

TED

TRENDS ELECTRONICS & DESIGN

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EVENTS • WHAT'S NEW ? • & MORE | VOLUME 2 EDIITON 02

»»» DIGITAL EDITION

- **TECHNICS, SU-G700**
- **NAD, MASTERS M33**
- **JBL, HDI-3600**
- **PE LÉON, KANTOR S3.2**
- **NAIM, CD5SI**
- **AUDIO NOTE, TT2**



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Editorial

Hope and serenity!

2021 is finally underway! There is hope, if only with the arrival, at the end of 2020, of the vaccine(s) among others. One could call these vaccines liquid hope... but then again, you have to vaccinate at least 70% of the general population in order for everyone to be able to aspire to some semblance of a return to normality. We are not quite there yet, and the health guidelines remain. They're even becoming stricter with the 3rd wave settling in. The goal has not yet been reached.

We must persevere even more, because we are close to this goal, and we must stay the course while *living* with peace of mind. We breathe deeply a dozen times, and we take advantage of it to relax by listening to the music which allows us to better live through this waiting period, interminable, but which, deep down, is not so long if we compare this time spent on hold to a whole lifetime. Life, no matter the season and/or the happy or troubled times, is always hanging by a thread.

For our part, we took great pleasure in concocting an entertainment plan for you, starting with reading of our various articles. I am therefore pleased to present them to you, starting with our test benches.

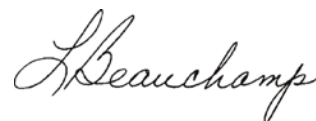
On a budget under \$3,000, is a surround sound experience possible these days? **David Susilo's** test bench is the result of his experience with **JVC's XP-EXT1** wireless surround sound headphones. Then there is **Guillaume Brunet's** article on an all-digital integrated system, the **Technics SU-G700**, which could very likely surprise many audiophiles given that not only is its technology cutting edge, but it also offers a very interesting broadcast, and this, at a fairly affordable price. This is followed by **Michel Dallaire's** review of the **NAD M33 BluOS**, which meets the definition of an *all-in-one* device while being nuanced and expressive, thanks to its transparency in every detail. The article, written by **Adrien Rouah**, deals with **JBL's HDI-3600** speakers, part of a series dedicated to home theaters. They fulfill their mission just as well in stereophonic reproduction as they do in home cinemas. **Michel Dallaire** also had the opportunity to renew his acquaintance with the French acoustician **Pierre-Étienne Léon's** brand with regards to a pair of **Kantor S3.2** model freestanding

speakers, of which the manufacturing and workmanship quality is above the norm. Our friend, **Jean-Denis Doyle**, likes to stream music, but hasn't discarded his **CDs**. So he will tell us about his evaluation of **Naim's CD5si** player, a device worthy of the *best purchase* rating. In addition, **Jean-Denis** invites you to listen to vinyl records using the **Audio Note TT2** turntable equipped with the *Arm Two* tonearm and the *IQ3* cartridge, as this trio is a hit in Europe. This set stole **JD's** heart and tells us that the **Audio Note** trio he presents to you is *one of the finer things that life has to offer*. **Adrien's** second report focuses on the **Yamaha GT-5000** turntable, as he describes its various engineering schools, the installation of the device, and the vinyl records listening experience. He concludes that this turntable qualifies as an *exceptional object* that will appeal to music lovers of all kinds.

Of course, even if one is the happy owner of any audio device (turntable, integrated player, loudspeakers), they become *purposeless* without the music. So we want to know what **CD/DVD/vinyl** record to buy, or discover, whatever its musical genre. Our collaborators in the *Rhythm and Music* section have thought of you, and offer you their discoveries and preferences.

Our *Buon Gusto* column, written by two enthusiasts of *good drinking* and *good food*, suggests wines to treat yourself and a recipe to make yourself. Since we're all pretty much confined for a while yet, yes, we can cheer ourselves up by trying various wines, while being reasonable, of course. Consumption must be reasonable for our physical and mental health.

On this note, I invite you to read this edition in its entirety, and I offer you, on behalf of the entire team, our best wishes for *Courage*, *Safety* and *Serenity*. We will reach the goal and go back to some form of normalcy once again. Looking forward to *hearing from you* and/or *seeing you* in our next publication! Let's keep up our good habits!



Lucie Beauchamp
Co-publisher and public relations manager

TRENDS ELECTRONICS & DESIGN – AN ENCORE

—AN INTEGRATION REALIZED BY QUEBEC ACOUSTIQUE

REINVENTING A LIVING SPACE!

» By **LUCIE BEAUCHAMP**

In this issue's photo essay, we present an urban loft, a property inhabited by a young couple and their two daughters. Unlike many others, they chose to leave the suburbs and return to the Island of Montreal. It was a decision somewhat provoked by the fact that one had to give back its primary housing vocation to the unit located at the top of their business, the district being zoned commercial-residential. The family, already owning a second home in the country, therefore decided to sell the suburban house and redevelop the space to their taste and move in. The project took about a year to complete, because reinventing one's living space requires good planning, the help of a designer who listens to one's needs, and who can suggest choices appropriate to the lifestyle of their clients while respecting both budget and deadlines.





TRENDS ELECTRONICS & DESIGN – AN ENCORE

The loft, located on the second floor of a building accommodating a first-floor business, had to have at least three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room and a living room. Except for the bedrooms and bathrooms, everything is designed to become an open-plan living space. What is fantastic about the building is that it is located on a street corner, providing light on three sides.

The second floor has even been redesigned to include a desk area with a cabinet-bookcase concealing a fold-away bed that can accommodate guests. A bathroom and an exercise room were also added, not to mention a huge terrace running along three sides of the building and allowing for extraordinary outdoor living. It's suburban life in the city – the best of both worlds!

This living space is very large, about 2,500 square feet. It was therefore essential that all members of the family could easily control various aspects of daily life without having to run from one floor to another, whether inside the loft or on the terrace. Our couple, having a friend whose job is precisely related to the installation and integration of technical elements to make their home more user-friendly and intelligent, had only a phone call to make. **Quebec Acoustique's Martin Pelletier** entered the stage, and set to work with his team of installers in order to understand the family's needs and propose different scenarios that would meet not only their current needs, but also those that the couple had not necessarily thought of, such as remotely starting the heating system in the winter when returning from a trip,



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for example. What could be better than arriving home and being able to feel good as soon as you enter, knowing that the air conditioning is perfectly balanced.

In talking with family members, I was told that trust needs to be established between them and the various stakeholders in order to set up a game plan that suits everyone's needs. Once the installation of the various equipment is done, it is good to remember that you have to live with the home automation system for a certain period of time to get used to it, and that it is quite normal to adjust some of the scenarios in order to fine-tune the response to your needs. You have to be patient with yourself, because you can't control everything at once. The availability of the home automation consultant and his team is then taken into account, naturally.

When we asked how much the family appreciated the system put in place, there was nothing but praise for every aspect of the home automation integration in their living space, making it very pleasant and highly appreciated. To be able to control music volume from different rooms, to be able to turn off the lights that were left on when you were already in bed, at the touch of a button, is very pleasant. Unlocking the front door remotely, when a family member has forgotten their keys, is also very useful.

As you can see from the photo essay, the entire installation of the various equipment, meeting this family's need, is integrated into the decor of the residence.





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Nothing is visible, or almost! In-ceiling speakers allows one to listen to music wherever they are. In the living room, one can easily watch a TV show or a movie. Everything can be controlled from remote controls, wall keyboards, an *iPad*, etc. Electronic equipment is hidden behind one of the two storage spaces on either side of the TV. Very ingenious!

I would like to draw your attention to the materials selected for decoration and furnishing in general, i.e. wood, metal, leather, glass, granite stone, as well as the main neutral tones used including white, brown, and black with a few brighter colors accents here and there. The result is sober, calm and results in a welcoming space. The lighting has been wisely thought out and the daylight is invigorating. The comfort, form and elegance of the combination of materials make up a cohesive whole for the well-being of the loft's occupants.

In the kitchen, the countertops, surrounding the stove, are in brushed chrome, easy to maintain while being very elegant. The top of the countertop, where one cooks or simply eats breakfast, is made of granite with a leather finish. You will notice the long handles of the kitchen furnishings, which were made to measure. The master bedroom invites calm and relaxation with its bath/shower area in neutral and relaxing tones.

On the terrace, there are also neutral tones for the furnishings inviting the family and visitors to relax and enjoy the outdoors.

One can easily concoct a good meal there, or entertain themselves by chatting or watching TV. A little hop in the spa is a must for many. A nice shower has been installed to make sure that before entering the spa, we don't keep any inappropriate substance on our bathing suit. Same as when leaving the spa. At the back of the shower area, the little family has laid out an urban garden where various plants and herbs can easily enjoy the sun as well as the rain. Edible plants and herbs are added to dishes to enhance taste.

As the pictures show, this family has surrounded itself with excellent advisors on all levels, home automation, layout, decoration and furnishing. The designer, **Roger Ste-Marie**, introduced the couple to an excellent craftsman, **Èl Design's Nathanaël Major**, winner of the **Montreal Foundation Inc.** who designed the living room cabinets, hidden behind magnificent metal doors, the fireplace surroundings, the magnificent floating staircase leading to the upper floor, kitchenette's furnishings and the bedside tables in the master bedroom. On the terrace, one cannot overlook Ombrasole's contribution to the retractable awning which is, of course, a must on hot and sunny summer days.

A visit to this loft is irrefutable proof that when deciding on a project of this scale, it is important, not to say essential, to surround oneself with competent consultants whom we fully trust. Congratulations to this charming couple who knew how to reinvent their living space!



List of equipments used

Living room

Samsung UHD 4K Series 8, 65" TV (1);
Fixed TV wall mount (1);
Klipsch R-1800C in-ceiling speakers (5);
GoldenEar Forcefield 3 subwoofer (1);
Control4 T3 Series C4-TT7-WH Touch Screen remote control (1);
Control4 C4-KCB-WH backlit keyboards (3);

Technical equipment

Omnimount 42U Rack Mount (1)
Ultrapower HDC-150RM Line Conditioner (1);
Control4 HC-800 Controller (1)
Control4 IO Extender (1);
Control4 4-zone Amplifier (1);
Control4 C4-DIN-5PAN 5-input Lighting Panel (2);
Control4 C4-DIN-8DIM-E 8-channel Drive Controls (5);
Pakedge RE-1 Router (1);
Luxul XGS-1024 24 ports Switch (1);
Vanco Evolution EVMX-4444 HDMI 4x4 Matrix (1);
Vanco Evolution EVEX-2006 HDMI Converter (4);
Gen3 Apple TV (2);
Bell Fibe TV Receivers (3);
Denon AVRX-3300 AV Receiver (1);
Provision NVR PV-NVR3 8 camera Server (1);
DSC IT-100 Alarm Integration Module (1);

Kitchen

Control4 T3 Series C4-WALL7-WH wall Control Screen (1);
Klipsch R-1800C in-ceiling Speakers (2);

Control4 C4-KCB-WH Lighting Control Keyboards (2);

Master bedroom

Samsung Series 6 40" TV (1);
Hinged TV Wall Mount (1);
Klipsch R-1800C in-ceiling speakers (4);
Control4 C4-KCB-WH Lighting Control Keyboards (2);
Control4 SR-260 Remote Control (1);

Hallway

Control4 Aprilair C4-THERM-WH Thermostat (1);
Control4 C4-KCB-WH Lighting Control Keyboards (1);

Exercise room

Samsung Series 6 40" TV (1);
Hinged TV Wall Mount (1);
Klipsch R-1800C in-ceiling speakers (2);
Control4 SR-260 Remote Control (1);

Terrace / Spa

Samsung Series 6 32" TV (1);
JBL PRP Control25 outdoor speakers (4);
Control4 C4-KCB-WH Lighting Control Keyboards (2);

Main entrance

Control4 Doorstation **C4-DS2SM-BL** Intercom (1);

Bedrooms and children'S TV corner, bathroom, shower room

Sony 46" LED TV (1);
Fixed TV Wall Mount (1);
Control4 SR-260 Remote Control (1);
Control4 Forward Phase **C4-FPD120-WH** Dimmer (13).



Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

White wines from the Loire Valley... wines of emotions!

Ah, the white wines of the Loire Valley... what emotions they give me! From dry chenins to sweet wines of Anjou, Saumurois and Touraine, not forgetting *sauvignon* blanc of the Centre-Val de Loire and Melon de Bourgogne of the Nantes region, and, of course, *Chardonnay* wines. Their vast aromatic palette offers multiple opportunities for tasting and pairing.

Located along the Loire River, at the 47th parallel North, the 4 wine regions of the Loire Valley (Nantes, Anjou-Saumur, Touraine and Centre-Val de Loire) benefit from climates and soils that are unique to each, creating wines that are particularly different from one another.

I thus propose four white wines, each coming from one of the four great regions of the Loire Valley. It should be noted that the Loire Valley region is the leading producer of AOP white wines (45% of production) in France. These are true terroir wines, full of emotions, elaborated by families of winegrowers concerned about their environment and the intrinsic quality of their wines. And they are fabulous! Believe me, don't miss out on these wines!

Château Thébaud, Les Bêtes Curieuses

AOP Muscadet Sèvre et Maine

Vignoble Mourat, 2013

Organic white wine

Price: \$28.80

Grape variety: melon de Bourgogne (Muscadet) 100%,

Sugar: 1.9 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5%

SAQ Code: 14556202

<https://www.saq.com/en/14556202>

This wine is made from grapes from vines that are 50 years old on average. They were planted at about 7,000 ft/ha, which ensures such quality. The vineyard went organic over ten years ago, so the vines are grown without any chemical inputs.

Tasting Notes

This wine reveals fresh fruit aromas such as lemon, peach, a hint of pineapple, and a stony minerality. The palate is surprisingly fresh, accentuated by a bright acidity as well as apple flavors that surreptitiously add to the perceived aromas. And what a beautiful minerality with this little touch of iodized salinity that extends into a chiseled finish! Excellent palatability, by the way. But what is particularly surprising is that we are tasting 2013 vintage, therefore a wine that is already seven years old and one does not feel any evolution due to age, which testifies to its great ageing potential.



Clos de l'Élu, Bastingage, 2017

AOP Anjou

Domaine Terre de l'Élu

Organic/natural white wine

Price: \$28.35

Grape variety: Chenin blanc 100%

Sugar: 3 g/l

Alcohol: 14.5 %

SAQ Code: 14422677

<https://www.saq.com/en/14422677>

This cuvée is produced from Chenin vines aged from twenty to forty years old, planted on a terroir of sandstone schist and friable schist. Fermentation takes place naturally using indigenous yeasts, followed by aging in barrels for one year and in vats for six months.

Tasting Notes

We discover this very beautiful wine with ripe fruits such as peach fragrances, beautiful almond, honey, hay notes as well as floral notes such as lime blossom. On the palate, it is succulent, delicious with these peaches, apricots, honey, butter flavors as well as an oxidative touch on nuts and almonds and, as a filigree, some woody notes. All in balance, this wine has a beautiful structure as well as a slightly fat and rich texture supported by a very fresh acidity, which creates a nice contrast. What aromatic intensity and what length!



unctuous, and of an aromatic intensity with elegant flavors that coat the mouth. Notes of lemon zest, peach pits, vanilla and almond as well as a slight bitterness complete the perceived aromas. And what a beautiful contrast between the residual sweetness and a nice fresh acidity! A heady wine that will charm you!

Domaine Vincent Carême Le Clos, 2018

AOP Vouvray

Organic white wine

Price: \$39.50

Grape variety: Chenin blanc 100%

Sugar: 6,2 g/l

Alcohol: 14 %

SAQ Code: 14555664

<https://www.saq.com/en/14555664>

Le Clos comes from an old white chenin vine and is vinified and aged in

barrels (two wines) for twelve months. The vines are cultivated organically and the vinification is done with indigenous yeasts.

Tasting Notes

Still on the chenin, this wine exhales notes of peaches, fresh apricots, hay, honey, beautiful floral notes of linden and camomile. A slightly minty accent adds a touch of freshness. The palate is rich,



White wines from the Loire Valley... wines of emotions! suite...



Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy, 2019 Terre de Maimbray

AOP Sancerre

White wine (*lutte raisonnée*)

Price: \$30.50

Grape variety: Sauvignon blanc 100 %

Sugar: 1,6 g/l

Alcohol: 13 %

SAQ Code : 11888682

<https://www.saq.com/en/11888682>

This wine comes from vines that are on average twenty-five years old. It is from a *lutte raisonnée* culture type, which implies the end of phytosanitary treatments (no chemicals).

Tasting Notes

What a beautiful return to the roots this *sauvignon blanc* from Sancerre gives me! A terroir wine, not disguised like many wines of this grape variety that can be found all over the world. Let these citrus fruits, pears, mint, sage aromas create an aromatic universe in harmony with the herbaceous notes of asparagus and mint as well as some beautiful floral notes. The palate has a velvety texture adorned with fresh acidity in harmony with the flavors of pomelo, red currants, and particularly floral notes. A beautiful minerality that gives it a crystalline and straight aspect. What emotions!

Claude Lalonde - biography

Sommelier by training, for me, wine is a matter of passion and pleasure. Visit my page *Vinformateur* on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vinformateur/> for your dose of humour and daily wine suggestions.

On my blog *Vinformateur* (www.vinformateur.com), you will find the complete tasting notes including food/wine pairings for more than 1,000 wines as well as several interviews with winemakers from all over the world.

Buon gusto

Easy recipes from the mischievous cook

Sole Filet Chowder with Tarragon

Here is a very tasty fish recipe. This heart-warming sole fillet chowder is a complete meal in itself.

This recipe will delight fish lovers and will be appreciated by those who enjoy it less.

Quite easy to execute, just follow the steps for a guaranteed result.

The recipe makes two good meal portions or four smaller first courses.

To make your chowder a perfect success, we recommend that you follow the ultra-detailed description, in addition to 24 photos, by visiting the *Recettes faciles du cuisinier tannant* Facebook page.

Ingredients

1 pack of 400 g sole fillet
1 cup minced mushrooms
1 cup chopped leeks
¾ cup minced carrots
1 1/4 cup potatoes in small cubes
½ fennel bulb chopped
1 cup 35% cooking cream
2 tbsp. tomato paste
1 small packet of chopped fresh tarragon

Method

Ingredients Preparation

Peel the potatoes and cut into small cubes. Wash and chop the leek. Mince the mushrooms. Peel and chop the tarragon.

Peel and mince carrots. Remove the heart of the fennel and mince it. Drain the sole fillets and place on a cutting board. Fold them in half lengthwise, roll and fix in place with a toothpick.

Cooking

In a large skillet, pour 2 tbsp. olive oil and heat up.
Turn oven on to preheat at 400° F.
Cook the leek, fennel and carrots until soft, a good 5 minutes. Lightly salt.
Add the mushrooms and continue cooking for 5 minutes.
Pour the 35% cooking cream.
Add the potatoes and the tomato paste.
Add a cup of water, and mix everything well.

Add 1 tsp of chicken **Bovril**.

Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a minimum, cook covered for 15 min, until the potatoes are very tender.

At the end of cooking the broth, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Place the sole fillets in the broth.

Cover the fillets with the sauce.

Add half the tarragon.

Return to heat and bring to a light boil.

Put the pan in the preheated oven, bake for about 12 min.

When cooked, remove the toothpicks with cooking pliers.

Serve in a deep plate, and accompany with garlic croutons.

Garnish with the remaining tarragon.

Have a nice meal!



<https://www.facebook.com/Recettes-faciles-du-cuisinier-tannant-105071697846276>

REAL IMMERSIVE SOUND WITHOUT SPEAKERS

By DAVID SUSILO

I am a big fan of *object-oriented audio* (also called *immersive audio*) launched on the market about 50 years ago. The level of immersion in **Dolby Atmos** (and **DTS:X**) exceeds anything I've experienced in the last 20 years or more in this field (longer, if I take into account my non-professional years). The ability for such a level of immersion, whether native or mixed, with **Dolby Surround Upmixer** and **DTS Neural X**, is always what I'm looking for in a home theater and concert experience. However, the problem with an immersive audio setup is that you need at least 10 speakers (to get to a 5.1.4, or better yet, 7.1.4 format). While this is not a problem for landlords and tenants, they will still see it as a problem because it's simply not possible to install speakers everywhere, willy-nilly. I have yet to experience a compelling immersive audio presentation that costs less than \$3,000 CDN (or \$2,000 US) in a room that is less than 10' x 16' x 8'.

For those who have this kind of problem, there are two solutions. The first is to use a sound bar, and the second is to use a pair of headphones... solutions that cannot faithfully reproduce the *Atmos* sound.

Wearing headphones ensures that what you're listening to envelops you with zero crosstalk, which is not an ideal listening experience for most people. This is because the sound mix of a recording was recorded using stereo listening (using two or more speakers) instead of a binaural approach (using headphones). The resulting audio experience usually includes an exaggerated stereophonic image, a *voice-in-head* for anything that is mixed in mono, such as voices or bass lines.



To counter these problems, in modern times, **DSP** technology seems to help a little by digitally processing the sound so that it appears to come from outside the head. Unfortunately, in terms of directivity and layers, the classical **DSP** algorithm cannot do this convincingly. This would require a more or less customized 3D sound modeling, at least. The more personalized it is, the better... Oh! And a very good pair of headphones is, of course, indispensable.

A solution?

None of the **DSPs** I've tried could swathe me completely, until several years ago when I got access to the **Smyth Realizer** system at the **High-End** exhibition in **Munich**. This system can faithfully simulate the literal 7.1.4, to the point where my brain began to think that there were 12 speakers all around me, in a semi-spherical configuration, rather than a pair of headphones.

I can identify where the sound is coming from so realistically that I don't feel the need to really have speakers in

my room. I use headphones instead. The only problems (yes, there are still problems) are the size of the **Smyth Realizer** system, which is heavy and gigantic, and the need to use a computer to control it. And the price. At about \$5,000 plus the cost of a laptop AND a pair of headphones, it is not within the reach of most people, although the sound could be a convincing argument.

A more accessible solution

Around the same time, **JVC** did its own research for the same purpose under the name *Exofield*. *Exofield* started as a 2-channel audio a few years ago (presented at **CES**). Thanks to the **JVC Exofield Theatre**, a very similar virtual reality sound experience is now available to many home theatre enthusiasts for only \$1,300 CDN (\$999 USD), including the brain and a very good pair of wireless headphones.

Description

The **JVC Exofield Theater** comes in an 18 x 32 x 22 cm box, which contains the brain that also serves as an **HDMI** switch with **eARC** capability with digital inputs. The brain, 15.5 x 16.5 x 3 cm, is where all the *Exofield* treatment is performed. For 2-channel audio, and other non **Dolby Atmos** or **DTS:X** sources, the signal can be processed using the **Dolby Surround Upmixer** and **DTS: Neural X** to simulate the 7.1.4 audio experience. This brain includes 3 **HDMI** inputs, 1 **HDMI** output with **eARC** capability, an optical input and a 2-channel analog input whose 12V / 2A DC power supply is included in the package.

The wireless headset has a high-end feel and has pads as soft as a baby's skin. It is a larger and heavier device with very thick ear cushions and a well-cushioned headband. It's certainly comfortable enough to be used during a full movie, although your ears will start sweating by the time the credits appear on the screen. It is simply difficult to provide good comfort and sound insulation without feeling warm. Moreover, the

weight isn't really light, 330 g, although I have already worn models that weighed much more. These are really headphones for someone who sits on the couch and can put his head against the backrest.

Connectivity

The connection between the headset and the transmitter is made by a specific 5 GHz protocol, not by means of *Bluetooth*. This



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« The Hunt comes with a fantastic, highly accessible, and animated **DTS-HD MA 7.1** lossless audio track. From the first 5 minutes, the bullets and arrows begin to fly, and that's when the speakers use their orientation as they pass in front of each of them with precision, leading to a smooth transition of sound. These bullet impacts and firearm explosions also produce a *punch* when aimed directly at the screen, especially from the large shotgun inside the gas station. Exploding grenades and falling body parts everywhere all produce that unique squish and gooey sound when they hit the ground. The *Neural:X DTS* upmixer on this device works extremely well, so much so that I often forget that this movie is not encoded natively with an *immersive audio* codec. »



higher frequency is a good choice to avoid dropouts, a problem I sometimes encounter with wireless TV headphones using 2.4 GHz *RF* technology. The reason for this is that the 2.4 GHz frequency is a fairly busy part of the radio frequency spectrum, with *Bluetooth*, *WiFi* and other means of communication using it, as well as a lot of interference. The range should be a little more limited with 5 GHz radio technology, but in this case, it's not so bad. You will use this unit in only one room. Based on my tests, over one month, the battery life of the headphones is about 5 to 6 movies, which corresponds to about 11 hours.

Exofield as such

The use of the *Exofield* application is mandatory to experience these headphones correctly (or not at all, in fact). After all, the *JVC XP-EXT1* headphones offer realistic surround sound because they adapt to your physical characteristics, as I explained above. Think about the shape of your ear and head, as well as

the peculiarities of your ears and hearing. *JVC* (among other immersive audio companies such as *Sony*, *Smyth*, *Creative*, etc.) has been working on this for a very long time and has discovered that the shape of the face also influences the perception of sound. In a laboratory, and in the early *Beta* versions of *Exofield's* final products, all of these physical characteristics can be accurately measured, which is obviously impossible to do in someone's home. That's why they opted for an effective compromise solution for the *XP-EXT1*. The microphones built into the earphones themselves measure your ears (including the inner ear). Based on these results, the device will search through the database of multiple measurements and find the closest match within those stored in the *Exofield* cloud.

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EXOFIELD THEATER ON IMAGE



How does it work?

To do so, you must put the headset on your head, temporarily connect the provided cable between the headset and the transmitter and follow the step-by-step plan of the application. The actual measurement itself takes just under a minute, and the following calculations will take another two minutes. The test tones are not particularly

loud, so it's not uncomfortable. Four possibilities are provided in the application for taking measurements. This allows four people to calculate their personal Exofield characteristics. Unfortunately, only one pair of headphones can be used at a time. Hopefully, one day a high-end version, including several headphone connections, will be available when the cost of the DSP

processing chip has been significantly reduced.

Let's put it to the test

Before switching to real hardware, I tested the *XP-EXT1* using the channels check on the **Dolby Atmos** demo disc and the **DTS: X UHD** disc. Each channel sounded as if the sound emanated from invisible speakers around and above my head. When the recorded channel called *right rear*, I could actually hear the sound coming from my right rear at a good distance instead of *somewhere* in my head. The same applies when the channel calls *top front left* or *top rear right*. Each channel was reproduced extremely convincingly, including the subwoofer call from the **THX Calibrator Blu-ray** disc. I felt like there was a subwoofer in the room, not just a deep bass sound in my ears. For the first test, I use an ordinary 7.1 non-immersive soundtrack, from a *Blu-ray* disc, played by my reference player, the **THX-certified Panasonic UB9000 UHD** playing the movie *The Hunt*. The purpose of this choice is to test the *Exofield's* upscale mixing capability.

The Hunt comes with a fantastic, highly accessible, and animated **DTS-HD MA 7.1** lossless audio track. From the first 5 minutes, the bullets and arrows begin to fly, and that's when the speakers use their orientation as they pass in front of each of them with precision, leading to a smooth transition of sound. These bullet impacts and firearm explosions also produce a *punch* when aimed directly at the screen, especially from the large shotgun inside the gas station. Exploding grenades and falling body parts everywhere all produce that unique squish and gooey sound when they hit the ground. The **Neural:X DTS** upmixer on this device works extremely well, so much so that I often forget that this movie is not encoded natively with an *immersive audio* codec. Ambient noises of people shouting from afar, screaming, nature sounds, and more, are also robust and loud. This sound track amplifies the situation at every turn without ever drowning out any other element. Bass comes into play when vehicles are on the move and firearms explode, which is fairly consistent and suggests that a real subwoofer is playing in the room. In almost all cases, I forgot that I was wearing headphones and I felt like I was in my home theater room instead of my living room, which has rather poor acoustics, with a pair of headphones.

Let's continue the experience

For the real world test of *immersive audio*, I chose *Ghost in the Machine*. Watching the live-action of *Ghost in the Machine* gives an even more compelling physical configuration of immersive audio (instead of the virtual configuration via headphones).

Reinvented science-fiction scenes creep into the home theater with a terribly impressive **Dolby Atmos** soundtrack that's sure to send chills down your spine, make your hair stand on end, and make your heart pound. The sound design attached to the musical score does most of the legwork, using all the space of the *Atmos 3D* system to generate a disturbing atmosphere with exceptional definition and separation in the mediums. But other subtle effects complement the gloomy atmosphere by using the surrounding environment at different times, such as the sound of rain falling directly over the listening area, the occasional electronic chirping and atmospheric tumult in the distance, the robust roar of frequency waves resonating above or the environmental boiling spreading sideways and backward. Yes, you read correctly, I said above, sideways and backward.

On the other hand, the sound design maintains surprisingly impressive and robust low frequencies, providing an incredibly powerful presence that digs deep and hard during several choice sequences, adding a surprisingly captivating air of apprehension. In the middle of the action and fights, the voices are always prioritized and distinct with an appreciable intonation in the performances, which gives an excellent and terribly hemispherical listening experience.

The sound reproduction really and distinctly sounds as if it came from several physical directions at once rather than the usual



mush of sound when listening to regular (and never effective) virtual / simulated *surround sound* like that offered in the past by **Sony**, **Sennheiser**, and **Apple** (among others).

How does it behave when listening to music?

Listening to music, whether from **Dolby Atmos**-encoded *Blu-ray* Discs or normal CDs oversampled with **Dolby Surround Upmixer**, gives the same results. Both approaches result in a feeling of space so credible that it's like listening to binaural recordings. Everything sounded as good as the configuration of my reference room, reserved for home theatre, in my basement. Very impressive!

During the listening sessions, I also switched between the four *EQ* presets available for the *Exofield* (called *Sound Mode*), namely *Cinema*, *Music*, *Game* and *Custom*. The *Cinema* preset gives a more powerful bass, the *Music* preset produces a very neutral sound, the *Game* preset creates a more distinct, but more irregular channel separation

and the *Custom* preset aims for a custom *EQ* setting at will. I end up using the *Music* sound mode no matter what I listen to, from music even to watching movies. This is the most neutral sound, presenting a slight bump in the midrange section causing a slight addition of sonic warmth.

My impressions

If you want to enjoy immersive sound without the expense, hassle and inconvenience, the **JVC Exofield XP-EXT1** is your best answer. Currently, it is only accessible to one person at a time. Although it is not something that can be corrected in the future, this device is highly recommended!

General information

Price: \$1,299.99

Warranty: 1 year, parts and labor

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TECHNICS SU-G700 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

THE DIGITAL AMPLIFIER AT THE SERVICE OF MUSIC

By GUILLAUME BRUNET

Since the beginning of the electronic age, in terms of power supply, it is probably the circuits that have undergone the least change. The technology has made it possible to refine the materials and the production of the parts, but since the development of the diode

bridge to rectify alternating current to direct current, very few innovations have been made. Today, however, **Technics** introduces the *SU-G700*, a fully digital integrated amplifier, from power supply to loudspeaker output. It features a hybrid switched-mode power supply



that achieves a very low signal-to-noise ratio. This new power supply is the basis of the all-digital principle of the *SU-G700* proposed by **Technics**. But audiophiles will first need to be convinced of the maturity of the technology before it can be commercially successful.

Technics, a **Panasonic Corporation** brand, has long been ignored or virtually absent from the international audio market. In 1969, **Matsushita**, now **Panasonic**, introduced the first professional direct-drive turntable, the *SP-10*. Three years later, in 1972, the famous *SL-1200* vinyl turntable was born. Since then, **Panasonic** is recognized worldwide. After several flagship products and technological innovations, including the first auto-reverse cassette player, Technics suddenly ceased operations in 2010. In 2016, it returns in force for its 50th anniversary with brand new versions of the *SL-1200*, the *SL-1200GAE* and the *SL-1200G*. In 2018, the *SU-G700* integrated amplifier is launched on the market.

In the same philosophy as the **Devialet** and some **NAD** amplifiers, the *SU-G700* from **Technics** is an all-digital amplifier. It is primarily aimed at a whole new generation of audiophiles, or at least the less traditional among us and those who have kept an open mind. Still equipped with analog inputs, including an *MM (Moving Magnet)* phono, the input signal is first digitized in 24 bits at 192 kHz before being processed. The primary goal of this choice of architecture is, obviously, to immunize the analog signal against all possible interferences and pollutions. This is the new trend in audio, simplifying circuits as much as possible, or even removing a few in the process. The reasons are simple, it's a question of cost and necessity. As music is now almost entirely produced and distributed digitally, analog inputs tend to disappear little by little. The fact remains that vinyl is on the rise and that radio is still a popular medium. That's why, in my opinion, **Technics** has included, on the *SU-G700*, two analog inputs, one for adding an external *MC (Moving Coil)* phono preamplifier and the other for a radio or *CD* player without digital outputs.



TECHNICS SU-G700 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

The digital inputs will accommodate a CD player, TV, streamer or computer.

Technical Description

The *SU-G700* uses proprietary technologies originally developed for the **Technics Reference Series**. Unlike traditional amplifiers, the *SU-G700* is all-digital, from input to output, including the power supply. From a functional point of view, the *SU-G700* is like an integrated amplifier that would combine a preamplifier, a digital-to-analog converter (DAC) and a power amplifier. Thanks to its all-digital architecture, it eliminates the traditional signal path, i.e. the analog gain stages of the preamplifier and power amplifier as well as all of the DAC's electronics. To do this, the *SU-G700* first converts all analog signals to digital signals using its **Burr-Brown PCM1804** chip to 24-bit at 192 kHz. The digital signals remain unchanged. Subsequently, a circuit called **JENO (Jitter Elimination and Noise-shaping Optimization)** eliminates jitter. Once cleaned and aligned, the digital signals are directly converted to **PWM (Pulse Width Modulation)**. It is the PWM signal that turns the output transistors of the *SU-G700* on and off. That's it, no digital filters, no DAC, no multiple amplification stages, and no analog volume control. All processing is done digitally, including **RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America)** equalization for phono input, tonal controls, and volume. The conversion from digital to analog occurs at the output stage, just before the speakers. The signal obtained by switching the output transistors is then filtered by an analog low-pass filter, following the same principle as the restitution filter in a DAC. This is the most direct signal path imaginable. To make it all work perfectly, they had to review the power supply and make sure the clock signal was perfect. The hybrid power supply, specially developed for the *SU-G700*, uses a fixed switching frequency and a linear regulator to stabilize the output voltage. The capacitors have been carefully selected to absorb all residual noise. The clock generator is isolated from any possible fluctuation or pollution coming from the power supply by a battery-powered circuit. Like all the parts, special

attention has been paid to the design of the circuit and the case in order to control resonances and parasitic noise. The entire frame is divided into three isolated sections so that they do not interfere with each other.

Another exclusive technology used on the **Technics SU-G700** is the **LAPC (Load Adaptive Phase Calibration)** function. It was developed to better control the harmful effects of the return current generated by the speakers. This particularly affects the performance of digital amplifiers. The way to achieve this was to develop an optimization algorithm based on the speakers' impedance. Once engaged, the **LAPC** provides an ideal impulse response by measuring the frequency, amplitude and phase characteristics of the amplifier with the speakers connected. The result is a more linear response and better restitution.

Unpacking and getting started

Very happy to see this device installed in my cabinet. It is even prettier than on photo. A really successful design, resolutely modern, and this, without relinquishing the brand's image. The housing is solid and well constructed. The 4 mm thick front panel has only two buttons and a discreet display screen. Unfortunately, all of the unit's menus can only be accessed using the remote control. The VU meters are beautiful with their grey-blue lighting. The brightness is adjustable on three levels of intensity, and can even be completely eliminated. However, once eliminated, the needles of the VU meters do not move anymore, they are deactivated, just like the screen. The universal remote control also makes it possible to control various **Technics** devices. The buttons are well spaced and easy to use, the different inputs are accessible alternately and in a preset order. It is impossible to go directly from one input to another without going all the way from one to the other, which, by way of comparison, is not ideal. After connecting my different sources, i.e. my streamer, my DAC, my turntable and a PC, I had a few listening sessions, without reviewing, over several days, in order to break in the device. About 300 hours later, I calibrated the *SU-G700* with my loudspeakers using the **LAPC** function.





This step takes about three minutes as the amplifier sends repetitive bursts of signals through the two loudspeakers and then into each of them, alternately and at different levels. The volume function is disabled during the process. Once this step

is completed, an orange-yellow light will illuminate in the center of the glass portion of the unit. I had to repeat the process when I changed loudspeakers and each time I preferred the result obtained with the *LAPC* function enabled. The headphone

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TECHNICS SU-G700 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



« Recorded in naturally reverberant spaces, *Canto at Gabelmeister's Peak*, on *The Grand Budapest Hotel's* soundtrack, perfectly demonstrates the capabilities of the SU-G700. From the very first notes, I noticed that this unit had a very dynamic, even fiery character. The general presentation is rather wide than deep and the bass is really solid, palpable even. [...] Even at very low volume, the SU-G700 does not lack any articulation in the bass and the result is perfect. »

output, in class AA, is very good quality too. It is based on the same philosophy as the rest of the amplifier, i.e. the JENO circuit directly feeds the two operational amplifiers (op-amp), one with voltage and the other with current.

Listening Impressions

What better way to test a new device than with an orchestral piece. The one I chose is particularly well suited. There are voices, acoustic instruments and an organ. Recorded in naturally reverberant spaces, *Canto at Gabelmeister's Peak*, on *The Grand Budapest Hotel's* soundtrack, perfectly demonstrates the capabilities of the SU-G700. From the very first notes, I noticed that this camera had a very dynamic, even fiery character. The general presentation is rather wide than deep and the bass is really solid, palpable even. The low notes of the organ make the apartment tremble. The thunder of timpani and drums resounds throughout the space as the choir and soloist float between the church walls. Even at very low volume, the SU-G700 does not lack any articulation in the bass and the result is perfect. What also impresses is the absence of background noise on the digital inputs, no hiss or buzz, even at full power. This

silence makes the music emerge from the most complete black, which is very pleasant.

I then wanted to know how the phono input behaved. So I chose a record that I know well and that I particularly like, *On Every Street*, **Dire Straits'** latest studio album, a classic. The SU-G700 delivers music in a very catchy way. It's as if the record was playing slightly faster than usual, without changing the pitch. Obviously this is not the case, but rather a metaphor to illustrate the effect. It's as if the Technics transmits an invigorating energy to the music. Resolution and channel separation are well served with this album. The mix and arrangements have several effects and details on the left and right. The fade outs are particularly interesting too. They are especially long, as if the tracks had been shortened and normally they should really last longer, because unexpected variations are present at the end of the range. The rejection of the rubbing noise of the needle is very well managed on this device, which allowed me to hear details that had previously gone unnoticed. I even enjoyed listening to vinyl with headphones, which is not normally the case. I continued my exploration with **Abdullah Ibrahim** and the album *Sotho Blue*. *Calypso Minor* is particularly striking and



highlights the *SU-G700's* reproduction qualities. The amplifier has a perfect control over my loudspeakers, it drives them with a master hand. The woofers leave no trail and reveal, by the same token, unsuspected details in the finesse of this recording. I had never noticed that the piano's miking picked up the internal resonance of the loudspeaker's cabinet. This is particularly audible when **Abdullah** plays with his right hand, while an internal resonance appears in the center-left, picked up by the stereophonic pickup of the piano. Cymbal crashes are particularly hard-hitting and resonate for a long time. The rhythm of the double bass is really sustained and well restored. The horns also take advantage of the *SU-G700's* ardor, and explode as they mark the tempo.

Conclusion

The **Technics SU-G700** is a complete and very neutral machine. This is why it is difficult to find qualifiers to describe its restitution. It breathes a particular energy into the music, a certain dynamism. It can certainly be described as analytical, because

no detail escapes it. It is like a magnifying glass that allows one to examine the music more closely. The mix's qualities as well as the flaws easily appear on all recordings. It will thus be necessary to be particularly vigilant in the choice of the loudspeakers that will be associated with it in order to obtain the desired result. **Technics** has, in my opinion, succeeded with the *SU-G700*. By creating a cutting-edge, all-digital, affordable and music-serving device, sales will surely be on the rise.

General information

Price: \$2,999. 99

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

Manufacturer/distributor: Panasonic Canada, Tel.: 905.624.5010, www.panasonic.com/ca/en

Mediagraphy

Alexandre Desplat, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* - Original Sound Track, ABKCO, CD, 018771813026

Dire Straits, *On Every Streets, Vertigo*, 2 x LP, 3752914

Abdullah Ibrahim, *Sotho Blue, Sunnyside*, CD, SSC 1276

A TRULY *ALL-IN-ONE* INTEGRATED PLAYER

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

NAD has been owned, for the past few years, by the Canadian **Lenbrook** group located in Pickering, Ontario. Following the release of the **NAD M10** last year, the manufacturer announced in early 2020 the release of a new all-in-one integrated amplifier, the *M33 BluOS*. The *M33* therefore replaces the *M32* in **NAD's** integrated amplifiers offer. At the time, the *M32* represented the pinnacle of amplifiers in the *Masters Series*. Let's see how the **NAD Masters M33 BluOS** is becoming a highly competitive model in an era where digital and networked music listening are increasingly dominant.

The **NAD M33** is an amplifier of the latest-generation with a touch screen of which the digit size makes it easy to read from a listening distance. In network playback mode (streaming) this screen displays the album cover of the album being played, and on the other inputs, it switches, graphically, to classic needle *VU* meters. On this screen, you can also select inputs by touching small icons. The *M33* is equipped with the *BluOS* home platform for networked music playback. It is therefore compatible with the entire *Bluesound* multi-room wireless music distribution system. It is also equipped with *Eigentakt's* latest amplification modules technology, operating in class *D*, from **Purifi Audio**.



The *M33* features fairly classic dimensions in an all-metal case that echoes the **NAD Masters** series' chic aesthetics. It comes with a superb backlit remote control and includes a *DIRAC* acoustic correction system. The *M33* is specified at 200 W per channel at an impedance of 8 ohms. At an impedance of 4 ohms, it increases to 380 W per channel and can still provide current up to 1 ohm. Its two channels can be bridged to obtain a 700 W monophonic amplifier. For the moment, we do not know if a monophonic power block is planned to accompany it in bridged mode? The *M33* also includes **NAD's MDC** technology, which consists of expansion cards that can be plugged into the back of the amplifier.

BluOS

The *BluOS* platform is supported by a touch screen interface, available as an application for *Android* or *iOS* tablets and smartphones. This *BluOS* application greatly facilitates the control of the *M33* amplifier's functions and access to its various digital and analog music sources. The *BluOS* platform supports all types of *PCM* or *MQA* files from online music services such as **TIDAL**, **Deezer**,

Spotify, **Qobuz**, **Amazon Music**, **Tuneln**, and more. On the other hand, it does not process *DSD* files which, for some users, will not be a problem. The *M33* amplifier is also compatible with the *ROON* playback software, which offers the advantage of being able to play files ignored by the *BluOS* platform. The latter also allows access to its own music files stored on a **NAS** or on a local server. The *M33* can be controlled using its superb backlit remote control or its 7" touch screen, but let's just say that the *BluOS* application provides a much more complete and comfortable visual interface with all its music at your fingertips.

A 1 GHz **ARM NXP** processor running on a Linux base handles all the *M33's* functions. The digital-to-analog conversion circuit uses an **ESS Sabre** chip number **ESS 9028PRO**. The *M33* has six digital and three analog inputs, one of which is designed for *MM* and *MC* phono cells. Two outputs on *RCA* connectors are provided to power up subwoofers. For wireless connectivity the *Masters M33 BluOS* is also equipped with *Airplay 2* and *Bluetooth aptX HD*. *HDMI* connection is also available with full *eARC (Enhanced Audio Return Channel)* support. The two *MDC (Modular Design Construction)* expansion modules, located at the rear of the unit, are planned for future enhancements including, among others, the addition of *HDMI* inputs. Due to its function as a network player, the *M33* does not have an asynchronous *USB Type B* input to which a computer can be connected directly. Hopefully, this option will be offered in the future on a modular *MDC* board. However, there is a *USB type A* input on the back of the unit that allows you to connect a flash memory drive such as a *USB* stick or external hard drive.

HybridDigital Purifi Eigentakt

The class *D* amplifier modules from this Danish manufacturer are the result of an association between five co-founders, the best known of whom are **Bruno Putzeys (Philips, Hypex)**, **Lars Risbo (TacT, Ti)** and **Peter Lyngdorf (Hi-Fi Klubben, Steinway-Lyngdorf, DALI)**. These *Eigentakt Purifi Audio* amplification modules are, in my opinion, the latest and most sophisticated development in high-fidelity Class *D* amplification. It is the evolution of a technology

that has been successfully used in the past on a few **NAD** devices. By reworking the feedback loop algorithms, **Purifi** has been able to further lower distortion levels and increase the stability of module operation over almost all impedance types. **NAD** was the first brand to use **Purifi Audio Eigentakt** amplification modules.

DIRAC

The **Dirac Live Room Correction** system is included in the *M33* with a microphone and a free downloadable *Dirac* application. The *M33's* response curve can therefore be digitally corrected and adapted to the listening room's acoustics. This application's procedure is quite easy to follow, and it is possible to record at least five usage profiles with different response curves. These can be created according to the type of source used or according to acoustics that vary depending on whether the listener is alone in an armchair or two on a sofa.

NAD M33 installation and start up

First, I was able to quickly listen from a *USB* hard drive, plugged into the **NAD M33's** back. This disk is a back up of the content of my music server. But to access this content directly through my wired *Ethernet* network, I had to search for it in the *BluOS* application settings, click on the *Music Library* tab and then on *Network Shares*. I don't know for what reason, but at this stage, the connection with my music server didn't happen automatically. So I had to manually enter, in the *BluOS* application, the path to my server which became a *NAS*. Once this delicate operation was completed, everything worked perfectly. All the albums stored in my server were displayed with their covers. As I own the *ROON* software, I tried to use it through my *Ethernet* connection, but its adjustments indicated that the *M33* device in my possession had not yet been certified by *ROON*. The **NAD** representative explained to me that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, *ROON* had accumulated delays in the certification process of several devices of different brands. In spite of this, I was able to proceed to a test bench by having direct access to my music server's content thanks to my *Ethernet* network and the *BluOS* platform.



NAD MASTERS M33 BLUOS AMPLIFIER/DAC/NETWORK PLAYER

A listening with this canadian-danish swiss army knife

I did some experiments with the *DIRAC* correction system, and the sound difference was very subtle, whether it was on or off. I have the impression that if your listening room is subject to reverberation or standing waves, the *DIRAC* system will have a more obvious correcting effect. As the acoustics of my listening room are relatively well-controlled, and for fear of having made mistakes during the procedure of taking measurements with the microphone, I preferred to listen using the *M33* in a purist way, without the *DIRAC* and the *BluOS* platform's tone controls. I started my sessions with jazz singer **Anna Maria Jopek** and her album *Barefoot*. This Polish singer's super voice is beautifully reproduced by the **NAD M33** integrated player. This amplifier demonstrates exceptional neutrality, which does not mean disembodied or cold music. By neutrality, I mean that the *M33* knows how to get out of the way and be completely forgotten in order to leave all the room for the sources and the speakers associated with it. During my listening sessions, I was able to test the **NAD M33** with my speakers and with another pair of speakers, of a different brand, that I had for a test bench. The *M33* integrated player's transparency was able to show me exactly these speakers' intrinsic personality while highlighting

each of them. The tonal balance seems almost perfect to me, the dynamics are there and the stereo image goes far beyond the frame of the speakers both in width and depth. On this opus, the instruments such as the piano, the acoustic guitar, and the double bass's timbres are scrupulously respected by the *M33*. The presence of the performers and instruments is rewarding, without ever being projected too far forward in the sound stage.

I continue my listening with the album *A Leap of Faith* by Quebec harpist **Isabeau Corriveau**. On this album, she is accompanied by a few musician friends while the arrangements are by herself, assisted by **Caroline St-Louis** and **Stephan Rich**. The creation of *A Leap of Faith* was inspired by Celtic music in the Irish or English tradition. The realization is superb and the sound has a bewitching naturalness. On certain pieces, the voices of Ms. **Corriveau** and Ms. **St-Louis** are juxtaposed, forming a most suave duet. The *M33*'s dynamics and its level of definition allow the music to fill my listening room majestically. Whether the tracks are dramatic, rhythmic, or catchy, the *M33* always remains nuanced and expressive thanks to its transparency and clarity in every detail. I don't have enough space to describe more fully my musical choices for this test bench,



NAD MASTERS M33 BLUOS AMPLIFIER/DAC/NETWORK PLAYER



but let's just say that on large symphonic ensembles, the M33 can play very loudly while maintaining total control, even when the tracks include explosive percussion and gleaming brass sections. The double basses are deep and keep a beautiful fullness while preserving their sound box's timbres.

Conclusion

If there is one amplifier that fits the definition of all-in-one very well, it is the NAD M33. For a relatively reasonable price, you get a 200 W per channel amplifier, capable of powering just about any loudspeaker on the market, without being huge,

very heavy or power-hungry. In addition, it is equipped with a very good platform for networked music playback, a powerful digital-to-analog conversion circuit, and an excellent acoustic correction system. On the wireless signal transmission side, the M33 features *Airplay 2* and *Bluetooth aptX HD* connectivity. Add to that a headphone output with dedicated circuitry, and you don't have much left to desire for a complete high-fidelity system. In addition, it saves you money on the wiring needed to connect multiple devices. As an audio columnist, the NAD Masters M33 BluOS integrated amplifier met all my needs in terms of functions and sound. The fact that it uses a switched-mode power supply and amplification modules operating in Class D makes it all the more interesting from an ecological perspective. Would smart devices, such as the NAD Masters M33 BluOS, represent the future of high-fidelity amplification? The question has been asked.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$6,999

Distributor: Lenbrook, T.: 905.831.6555; nadelectronics.com

Mediagraphy

Anna Maria Jopek, Barefoot, 016 299 2

Isabeau Corriveau et les tisseurs de rêves, A Leap of Faith, CA-LMJ-19-40000

Copland, Fanfare for the Common Man, Reference Recordings RR-93-CD

Kate Bush, 50 Words For Snow, Fish People FPCD007

Ulf Wakenius, Love is Real, ACT 9459-2



JBL HDI-3600 LOUDSPEAKERS

Music and home theatre - Successful Double

By ADRIEN ROUAH





Hit

The name **JBL** immediately evokes professional transducers, of course, but also some loudspeaker models that have made high-fidelity history. But today, what can you say about it? Well! Like me, I suppose, few things, except the disappearance from the classic circuits, shortly after the great invasion of *Home Theater*. Yet I know that the professional sector has always worked, tirelessly, and that **JBL**'s good reputation has been maintained with the brand's loyal followers. After introducing the *L-100 Classic* model in the December 2019 issue of **Magazine TED**, it's my turn today to talk about a pair of floor standing loudspeakers, from a series mainly dedicated to *Home Theater*, according to the document that accompanies the model at our disposal. Let's take a look at the pair of **JBL HDI-3600**.

JBL HDI-3600 LOUDSPEAKERS

The good thing about a floorstanding loudspeaker is that you get the benefit of a fairly large overall volume, for the same floor space as a monitor installed on stands. This also makes it possible to accommodate larger and, as in this case, more numerous bass transducers. The *HDI-3600* model's presentation is classic, with a wood-like vinyl veneer, a small black lacquered base, a pleasant finish, quite acceptable if the savings are redirected to the transducers used and the technologies implemented.

Technical achievements

And this is indeed the case here, both on the transducer side and on the cabinet side. The woofers, first of all, with a dipole – two identical transducers forming a larger surface area diaphragm, a midrange of the same diameter and nature as the bass dipole, and a compression chamber tweeter. This is **JBL** showing its strengths in transducers. The woofer and midrange speakers' diaphragms are made of aluminum with 1.5" voice coils and generously sized magnets. The *2410H-2* compression chamber tweeter is also equipped with a patented wave horn or guide that **JBL** calls *HDI (High Definition Imaging)*. This horn will allow a distribution of waves in correlation with the conical

ring lens, a metallic part that can be seen at the bottom of the pavilion.

The cabinet saw just as much attention, with numerous internal reinforcements, and a dacron foam damping which also serves as a volume separation element, dedicated to bass and midrange transducers. The filter uses quality components and is very seriously assembled. You can feel a completely controlled and professional internal realization. The back of the cabinets reveals a double terminal block, allowing for bi-wiring, as well as a double tubular vent, practical in some cases, as I will explain later. The workmanship doesn't show any screws, both on the transducers and the tweeter horn. The tower-shaped cabinets are strongly rounded at the four corners, which adds a personalized cachet that I find very pleasant and, above all, very effective as far as the front part is concerned, which has no edge effect constraint.

The filter cuts are at 900 and 2,000 Hz, the satisfactory sensitivity of 90 dB, and power consumption that goes from 20 to 250 W, with a displayed bandwidth of 38 to 30 kHz (@ -6dB), all this gives me a glimpse of a balance of technical data that will increase the possibilities of marriage to electronics. A very good element. A magnetic grid protects the whole and completes



« I choose the **Bill Evans Trio** for its magic and the degree of precision of the piano's miking. And it's a success, the *HDI-3600s* reveal a 1963 sound recording, reviewed and corrected by the *XRCD* technique, of which the presence is very invigorating. This album has something authentic both in the sound recording and in its musical richness. The restitution by the *HDI-3600* makes us easily forget this album's creation date. The applause also reveals a very beautiful presence during a public concert. »

the look of the columns, a rather discreet look, in my opinion. It is successful, always in my opinion, and it remains in line with the general demand.

Preparation for listening

The pair of **JBL HDI-3600** loudspeakers took the place of my pair of monitors and I positioned them identically, that is, with the front side facing slightly toward the listener. I did not use the protection grids and proceeded to a first listening session. Bass is very prominent in my room, and I know that when I can, I adjust it, first by moving the loudspeakers away from the walls and then, if possible, by blocking one of the cabinet vents. In fact, the **HDI-3600** offers two of them, and by blocking one of them, I find myself shortening the length of the tube. The tuning becomes appropriate for my room and I can now move on to listening.

Music and movies

All I had to do was select four different genres and a few movies to tell you that **JBL's HDI-3600s** are versatile. Versatility is important, because if your listening is split between 50% music and 50% movies, you won't have to worry about the soundtracks, as everything will be rendered in a pleasant way. First, let's take advantage of the different test bench and listen to some vinyl records with the **Yamaha GT-5000** turntable. The music flows and envelops, it is broad and abundant. The acute compression immediately attracts the ears, it is precise and dynamic even if the chosen music is quiet. There is a certain pleasant roundness in the bass, but I still don't know if this is mainly due to the analog or the **HDI-3600**. I change my vinyl record to something more nervous. The ardor is well transcribed, it is seriously hard-hitting. I enjoy listening to **Iggy Pop** and **Jacques Bertin**, the ardour and calm translating well.

The second choice will focus on compact discs, and first and foremost a **JVC XRCD**, of which the audiophile-quality work always amazes me. I choose the **Bill Evans Trio** for its magic and the degree of precision of the piano's miking. And it's a success, the **HDI-3600s** reveal a 1963 sound recording,



JBL HDI-3600 LOUDSPEAKERS

reviewed and corrected by the XRCd technique, of which the presence is very invigorating. This album has something authentic both in the sound recording and in its musical richness. The restitution by the HDI-3600 makes us easily forget this album's creation date. The applause also reveals a very beautiful presence during a public concert.

The following CD will be inviting for those who will listen to world music concerts, in this case for the classical / world music mix. The scenic representation is beautiful, which bodes well for those who mix music and images. The musicians are clearly visible in my room. The bass is serious, but well cut and enveloping. The mid-treble section is tastefully precise, with an harmonic richness that only acute compression chambers can produce. Let's switch up the fun and see what something more contemporary sounds like. **Nordub**, the title says it all, a mix of Dub and Nordic trumpet, **Sly & Robbie** and **Nils Petter Moelvaert**. The JBL HDI-3600s better watch out. And they hold their own very well, they are even quite comfortable when faced with this challenge. The initial impacts are gentle, then heading towards an unbridled complexity. From *Strange Bright Crowd* and its reggae rhythm, to *If I Gave You my Love*, a more

classical jazz track, everything is pleasant and well transcribed. The HDI-3600s can be described as very versatile and enjoyable for all types of music.

But, as JBL has dedicated them to home theater, let's try and see. And in order to see, I use *Pearl Harbor*, which seems to be a good choice for the occasion, with a perfect balance between strong images and intense noises. From murmurs to action scenes, the HDI-3600s confirm that it's easy to rejoice with such equipment from JBL. Of course, the happy owners of a complete set will be even more satisfied with the result, which is really already very spectacular in stereo mode. I also think that a complete HDI package will require a fairly large home theater room, since just with a pair of HDI-3600s, my desire to watch movies would be more than fulfilled. In the forced landing sequence, in the film mentioned above, the result is intense and creates tension easily. The sounds of scrap metal have a nice veracity to them. Other films, of a completely different genre, followed with the same pleasure, and special mention for the dialogue aspect, which offers excellent intelligibility thanks, certainly, to the very well-balanced mid-range speaker / compression chamber duo.

Conclusion

We are reassured, the contract is fulfilled, this pair of JBL HDI-3600 is well thought out for both stereophonic music enjoyment and home theater enthusiasts looking for excellent results in both respects. I found the emphasis on acoustic qualities rather than just aesthetic qualities very good, as the latter would have neglected the sound aspect. But don't worry, I find them easy to integrate into a living room and very successful in terms of design, discreet enough for a wider audience. They bear JBL's signature, and the beautiful logo at the bottom of the cabinet confirms it, they will certainly give a lot of pleasure to those who will choose them.

General information

Price: \$5,000 / a pair

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labor

Distributor: Erikson Consumer, Tel.: 514.457.6674,
www.eriksonconsumer.com; <https://www.jblsynthesis.com>

Mediagraphy

Vinyl

Stooges, Funhouse, Elektra, EKS 74071

Jacques Bertin, Domaine de joie, Le Chant du Monde, LDX 74701

Compacts Discs

Bill Evans Trio, At Shelly's Manne-Hole, JVC-XRCD-0036-2

Constantinople & Ablaye Cissoko, Jardins migrants, MACASE016

Sly & Robbie meet N.P. Molvaert, Nordub, Okay, 88985406342

DVD Video Ddiscs

Pearl Harbor, Touchstone Home Video, 23889



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THE RETURN OF THIS FRENCH MANUFACTURER

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Loudspeaker manufacturer **Pierre-Étienne Léon** had a good run in the province of Quebec in the 1980s and 1990s. This renowned French acoustician's products were well represented and their sound greatly appreciated by Quebec audiophiles. This manufacturer never totally stopped its operations, but we lost sight of it a little until the beginning of 2000 when it returned to our stores. What I'm being offered to test is the *Kantor S3.2* model and, unless I'm mistaken, the release of this test bench is probably a first in North America.

Originality in a classic look

The *Kantor S3.2* is a large, slender, blonde, two-way floor-standing loudspeaker, and it occupies about the middle of the **P.E. Léon** loudspeaker range. Its superb finish on all sides consists of a blond cherry wood veneer covered with a transparent and satin surface varnish. With its stiletto heels (decoupling spikes), it measures almost 120 cm in height. Its width is 20 cm, while its depth is 32.5 cm. The *Kantor S3.2* is equipped with an impregnated fabric ring diaphragm tweeter with a rigid center ogive that serves as a waveguide. Two identical 17 cm diameter woofers are installed symmetrically, vertically, on either side of the tweeter. This method is called the *Appolito* technique, named after its inventor, an American acoustician. Moreover,

it seems that **Pierre-Étienne Léon** opted for this technology for all his floorstanding column-type loudspeakers' design. The use of two small-diameter mid/bass transducers, mounted according to *Appolito's* technique, makes it possible to simulate a point sound source while improving horizontal dispersion. The frequency filter that connects these three transducers is minimum phase shift and direct-coupled. It is, therefore, wiring connected in the air without the use of a printed circuit board. The *Kantor S3.2's* exterior is relatively classic in its rectangular shape, but its slightly rounded edges soften its look. Its elegant cabinetry is made in France and built with *MDF* veneered on both sides. The *Kantor S3.2's* base system was designed by a company specializing in high-tech audio furniture. This system is essentially based on three coupling spikes of which the central cone, at the front, serves to mechanically channel the cabinet's vibrations to the ground. The other two front spikes, left and right, are not in contact with the ground and serve only as tilt protection.

The Cross Flow charging principle

The *Kantor S3.2's* originality lies rather in its internal design, which is the fruit of **Pierre-Étienne Léon's** long experience in the development of a set of transducers loaded by a specific volume. The principle of the acoustic load, called *Cross Flow*,



PIERRE-ÉTIENNE LÉON KANTOR S3.2 LOUDSPEAKERS

is already applied in several of **P.E. Léon's** realizations. The enclosure's internal volume is formed by two cavities, acoustically coupled by non-parallel walls. This manufacturing technique creates a regulation of the wave flow inside the cabinet while balancing the pressure behind the two bass/midrange transducers. In this way, the standing waves are broken, limiting internal and tonic reflections from the cabinet, while stiffening the loudspeaker. The *Cross Flow* principle allows the two bass/midrange transducers to go lower in terms of frequency, even if their diameter is relatively small. With a circular vent that opens to the rear of the loudspeaker, this results in better linearity across the entire frequency range. The connection terminals only accept banana plugs and do not allow bi-wiring, which simplifies installation and its usage.

My reunion with a tall French blonde

The *Kantor S3.2* has been associated with my integrated amplifier of French origin, which makes it one of the most French duo in high-fidelity. The French sound has often been described as thin and mostly focused on high frequencies, which is, in my opinion, a myth. The linearity of high-medium and low frequencies should not be confused with hardness and dryness. The association **P.E. Léon** with my integrated amplifier gives me, on the contrary, a soft and ample sound with a slight touch of warmth. The dynamics and level of detail are of excellent quality, which translates into an incredible presence of the performers and instruments in my listening room. However, the *Kantor S3.2* must be run in for a good 200 hours according to the manufacturer's recommendation. This is what I did, and

I confirm that the improvements are progressive and very beneficial.

Given the French origin of my integrated amplifier and the *Kantor S3.2*, I thought it would be a good idea to listen to a few albums by francophone songwriters. The first is entitled *Les Atomes*, by Quebec artist **Martin Léon**. To my knowledge, this is his latest studio album, which dates back to 2010, and its production is impeccable. With the *Kantor S3.2*, vocals have an almost magical presence and no sibilance or harshness is to be expected. All of the recording's details are perfectly revealed to me, and the instruments' texture is of a confounding naturalness. The stereophonic image is ample and with a lot of ventilation between the performers and the instruments. This loudspeaker has the gift of releasing the music and letting it flow freely in my listening space. The transition between the tweeter and the two bass/midrange transducers is so coherent that I have the impression of using only one transducer, as if on electrostatic panels, but with a little more extension in the spectrum's extremities. I definitely believe that the *Appolito* technique, combined with the *Cross Flow* charging principle, really pays off in terms of the *Kantor S3.2's* consistency.

I continue with a second songwriter, but this time from a French appellation contrôlée. It is **Michel Jonasz** and his album *Where do dreams go?* **Michel Jonasz** has always been meticulous about the choice of his musicians and the quality of his recordings. On this album, priority is given to the artist's voice and keyboards, which is a frequent feature in the making of French or European albums. Here, the *Kantor S3.2* gives me a clear picture. The voice of **Michel Jonasz**, somewhat nasal, and his

(Continues on page 48)



What's New?



Naim Audio MU-SO Wood Edition, Light Oak Finish

Introducing a new, premium *Wood Edition* of the award winning *Mu-so 2nd Generation* – the wireless speaker system that excels with music and TV. Available alongside existing models, the new *Mu-so Wood Edition* blends superb performance with exquisite styling.

The *Mu-so Wood Edition* is dressed in sustainable Ayous hardwood, expertly treated and lacquered to give the appearance of a *Light Oak* finish. The iconic *Mu-so* heatsink also has a new anodised aluminium tint, with the speaker finished by a neutral-toned, woven front grille.

A Few Characteristics of the Wood Edition

- It blends class-leading performance and timeless design with a luxurious new finish. The perfect premium audio companion for homes with classic or contemporary interiors.
- Experience the exceptional sound quality and features that have won *Mu-so 2nd Generation* global acclaim.
- Enjoy a world of radio stations and direct streaming from **Spotify**, **TIDAL** and **Qobuz**, plus easy playback from all your devices with **Bluetooth**, **Apple AirPlay 2** (including **Apple Music**), and **Chromecast built-in**, which delivers multiple services including **Deezer** and **Google Play Music**.
- Accurate, powerful performance: 450 Watts of power paired with premium processing and sophisticated speaker drivers, optimised by **Focal**.
- Transformative TV sound. Simply connect via *HDMI* to hear more from your favourite shows, movies and games.
- Seamless music throughout your home. *Mu-so's* multi-room capability lets you stream the same song in beat-perfect sync or play different music in different rooms. Group with other **Naim** players and systems at the touch of a button, any *AirPlay 2*-compatible wireless speaker or with **Chromecast** built-in devices.
- Delightful to use. Explore and control your music via the **Naim App**, the tactile illuminated dial or the supplied remote control. Or try **Google Assistant** and **Apple Siri** voice control support.
- Explore and control your music via the **Naim App**, the tactile illuminated dial or the supplied remote control. Or try **Google Assistant** and **Apple Siri** voice control support.
- Sounds great anywhere. *Room compensation* optimises audio to suit where your *Mu-so* sits - guaranteeing a rich and natural musical experience, regardless of setting.



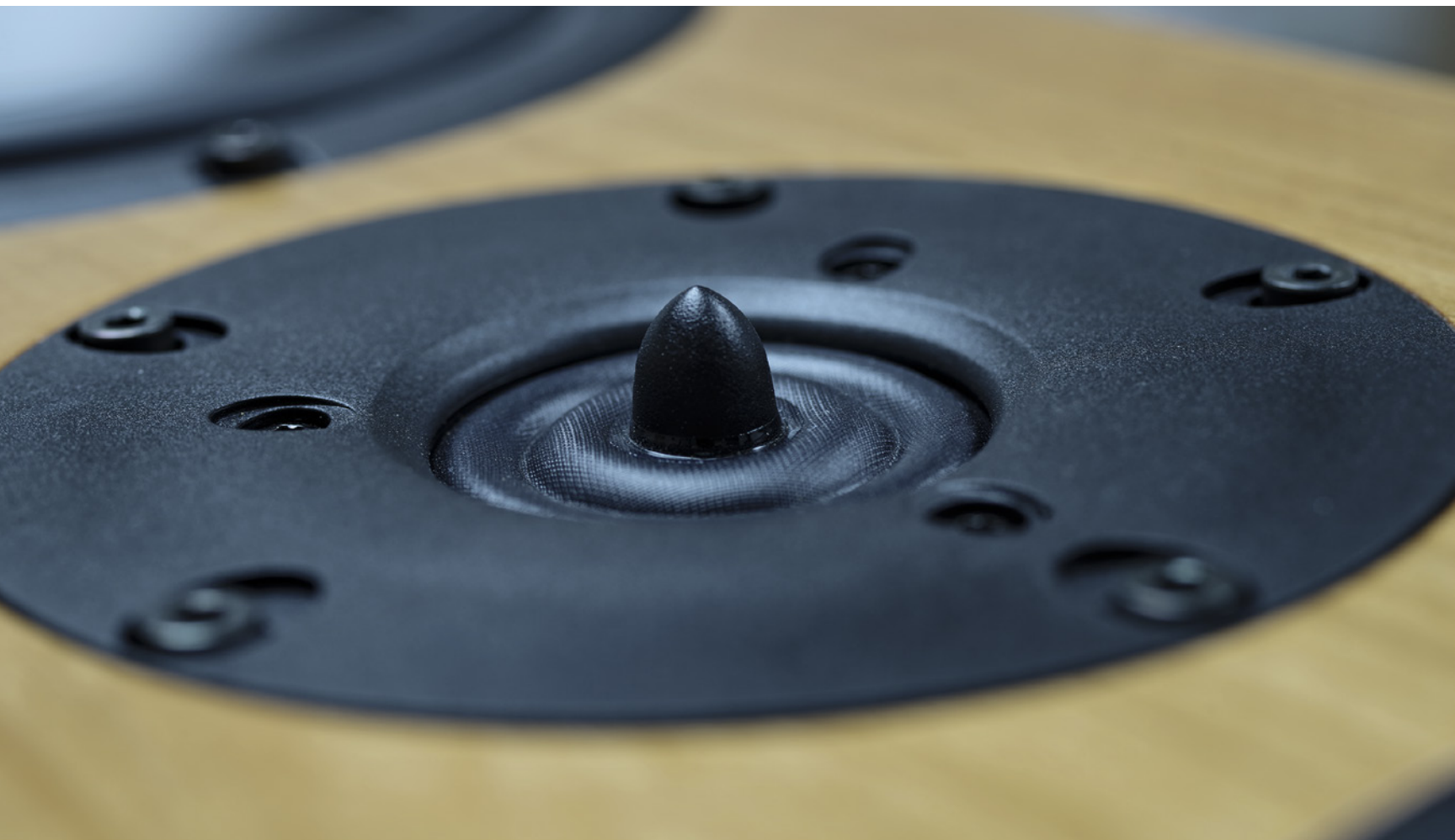
« Her electro-pop music is a clever mix of hip-hop and *R&B*. Her albums are always well done and the *Kantor S3.2* reproduces them impeccably without, however, denying this French artist's personality. Her voice is perfectly centered in the stereophonic image while the keyboards and synthesizers' dynamics are most exhilarating. Without being abyssal, the basses are frank and well supported by the percussions. But again, it's the space that is created by these loudspeakers that impresses me the most. »

(Suite of page 46)

melancholic style are remarkably restored. **Steve Gadd's** excellent playing on the drums is vibrant, and is perfectly rendered in all its nuances. The drumsticks' impact on the skins of the drums is frank and the bass drum's hits show good power. Cymbals retain their metallic character very well without becoming strident, confused, or denatured.

I follow with **Christine and The Queens**, a young singer-songwriter also from France. **Héloïse Létissier** (her real name) released her debut album entitled *Chaleur Humaine* in 2014 and it was a revelation both in North America and in England. In her

second double album, entitled **Chris**, she writes in both English and French, and all her pieces are covered in both languages. Her electro-pop music is a clever mix of hip-hop and *R&B*. Her albums are always well done and the *Kantor S3.2* reproduces them impeccably without, however, denying this French artist's personality. Her voice is perfectly centered in the stereophonic image while the keyboards and synthesizers' dynamics are most exhilarating. Without being abyssal, the basses are frank and well supported by the percussions. But again, it's the space that is created by these loudspeakers that impresses me the most.





Not only does the music extend beyond the normal range of the loudspeakers, but there's a sense of depth that's rarely experienced in other products in this category. I close with **Stephan Eicher**, a Swiss songwriter of Yugoslav origin. He sings in several languages, but his career is mainly in French. After an absence of seven years, in 2019 he released an album entitled *Hüh!* which

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$ 6,999

Finish: satin cherry and/or satin black

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labor

Distributor: Asona Ltd., Tel.: 514.655.5882, richard.k@asonaltd.com

Mediagraphy

Martin Léon, Les Atomes, La Tribu, TRICD-7310

Michel Jonasz, Où vont les rêves? MJM CD 015

Christine and the Queens, Chris, Because Music, BEC5543600

Stephan Eicher & Traktorkestar, Hüh!, Polydor, 6791316

Matt Holubowski, Solitudes, Audiogram / Sony Music, 88985368932

means *Come* in Bernese. This album includes four previously unreleased songs and eight covers of his old repertoire, accompanied by the Bernese brass band **Traktorkestar**. This ensemble is made up of twelve musicians including three percussionists, six brass blowers, jazz singer **Claire Huguenin** and rapper **Stef La Cheffe**, a beatboxing specialist. Needless to say that the songs thus reworked in the manner of Balkan folklore become rhythmic and lively, not to say festive, in some cases. The *Kantor S3.2* loudspeaker reproduces gleaming brass instruments that impress with their power and majesty without ever becoming aggressive or overly intrusive. The performance is so exhilarating that I find myself following the rhythm by nodding my head and tapping my foot. The *Kantor S3.2* is resolutely focused on good music reproduction rather than bluster and overbidding.

Conclusion

As you can imagine, I had a great time with the *Kantor S3.2* loudspeaker pair, and my reunion with this **Pierre-Étienne Léon** product went as if we had never lost sight of each other. During all these years, this French designer has lost nothing of his skill in arranging and making electrodynamic transducers of different origins sing together. The *Cross Flow* charging principle is certainly one of the reasons why the *Kantor S3.2* is so musical and intoxicating. Its association with the *Appolito* technique opens a wide window on all the subtleties of any record I submitted to it. Its manufacturing quality and finish are above average, which makes it very competitive in its price category. So here is a French beauty who can sing in any language, musically speaking.

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NAIM CD5SI CD PLAYER

THE READER WITH A THOUSAND AND ONE GOOD REASONS

By JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

It has become a sought-after rarity, almost an endangered object, an essential device for some and a completely useless for others. What is it? The *CD* player. Is this device, which was once the main source of an audio system, still of interest today? Of course it is! And here's one that's really irresistible, **Naim's CD5si**. This device,

which has been constantly improved over the years, has piqued our curiosity. Since we hadn't tested a *CD* player for many moons, this was a perfect opportunity. This is the **Naim CD5si CD** player. A device, with undeniable charm, which comes at just the right time for those who want to replace their old player. As we will see, *CD*





playback, with a device like the CD5si always keeps its relevance and is even for those who never thought they would need it!

The compact disc has its reasons

Launched by Philips and Sony in 1982, the compact disc remains, for many amateurs, the medium par excellence for listening to music. Contrary to many preconceived ideas, not everyone has converted to dematerialized music. For a variety of reasons, some audiophiles simply



NAIM CD5si CD PLAYER

refuse to use online music services, which are now the norm. For others, the *CD* remains indispensable, since many albums, edited in *CD* format, are not available on streaming services. This is especially true with classical music, of which some works quickly become difficult to find on streaming services. But what's worse, if you've ever tried to archive your classical music collection on a hard drive, you know as well as I do how difficult it becomes to find your way around and how frustrating it can get.

For my part, I made the decision to give up the computer and the hard drive and go back to a *CD* player. Daily, I use the **TIDAL** service for the majority of my discoveries and for my listening. By adding an excellent device to play my *CD* collection, which I can't find on streaming services, my needs are perfectly met. After all, a *CD* collection doesn't take up so much space in a house. In addition, it is now possible to get one for a pittance on the used market. Are we going to see a strong comeback of the *CD*, a bit like it has been for vinyl since 2001? It's quite possible, since there are millions and millions of discs, often in perfect condition, just waiting to be listened to on a quality player like **Naim's CD5si**. And that's all it knows how to do. It is simply a machine to play your compact discs with the best possible mechanical precision, period. No digital inputs, no digital outputs, no questioning, you plug it into your amplifier, you put a record in it, you press *Play* and it plays!

Technical Description

The *CD5si* is now the one and only *CD* player that **Naim** manufactures. It is based on older versions of the *CD5* and incorporates many important advances and improvements. **Naim** will have built several players over the years and the *CD5si* represents a culmination. This device was therefore developed and refined over a long period of time on the basis of many hours of listening.

Let's start with the mechanics. You will find the traditional bow-shaped drawer that you pull by hand and of which the ease of use remains unparalleled. **Naim** has installed completely new mechanics and a new laser reading block, which are reaching new heights in terms of reading accuracy. The *CD5si* has a new conversion chip. This is the *PCM1793* produced by **BurrBrown** and has been specifically optimized by **Naim** for *CD* playback. Thanks to a completely new clock circuit, data conversion is done with a practically unmeasurable jitter level. Moreover, this can easily be heard in the music's fluidity and melodic follow-up. In addition, Naim engineers have redesigned the

power supply for the device. Thanks to new regulators and better feed rails, the current delivered is of excellent stability and higher voltage. The output stages have also been completely redesigned. The signal path is now much shorter and includes only discrete components.

Taken together, these improvements make the *CD5si* a far superior performer to previous **Naim** models, even if the latter were much more expensive to purchase. This is what we call well-thought-out engineering at the service of consumers. **Naim's** classic and timeless chassis is antimagnetic and features backlit playback controls. A configurable dot-matrix display with large, easy-to-read, lime green numbers completes the front panel.

Unpacking and installation

This **Naim CD Player** requires certain precautions to be taken when unpacking it. As always, the packaging is very neat and professional. Upon unpacking, **Naim** warns us to remove the protective screw that has been used for transport. It can be easily removed without tools. Once the job is done, be careful of the manual loading drawer, which is not restrained in any way, and can come in and out quite abruptly. A little trick, block the drawer with a piece of tape before removing the screw, then remove the tape once the installation is complete.

Once installed, this device is a pure pleasure to handle. Open the manual rolling drawer, place the disc and the small magnetic pressure puck. All you have to do is push the drawer back in and press *Play*. All this is reminiscent of the use of a vinyl turntable. The player has a nice, solid remote control capable of operating a Naim tuner and amplifier. Depending on your installation, you will have to choose between the output on a *DIN* connector or on a *RCA* connector. This is important information that **Naim** could have made much clearer in the instruction manual. Your reseller should be able to assist you with this operation.

Listening Impressions

Rediscovering what we used to know

It is with the album *Wes Bound*, by guitarist **Lee Ritenour**, that I started my listening. Strangely enough, I hadn't listened to this West Coast Jazz classic in years. Simply by rummaging through my *CDs*, I stumbled upon it and wanted to listen to it again. A reflex I wouldn't necessarily have had when exploring a streaming service. With *4 ON 6*, the sound of the *CD5si*



player immediately asserts itself with first-rate dynamics and rhythmic follow-up. There's something immediate, direct, pure, about listening to a digital file that doesn't come from halfway around the world. The file located on the disc, a few centimeters from the DAC, offers a fluid and rhythmic sound that makes the music more interesting. Although I have a streamer and a DAC twice as expensive as the Naim player, my set struggles to keep up with the beat when compared to the CD5si. With the CD player, differences in dynamics have much more impact and the music's swing immediately makes you stamp your feet. Curiously enough, this album's recording by Lee Ritenour seems to have taken a turn for the better. We are light years away from the cold and emaciated sound of the CD players of

« This music by James Horner has a breadth and expansion that seems infinite. With the CD5si, the stereo image expands in depth and width, creating a very convincing effect. The songs of this soundtrack are interpreted by the Boys Choral of Harlem of which the Naim device renders texture and tone impeccably. This record, when listened to at low volume with the Naim player, is a real treat for the ears. »

the 1990s. Naim's CD5si allowed me to revisit many jazz albums from that era, often impossible to find on online services.

Seeing music in cinemascope

If there's one unconditional fan of film music, it is me. Since film music titles are scarce on streaming services, I took the opportunity to spoil myself. The *Glory* soundtrack was the first to be played by the Naim player. This music by James Horner has a breadth and expansion that seems infinite. With the CD5si, the stereo image expands in depth and width, creating a very convincing effect. The songs of this soundtrack are interpreted by the Boys Choral of Harlem of which the Naim device renders texture and tone impeccably. This record, when listened to at low volume with the Naim player, is a real treat for the ears. The military drums in the distance are simply mind-blowingly realistic and the flute accompaniment could be sliced with a knife between the two loudspeakers. An excellent performance!

A classic for classical music

A compact disc also means a collection of classical music. Obviously, a test bench for a CD player as ambitious as the CD5si will certainly attract fans and collectors of classical music. So I chose Jordy Savall's *Le concert des nations*. This apotheosis of baroque dance offers music by Rebel and Telemann. Naim's CD5si plays this album by bringing to it a new light and an absolutely superb silky aspect. One can easily distinguish the different instrument sections that appear to the listener, with a sensation of three-dimensional presence. String sections have swing and tempo as is rarely the case with classical music. The CD5si literally transports us to the *Sun King's* era and makes us want to join the dance. Capable of flawless transparency, it



digs deep into discs and brings out the best in them. It would have been so easy for this player to fall into the trap of violins rendered overly aggressively. Rather, it renders them with vigor, finesse and subtlety, allowing us to appreciate classical music in all its splendor.

Conclusion

This CD player performs flawlessly both functionally and musically, and easily deserves the best purchase rating. Even if it doesn't have any digital output, I can assure you that you won't need it anyway. With the sound quality offered by the CD5si itself, it would be crazy to deprive oneself of it. There are a thousand and one good reasons to treat yourself to Naim's CD5si. Whether you want to play tracks you can't find, rediscover your CD collection or start rebuilding one, the CD5si will do the job with panache. The pleasure brought by its use is unequalled and it will make you appreciate all the charm and richness of the compact disc. In short, I want one!

General information

Price: \$2,190

Warranty: 2 years for the mechanical section and 5 years for the electronic section, parts and labor.

Distributor: Focal-Naim Canada, Tel.: 1 866.271.9352, www.focalnaimamerica.com

Mediagraphy

Lee Ritenour, *Wes Bound*, GRP Records, GRSD, 9597

James Honer, *Glory Original Picture Soundtrack*, Virgin Record America, 91329-2

Jordy Savall, *Terpsichore Le concert des nations*, Alia Vox, AVSA9929

AUDIO NOTE TT2 DELUXE TURNTABLE, **ARM TWO** TONEARM AND **IQ II** CARTRIDGE

A REFINED SEDUCTRESS WITH BEWITCHING CHARM

By JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to meet this English beauty, *Miss TT2 Deluxe* by **Audio Note**. Accompanied by her inseparable friend *Arm Two* and her girlfriend *IQ II*, the trio is already all the rage in Europe, but is still unknown on the North American continent. Since we had the opportunity to try it out, I am pleased to present this classic, timeless and refined turntable. Although based on very classic technologies, Ms. *TT2* hides, under her black dress, a lot of technical innovations that

really go off the beaten track. Let's discover what made Europeans' hearts capsize for this turntable.

Audio Note is a legendary and reputed manufacturer. Specialized in high-end tube electronics, the British manufacturer is also a generalist capable of assembling a complete audio system. This company's product portfolio is impressive, not only by the quantity of products assembled, but also by the countless parts manufactured and distributed.



In the 1990s, when the company decided to embark on the vinyl turntable adventure, it decided to acquire the rights and patents from Dunlop, the Scottish manufacturer of **Systemdek** turntables. With a solid foundation, the old **Systemdek** was completely rethought and the *TT1* was born. Nowadays, **Audio Note** turntables don't have so much to do with their **Systemdek** ancestors, and any comparison would be completely futile. Since **Audio Note** was also associated with the **Voyd Reference** turntable's manufacturer, the concept of multiple motor progressed. And so the *TT2* was born, and now the stunning *TT3*. More recently, three tonearms specifically designed for **Audio Note** turntables have been released: *Arm One*, *Two* and *Three*. Of course, **Audio Note** being what it is, there was no question of limiting itself to the manufacture of turntables and their tonearms. A full range of cartridges, at various prices, has also been launched. Not only cartridges, but also elevation transformers, tube phono stages, and all the necessary cables. **Audio Note** now perfectly masters every step of vinyl disc reproduction with an uncommon level of expertise.

The *TT2* turntable, which interests us, is right in the middle of the manufacturer's range. It is, in my view, the best balanced model in terms of technology, outcome and price. It corresponds perfectly to the principles that guided **Audio Note** towards the design of a vinyl turntable, these being to create a turntable with a discreet and elegant look, completely isolated

from vibrations, with an extremely high performance, and that can be easily integrated into its environment.

Technical Description

The *TT2* turntable

The *TT2* is a turntable with a three-point suspension, driven by two motors and two belts. This is an extremely classic suspension configuration since the platter and tonearm assembly is suspended by three springs. These completely cut them off from the outside world and the rest of the turntable. The suspension still offers a good level of firmness preventing it from wandering in all directions, as was often the case with the old **Systemdek**. In fact, the suspension is remarkably effective, and no matter how much you knock on the furniture while the turntable is in operation, nothing disturbs the playback. The acrylic platter is rather light and is driven by two motors connected by a small round belt. Both motors are adjusted electronically, with precision, to ensure perfect synchronization.

When properly set up, the advantage of using two motors provides an extremely stable speed and total control over the rotation of the platter. The resulting stability is worthy of a direct drive turntable. The use of two motors also ensures that a perfectly equal pressure is maintained around the axis of rotation, reducing friction to a minimum, thus guaranteeing an ultra-quiet reproduction of the music. **Audio Note**, like **Rega**, prefers your turntable and its platter not to be too heavy. Their reasoning is that a lighter turntable will be less likely to pick up outside vibrations, unlike a more massive one. This concept was the basis for the design of several excellent turntables and still proves its relevance today. The turntable's casing is made of solid wood, thin, whose resonance frequency has been designed to work in harmony with the other components that complete the *TT2*.



AUDIO NOTE TT2 DELUXE TURNTABLE, ARM TWO TONEARM AND IQ II CARTRIDGE

The Arm Two tonearm

This tonearm, entirely designed and manufactured by **Audio Note**, is a marvel of design simplicity and purity. It is a 9" straight arm, machined from a single piece of aluminum, using the geometry of the **Rega** arms. Despite its elegant simplicity, the *Arm Two* uses rarely seen technology to ensure its movement. Indeed, this arm uses captive needles instead of the usual ball bearings. These needle bearings provide the same sound signature as an unipivot arm. Since the tips of the needles are captive, disadvantages such of instability and difficulty of adjustment are avoided. Moreover, the adjustment of the azimuth, always problematic with unipivot arms, is done simply by moving the counterweight to the left or to the right. A very convenient arm height adjustment (*VTA*) is made by means of a threaded collar at its base. The **Audio Note Arm Two's** internal wiring is made from pure silver, from the cartridge connectors to the *RCA* jacks that connect to a preamplifier. This is a touch of extreme quality that is all too rarely seen. As we'll see while listening, it's pays off.

The IQ II cartridge

The *IQ II* is a *Moving Magnet* cartridge. For the discerning observer, it is obvious that it is a **Goldring** model, assembled according to specifications specific to **Audio Note**. These cartridges already have an enviable reputation and the fact that they are made by **Goldring** will guarantee a reliable supply of replacement needles for many years to come. The *IQ II* has a structure made of a very rigid material called Pocon. The cartridge's spools use an extremely fine cable, guaranteeing excellent reactivity. The *IQ II's* needle is interchangeable, a considerable advantage that will save the user from having to carry the turntable and redo all the adjustments.

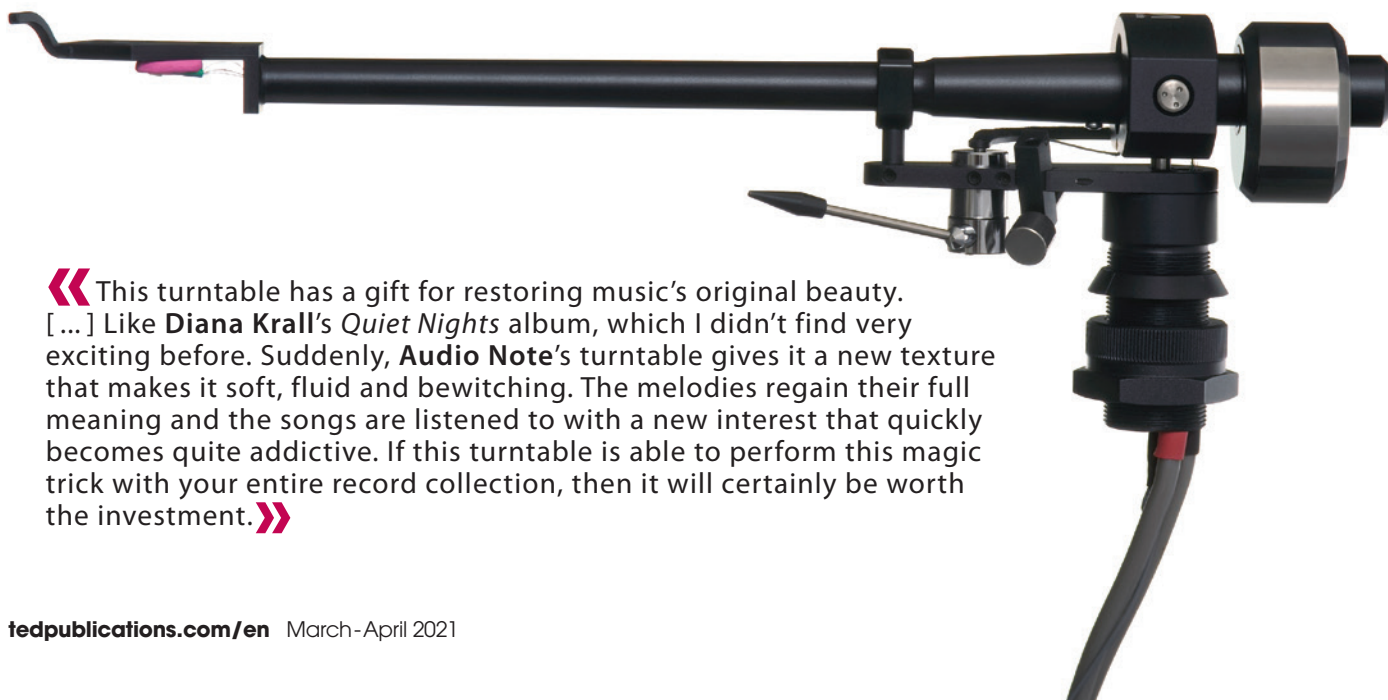
Unpacking and installation

Audio Note's TT2 turntable was delivered to me fully assembled and aligned. All I had to do was adjust the arm's pressure and, at the same time, the azimuth. The suspension does not require any adjustment. No platter mats are supplied with the turntable and the acrylic platter is designed for direct disc placement. This turntable is not without its share of slightly annoying small details. I'm thinking of this power switch, located at the back of the turntable, which is not very practical. Same observation for the belt that needs to be moved on the two pulleys to go from 33 to 45 revolutions. However, this is not dramatic. The clientele that this turntable is aimed at will tell you that what really counts is the magic it offers when it reproduces the music. And as we will realize upon listening, the magic is indeed present.

Listening Impressions

An outstanding agility and sense of rhythm

I started my listening session with **Sade's** classic album *Diamond Life*. It only takes a few seconds of listening to *Smooth Operator* to realize how this turntable has an innate sense of rhythm. Your feet instantly begin to move and you catch yourself tapping your fingers. This magnificent melodic follow-up is done with lightness and disconcerting agility. The *TT2* does not add any heaviness to the reproduction, everything is laser-cut precise without the sound ever becoming aggressive. By way of comparison, this turntable reminds me of the sound presentation of **Rega's Planar 8**, both models being based on a rather light chassis. It is therefore not surprising that there are similarities. However, **Audio Note's TT2** seems to go a bit further in the details it can extract from records. This is quite normal given its higher price.



« This turntable has a gift for restoring music's original beauty. [...] Like **Diana Krall's** *Quiet Nights* album, which I didn't find very exciting before. Suddenly, **Audio Note's** turntable gives it a new texture that makes it soft, fluid and bewitching. The melodies regain their full meaning and the songs are listened to with a new interest that quickly becomes quite addictive. If this turntable is able to perform this magic trick with your entire record collection, then it will certainly be worth the investment. »



Curious and capable of going deep into a record.

With Kornet Van Sin Vilat choir's record, released on the Proprius label, the restitution is simply astounding. This record, by a choir singing in Swedish, recorded with only two microphones, transmits an absolutely spectacular stereophonic image. Listening to it on the TT2 turntable is an experience that takes us straight to the recording location. The stereophonic image is of unheard-of depth, but I was expecting that. But the fact that one could perceive a notion of height between the different groups of choristers left me simply flabbergasted. To be able to create such an illusion, the turntable, arm and cartridge really need to be able to extract a phenomenal amount of information from the vinyl record. As such, this medium never ceases to surprise me.

A mesmerizing musical beauty

This turntable has a gift for restoring music's original beauty. Those who will try using the TT2, will be able to appreciate all its abilities. Like Diana Krall's *Quiet Nights* album, which I didn't

find very exciting before. Suddenly, Audio Note's turntable gives it a new texture that makes it soft, fluid and bewitching. The melodies regain their full meaning and the songs are listened to with a new interest that quickly becomes quite addictive. If this turntable is able to perform this magic trick with your entire record collection, then it will certainly be worth the investment.

Conclusion

Audio Note's TT2, Arm Two and IQ II package is exceptional in many ways. The fine reproduction, all in subtlety, to which this turntable arrives is simply magical. Of course, it is not cheap, but TT2 and its acolytes are among the fine

things that life can offer us. Melodious, beautiful, well thought out, it is timeless and will bewitch those who will forgive its little whims and make it their companion. A great lady with crazy charm!

General information

AN-TT Two Deluxe vinyl turntable, ultra lacquered black

Price: \$5,700

Arm Three/II tonearm (including AN-VX cable)

Price: \$2,800

IQ3 MM ZU083 cartridge

Price: \$1,400

Distributor: Audio Note America, Tel: 438.504.3278, even.cloutier@gmail.com; www.audionote.co.uk

Mediagraphy

Sade, *Diamond Life*, Portrait, FR3958

Bengt Berg, *Kornet Har Sin Vila*, Proprius, PROP 7853

Diana Krall, *Quiet Nights*, Verve, B0001 2433 01

NOTHING BETWEEN YOU AND THE MUSIC

By ADRIEN ROUAH

Nothing between you and the music, that's the slogan that accompanies the **Yamaha** *Flagship HiFi 5000 series'* presentation document. And today's *GT-5000* vinyl turntable is part of that flagship series, which includes a *C-5000* preamplifier, an *M-5000* power amp, and a pair of *NS-5000* loudspeakers. Back to the roots of high-fidelity, back to the simplicity of listening with a purely analog set. After all, and for many of us, it's this configuration of devices – turntables, amps and loudspeakers – that allowed us to discover high-fidelity, isn't it? So let's explore this masterful Yamaha series and start with the music's source.

I received this vinyl turntable from the hands of **Yamaha's** friendly representative, Mr. **Nico Boucher**, and once delivered, I think I had the same enthusiasm as if I had welcomed a piano of the same brand in my home! The device is imposing and magnificent, which is already a compliment when you know how difficult it is to achieve an imposing object while at the same time making it magnificent. Seriously equipped with gloves, not wanting, even before the pandemic, to leave any fingerprints on black lacquer, I reserve my white gloves for future adjustments and I put on my Nitrile gloves for unpacking and installation. The object being very heavy, the grip with these gloves is only better!

Engineering schools

To fully understand our subject, the **Yamaha** *GT-5000* vinyl turntable, we need to present the different technological schools of thought that have joined the fun over the years. The brands I quote will only be cited for the purpose of technique authorship, nothing commercial on my part. The turntables' base to begin with, either it is made

light and simple in design according to **Rega** which has always advocated this approach, or it is made heavy and inert according to **Sharp-Optonica** which will take the path of the heavy and inert marble base. Next comes an isolation suspension, with compression springs like Thorens or extension springs like **Oracle**. You will encounter, and once again with **Rega**, a total absence of suspension, just rubber damping feet, the locations of which are judiciously chosen. The platter will be driven by a belt, which, depending on the case, will be internal and will drive a counter platter, or will be external and will drive the platter itself on its periphery. Or the designers will have chosen direct drive, with the motor directly driving the platter, like **Technics** and many others. And we move on to the arms, with the most common concept, the *S-arm*, the *J-arm*, long or short, and the straight arm, long or short, too. There is also a radial displacement arm which is not very common in home audio, apart from a few tests by **Revox** and **Bang & Olufsen**.

This lengthy description helps us to clarify this statement, to understand that while



there are many opportunities, they have strengths and weaknesses. Each manufacturer's final concept reveals the brand's initial technological school of thought that drives the engineers and imposes certain manufacturing choices. This information is provided in order to help the consumer better guide his choice of products in order to better enjoy them. And what are the choices made by **Yamaha**?

Yamaha's project definition

The *GT-5000* vinyl turntable offered by the famous manufacturer has a heavy and

hyper rigid base. It is made of several *HDF (High Density Fiberboard)* layers up to a thickness of 4 in. This generous base rests on 4 legs equipped with ball-and-socket joints that can accommodate the *GT-5000's* total weight of 58 pounds. The aluminium platter, larger than usual, measures 35 cm in diameter and rests on a brass capstan which will be the platter's drive bearing and support. This combination of metals of different natures makes it possible to dissociate the resonances, explains **Yamaha**. Each part is machined with extreme precision, as evidenced by the rigorous positioning of the

platter on the capstan. The flat belt connects a 24-pole, 2-phase, servo-controlled AC synchronous motor. The outputs offered are *RCA* or *XLR*, which is quite rare in the vinyl analog playback process .

Aesthetically, this vinyl turntable is a pure delight. The solid base block is embellished with silver accents from the various pushbuttons for starting up, speed selection, platter rotation start, speed control setting and by the generous damping feet. The arm and its support pivot are also silver with a delicate and refined design. Pure and simple elegance and a



YAMAHA GT-5000 VINYL TURNTABLE

classicism of great prestige. Finishing touches that impose respect in all points.

Straight arm and cartridges

To get as close as possible to the master matrix, which serves as a model for the creation of vinyl records in series, arms (and vinyl turntables) designers wanted to get as close as possible to the movement of the burin, which progresses linearly as it burns the master record. In the case of a playback device for domestic use, the movement of the arm will be chosen, preferably along a swivel axis, and an angle error will thus be obligatorily created. Giving a slight, precise horizontal angle to the cartridge shell will reduce this angle error. The arm chosen for the *GT-5000* table is straight and short. However, there is no specific cartridge recommended by Yamaha for this type of arm, the choice being left to individual requirements.

In my case, and for this test bench, I used a moving magnet cartridge (*Ortofon 2M Bronze*) and a moving coil cartridge (*Koetsu Black*). As for the tastings of great wines, I started with the less robust to finish with the first vintage, but we are, in both cases, in front of great choices of wines ... pardon me, cartridges.

Installation details

The *Yamaha GT-5000* was installed on a perfectly leveled table-type stand. I used my usual phono preamplifier, with an *RCA* type input and output connection from the same cable manufacturer. Cartridge installations and startup will pose no difficulty for a hobbyist who has already done this kind of installation, as all the necessary equipment – except a scale – is provided by *Yamaha*. I particularly liked the multi-purpose disc and the small light provided, which allows stroboscopic speed control, as well as the cartridge positioning template.

Listening impressions

Who says exceptional material – vinyl turntable and cartridges – turns towards some exceptional records, too! These are my exceptional records, which are my musical references, which I have known for a long time and which allow me to easily appreciate the sound stage, the musicians' position, the quality of the timbres and, especially, the voices' human side. If excellent results were obtained with the *Ortofon* cartridge, the paradox of definition, and especially of sound staging, surpassed my expectations with the *Koetsu Black*. Although there is a noticeable price difference between the two cartridges, it is rather in the direction of a moving coil cartridge that I think we should move towards. My review will be based on the *Koetsu Black* cartridge. In the first place, it is *Pictures at an Exhibition* that I listen to. The recording is sublime and labeled *London Digital Recording*, which, and connoisseurs will confirm it, is quite a reference in terms of vinyl. It is the sensation of space that dominates the listening in the first place, the sensation of great space that the orchestra occupies in my room. I know, not everyone would fit into my living room, but what you have to understand, keeping your eyes open, is that the walls are pushed back. Even if the dynamics are more reduced than with digital listening, the orchestral mass is violent enough to startle us. The intimate moments of the work are super defined and limpid. Listening to classical music is a pure delight.

Following is an *ECM* record, *Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette and Keith Jarrett*. About the latter, I would have liked someone to tell him to shut up when he plays the piano or not to sing at the same time, it's unpleasant! I make the effort to get over his bad habit and I tell myself that he is, despite everything, a genius. Genius well revealed here, the playback is magnificent,





« Let's go even further with a pop record, *Trapèze*. Standard **Decca** record, which does not bend, as thick as a 180 g disc, for audiophiles, (mine is 168 g) and dating from 1970. I'm sure **Yamaha's** engineers would congratulate **Decca's** sound engineers, because their work is impressive. No prevarication, no artifice, the *GT-5000* reveals all of this music. Each musician is perfectly at his place, well camped and at the right levels. I salute here the vinyl turntable's overall balance that nothing comes to disassemble. If the playback is excellent, the definition is delightful, and I applaud this musical truth that time doesn't reach, this precision that will make you hear the true definition of an **Ampeg** amp and many other things. »

everything is precise, accurate, chiseled. The piano is endowed with a masterful body, the cymbal is true, it is enjoyable! And I switch to **Ofra Haza**, for the female voice and the slightly disco rhythm, I like contradictions, the *GT-5000* does too. The performance is there and the idea of quiet music, which enhances an audiophile ensemble, is thwarted. No concessions to

be made here. I want my money's worth, and it works. The test does not frighten **Yamaha**.

Let's go even further with a pop record, *Trapèze*. Standard **Decca** record, which does not bend, as thick as a 180 g disc, for audiophiles, (mine is 168 g) and dating from 1970. I'm sure **Yamaha's** engineers would congratulate **Decca's** sound engineers, because their work is impressive. No prevarication,



YAMAHA GT-5000 VINYL TURNTABLE



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Conclusion

Yamaha doesn't choose the easy road by imposing a *GT-5000* vinyl turntable with a proven but unusual principle. If the straight arm used has its advantages, it is after all not very common in audio and if it is perfectly mastered from a technological point of view, the results are admirable. Understandably, in the case of the *GT-5000*, this is not a decision made for cost reasons, but rather a choice in perfect symbiosis with the desires of **Yamaha's** designers. Note that rather for uselessness related reasons (in the case chosen by **Yamaha**), the *GT-5000* doesn't have an anti-skating setting, an omission that tends to spread on some current turntables, since it was already considered useless on the **Clément-Schlumberger**. In fact, and under common appearances, this turntable has many manufacturing secrets, secrets that will be revealed to those who will want to know, those who will consider this turntable as an exceptional object of which the technology is not immediately visible, but which will allow to play precious vinyls by dissecting the smallest details.

It will be necessary to find a cartridge to one's taste, primarily with a mobile coil, to give it every possible chance on the musical level, as described here. It's up to you to try, to be advised, but be demanding and curious. With **Yamaha's** *GT-5000* vinyl turntable, you get a touch of the sublime and you



understand better the dazzling return of this analog process. With all due respect to the hard-core dematerialized aficionados, vinyl reading has something unsurpassable in terms of truth, humanness, concordance with a palpable sensation. **Yamaha's** return is shattering with this *GT-5000* vinyl turntable and can be greeted by the applause of music lovers, convinced by analog or not.

General information

GT-5000 vinyl turntable

Price: \$10,999

Warranty: 4 years, parts and labor

Distributor: Yamaha Canada Music Ltd., Tel.: 416.298.1311 or toll-free, 1 855 300.7811, ca.yamaha.com

Mediagraphy

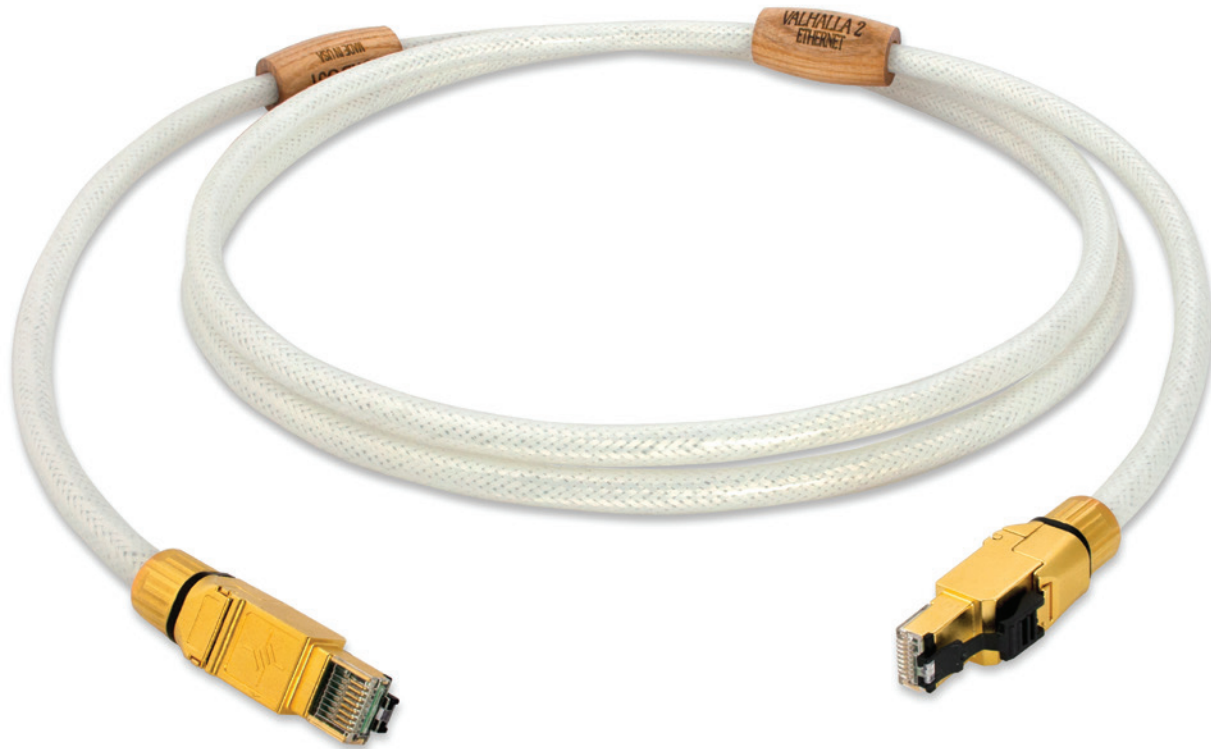
Mussorgsky, exhibition Painting, Decca-London, LDR10040

Gary Peacock, J. DeJohnette, Keith Jarrett, Tales of Another, ECM-1-1101

Ofra Haza, Shaday, Teldec, 24 38451

Trapeze, Medusa, Decca Threshold, THS4

What's New?



Nordost VALHALLA 2 ETHERNET CABLE

High end, two-channel audio systems have gone through a major transformation over the past decade. Systems that were once driven exclusively by vinyl and CDs are now largely run by content stored on NAS drives and servers. In order to ensure that audiophiles can enjoy the ease of streaming music without having to concede the fidelity that they deserve, it is necessary to employ an *Ethernet* cable worthy of facilitating that transfer. Nordost's *Valhalla 2 Ethernet Cable* allows music lovers to fully incorporate digital music storage and streaming into their reference audio systems, while maintaining, and even improving upon, their musical performance.

In order to meet the increasing demand for high speed data and increased bandwidth, the *Valhalla 2 Ethernet Cable* has the advantage of eight, 23 AWG, solid core conductors wrapped in a high density polymer insulation. These annealed conductors are arranged into four twisted pairs before being triple-shielded. Each of these design aspects minimizes skin effect, eliminates crosstalk and EMI (electromagnetic interference), and ensures a high performance network cable, offering far more bandwidth than is needed for the typical data demands of today.

To further distinguish the *V2 Ethernet Cable* from its competitors, Nordost has implemented its unique mechanical tuning process. By meticulously cutting each conductor at calculated and equal lengths, Nordost reduces internal microphony and high frequency resonance. The precise cut of each conductor, at a length which is determined by the cable's geometry, material, and application, guarantees the uniform arrival of all signals, dramatically reducing timing errors.

To complete this reference design, the *Valhalla 2 Cable* is terminated with a completely specialized, gold-plated 8P8C / RJ45 connector, designed to resist ESD (electrostatic discharge) and optimized for mechanical reliability. The resulting cable supports frequencies and transmission speeds that easily meet *Category 8* requirements.

The *Valhalla 2 Ethernet Cable* is designed, manufactured, and terminated in the USA. Each cable is constructed with precision, consistency, and quality fabrication, providing a massive improvement over standard issue, mass-produced, low precision *Ethernet* cables.

www.nordost.com

CLASSICAL MUSIC

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS



RECORD OF THE MONTH MARISS JANSONS

His Last Concert - Live at Carnegie Hall Works by Strauss and Brahms.

BR Klassik, 900 192.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****

We already have a 4th *Brahms Symphony* by **Mariss Jansons** released under **BR Klassik**, dating from 2010 and an integral part of the Latvian conductor's **Brahms** cycle. It's an excellent, but normal, 4th *Symphony*. This one is exceptional. Today is November 8, 2019 in New York. A few hours after this concert, **Mariss Jansons** will be rushed to the hospital. He will not conduct the next day. He'll never conduct again. A plane will bring him back to St. Petersburg where he will die on November 30. In this final concert, **Mariss Jansons** is at the baton for the *Intermezzo's 4 Symphonic Interludes*, **Strauss' 4 Last Lieder** with **Diana Damrau** and **Brahms' 4th Symphony**. We do not find, in this disc, the *Lieder* with **Damrau**, previously released by **Erato**, taken from a previous show given in Munich. This November concert is admirable and very moving. It is no insult to **Strauss's Intermezzo** to say that **Brahms' 4th Symphony** attracts all the attention. It is much denser and more tense than the previous version. The power, exceptional, is reminiscent of **Karajan's** last recording, with an orchestra as huge as the one in Berlin.

SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH THIBAUD GARCIA ARANJUEZ

Concerto by Joaquin Rodrigo and works by Sainz de la Maza, Tansman, de Visée.
Thibaud Garcia (guitar), **Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Ben Glassberg**.

Erato, 0190295235710.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****

A **Warner Classics** record that sounds like that? Usually it's good, but not that good! Then, we refer to the booklet and we discover that the recording of this *Concierto* by **Aranjuez**, unlike any other, was entrusted to the great **Hugues Deschaux**, the sound engineer who is responsible for the **Alpha** legendary label. What a godsend! And if there was only that... Because here is the recording of **Aranjuez**, a pure enchantment, nourished by attention to detail and an expressive, but never exaggerated, generosity. **Warner** really succeeded in renewing the artists in its catalog, with harpsichordist **Jean Rondeau**, guitarist **Thibaut Garcia** and cellist **Edgar Moreau**. The icing on the cake is the program, which adds to the famous concerto some guitar selections by its dedicatee, **Regino Sainz de la Maza**, a rare concerto by **Tansman** according to **De Visée** and the transcription of a *Suite in A*, by this **Robert de Visée**. An ideal and irresistible record.

THE BOX SET OF THE MONTH IVAN MORAVEC

Portrait
Portrait
Recordings 1962 - 2002
Supraphon, 11 CD + 1 DVD, SU, 4290-2
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *** to ****

Ivan Moravec is, together with **Rudolf Firkušny**, the greatest post-war Czech pianist. He is not known to

the general public, as his career was thwarted by red tape due to the fact that he never took his Communist Party card. His name was known and recognized in the West after 1963, thanks to records released on the **Connoisseur Society** label. This label's executives had managed to get **Moravec** out of his country in 1962 to make recordings. The operation, reissued in 1966 and 1969, resulted in memorable **Chopin** and **Beethoven** records. **Supraphon** publishes here the most complete set of recordings by this sound fanatic who said *The most beautiful instrument is the human voice. Playing an instrument where the sound falls and disappears, my goal is to support the sound in order to create the illusion of singing.* In this box set's booklet, **Murray Perahia** writes *What struck me about his playing was the range of colors he had at his disposal, the absolute naturalness of his phrasing, a technique that was not ostentatious but superior, and a profoundly human way of seeing, where the artificial had no place.* What we have here is not an **Ivan Moravec** integral, but it is a vital portrait of one of the greatest pianists ever recorded.

DVD OF THE MONTH YO-YO MA

The Bach Project
Bach: Cello Suites
C Major, Blu-ray, 754 504
Interpretation: ****
Technique: *** to ****

On December 7, 2018, as part of the *Festival Bach Montréal*, **Yo-Yo Ma** played the *Six Cello Suites* in one sitting. A dive of more than two continuous hours (yes, without intermission!) in these Suites. This concert was part of a 36-city world tour. The *DVD* documenting this project and this world tour was recorded on June 30, 2019, at the *Odeon of Herod Atticus* in Athens, at the foot of the Acropolis, in front of 5,000 rather silent spectators, but in a general

atmosphere not exempt from some extrinsic noises.

This release allows us to rediscover what we had heard in Montreal, a musical ceremony embraced with a breath. **Yo-Yo Ma** has recorded **Bach's Cello Suites** three times, in 1982, 1997, and 2018 with a clear stylistic evolution. The musician in his twenties (1982) is a cellist who plays a beautiful cello, but not necessarily the greatest **Bach**. The 1997 integral's cellist received training in baroque rhetoric. He is interested in the pulsation of the dances, and the phrasing is carefully considered. Twenty years later, it's still dancing, but with shorter breaths and less sound. The trait has eased. One can find that in this impressive concert recorded in a sumptuous setting..

NEW RELEASES LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN JORDI SAVALL

Symphonies nos 1 à 5.
Le Concert des Nations, Jordi Savall.
Alia Vox, 3 SACD, AVSA, 9937.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****

There have necessarily been a lot of records during this **Beethoven** year, but this first part of the complete works, which should end with recordings to be made in 2021, is really not like the others. What sets it apart is the development process. The pillars of the *Concert of Nations* serve as mentors for young musicians, and all of them are brought together with **Jordi Savall** during intensive work seminars, after which the programs are played in concert and recorded. The advantage of the method is obvious. The work on the scores is potentially much more detailed than under normal conditions. But excessive premeditation must not kill spontaneity. **Jordi Savall** succeeds in stripping the symphonies and giving them an extraordinary impact (*Third, Fifth*) without the sum of the details

tempering the impulses. It's invigorating and exhilarating.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN LAHAV SHANI

Symphony No. 7, Piano Concerto No.4.
**Lahav Shani (piano and direction),
Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.**

Warner, 0190295177683.

Interpretation : ****

Technique : ****

Lahav Shani was **Yannick Nézet-Séguin's** surprise successor in Rotterdam. The 31-year-old conductor, who also took over the **Israel Philharmonic Orchestra**, was trained as a pianist. For his first **Warner** record, he tackles a monument, **Beethoven's 4th Concerto** on piano and conducting, and the result is sumptuous. Its main asset is the 2nd movement of which the simplicity and naturalness of breathing have rarely been so obvious. The 7th *Symphony* is almost as successful. Interestingly, as interpretations are increasingly focused on the primacy of rhythm these days, **Shani** instills in the 2nd movement a dark nostalgia reminiscent of the great versions of the past.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN CÉDRIC PESCIA and PHILIPPE CASSARD

Symphonie no 9 (version for two pianos
by Franz Liszt).

**Cédric Pescia and Philippe Cassard
(pianos).**

La Dolce Volta, LDV, 82.

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

Who could have thought! **Beethoven's 9th Symphony** without soloists and choirs? **Beethoven's 9th Symphony** on the piano. And it's exciting. **Liszt**, who had great respect for **Beethoven**, transcribed the *Nine Symphonies* for solo piano. But the transcription for

two pianos of the *Ninth* has rarely been documented. It does justice to the brilliance of the **Beethovenian** language. The amount of music on this disc is truly astonishing, thanks to the **Pescia-Cassard** tandem's flair for color and their innate sense of contrasts and musical flow. An astonishing revelation.

LÉO DELIBES ROYAL NATIONAL SCOTTISH ORCHESTRA, NEEME JÄRVI

Ballet Suites: Sylvania, La Source, Coppélia.
Chandos, SACD, CHSA, 5257.

Interpretation: ****

Technique: *****

It is a joy to see **Järvi Sr.** take an interest in this neglected yet exhilarating repertoire, in a disc with a perfect program and a duration of 83 minutes. The **Léo Delibes'** (1836 - 1891) ballet music was very much in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s. It is a pity that we lose the tradition of playing it outside ballet performances, because it is very beautiful music (reminder that **Karajan** recorded the suite from *Coppélia*). Fluid direction, orchestra very well captured by **Ralph Couzens**, the label's director himself. We are pampered.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART QUATUOR VAN KUIJK, ADRIEN LA MARCA (ALTO).

Quintets K. 515 and 516.

Alpha 587.

Interpretation: ****

Technique: ****

The transcendent and unique beauty of **Mozart's** late *Quintets* cannot be overemphasized, as they are too little-known masterpieces that have no real equivalent in his time. Compared to **Schubert**, who uses two cellos in his notorious *Quintet D. 956*, **Mozart** uses two violas. The **Quatuor van Kuijk** is an ensemble that pays great attention to detail and eloquence (accentuation,

dynamic contrasts). The **Van Kuijks** never forget that **Mozart** was an opera composer. We may prefer a little more restraint, with the **Juilliard** or the **Auryn**.

DANIIL TRIFONOV (piano)

Silver Age. Works for solo piano
and for piano and orchestra by Scriabin,
Stravinsky and Prokofiev.

Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra,
Valery Gergiev.

DG, 2 CD, 483 5331.

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

No attempt will be made to explain this *Silver Age* of Russian music, which justifies a somewhat heterogeneous association of orchestral and solo works. The two concertos are **Prokofiev's 2nd and 3rd** and the 8th *Sonata*, **Stravinsky's Serenade in A**, **Petrushka's 3 Movements** and **Agosti's** transcription of *The Firebird*. Certainly, **Daniil Trifonov** is, technically, a wizard. His digital faculties are exceptional, as witnessed by the *Finale* of **Prokofiev's 2nd Concerto** and the delirious transcription of *The Firebird* already proposed by **Beatrice Rana**. **Valery Gergiev's** accompaniment is excellent in a scathing **Prokofiev 2nd Concerto** and a romanticized **Scriabin Concerto**.

BERTRAND CHAMAYOU

Good Night!

Lullabies for solo piano

Erato, 0190295242435.

Interpretation: *****

Technique: ***

It's kind of the opposite of **Aranjuez**, our Sound Recording of the Month. This *Good Night!*, a fascinating record, gathering lullabies by **Janacek**, **Liszt**



Lyapounov, Busoni, Chopin and others, thus inviting to meditation, would have deserved a sound matching the concept. The sound of the piano, however, is far too open, clear and present for a night record. Musically the program includes two very famous pieces (**Chopin, Brahms**), many rarities, and some discoveries. Thanks to these, the program, essentially meditative, avoids uniformity and constantly surprises. This record is above all a plebiscite for intelligence, at a time that celebrates the tepid audio water faucet and a vain piano playing that reigns supreme in the world of streaming and charts of all kinds.



BLUES

By PIERRE JOBIN

DAVID ROTUNDO BAND

So Much Trouble
Dreams We Share (Label)

This Torontonion harmonica specialist and singer's album gets off to a flying start with *She's Dynamite*, an up-tempo piece that, like the story's girl, leaves no room for complacency. The second track, *I Must Be Crazy*, is an intense ballad, both in terms of the passionate and urgent vocals and the instrumentation that delivers fiery organ, guitar and harmonica solos! With the third track, the dylan-esque *Funky Side Of Town*, the tension is eased in favor of a philosophical outlook at the difficult daily life of the slums. The presentation is simple, direct, and the atmosphere is well rendered. *Hard Times Coming* is a beautiful blues with both acoustic slide and harmonica, well written and interpreted in every way by a **David Rotundo** who seems to be in full possession of his means, even in a gloomy context. *So Much Trouble*, the title track, is an eschatological text that speaks of the trouble that invades us, by water, by air, and by land, as well as in our families, our countries, our hearts, and against which we struggle to free ourselves. Guitar, bass, drums, and harmonica form the basic instrumentation of this album to which keyboards and saxophone are added as needed. The cello and percussions, with accents of world music on a couple of songs, as well as the choirs, on several others, create atmospheres that reflect all horizons of life, from local miseries to universal problems. *So Much Trouble* is an excellent album in its writing, and its interpretation as much as in its direction, which was handled by famous harmonicist **Lee Oskar**. This accomplished musician's creativity and skills have already left their mark. This record originates from the blues, from the human condition in a dense, gripping and expressive atmosphere, while converging on it. Sometimes I felt at the confluence of a **Dylan** and a **Burdon**, with a lot of spleen and a ray of hope; *So Much Trouble* is great **Rotundo** with feelings often long-suffering that take

us to difficult territories where the sun always ends up entering through the back door. Well done!

PETER VETESKA & BLUE TRAIN

Grass Ain't Greener on the Other Side
Self-produced

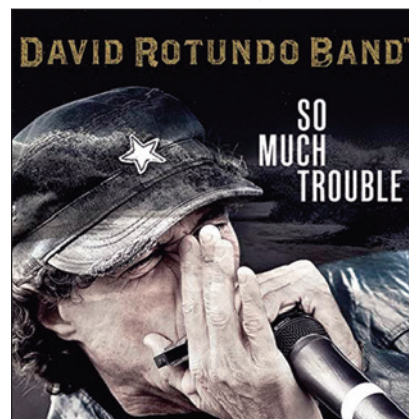
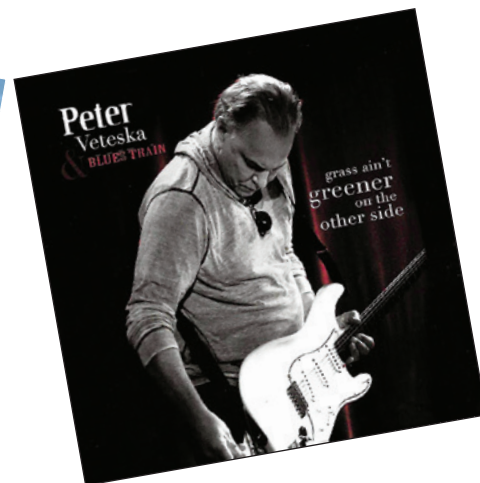
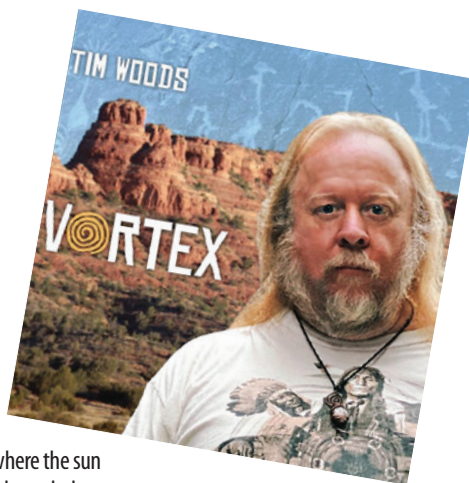
In 2013, New Jersey guitarist and singer **Peter Veteska** formed **Peter V Blue Train**. In 2015, the band released its self-titled debut album and was chosen to represent the *Jersey Shore Jazz and Blues Foundation* at the *International Blues Challenge* in Memphis. In 2016, a second album, *On Track*, was released and **Veteska** was also inducted into the *New York Blues Hall of Fame*. On these solid foundations, and after a reformation of the band which retained only the drummer, **Alex D'Agnese**, who was joined by solid bassist **Coo Moe Jhee** and the special guest, keyboardist **Jeff Levine (Joe Cocker, Hall and Oates, Clarence Clemons, John Fogerty...)**, **Peter Veteska** offers us a fifth album which is more than ever rooted in the blues. To this end, he also recruited special, high-quality guests, including harmonica player **Mickey Junior** on two tracks and guitarist and singer **Roger Girke** on one track, in order to realize the specific vision of this project. Six original tracks by **Veteska** and four covers, including *Heartbreaker*, popularized by **Ray Charles**, and *You Don't Love Me* by **Willie Cobbs**, form the framework of this solid opus. The album opens with an original dancing and groovy R&B track, *Am I Wrong Pretty Baby*. This is followed by a cover of *Baby You've Got What It Takes*, popularized by **Dinah Washington** and **Brook Benton**, which he covers here with singer **Jen Barnes**, also from New Jersey and leader of her own band. Intensity, groove, know-how, both in the conception and execution, are present, resulting in an impactful album that

will appeal to lovers of sensations and energetic electric blues.

TIM WOODS

Vortex
Self-produced
Tim Woods, this singer, songwriter, and guitarist with more than thirty years of experience, recently released *Vortex*, his third album. It is, in this case, a psychedelic rock opus that unfolds like a journey to a land of wonders and natural energies. His singing offers, here and there, accents that awaken in my memory **Jim Morrison** in his voice and his impulses, as well as traces of blues, **Hooker** or **Wolf** that sometimes rise to the surface. This native of western Pennsylvania moved to Macon, Georgia at the age of eighteen, following his family. Already steeped in the variants of popular music, invaded by the blues of **Willie Dixon**, **Howlin' Wolf**, **Muddy Waters** and psychedelic bands, his immersion in the music scene of this southern city, where he worked in a local club, had a profound and lasting impact on him. *Vortex* is a concept album that recounts his visit to the sacred site of Sedona, Arizona where he visited

a vortex of energy, an experience that inspired the writing and music of this project. His musical influences are multiple and fused to the point where it is his personal style that unfolds and comes alive in an atmosphere filled with imprints and sounds that invite a feeling of *déjà vu* and a change of scenery. For example, the instrumental track *Sage* could be put in parallel and associated with a floydian flight which would have the rhythmic and sonorous hues of the South. *Water Is Life*, which concludes the journey, is a timeless and catchy hymn ballad that should, without difficulty, be able to go through the decades as an ode to this constituent and essential source of life that is water. For the rest, I let you discover according to your perceptions and fantasies. Happy those who, like **Tim Woods**, have made a beautiful journey and know how to pass it on! *Happy Trails!*



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

By DAN BEHRMAN

STEN KÄLLMAN & SANBA ZAO

Mapou Haitian Drums & Northern Wind Country & Eastern #CE43, 2020, www.countryandeastern.se

The improbable musical encounters between cultures from countries with very little in common are usually as surprising as they are fascinating, in the positive sense of the word.

This is the case with this brand new collaboration between Swedish saxophonist **Sten Källman**, a leading specialist in voodoo rhythms and melodies, and legendary Haitian percussionist **Sanba Zao** (**Louis Lesly Marcelin**), master drummer and a great ambassador of his country's roots music.

Totalling, together, 80 years of experience, these two musicians are each at the origin of several unmissable bands.

Sten Källman is a founding member of **Mizik Rasin** (Root Music), **Simbi**, and the equally superb **Amanda** vocal ensemble, whose repertoire includes many beautiful traditional Haitian songs.

As for the energetic and passionate **Sanba Zao**, founder of the *Retour à la Terre* movement in Haiti, he is also a member of **Lakou Mizik**, another group dedicated to the pure authenticity of the peasant and spiritual music of this resolutely unique, profound, and incredibly courageous country.

Mapou is considered a sacred tree in the religious tradition of voodoo, and this album embodies the fusion of Haitian ritual drums with traditional Swedish music. By allowing these rhythms and melodies to meet and marry, a new musical form emerges without sacrificing identity and originality.

Listening to the first notes, one is immediately struck by the diversity and quality of the warm sounds produced by the breath of the brass instruments and by the intensity of the many pairs of hands beating the skins of the sacred drums. The music is of unparalleled purity. It surprises, seduces and transports those who listen to it, in a beneficial and almost mystical trance after only a few bars, and this, throughout the album which includes ten tracks as beautiful and interesting as one another.

Completely instrumental, bringing together elements of traditional Haitian

and Scandinavian music as well as a few tracks signed by great Haitian composers (**Fabre Duroseau**, **Frantz Casseus**, **Hans W. Brimi**) and by **Sten Källman**, *Mapou* was recorded in Port-au-Prince as well as in Göteborg, where **Sten** lives. Among the fifteen musicians who took part in this beautiful adventure are **Sanba Zao's** two children as well as several members of **Simbi**. Bringing together, in a natural and perfect way, waltzes, carnival merengues, polkas, raras, and other ancestral rhythms from the West African past still very present among the Haitian people (**Kase Dawomen**, **Raboday**, **Double Nago**, **Yanvalou**, **Kongo**, **Dioumba**), this album, *Mapou*, perfectly represents the true notion of this wonderful reality embodied by what is called *World Music!*

P.-S. Those interested in this column will be delighted to discover **Simbi's** music as well as **Amanda's**. A small search, on **Google** or **YouTube**, should be enough!

LÉONORE

L'accordéon s'en fout!
Self-produced, 2020, LEO-0, leonore@videotron.ca

Although I grew up in France during the 1950s and 1960s and was fortunate enough to have parents who took me to see and hear the great names of *French Chanson*, **Piaf**, **Brassens**, **Barbara**, **Mouloudji**, **Reggiani**, **Catherine Sauvage**, **Juliette Gréco**, and **Jacques Brel** among many others, I don't claim to be a great connoisseur of the genre. Still, I was able to identify and refine my tastes by adding to my preferences, as I got older, artists such as **Jacques Hige-lin**, **Colette Magny**, **Léo Ferré**, **Dick Annegarn**, and other perfect imperfects of the genre.

The fact is that I was more interested in styles from other countries and continents such as folk, blues, jazz, psychedelic rock, and a lot of so-called ethnic music. All this to say that, even if I'm a bit elitist when it comes to *French Chanson*, I still know how to recognize a rare gem when it presents itself to my ears and my senses!

My friend, the talented Montreal accordionist **Luzio Altobelli** (Manouche,



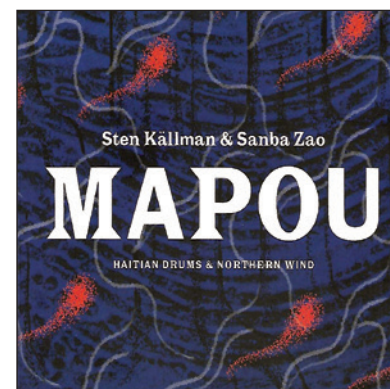
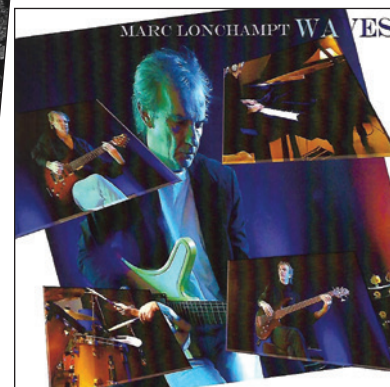
Sagapool, Ironico Orchestra), knocked on my door the other night around 9 p.m. with a big smile to hand me a black CD, saying Listen to this and tell me what you think! She was looking for an accordionist, she is totally unknown, she writes and composes in a really special way and she asked me to play on her album. Here's what we did together and I love it!

A few days later, I put the vaunted CD in my player, sat down and listened from the first to the last note while I read the texts of the thirteen songs in the booklet as **Léonore** interpreted them or recited them in her warm, deep, sometimes slightly nasal, but always sensual, voice.

Léonore, (**Monique Paquin** is her real name), is from Montreal and has absolutely nothing to do with *showbiz* or the profession in general. She composes, writes, plays the piano, and sings for her own pleasure and, perhaps, for that of her friends. In any case, she certainly must have listened to and loved some of the artists mentioned above. This can be heard and felt intensely in her way of doing things and in her way of being. It's all to her credit!

She expresses herself, rhymes, and tells stories in impeccable French, evoking images, sensations, and memories that many of us can identify with, and takes us into intimate legends, sometimes sensual, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes tinged with tasteful eroticism, titillating the imagination and distilling the pleasure of hearing our beautiful language used so brilliantly. Musically, it's solid.

Luzio Altobelli's omnipresent accordion shines with all its keys, **Vanessa Marcoux's** violin flies under her nimble fingers and **Gabriel Paquin-Buki** makes his clarinet sing in a bewitching way! Everything is done according to the rules of an art that we unfortunately hardly hear anymore, if at all, on the radio or even on stage. But, who knows, maybe, thanks to **Léonore's** very personal style of writing, composing, and singing, this mode of expression will take off again, provided, of course, that she accepts the challenge of taking to the stage and revealing her secrets to those who will want to hear her. In the meantime, there



is always *L'accordéon s'en fout* and that already a lot!

MARC LONCHAMPT

Waves
Self-produced, MLC2021, 2021, www.marclonchamp.fr

These are most difficult and tragic times caused by *Covid-19*. It could be argued that one of the few advantages of this confinement to which we must submit is that, for some of us, it brings us face to face with ourselves and leads us to dig and explore the infinite well of our inner creativity to extract the gems that are carefully hidden within!

That's exactly what the multi-instrumentalist from Marseille, **Marc Lonchamp**, did with this little gem called *Waves* recorded between February 2nd and June 1st 2020, in the middle of a pandemic, so... One has to admit that when you play guitar, keyboards, bass, drums admirably well, when you know how to record, mix, die-cut, and you're even a graphic designer, it helps, as they say! All this with talent, originality, lyricism and extraordinary precision. A total of twelve lively and vibrant compositions in addition to one, signed **John Coltrane!** Ah yes, there is even a *DVD* for those who also want to see the music!

JAZZ

By CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ

BRANDI DISTERHEFT

Surfboard
Factor/Justin Time

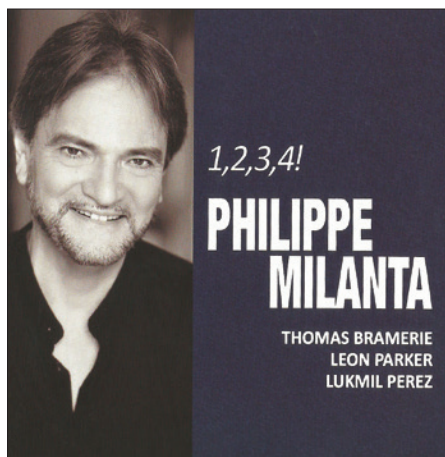
Oh, what a perfect new release to make you forget small everyday worries and the grayness of winter. By the talented Canadian double bassist, cellist and singer, *Surfboard*, as its title suggests, is an invitation to travel, to dreams, and to passion. With accents à la *Diana Krall*, but without the syrupy aspect, and why not, a nod to the late **Michel Legrand**, **Brandi** arrives in your living room with a breathtaking guest, tenor saxophonist **George Coleman**, once a road companion of trumpet player **Miles Davis**. As we talked about passion before, we might as well examine the various proposals offered to us, such as *My Foolish Heart* with its soft accents, with the shadow of **Duke Ellington's** star saxophonist, **Paul Gonsalves**, in the background. In the same register, *Prélude To Coup de foudre* means everything, while the real *Coup de foudre* is set to a nice samba tempo with, once again, our friend **George Coleman**. For the *swing* spirit, and that will reach a large audience, without however falling into facility, we strongly recommend the flagship track, *Surfboard* as well as a detour through Portugal with *Portrait of Porto*. It would be very difficult for us to overlook the wonderful work of pianist **Klauss Mueller**, a kind of emulation of the legendary **Oscar Peterson**. Without

being explosive, he cements from beginning to end the musicians' action, including those of **George Coleman**, who has heard many others. With great ease and a sure sense of precision, the double bassist offers you on a silver platter this little jewel that will make many happy, with a very comforting and honest *je ne sais quoi!*

PHILIPPE MILANTA

1, 2, 3, 4

Camille productions (import)
At the age of 57, Marseilles pianist and composer **Philippe Milanta** has an immense track record. In addition to winning the Académie du Jazz **Sydney Bechet** award in 1996 and the classical jazz award in 2015 with saxophonist **André Villéger**, he has played with saxophonists **Guy Lafitte**, **Jesse Davis**, guitarist **Barney Kessel** and singer **Cassandra Wilson**. For this highly visceral novelty, as the late **Jacques Languirand** would have put it, he surrounded himself with drummers **Leon Parker** and **Lukmil Perez** and double bassist **Thomas Bramerie**. Served by a close sound capture that gives even more intensity to his play, which is far from being



academic, Philippe Milanta explores universes while making reference to **Keith Jarrett** as well as **Bill Evans**, without forgetting *swing*, an essential component of the 15 tracks, almost all of them personal. Also noteworthy is the teamwork, as well as **Thomas Bramerie's** oh-so-captivating bass

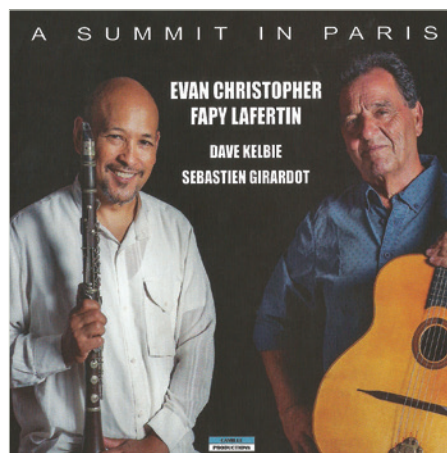
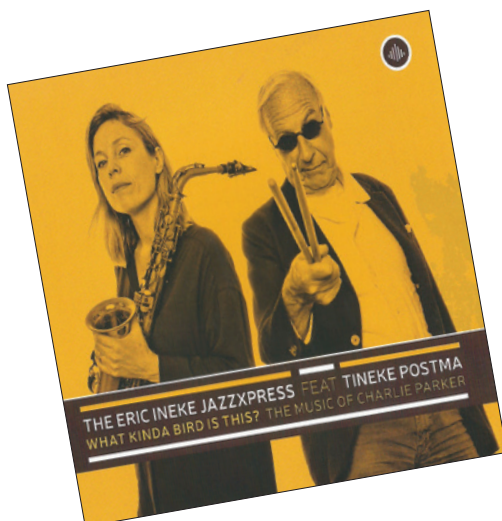
EVAN CHRISTOPHER FAPY LAFERTIN

A Summit In Paris
Camille productions (import)
The best things come in small packages according to the saying and, it is also the case for some record companies that work with passion on their recordings. Little known on this side of the Atlantic, clarinetist **Evan Christopher**, a specialist in Romani and Creole music, among others, revisits, with his accomplices, the worlds dear to **Django Reinhardt** and **Sydney Bechet**. Also featuring the brilliant Romani guitarist **Fapy Lafertin**, this Parisian reunion is all the more moving. Between the woody sound of the clarinet that touches your heart, **Fapy's** guitar that draws sinuous

and timeless lines, how spoiled we are! From *Wild Man Blues* to *Clair de Lune* to *After You've Gone*, this return in time is a solace, especially in times of confinement!

THE ERIC INEKE JAZZEXPRESS

What Kinda Bird Is This?
Challenge Records / Naxos
And we will conclude this column with a tribute to saxophonist **Charlie Parker**, with a detour to the Netherlands. For this muscular nod to the legendary bird, veteran drummer **Erik Ineke** called upon young violist **Tineke Postma**. On an entirely bop, as well as post-bop, backdrop, the sextet gives everything imaginable, and believe your columnist, you won't be disappointed. Without copying **Charlie Parker**, which is unthinkable, the saxophonist becomes inspiring and the drummer reminds us of the beautiful hours of the dynamic **Philly Joe Jones**.



PROGRESSIVE ROCK

By RICHARD GUAY

THE FLOWER KINGS

Islands

www.roinestolt.com; <https://www.facebook.com/TheFlowerKings/>

Roine Stolt's troupe continues its tireless quest for musical nirvana and offers us their fourteenth opus, and also its fifth double album, since their debut in 1995. Always surrounded by his close collaborators, **Hasse Fröberg** and **Jonas Reingold**, who emerged in the early years of the cult group's existence, **Stolt** demonstrates once again that he is still at the helm of the project that is closest to his heart. *Islands* is entirely in line with the quintet's releases since 2012. The preferred approach is to be more accessible than before and to focus more on much simpler structures. This time, we are entitled to a double album (it's been a long time) with 21 tracks equally divided between the two discs and totaling 96 min of pure bliss. The concept, which is difficult to define, is based on relatively short, enigmatic pieces with few links between them. The ensemble, which no longer has anything to do with the epic works of yesteryear, bets on a very symphonic progressive rock, much less spectacular and of which the melodic content takes up all the space. Forget the interminable instrumental excerpts and escapes bordering on experimentation. *Islands* offers a digestible and mature content, worthy of the best musicians on the planet. This album will not offer you the strong sensations of *Sum of No Evil* nor the level of sophistication of *Paradox*

Hotel. It's another balanced, solid and exceptionally refined **Flower Kings**. Decidedly, this band does not seem to be about to disappoint us!

AYREON

Transitus

www.arjenlucassen.com

Arjen Lucassen returns to us with **Ayreon**, his masterpiece. And this album, *Transitus*, marks not only the tenth opus in the series but also the 25th anniversary of *The Final Experiment* (1995), the record with which it all began. What better way to mark the event than a return to his roots? The last **Ayreons**, as we know, moved away from the first attempts by proposing music that became more symphonic, melodic and cerebral, a clear sign of evolution. The themes developed were complex and often referred to quantum physics or philosophy. However, a more or less successful move was made on *The Source* (2017), which disappointed more than one (including me) with its boosted prog metal style and rudimentary simplicity. This time, we are plunged directly back into the phantasmagorical universe of *Into the Electric Castle* (1998) with, on the one hand, an incursion into an unreal and science-fiction world, a universe that **Lucassen** has always been fond of, but above all, a similar musical packaging. It is as pompous, talkative and invasive as you could hope for! The extravagant instrumental passages are legion. An army of about

fifteen musicians was even called in as reinforcements. A narrator and multiple choristers add all the ambiance necessary to create a strange and disturbing atmosphere. The vocal arrangements are also noteworthy with medieval choruses and variations, one of which is very close to *Les Visiteurs's* musical theme. *Transitus* is not as successful as *Into the Electric Castle* but reprises all the same elements, making this double anniversary album a hyper entertaining and more than satisfying **Ayreon!**

WOBBLER

Dwellers of the Deep

<https://wobblers.bandcamp.com/album/dwellers-of-the-deep>

Three years after the exceptional *From Silence To Somewhere*, the Norwegian quintet returns with the same team and offers us their fifth opus, *Dwellers of the Deep*. If the first attempts were a bit conservative, which bothered me a bit, a personality of its own has been forged over the years, making the product more and more interesting. This is the case with *Dwellers of the Deep*, which offers, like *From Silence To Somewhere*, an evolved, solid and mature content that tells us unequivocally that this band improves significantly with each record. All the Norwegian creative potential is used to build, on a classical progressive structure, a complex, cerebral and disconcerting music, while remaining playful and accessible. The opus, unfortunately too short (45 min), offers only four tracks including an epic suite, *Merry Macabre*, which closes, in 19 short minutes, a flawless journey. Much less underground than its predecessors, *Dwellers of the Deep* relies more on elaborate arrangements, sophisticated harmonies, and omnipresent surprises to establish what becomes the best **Wobblers** in the series. And, as before, *Prestmo's* somewhat gloomy voice continues to be a great fit, especially with darker lyrics than usual. *Dwellers of the Deep* is likely to become

an absolute must for all progressive rock fans.

BERNARD & PÖRSTI (THE SAMURAI OF PROG)

La Tierra

<https://www.facebook.com/thesamuraiofprog/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsWG11wYeM>

The Samurai of Prog is an international trio that was formed in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s and includes American guitarist **Steve Unruh**, Finnish drummer **Kimmo Pörsti** and Italian-Finnish bassist **Marco Bernard**. The latter two, without disavowing **Samurai of Prog**, nor putting an end to it, took the initiative to produce works together, which is a lighter version of the original group. The experience seems to be positive, since just a few months after *Gulliver*, our two companions do it again by offering us *La Tierra* (the Earth, in Spanish). The international experience, where these artists' material is placed, thus continues here by proposing a lyrical content mostly composed in the language of **Don Quixote**, although some Italian passages are included. Spanish-speaking singer **Ariane Valdivié** honors this new initiative by gratifying us with her celestial and bewitching voice, giving life to a work of Hispanic literature, knowing that this kind of concept particularly appeals to **Marco Bernard**. The previous album was rather a cross-over and relatively accessible, with a musical content that was not too exotic and English and Italian lyrics. This one is much more classic and even flirts very closely with a mixed Italian-Spanish *RPI*. The Spanish texts are surprising at first, but will soon seduce us. And as usual, a symphonic orchestra and a pleiad of musicians and choristers complete the gentle complexity of an ensemble already carved out with skill and precision. This album is sure to give you a damn good time!



What's New?

**Never, never in a million years... and yet,
one can always change their mind!**

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Given the popularity of vinyl turntables, renowned Norwegian manufacturer **Hegel** has just released a phono preamplifier. Drawing on some 30 years of experience in discrete transistor circuit production, **Hegel** designed the **V10** with the goal of amplifying the analog signal contained in a microgroove as faithfully as possible..

The **Hegel V10** phono preamplifier's chassis includes a large compartment installed between the *DC* voltage supply circuits and the signal processing circuits, which are highly sensitive to interference. In order to reduce interference as much as possible, and for cost-related reasons, **Hegel** decided to keep the transformer outside the housing. It is a wall-mounted type and was designed specifically for the **V10**. It only supports the transformation of alternating current.

On the *MM/MC* input stages, the signal passes through very low noise *JFET* transistors. Each channel has a series of micro-switches to adjust capacitance and impedance to any type of *MM* or *MC* phono cell. The gain can also be increased by 5, 10 or 12 dB to match that of other music sources.

The output is provided by fully discrete operational amplifiers based on bipolar transistors. The *RCA/XLR* connectors at the rear are all gold-plated, while the left and right channels are processed individually.



The **Hegel V10** has now been available in authorized stores since late February 2021. The suggested retail price is \$ 1,750.

For more information, simply click on the manufacturer's link hegel.com or call 905.947.9229.



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