. **Simaudio's** engineers wanted to make the loudspeaker as user-friendly as possible when listening with several people. Thus, the guest listeners do not have to all sit directly in the axis of the two loudspeakers to obtain a good stereophonic effect. The *Voice 22* project should normally have come out on the market more than a year ago, but the vagaries of the pandemic have slowed down its introduction.

Installation and listening conditions

I first installed the loudspeakers on their stands in my living room where my main high-fidelity system is located. The latter is composed of my **CeolBOX** music server, my built-in amplifier and my *DAC* connected to a linear power supply. The *Voice 22* was placed 45 cm from the rear wall and more than a meter from the side walls. An inclination towards the listener has been applied. I also had on hand a superb *CD/SACD MPS-8* player from the renowned manufacturer **Playback Designs** as part of another product review. This player, which is also a *DAC* and a high-flying streamer, allowed me to evaluate the small *Voice 22* loudspeaker to its highest potential. Secondly, I used this speaker for close listening. It was installed on either side of my desktop computer and connected to a small integrated amplifier. Its good performance, in this case, leads me to say that the *Voice 22* could even be used as a monitor on a console or on a support in a recording studio.

Let's listen now to the voice of Simaudio

I started my listening session with the beautiful African singer **Somi** who is making a career in New York. I downloaded her latest album *Zenzile, The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba* which is a pure marvel in terms of transparency and recording quality. The restoration of the 24-bit/44.1 kHz *FLAC* file by the *Voice 22* loudspeaker is quite impressive. I get an unusual level

of clarity and definition for this type of loudspeaker and its price category. The cohesion between the two transducers is successful, so much so that the very varied African percussion is clearly delivered to me on each side of the singer in a stereophonic image that forms in front of the loudspeakers and that goes well beyond the frame of the latter. The dynamics are surprising with a rather rapid attack of notes. On the *House of The Rising Sun* musical track, the double bass has body and we can hear all its notes, despite the limited size of the *Voice 22*. As the laws of physics cannot be transgressed, one should not expect low frequencies that will crack the foundations of your home, but the tonal balance of the *Voice 22* is nevertheless most satisfactory. So, when using them in a medium to small room, you won't necessarily feel the need to add a subwoofer.

I continue with the latest album by **FKA Twigs**, who is a British singer-songwriter. She is also a dancer-choreographer and her real name is **Thaliah Debrett Barnett**. Her musical style is an amalgam of electronic music, trip up, pop and R&B. In her third album, *Caprisongs*, she even added rap to her style. This superb production has basses that are most often heard in boosted car radios. However, a certain subtlety has been preserved in the quality of the recording. I was thus able to test the *Voice 22* to its last limits and I can assure you that it takes it well and that it likes to play relatively loud. The singer's voice remains natural and all details are conveyed in a clear, crisp and precise way, while the soft dome tweeter avoids the highlight trap.

I continue with somewhat quieter instrumental music. Specifically, with the album entitled *Spain Forever* by the classically-trained pianist **Michel Camilo**, whose style is inspired by Latin jazz. He forms a duet with the excellent guitarist **Tomatito**, whose flamenco style is internationally recognized. The recording of the piano and the Spanish guitar is quite exquisite and the *Voice 22* gives me timbres of an assumed natural character. The piano is present with all its tones and harmonics. The guitarist's playing is superb and I can



perceive the softness of the nylon strings very well when he pinches them with his nails. Here, I can once again see that the transition between the two speakers is very well done and gives me a good consistency on the reproduction of the instruments. This recording invites me to relax and unwind. In this sense, the *Voice 22* is a very good re-transmitter which brings me to this state of mind.

Conclusion

With the *Voice 22*, **Simaudio** wanted to find an ideal loudspeaker to accompany its *MOON ACE*. Thanks to its manufacturing quality, it is a superb purchase option for the owners of this all-in-one integrated amplifier who do not want to complicate their lives when the time comes to connect a loudspeaker to it. The small *Voice 22*

is a solidly designed product, both in terms of aesthetics and sound quality. Its compact design and its removable base ensure versatility in terms of positioning in your everyday environment. Nevertheless, it is once it has been placed on its support and away from the walls that the *Voice 22* will be able to optimize its qualities. As I mentioned in this product review, I believe it can even be used in close listening for monitoring purposes. At a price of \$3,800 a pair, the *Voice 22* will definitely face stiff competition, but in this price category, it is quite competitive. The *Voice 22* has fire in its belly and it has everything needed to seduce you. For my part, it was able to flatter my ears with an incredible presence, a good musicality and it caught my eye.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3,800/pair

Warranty: 10 years, parts and labour under certain conditions.

Manufacturer: Simaudio Ltd.,
Tel.: 450.449.2212, <https://simaudio.com>

Mediagraphy

Somi, Zenzile: The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba, FLAC, 24-bit / 96 kHz

FKA Twigs, Caprisongs

Michel Camilo & Tomatito, Spain Forever, Universal, 0602557025583

Woodkid, S16, FLAC, 24-bit / 44.1 kHz


Valérie Milot / Stéphane Tétreault, Transfiguration, FLAC, 24bit / 96kHz

Acknowledgements

The editorial team thanks Simaudio for the loan of the loudspeakers and the technical support.

TWO SMALL DEVICES TO *KNOW*

By MICHEL DALLAIRE



The manufacturer **Wattson Audio** is the result of a collaboration with the Swiss company **Engineered SA**, which specialises in the manufacture of high-fidelity equipment for more than 20 years. Located in Yverdon-les-Bains in the heart of French-speaking Switzerland, **Wattson Audio**'s products meet the highest standards of Swiss manufacturing. Some time ago, I got to know these streaming and digital-to-analogue conversion products. However, their distribution in Canada was not yet fully assured until an agreement was reached with the Montreal distributor **Phonographe**. Therefore, this company will distribute **Wattson Audio** products for Canada and the United States. What I am being offered to test for this product review are two small devices from the **Emerson** series, called Analog and Digital. Let us see together what these devices, of exemplary simplicity, can bring us as audiophiles or simply as music lovers in search of a good sound. All of this, of course, without having to complicate one's life with all the network aspect of digital music.

At the moment, **Watson Audio**'s catalogue consists of three devices including the *Emerson Analog*, which is a networked music player (*streamer*) with a digital-to-analogue converter (*DAC*) and *RCA* outputs that can connect it to any integrated amplifier or preamplifier. The *Emerson Digital* is a streamer with digital outputs only, on coaxial *AES/EBU* and *S/PDIF* connectors, which can be connected to a *DAC* or any other device with these digital inputs.

The *Madison* is a third, more complete streamer model. It includes a digital-to-analogue conversion (*DAC*) section, but with coaxial *S/PDIF* and *AES/EBU* digital inputs. Its stereo output on *RCA* and *XLR* connectors is controlled by a potentiometer. It is also equipped with a 6.35 mm format jack output for headphones. At the time of writing this article, the retail price

in Canadian dollars for each of the two *Emerson* models is \$1,950.

The Emerson Series

Let's focus on the two devices of this product review, the *Emerson Analog* and *Emerson Digital* streamers. They are very compact, easy to place and designed with a *retro-futuristic* touch that makes them unique in their kind. Their housings are machined from a massive block of aluminium covered with a powder-coated paint. Their connections are very clean and easy to understand without the need to reach for an instruction manual.

In both cases, there is only one *Ethernet*-type digital input (100 Mbits/LAN) on *RJ45* connector. These streamers are therefore compatible with the *UPnP/DLNA* transfer protocols as well as with the *Airplay* and *ROON* reading platforms. Thus, they can also be driven by different applications such as *Audirvana*, *BubbleUPnP*

or *mConnect Player*. These apps are free for *Android* or *iOS* smartphones and tablets. The **Quobuz**, **Tidal** and **Airable** networked music services for Web radio are also compatible. Forget the *Bluetooth* wireless receiver or *USB Type B* input allowing a computer to be plugged directly into it. The digital signal must pass through the router of your Web network and come from your music server, a computer or a *NAS* (*Network Attached Storage*). At **Watson Audio**, it is believed that wired network playback has proven its worth and that it allows all other technologies to be surpassed in terms of signal stability and, therefore, sound quality. For this Swiss manufacturer, digital signal synchronisation is of paramount importance, so *Emerson* devices use two clock generators depending on whether the musical track being played is sampled at a frequency of 44.1 kHz or 48 kHz and their multiples. The signal transfer protocol is





asynchronous in order to dispense with external clocks of lower quality. The flow of audio data is thus clocked directly by the active clock. The oscillators selected are of high precision (50 fs) and with extremely low phase noise in the audible band. All Wattson products have been designed with the challenges of our time period in mind. Their ecological impact is reduced through the use of robust and durable components. This avoids the production of apparatuses whose obsolescence is programmed. For this purpose, firmware updates are available on the manufacturer's website.

The two Emersons

For the *Analog* model, the choice of the DAC was based on a **Cirrus Logic** digital-to-analogue conversion chip which has proven itself to a large extent in terms of reproduction quality. The power supply, the topology of the output stages and the filtering circuits of the *Emerson Analog* have been the subject of particular attention as regards the final result of the listening. Its *RCA* connectors are of impeccable quality. In the case of *Digital*, the device is provided with two distinct modulators, one for the coaxial *S/PDIF* output and the other for the *AES/EBU*. According to **Wattson Audio**, this is the only way to respect the specifics of these two standards without compromising. These high-speed digital output stages are synchronised by the main clock in order to avoid any jitter. A broadband *RF* transformer is used on

each of these outputs to isolate them from each other and avoid common mode problems. Its *RCA* and *AES/EBU* connectors are also of impeccable quality. The power supply to the two streamers is provided by a wall-mounted switching transformer. The choice of this type of external adapter has the advantage of keeping the mains voltage away from the core of the apparatus whose circuits are sensitive to interference. The *DC* voltage, provided by this external adapter, is smoothed by a series of common mode filters and then distributed to the various sections of the electronic board. Each of these sections is filtered and has a dedicated voltage regulator to avoid unwanted interactions.

The Network Interface

Both *Emerson* models run **Engineering SA's** streaming engine, which is a **Wattson Audio** solution based on a *Sitara* processor from **Texas Instruments**. The embedded software that manages the various network communication protocols as well as the decoding of audio streams have been developed and perfected over several years. The internal process can therefore guarantee the integrity of the audio data and the reliability of their transmission. High-resolution file support for both *PCM* and *DSD* is transcoding-free thus ensuring a smooth and interactive user experience.

Using the two Emerson Streamers

First, I connected the *Emerson Digital* to my *Ethernet* network, then its coaxial

output to my **Chord Qutest** converter. The analogue output of the latter was connected to my integrated amplifier. The *Qutest* is powered by an **Sbooster BOTW P&P ECO MKII** linear circuit. Subsequently, I tested the *Emerson Analog* by connecting its stereo output directly to the auxiliary input of my integrated amplifier. Since these two streamers are compatible with the *ROON* playback platform, it was easier for me to use the latter, already installed on my computer and my tablet. I was able to listen to *PCM* and *DSD* files in high resolution. For this product review, the **Phonographe** distributor supplied me with two medical-type transformers, a model that is normally supplied with the *Madison* streamer. According to the distributor, there is a gain in sound quality with this transformer, which is stronger and not connected directly to the wall.

French-speaking Switzerland listening to world music

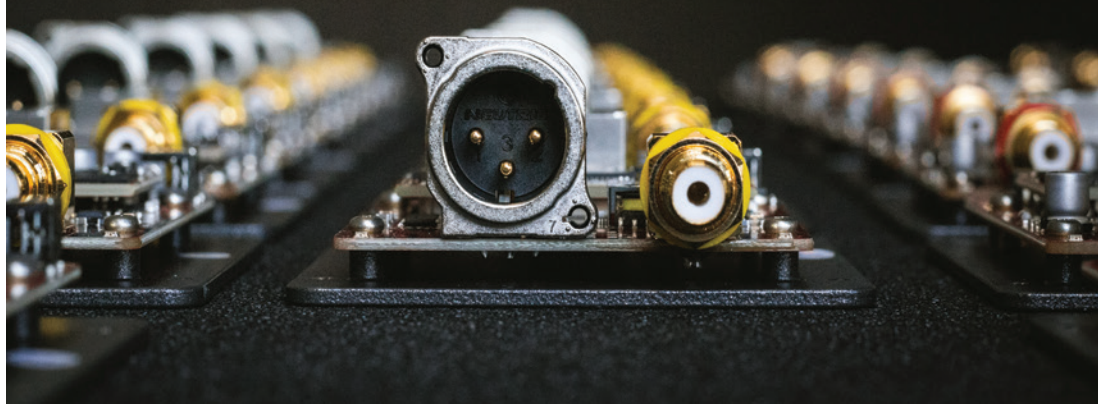
I started my listening sessions with **Natalia Mateo's** album *De Profundis* on the **ACT** label. The name of this young jazz singer tells us little about her origins, since she was born in Poland, raised in Austria and now lives in Germany. Her voice is crystal clear and soft at the same time. She may sometimes seem vulnerable, but not without a certain air of assurance. Most of the songs on this album are compositions by **Natalia Mateo** with the help of her musicians. The transmission accuracy of the *Emerson Digital* streamer allows my

Emerson

DAC Chord Qutest to perform at its true value. The singer's voice is sensual at will and well centered within the stereophonic image. All the details of the recording are present and spread very well over a very wide sound panorama. The *Emerson Digital* offers me a pleasant fluidity in the reproduction of this very personal form of jazz to **Natalia Mateo**. The dynamics are there and the impact of the percussion is proof of this.

I continue with one of my favourite jazz guitarists, **Nguyen Lê**. In 2017, he recorded an album entitled *Hà Nội Duo* with the collaboration of singer and multi-instrumentalist **Ngô Hồng Quang**. The excellent trumpeter **Paolo Fresu** teamed up with them to take us on a whirlwind of jazz fusion inspired by traditional Vietnamese music. This superb recording takes us into a universe where exoticism and modernity go hand in hand. The guitarist **Nguyen Lê's** playing is, as usual, fluid and of an impressive virtuosity. In this case, the *Emerson Analog* streamer is just as competent as the *DAC Chord Qutest* which, I remind you, is supported by the **Sbooster BOTW P&P ECO MKII** linear power supply. So good, it's hard for me to decide which one is the best. In their difference, I would say that the *Emerson Analog* seems to dissect the details of the recording a little more, while the *Qutest* is more about roundness and softness. At a price of \$1,950, the *Emerson Analog* is, in my opinion, very competitive compared to the *Qutest* whose pricing is nearly \$2,400. I also believe that changing the *Emerson's* small wall transformer to the medical type offered with the *Madison* model is an option to consider for a significant improvement in sound.

I finish my listening with a *DSD* file like the one from the album *Polarity* by the band **Hoff Ensemble** with **Anders Jormin** and **Audun Kleive** on the **2L** label. This Norwegian label specialises in high resolution *DSD* recordings. For this listening, the two *Emerson* streamers are just as captivating thanks to an exceptional fluidity of execution and a natural mixing of instruments. Once again, I have proof that the synchronism of the signal ensured by the quality of the clocks has a significant influence on the final result of the playback. In addition, with these *Emerson* devices and their free **Watson** app,



navigating through Web radio stations or online music sites like **Spotify** or **Tidal** is a breeze. The sound results are quite constant, regardless of the musical source.

Conclusion

The *Emerson Analog* and *Emerson Digital* streamers are fundamentally good, as they benefit from unparalleled signal transmission synchronisation. As with some other streamers, they also convinced me that to listen to digital music in high resolution, it is imperative to pass digital files through a wired *Ethernet* network. Wireless transmission like *Bluetooth*, *Airplay* or *WiFi* can be convenient in some circumstances, but to get the best possible performance with files in very high resolution, wired transmission is essential. Obviously for the same price, and even a little cheaper than one of these two **Watson** streamers, you can buy a network player lined with multiple digital inputs and functions, such as a headphone jack or a nice *OLED* screen to display your album covers. But what about the reliability of the signal transmission and its synchronicity? In any case, using the **Watson** app or those of other partners like *ROON*, you'll have all the display you need on your tablet or smartphone to control everything. If you have an amplifier that doesn't have a integrated digital card and you want to try streaming hassle-free, the *Emerson Analog* is for you. If, however, you already have a good external *DAC* that does not offer the streaming function, the *Emerson Digital* will provide a strong and stable bridge in

your Web network between your music files and your *DAC*, regardless of whether these files come from your servers or online music sites. For these two products, the manufacturer **Watson** preferred to put the money where it counts, that is to say on the reliability, the ease of use, the quality of manufacture and especially on the precision of the synchronisation clocks. So don't be intimidated by their Lilliputian format or minimalist connectivity, because it's on the inside that they're beautiful.

GENERAL INFORMATION

EMERSON ANALOG and/or

EMERSON DIGITAL

Price: \$1,950

Warranty: 2 years parts and labour and possibility of one year extension (see conditions online on the website)

Distributor: Phonographe, T.: 514.622.8966, <https://www.phonographe.ca>

Mediagraphy

Natalia Mateo, *De Profundis*, ACT, FLAC file 24-bits / 96 kHz

Nguyen Lê & Ngô Hồng Quang, *Hà Nội Duo*, ACT, FLAC file 24-bits / 88.2 kHz

Hoff Ensemble, Anders Jormin and Audun Kleive, *Polarity*, 2L, DSF, DSD128

Valérie Milo / Stéphane Tétreault, *Transfiguration*, FLAC 24-bit / 96 kHz

Anna Gréta, *Nightjar in the Northern Sky*, FLAC 24-bit / 48 kHz

Acknowledgements

The editorial team thanks the distributor Phonographe for the loan of the devices.

Jazz

By CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ



MICHEL DONATO
MICHEL DUBEAU
ROBERT MÉNARD
Simplement jazz 2.0
Independant

During the last edition of the **Montreal International Jazz Festival**, double bassist **Michel Donato** celebrated his 80th birthday and 60 years of his career. It was a royal celebration and, despite the passing of time, he never lost the desire to play. On stage there are many friends, including guitarist **Robert Ménard** and tenor / baritone saxophonist **Michel Dubeau**. For this *Simplement Jazz 2.0*, our three accomplices revisit soberly, and we will add lovingly, standards that have stood the test of time. It's good to listen again to *Alone Together*, *Black Orpheus*,

56 tedpublications.com/en November - December 2022

My Funny Valentine magnified by baritone saxophonist **Michel Dubeau** or the classic *Whisper Not* by the late saxophonist **Benny Golson**. This little record highlights three talented instrumentalists who tell us the story of the blue note, very modestly. From the subtlety of double bassist **Michel Donato** to guitarist **Robert Ménard**, quite in the spirit of another great man, **Grant Grenn**, to saxophonist **Michel Dubeau**, who reminds us just how essential his masters **Serge Chaloff / Pepper Adams** were, *Simplement Jazz 2.0* is a real joy that is to be consumed slowly.

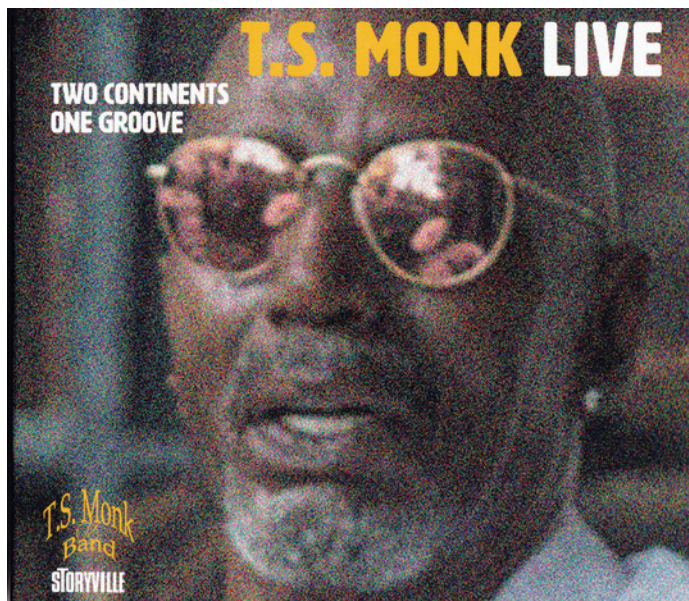
MICHEL DONATO
Et ses amis québécois
Effendi / Naxos

Since we are on the subject of **Donato**, this novelty was presented on his 80th birthday. Around him are long-standing friends, including brave accomplices. With pianist **François Bourassa**, drummer **Pierre Tanguay** and saxophonist **Frank Lozano**, there are no standards, only personal compositions. It is often said that unity as well as trust coupled with fraternity ensure a result that is out of the ordinary. This reunion is, indeed, worth well the interest. In nine tracks, and without too much window-dressing, these instrumentalists make us travel intelligently. From *Never Met Her* (**F. Lozano**) to *For Prez* (**F. Bourassa**) as well as *Petite Brise* from our friend **Donato**, the well-served jazz makes us, without a doubt, happy. Hoping that these four pirates will visit us all in the near future.



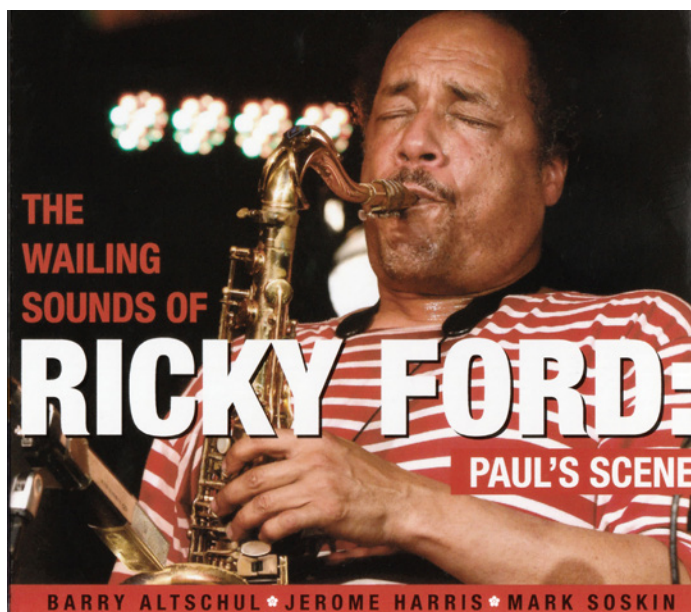
RICKY FORD
The Wailing Sound
Whaling City Sound / Naxos

Chameleon saxophonist, tenor **Ricky Ford** can be **Coleman Hawkins**, **Stan Getz** or **Sonny Rollins**. Without ever imitating, he continues the work of these giants who wrote the history of jazz. An accomplished artist, able to play in any style, this *Wailing Sound*, which is an elegant tribute to the starred saxophonist **Paul Gonsalves**, will give you a very good idea of what he's capable of. Along with drummer **Barry Aschtul**, pianist **Mark Soskin** and bassist **Jerome Harris**, saxophonist **Ricky Ford** delivers the goods. More than solid, you have to listen twice rather than once to *That Red Clay*, *Ricky's Bossa*, the beautiful ballad *Angel Face* and of course, *Paul's Scene*. Everything is expressive, powerful without forgetting the softness when the time comes for a generous and well felt romance. A minor master we should listen to more often. We also recommend *Artistry in Rhythm* with **Ran Blake** in 1986. An impressive record where he uses for once, rarely, the bassoon, a specialty of another great disappeared artist, **Jean-Baptiste Illinois Jacquet**. In short, a novelty that will put you in a satisfying mood.



T.S. MONK - Live
Two Continents / One Groove
Storyville/Naxos

An illustrious son of composer / pianist **Thelonious Monk**, **T.S. Monk** has finally recorded, after so many years, a record before the public. Having had **Art Blakey** as well as **Max Roach** as teachers, without omitting the advice of his father with whom he shared the scene, his style marries that of the *Bebop* with a little extra, let's say. For this novelty, which smells of solid swing and palpable energy from the beginning, everything is in place for the jazz fan to find something to suit them. Surrounded by young musicians, let's not forget that the drummer is over 75 years old, the dynamics proposed will suit you well. Between two beautiful nods to pianist **Randy Weston** *Chessemens Delight*, *Little Niles*, as well as the unmissable *Seven Steps To Heaven*, the blue note is more than well served. It's as if we were in a jazz club.



V12+ MK SOUND V12+ SUBWOOFER

TAKING REFERENCE TO A NEW LEVEL

By DAVID SUSILO

Earlier this year, the legendary speaker brand **Miller and Kreisel** (aka **MKSound**) released their V+ subwoofer lineup. The V+ Series comprises three models: the V15+, V12+ and V10+. Each's name corresponds to the size of its driver, so the range-topper has a 15-inch driver. The V15+ and V12+ have earned **THX** Certification too, meaning that given the right conditions, they can achieve professional cinema reference levels.

The V15+ achieved **THX** Certified Ultra status when used in a pair, while the V12+ is **THX** Certified Select. That means in order to hear pro-grade audio, you need to use a pair of V15+ in a room of up to 3,000 square feet in size, and the V12+ as a solo sub in a room of up to 2,000 square feet. For my home theatre, as it is only about 10 ft wide and 16 ft deep, the V12+ is more than enough for the room.

I have extremely high hopes for this subwoofer as my previous experiences with **MKSound** subwoofers (the X series) have been extremely

positive. After all, they were the inventor of subwoofers. You read that right. Before **MKSound**, there was no such thing as subwoofer.





Their journey began in 1973, when **Walter Becker** of **Steely Dan** commissioned **MKSound** to design a studio reference subwoofer and monitoring system for their **Pretzel Logic LP** mixing sessions. The result was the world's first balanced dual-drive subwoofer and **Pretzel Logic** went on to become a million-selling *Top Ten* hit and one of **Rolling Stone** magazine's *500 Greatest Albums of All Time*. At the time, the subwoofer was a passive unit requiring outboard amplifier to power it. In 1977 the company released the **Volkwoofer**, the world's first active subwoofer ever existed. So if anybody knows what a subwoofer supposed to sound, they are it.

While I'm very familiar with their *X* series subwoofer, I can not incorporate them into my home theatre designs. Not because of the performance, but simply because they are too ugly looking albeit their phenomenal performance. So when they announced the much nicer looking

V12+ subwoofer, I instantly ordered mine directly from Denmark in order to receive the very first *V12+* subwoofer in Canada. Many months have past since then but now after playing with it for a month; I'm ready to start my review.

The Installation

Setting up the subwoofer was as easy as *A-B-C*. In fact, the most difficult part is carrying the subwoofer to my basement where the home theatre is. Its near-50 lbs weight is very heavy for my tendonitis ridden hands. And the smooth satin finish makes the subwoofer slippery. Very beautiful indeed, but slippery. The supplied white gloves don't help as they only adds to the slipperiness of the sub. Once it's in my home theatre, it sits on four **IsoAcoustics Orea Bordeaux** feet and the setup begins.

Because I ordered the subwoofer directly from Denmark, the subwoofer was set to 220 V. A simple slide of a switch, it is now accepting North American electrical voltage. Note that when purchased from

North American stores, you don't need to do this. Plugging in my *LFE* output from the receiver directly to back of the *V12+* (clearly marked as *LFE* input) and set the volume dial to twelve o'clock, and I'm done with the physical install.

Calibrating the subwoofer is extremely crucial and it used to be a long and annoying process for me, even as a professional calibrator. So I usually use my **DSPeaker Antimode 8033** subwoofer auto calibration module to ease my calibration process and turn it into an only 5-minute ordeal. It automatically set the *EQ* and phase as perfectly as possible for my room conditions with minimal effort. Mind you, that still means spending another \$600-ish for an external auto bass *EQ* module.

Thankfully, the *V+* subwoofers come with their own internal auto bass *EQ* processor. All I had to do is to download the **MKSound** app from the app store, set it to *integrator's* mode and do the calibration using the phone's internal mic. However, since I have a custom tuned microphone



Movies after movies, concerts after concerts, have now been vastly improved by the *V12+*. Of course the **MK Sound S150 THX Certified** satellites helped with the imaging quite dramatically too. The first thing that struck me when listening to music, the **MK Sound** combination of the *S150* and *V12+* is their amazing sense of imaging. The *S150* are able to recreate a large soundstage but at the same time they provide an exceptional amount of accuracy and multi layered details.

for my phone, I plugged that in instead of using the phone's internal microphone and the result was impeccable.

All I had to do was download the app, and within the app, connect the *V12+* using *Bluetooth*. Set the app to integrator's mode and choose the auto *EQ* option and start the process. You can have up to three separate measurements and have those measurements averaged. I use 3 positions as follows: at the main listening point (*MLP*), 2 feet to the left of *MLP* and 2 feet to the right of *MLP*. Within less than 10 minutes, everything is done for both *EQ* and phase. No need for sub-crawl, no need for the steep-learning-curve *REW* that takes hours to learn and implement, 10 minutes and you're up and running

Unlike the **DSPeaker 8033** bass *EQ* module, you can customize the *EQ* further using the internal 4-band parametric *EQ* and phase control supplied within the app's integrator's mode. I don't feel there is any need to use these controls beyond the auto bass *EQ* calibration so I left them alone.

Moving on to the listening test

As usual, I tested the subwoofer in my **THX** specifications home theatre using **Pioneer SC-LX704** as a pre-pro fed to five **Marantz MA-500 THX Certified** mini monoblocks powering **MKSOUND S150**

THX Certified satellites in 5.1.4 configuration with **Revel C263** in-ceiling speakers for *Atmos*.

For those of you who are not familiar with the **MK Sound S150**, the speakers were originally released about 25 years ago and instantly were a hit by industry professionals including **Disney, Lucasfilm, Paramount, HBO, Universal, DTS, Dolby** even **THX** themselves use those speakers as their reference speakers and these speakers have won various awards even garnered five star ratings from various A/V media outlets including various audiophile magazines worldwide.

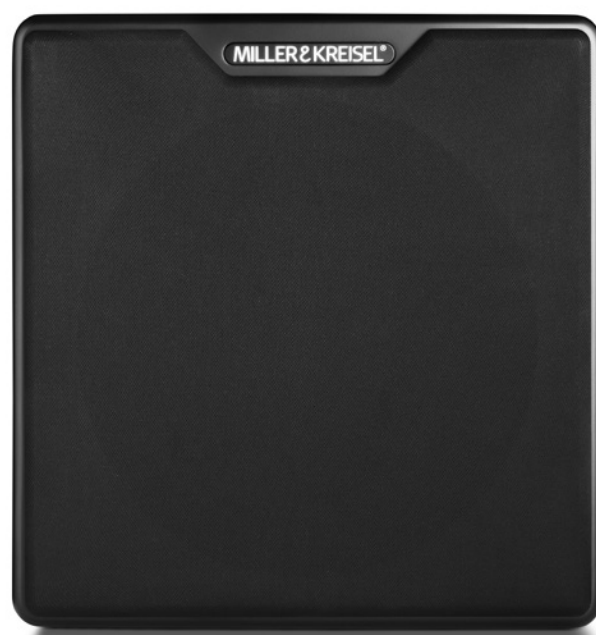
After calibrating the subwoofer, I calibrated the five **MK Sound S150 THX Certified** speakers (for the bed tracks) and **Revel C263** in ceilings (for *Atmos*) using **Pioneer's Advanced MCACC** with *EQ* turned off and further massaged the tuning with manual measurements of distance using a laser tape measure and speaker levels using calibrated microphone and **AudioTools** (paid version of the software).

For a listening test, I started with the legendary *Edge of Tomorrow 4K UltraHD* disc played on my **Panasonic UB9000 THX Certified 4K** disc player; the opening scene where the opening *LFE* is awesomely named as subwoofer killer. Using

the **AudioTools RTA** functionality coupled with the said calibrated mic shows the subwoofer actually reached 17 Hz at -6 dB, 18 Hz at -3 dB, and 20 Hz at 0 dB. Very impressive indeed as testing using my previous subwoofer of a similar price, similar spec (on paper) never yielded anything below 20 Hz. My previous subwoofer didn't even hit 20 Hz at 0 dB, in fact it only kicked 20 Hz only at -3 dB, which in retrospect, disappointing. I also used to use **Butt Kicker** for each of my seat to add tactile feeling for the *missing notes* from my older subwoofer, but that's no longer the case. Even just using the *V12+* is enough to make my seats rumble. Of course, to psychoacoustically add the illusion of an even larger bass, I still use my **Butt Kicker**, but now it's turned down by a whopping 40%.

Movies after movies, concerts after concerts, have now been vastly improved by the *V12+*. Of course the **MK Sound S150 THX Certified** satellites helped with the imaging quite dramatically too.

The first thing that struck me when listening to music, the **MK Sound** combination of the *S150* and *V12+* is their amazing sense of imaging. The *S150* are able to recreate a large soundstage but at the same time they provide an exceptional amount of accuracy and multi layered details. Every track from **Emilie-Claire Barlow's**



The Beat Goes On CD sounds alive. The vocal is forward and intimate without any hint of in-your-face brashness of many speakers of the similar price range. Double bass sounds emitted by the V12+ sounded like... double bass. Every bass drum kick I can hear not only the bass-drum frequency but also the mallet hitting the drum skin. Impressive from this small-ish subwoofer enclosure. Even more so from a subwoofer that is this affordable. The V12+ subwoofers produced a mind bogglingly realistic bass response that blended with the music without ever overpowering the performance. Details in the music were abundant and the V12+ just disappeared into the background.

I was constantly shocked at just how much bass was coming from this relatively small subwoofer. The V12+ had zero trouble producing incredible bass and grabbing my attention from scene to scene. From the mayhem of the chase scene in *Phantom Menace* (originally mixed using S150 and X12 sub at **Skywalker Ranch**), the crashing of buildings in *Inception*, to the pounding synthesizer bass lines and drums in **Netflix**' *RRR* could be felt throughout the room, the V12+ managed to effectively recreate these movies in all their respective glory.

Playing movie such as *Aquaman* and *Ready Player One*, both in Atmos with lots of LFE action, I noticed a distinct

enhancement in dynamic range over my previous set of speakers (I used **System Audio Aura 30** towers for the left and right channels, **PSB Image C5** as the centre). The tidal storm sequences from *Aquaman* (and there were many) where the massive wave unleashes hell on the New England coast and the opening racing sequence in *Ready Player One* exhibited unrelenting power and rumble to my seat, loud but clean with the subwoofer in **THX** (neutral) mode. If you want more oomph, you can simply open the app and set the EQ profile to *Movie*. I personally tried both and I prefer the **THX** (neutral) setting without the added bloat and a much smoother frequency response. For listening to music and/or watching concerts and musical, there is also *Music* profile but just like the *Movie* option, I prefer not to use them as they both added bass boost frequencies (albeit different) that are uncomfortable to my ears. This is not to say that I dislike my previous system, in fact I loved my old system so much that I was worried that I won't hear enough gain in perceived sound quality with the **MK Sound 5.1** set. In fact, if anything, it makes me want to upgrade my **Revel C263** in-ceilings to **MK Sound IC95** in ceiling speakers, budget permitting.

Conclusion

So, if you don't know by now, I absolutely love my **MK Sound V12+** subwoofer, especially when matched together with **MK**

Sound S150 satellites. If you are like me, looking for the utmost in reference quality sound, I strongly recommend the V12+ subwoofer. It is small, it is taut, it kicks deep, yet remain to be pristinely clean. It takes the term *reference quality* to a new level.

Equipment list:

- Kaleidescape** *Strato C* and *Terra 6* combo
- JVC** *RS3100 8K eShiftX* projector
- Marantz** *MA-500 THX Certified* monoblocks
- MK Sound** *S150 THX Certified* satellites
- MK Sound** *V12+ THX Certified* subwoofer
- Panasonic** *UB9000 THX Certified* BD player
- Pioneer** *Elite SC-LX704* receiver in *pre-pro* mode
- Pixelgen Design** *THX Certified* HDMI cables
- Revel** *C263* in ceiling
- Stewart Filmscreen** *StudioTek 130 G4 THX Certified* screen
- Torus Power** *AVR 15 Plus*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$ 2 800

Warranty: 5 years on speakers and 2 years on electronic components, parts and labor.

Manufacturer: Miller & Kreisel,

<https://mksound.com/>

Progressive

By RICHARD GUAY



ZONEM

Sono Dentro Di Me

<https://www.facebook.com/ZoneM.SonoDentroDiMe/>

Those who have been following me for a long time know my devotion to *RPI* (Rock Progressivo Italiano) groups. Although exciting discoveries are still possible, on several releases, creative breakdown and conformism is setting in. Fortunately, stunning encounters with new and atypical formations are still possible. They want to take *RPI* elsewhere, to unexplored lands. This is the case of **ZONEM**, the project of keyboardist **Beppi Menozzi**, a virtuoso with 10 years of piano studies to his credit in addition to a solid classical musical training. At his side he has an impressive army of 16 collaborators on guitars, percussion, voice and keyboards. *Sono Dentro Di Me* (I am inside of me) is therefore a bold exhibition based on several themes, some of which break down into several parts. This is an anxious and disturbing experimental progressive rock project, firmly encamped on an irreproachable *RPI* matrix. The concept offers a composite fresco on human emotions and concerns, sometimes even the most obscure. One plunges happily and without restraint into all the

most secret corners of thought by using an amalgamation of musical genres, whether it be classical progressive rock, artistic rock, psychedelic, jazz, orchestral music, electronica or film music, to name but a few. Sometimes you get the impression of watching a thriller where the rise in anxiety goes hand in hand with a syncopated and hysterical, often *underground*, music. The surprises, we suspect, are there in the hundreds. The disjointed rhythm of the making gives as much room to soft passages as to obsessive delusions. The voices and lyrics, all in Italian, are rather discreet, but present on half of the songs. They come in all forms, male and female singing, vocalised, narrative, but always doped with an overdose of emotion. *Sono Dentro Di Me* is an epic, masterful, eclectic and extremely musical work aimed at those who wish to live a new *RPI* experience to the full



PORCUPINE TREE

Closure/Continuation

<https://porcupinetreec.com/>

At the end of 2010, after the *The Incident* tour, **Porcupine Tree** took a break, to the great dismay of their audience. Each member then devoted himself to new projects. Over the years, the future of the cult group seemed more and more nebulous to such an extent that **Steven Wilson** declared in August 2016 *You can wait a long time, this group no longer exists*. So there will be no eleventh album. Note that ten albums spread over 17 years (1992 – 2009) represent a more than significant career that many artists would envy. It was not until last autumn that the rabbit came out of the hat, with the announcement of a new release entitled *Closure/Continuation*, a title quite appropriate if ever there was one (*We Close and We Continue*), which will follow the enigmatic *The Incident* (2009). And now that the beast has finally shown the tip of its nose, what has become of the music of this much-loved band 11 years later? After such a long break and so many solo experiences on the part of the artists involved, what can we expect? At the outset, I must humbly admit that I am not a big fan of **Porcupine Tree**, although I have already had a great time with this quartet, now a trio after the departure of bassist **Colin Edwin**. Since we are all friends here, let's even say that I have all the records. First of all, what is

obvious to me is that it has not received great reviews. *Closure/Continuation* is like or little-liked, but not hated. The main problem is this obsession with wanting at all costs to compare it with its predecessors, which somewhat distorts the judgment of my colleagues. This was also the case with *The Incident*, taken down by the critics, but which I loved because of its atypical, wandering and pleasantly disturbing style. If we refer to the title of this new version, it is a question of closure, therefore of a separation followed, 11 years later, by a continuation, therefore, of certain references to the past. The past in question here refers to the latest albums, those of the second half of the 2000s, the *heavy prog* period, notably *Fear of a Blank Planet*, whose heavy and rather stratospheric passages have been retained, or *The Incident*, whose ethereal and sustained breaks as well as its psychedelic content will be retained to a certain extent. And the comparison ends there. *Closure/Continuation* is an atypical **Porcupine** that marks the artistic evolution of the trio very well. First of all, because it has just become a trio, we will have to do without the powerful and loud bass of **Colin Edwin**. In a group classified as *heavy prog*, the bassist function is obviously crucial. **Steven Wilson** thus takes on this task, quite honourably, we suspect, but in a very different way. The album is thus less hard and more symphonic than its predecessors. Secondly, **Steven Wilson's** musical career over the past 11 years has had a marked influence on his music, and that can be heard. Finally, **Richard Barbieri** (keyboards) and **Gavin Harrison** (drums) have not remained idle in recent years either, and their respective styles have definitely gained in refinement. So, is the last **Porcupine** good? Certainly! And for several reasons, a progressive content that emerges strongly, notably through the proliferation of unconventional structures, long titles such as the opening piece, the enigmatic and amazing *Harridan* or the closing track, *Chimera's Wreck*, through complex variations and convoluted melodic passages. A few calmer tracks are added to the list, but a heavy, dark and cynical atmosphere, as we like them, hovers throughout the record. Much less of a rock album than the previous ones, but perhaps more eclectic, *Closure/Continuation* is a very respectable and most pleasant **Porcupine Tree** album, as long as we unconditionally accept its difference and the level of evolution it has reached. Moreover, as **Steven Wilson** so well pointed out during an interview with a Belgian webzine, *If this album had nothing new to add to Porcupine Tree's repertoire, it would never have seen the light of day!*

What's New?

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

A new active loudspeaker from the manufacturer Triangle

The French company **Triangle** is a manufacturer of loudspeakers that is already well known, and its products have been imported into Canada for a few years. **Triangle** restarts its production of the *LN05A* active type floorstanding loudspeaker. It is a true connected system that

includes an amplifier and a multitude of analogue and digital connections. Designed to reproduce sound a large room ranging from 20 to 50 m², the *LN05A* returns, in a new 2022 edition, with two new finishes that are light oak and chestnut in a dark tone that offers a more rustic but distinguished style.

Wireless playback

The *LN05A* loudspeakers are equipped with an *AD2P aptX Bluetooth 4.0* receiver, providing a quality wireless connection for streaming *HD* music. These compact and powerful loudspeakers are truly all-in-one systems that are as comfortable for listening to music as they are for listening to movies or TV shows.

The announced power of the *LN05A* is 80 W per channel and an *LFE* output is provided for a subwoofer to enhance the sound rendering of movies and TV series in home cinema use. The *LN05A*'s

preamplifier and *MM* phono input keep the 33 and 45 turn fans in mind.

Some technical data

The *LN05A* speaker is a floor-standing active loudspeaker with a bass reflex acoustic load. It is a 2.5 channel consisting of a 25 mm tweeter with a flexible dome and two 13 cm diameter medium/bass transducers. The sensitivity is 90 dB/W/m in a bandwidth of 47 Hz to 22 kHz plus or minus 3 dB. The impedance is between 4 and 8 ohms and the available power of 80 W per channel is provided by a class *D* amplifier module.

On the rear panel of one of the two speakers, one can see the two digital inputs which are of the coaxial and optical *S/PDIF* type. The stereo line input is on *RCA* connectors and it is switchable to a phono input followed by a bolt for grounding the turntable. There is also an auxiliary input on a 3.5 mm mini jack socket. Finally, you can see the (+) and (-) loudspeaker outputs needed to plug in the other loudspeaker, which is passive. The *LN05A* active loudspeaker comes with a remote control that allows remote source switching and volume control.

At the time of writing, in-store availability and the Canadian retail price were not yet known. In France, we are talking around €999 per pair and one can order the *LN05A* in a pack with a turntable specially designed by **Pro-Ject** to accompany the active **Triangle** loudspeakers, such as the *LN01A*, the *Bora Active BR02 BT* and *BR03 BT* or the *AIO Twin*.

<https://www.trianglehifi.com/en/>

Distributed in Canada by:
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