

# TED

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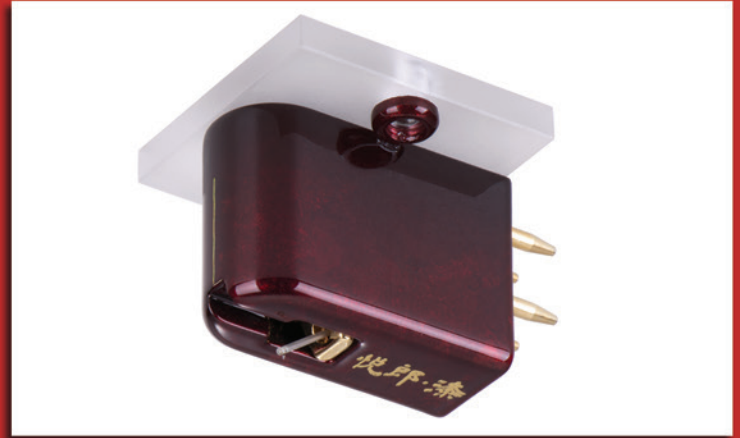
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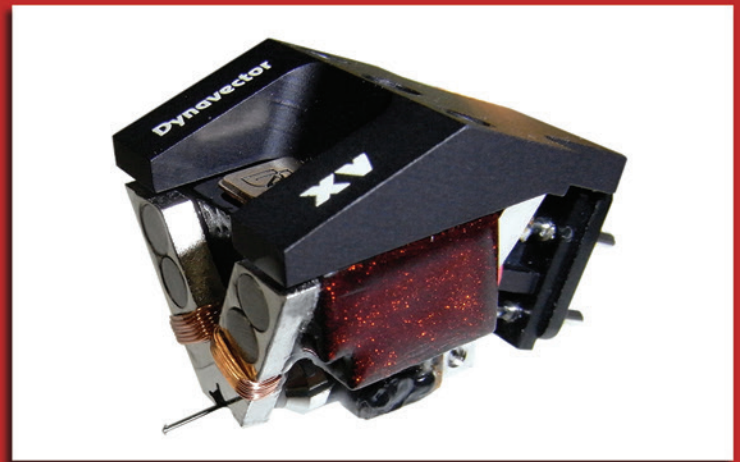
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# Taking the time

To all of you, dear readers, a warm hello! Not that I'm leaving to go anywhere, but, well, eventually a good vacation time, short or long, would not be *refused*, but, here it is, for the moment – work obliges!

I'm sharing with you a few points from an article published by **Sonia Lupien**, Ph.D., researcher, author, and speaker, regarding *Happy People* – which is also the title of an article published on her blog in October 2017.

The article focuses on the behaviour of happy people and the undeniable effect of their happiness on others. Kindness and humour create positive effects on those around us. Remember a clerk who serves you in a kind, friendly and cheerful manner, and recall the feeling that came over you as a result of that encounter, no matter how short it was. You felt, without a doubt, less stressed even though you still had a lot to do. I share with you the hyperlink, because there is food for thought for everyone... <https://sonialupien.com/les-gens-heureux/>.

A smile, an act of kindness, all this has an impact, more often than not, very positive. Ms. **Lupien** emphasizes 4 points: *happiness is contagious; happy people are not shy; happiness creates interference and happy people waste our time*. She explains that the difference is that happy people have learned to *take the time* to create a positive interaction with others.

In order to interact with you, albeit virtually, our reviewers took the time to talk about the fun they had with various devices such as the **Bowers & Wilkins P15** wireless headphones, the **Conrad-Johnson HVA-1** headphone amplifier, the **Copland CSA-100** integrated amplifier, the new **Oracle Audio PH100 MKIII** phono preamp, two network players including the **Arcam Uno Solo** and the **iFi Audio Zen Streamer**, not to mention the **Thorens 402DD** vinyl turntable.

It's up to you to choose which topic you'll start reading about! All of these devices meet a need for many of you, not to mention that one of these devices could possibly become a gift for any anniversary. Who knows!?

What I do know is that any of these devices is worth reading the review it was given, and you may smile at the time it takes you to read the article.

I wish you to *take the time*, to make the decision to *be happy* – no matter what tasks you have to accomplish. You have to give yourself permission to take the time. In any case, you will get an undeniable well-being. Treat yourself, you deserve it!

As the *Holiday Season* is slowly creeping up on us, the **Magazine TED** and I are wishing you the Best of Times for this season and its vacation time permitting some well-deserved leisure time and occasion to reflect on how to be your *Best self!*

Beauchamp



# CLASSICAL MUSIC

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS

## FEATURING

### JAN LISIECKI FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Complete Nocturnes

DG, 2 CD, 486 0761

Interpretation: \*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

Canadian pianist **Jan Lisiecki**, now 26, already has quite a track record, including a recording of the complete **Beethoven Piano Concertos** for DG in place of **Murray Perahia**. These *Nocturnes* are **Lisiecki's** pandemic recording (Fall 2020). But the reflection has gone nowhere with two main evident problems. The first is acoustic: rarely have *Nocturnes* been so luminous. The piano is hard, captured up close with shimmering, snapping high notes. All of this is anti-atmospheric in the worst possible way. The second is aesthetic. **Chopin's** music is played with rubato. The rubato is this way of breathing in the phrases so that they are not mechanical or metronomic. The rubato must be organic, natural. Now, with **Lisiecki**, it is organized and calculated, in the kind of *attention, little moment of suspense, I'll give you the note*. A **Chopin** in the style of a road signaller, so to speak.

### ALAIN PLANÈS (Pleyel piano, 1836) FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Complete Nocturnes

Harmonia Mundi, 2 CDs, HMM 9053 3233.

Interpretation: \*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

The disappointment of listening to **Jan Lisiecki's** *Nocturnes* leads us to briefly evoke this other release of the summer of 2021, since from the *Nocturne op. 9 No. 1* the difference between a *breathed* music (**Planès**) and the premeditated effects of **Lisiecki** bursts out. The object of this **Planès** recording, however, is the instrument, an old **Pleyel** from the composer's time. Even if we love old instruments and copies of old ones

(see the **Brahms-Schiff** album), there is a *museum-like* quality to the music here. A very musical integral, but for inveterate lovers of old pianos. The references for the *Nocturnes* remain **Claudio Arrau**, **Pascal Amoyel** and **Ivan Moravec**.

## RECORD OF THE MONTH

### KRYSTIAN ZIMMERMAN LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Complete piano concertos  
London Symphony Orchestra –  
Simmon Rattle

DG, 3 CD, 483 9971

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

At least in terms of the attention generated, this is the must have release for summer 2021. Polish pianist **Krystian Zimmerman**, who is very rare on recordings, does not speak for nothing. This complete set of **Beethoven's** concertos, concocted in December 2020 in London, without an audience, was first broadcast on video. **Simon Rattle**, the conductor, is in his third complete work, after **Brendel** in Vienna and **Uchida** in Berlin. The distance of the musicians gives his accompaniment a welcome transparency compared to the more cottony sound of Berlin and the poorly captured sound of Vienna. **Zimmerman** returns to Beethoven 30 years after his complete works with **Leonard Bernstein**. These new versions have that extra zest of liveliness that goes well with the finer textures of the accompaniment. It is a complete work in which the piano is in the forefront, musically and acoustically. To take

advantage of this, one must grasp the micro-details by which **Zimmerman** revives or inflects the discourse. It is better to already know the concertos. For this, **Kovacevich-Davis** (**Decca**) and **Bronfman-Zinman** (**Sony**) are models. **Uchida-Sanderling** and **Schiff-Haitink** offer a *grand style* vision, while **Helmchen-Manze** are the modern reference. Here we listen to the piano, again and again. And we don't get tired of it.

## SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH

### HEINRICH ISAAC

Missa Wohlauft gut Gsell von hinnen.  
Cinquecento.

Hyperion, CD 68,337.

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*\*

The name **Heinrich Isaac** (c. 1450–1517) is not unfamiliar to those who have succumbed to one of the most beautiful records of **Jordi Savall's** career, *Carlos V* (Music at the time of **Charles V**). The latter was already a small miracle of sound recording. The **Cinquecento** Vocal Ensemble records here a 40-minute *Mass* by **Isaac**, coupled with *Motets* by **Josquin Desprez** (c. 1440–1521), his great rival in the field of Franco-Flemish polyphony. **Isaac** was Flemish who made his career mainly in Italy, and this sumptuous *Mass* was composed in Florence for the Medici. The interpretation, of perfect intelligence and beauty, is set in an ideal sound framework. The acoustic keyword in this repertoire is

*reverberation*. This recording made in Austria in January 2020 by **Markus Wallner** finds the exact balance between precision of musical lines, beauty of voices and a sacred atmosphere that does not dilute the sound and the message. A miracle in every respect, for lovers of austere, but bewitching music.

## THE BOX SET OF THE MONTH

### ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Complete Recordings on Deutsche  
Grammophon

DG, 55 CDs, 483 9948.

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

**Universal** has been publishing cubes for over a decade. This one, unexpected but very useful, dedicated to the **Orpheus** New York chamber orchestra, allows to cover a repertoire that this type of editions, usually dedicated to soloists and conductors, does not document. **Orpheus** was formed in 1972 as an orchestra without a conductor. For **DG**, **Orpheus** covered a type of repertoire that, for **Phillips** and **Decca**, was handled by the **Academy of St Martin in the Fields** and **Neville Marriner**. What this cube reveals is the extent of the legacy and the consistency of its quality. **Orpheus** had to prove that the very original concept of a democratic orchestra without a conductor worked with the same acuity. From there, chiselled interpretations in a very vast repertoire, from **Handel** to **Bartók**, through **Haydn** and the great classics (**Dvorak's** *Serenades* for example).



**Orpheus** has also partnered with soloists for their recordings of repertoire that does not require large forces, from **Misha Maïski** in *Vivaldi* to **Jan Lisiecki** in *Mendelssohn*. A refreshing box set.



### REMASTERING OF THE MONTH

#### KARAJAN SIBELIUS

Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon.

DG, 5 CDs and 1 Blu-ray 486 0651.

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

The importance of **Herbert von Karajan** for the universal dissemination of **Sibelius's** music cannot be overstated. The composer understood this, even though his music was denigrated by many intellectuals in the German-speaking world. **Karajan** recorded **Sibelius** as early as the 1950s and was a reference, with a predilection for *Symphonies No. 4 and 5*. His most famous recordings are the *Symphonies No. 4, 5, 6 and 7* the *Violin Concerto* with **Christian Ferras** and symphonic poems in the 1960s for **DG**. This legacy is gathered here in a remastered box set. There are also the digital *remakes* of symphonic poems from the 1980s and, most importantly, a *Blu-ray* in 24 bit/192 kHz stereo, 5.1 24 bit/96 kHz and **Dolby Atmos** 24 bit/48 kHz analogue tapes.

Even if the previous editions were quite decent, one must underline the very scrupulous work of the engineers, who had already worked miracles on the *Symphonies Bruckner*, who give even more substance (well-drawn bass) and flesh to these reference documents (the *5th Symphony!*). If you can enjoy listening to the *Blu-ray*, this is a benchmark edition even though all the captures are over 50 years old.



### DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

#### PHILIPP FAHRBACH

Waltzes – Marches – Polkas  
Nürnberger Symphoniker, Christian Simonis.

CPO, 555 179-2.

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

Even if you are a fan of Viennese music, you have probably never heard of **Philipp Fahrbach**. Moreover, they are two with the same first name, like **Johann Strauss** the father and the son. This disc thus brings back to the repertoire the music of **Philipp Fahrbach Senior** (1815 – 1885) and **Junior** (1843 – 1894). They too are Viennese and one really wonders, after hearing 65 minutes of their music, how they could be so forgotten. Waltzes, marches and polkas are of the highest quality and we thank conductor **Christian Simonis** for having examined the legacy with a judicious selection of 14 works, because, as we learn from the notice (in German and English), **Fahrbach** the father is the head of a catalogue of 700 scores and his son composed more than 500. These musicians deserve to be included in the repertoire of the next *Viennese New Year's Concerts*.

### DVD OF THE MONTH

#### BARBE-BLEUE

Three act opéra bouffe by Jacques Offenbach.

Conductor: Michele Spotti. Direction: Laurent Pelly. Opéra de Lyon, 2019.

Opus Arte, OABD, 7290D.

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

Any show dedicated to **Offenbach** and directed by **Laurent Pelly** must be mentioned since the fabulous *Belle Hélène at the Châtelet* two decades ago. The work chosen here, *Barbe-Bleue* (1866), based on **Perreault's** tale, is far less renowned, as it is **Pelly's** eleventh



**Offenbach** production, and he masters all the workings of his universe and revels in his absurdist comedy. There is plenty to do in *Barbe-Bleue*, which contrasts princely and rural environments, with the prince and princess dressed as peasants. The principle of **Pelly** and his dramaturge **Agathe Mélinand** in **Offenbach** is to modernize the show with modern references (reality TV, gossip magazines). But wasn't **Offenbach** himself making fun of the material he was diverting? With him, **Bluebeard's** women are not murdered, but put to sleep and hidden by an alchemist. This *DVD* of a well-oiled and rhythmic work is also a last appearance of the tenor **Yann Beuron**, ideal in this repertoire and perfect **Bluebeard**, who stopped his career in June 2020 at 52 years old. Funny *DVD* for fans of the composer. From the sound point of view, the link between the orchestra and the stage is a little distended.



### NEW RELEASES

#### DEBUSSY AND FRANCK

Sonates pour violon et piano. + Szymanowski: Mythes.

Marie Bégin (violin), Samuel Blanchette Gagnon (piano).

Atma, ACD2, 2850

Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*

**Marie Bégin** is a new name to remember in the concert of local violinists. She

is associated, in this disc, with the *Prix d'Europe 2019* pianist. While the talent is certainly documented, the manner in which it is documented is questionable. It is doubtful that **Marie Bégin** would have attracted attention at the recent *Isaac Stern Competition* in Shanghai with such a tense and metallic sound. Did they have to make the trip to **Domaine Forget** and record in one of the most beautiful venues in Canada to get *this* out? *This* is a capture mixing the space of the place and instruments captured from too close. Results: the above-mentioned hardness with the very notable breaths of the soloist. The sound recordist (and art director and editor) is **Clément Goulet**. We don't know if he is happy with his work. In short, **Marie Bégin** is a talent to follow, and for **Debussy and Franck** on disc, we are left with **Dumay-Collard** (**Warner**) and **Chung-Lupu** (**Decca**).



#### RICHARD STRAUSS

Eine Alpensinfonie.

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Jurowski

Pentatone, SACD, PTC, 5186 802.

Interpretation: \*\*\*

Technique: \*\*

Doesn't an *Alpensymphony* by **Jurowski** already exist? It does, recorded in London in April 2016 and released in 2018 on **LPO** label. The usefulness of doing a repeat performance in Berlin in 2019, with another publisher, could be the multi-channel *SACD* format. But what do we hear? An interpretation without the London impetus and, above all, a sound recording (the sinews of war in the *Alpensymphonie*, the most spectacular work of all), of the banal type of recording for radio broadcasting, with an orchestral image that is coherent but dull, without air, without *punch* and without soul. To be avoided in spite of the poster.





**BOWERS & WILKINS P15** WIRELESS IN-EAR HEADPHONES

# QUALITY AND COMFORT ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY!

By DEBBIE HOULE

For this review, I had the pleasure of testing the new **Bowers & Wilkins** True Wireless *P15* in-ear earphones. This is one of two new models for the average person who wants a great music experience and a taste of high-end headphone performance. The *P15* model, offers noise reduction and integrates seamlessly with smart phones, *iPads*, computers, etc. The *P15s* are primarily intended for music listening, but can also be easily used for remote work. They will become indispensable work companions when connecting with **Zoom**, **Teams** or **Messenger** software. They will be very useful for watching videos and taking phone calls while on the go. Will the **Bower & Wilkins** *P15* be up to the tasks that await them on a daily basis? Let's take the time to discover their multiple talents.



**Bower & Wilkins** is a legendary speaker and headphone manufacturer. A veritable university of acoustic research, **Bower & Wilkins** is one of the world's leading designers of loudspeakers and headphones, investing in research and development. It will be very interesting to see and hear what the Worthing-based manufacturer's engineers have in store for us with the *P15*. These wireless in-ear headphones target the market of music lovers who want a quality product. In this market, the competition is tough with the *AirPods Pro*, **Bose QC Earbuds**, **Sennheiser Momentum**, **Sony WF-1000Xm3** and the **Jabra 85T** among others. **Bower & Wilkins** has come up with its version of the high-quality *Bluetooth* wireless headset. These are well worth a look, as they incorporate many interesting technical features.

#### Technical Description

The **Bower & Wilkins P15** are a true miniaturization gem. They feature *True Wireless* technology for a stable and reliable connection between the two headsets. The *P15* is, of course, equipped with the latest *Bluetooth APTX 5.0* technology from **Qualcomm**. This allows a quick coupling with all compatible devices and guarantees a high quality transmission. The *P15* in-ear headphones also incorporate advanced adaptive noise reduction technology. This will adapt the type of noise reduction to your sound environment, ensuring that you always have the right type of noise reduction. For example, the *P15* will be able to let conversations pass through, allowing you to hear them clearly, without having to turn down the volume of your music. Thanks to its sophisticated sensors, the *P15* will be able to pause your music the moment you take it out of your ear. Settings for these advanced features are accessible via an app available for *Android* or *iOS*.

**Bower & Wilkins** headphones come with a clever little storage case that acts as a wireless charger by simply placing them inside. When you get home, just plug in the storage box to recharge. Under normal conditions, the case will be good to provide about twenty hours of charge to the headphones. The *P15* is equipped with four microphones to capture all the surrounding noises, but



above all, to perfectly capture your voice during a telephone conversation. In terms of sound quality, the *P15s* are equipped with high-quality 9.2 mm drivers to achieve good bass despite the small size of the headphones. The **Bower & Wilkins P15** have multi-function controls on each earpiece. These allow you to take a call, activate the voice assistant and change songs.

#### Unpacking and Installation

The in-ear monitors are nice and solid, which is what you'd expect from a company like **Bower & Wilkins**. The company name, engraved in the metal, reflects a classic *look*. The earphones come with three sizes of ear tips: small, medium and large. The charging case, which is rather high up, comes in a shape that I like, easy to find in our pockets, bags, etc. However, I would have liked the top hinge to give a better impression of solidity, to be proofed against **Debbie's** use. The installation, on *Android* and **Apple** devices via *Bluetooth*, is easily done by pressing the small button in the box that connects them. I also installed the **Bower & Wilkins Headphones** app from the **Google Store** for my **Samsung S10 Android** phone as well as the one for my *iPad* from the

**AppleAPP Store**. A small light on the front of the rechargeable case indicates the status with the colour yellow, green, red or blue. The listening time is about four hours. However, with a 15-minute break in the charge box, you can go up to about 6 hours, which was usually good enough for me. The multi-function buttons on the headphones are beautifully practical and quite intuitive in their use. In my opinion, the only thing missing is a volume control, because as I moved around, I had to redirect to my mobile device, to adjust the volume, when necessary. Sometimes, in order to better appreciate certain pieces of music, increasing the volume level is really essential.

#### Listening Impressions

The first thing I noticed, to my great pleasure, during my very first listening, was the excellent bass presence. The sound is soft and pleasant without being aggressive and the layering of the sound planes is definitely present. The separation between left and right is very well controlled. The rendition of the instruments and voices are excellent, allowing you to lose yourself in the music. My first choice for *streaming* music is **Tidal**, and has been since the very beginning of the platform. There is everything and the



« The first thing I noticed, to my great pleasure, during my very first listening, was the excellent bass presence. [...] When listening takes you completely elsewhere, this is an excellent indicator of listening quality. These **Bower & Wilkins P15** headphones pulled off this magic trick with flying colours. Listening to the theme from *Schindler's List*, transported me to where I saw the little girl in the red coat walking alone in the chaos. »

format I listen to is either *Master* when available, or *hi-fi*. I really listen to everything according to my taste of the moment or discoveries like the *360 Audio Reality* of **Tidal** with **Doja Cat**. What a pleasure in the morning, while enjoying my coffee outside, to listen to a *playlist* of 31 songs. Named *Acoustic Pop Song*, this one was kindly shared with me by my spouse. Some artists including **Ed Sheeran, James Arthur, Tom Walker, Dua Lipa, Rag'n Bone Man, Offenbach, Kyge/Conrad Sewell, Seal**. I was having trouble concentrating because the music was drawing me in, gently calling me to fly away. When listening takes you completely elsewhere, this is an excellent indicator of listening quality. These **Bower & Wilkins P15** headphones

pulled off this magic trick with flying colours. Listening to the theme from *Schindler's List*, transported me to where I saw the little girl in the red coat walking alone in the chaos. **Itzhak Perlman's** violin literally made my heart cry.

**Yo-Yo Ma** and his instrument in Gabriel's Oboe from the film *The Mission*, also transported me elsewhere, provoking yet another writing pause. The excellent music of **Denis Villeneuve's** film *Arrival*, by the late composer **Johan Johannsson**, immediately evoked the image of the ship in the field.

Abrupt change of mood, we go to *Uprising* by **Muse**, a piece that literally made me dance on my chair, while moving my head to the rhythm of the music. **Billie Eilish**, whom I like very much with *Therefore I Am* from her album *Happier than Ever*, allowed me to appreciate her voice with all its sensuality and subtlety. And what about the bass on this piece? Oh how I love the bass! I was very happy that my ears and the in-ears survived **James Blake's** *Limit to Your Love*. This song made some representatives shudder when listening with speakers.

I could talk for hours about my listening experience with the **Bowers & Wilkins P15**. I listened to a little bit of everything, from classical to *metal*. I wore them for so long, I had to do a quick 15-minute charge so I could keep using them for another two hours.





### Other Than the Music...

In addition to music, I have to talk about other uses. I have had several video conference meetings using software such as **Zoom**, **Messenger**, etc., and I particularly appreciated not being *tied to a wire* and the excellent sound quality, both when I was talking and listening.

I also watched movies and shows that aired on *Netflix*, *Crave* and **Amazon Prime**. The **Bowers & Wilkins PI5** headphones performed with panache in many of my everyday situations.

### Conclusion

A quick review of these in-ear headphones. I like the sound, comfort, construction and

quality. Everything is done easily, from the installation to control with the buttons on the top. I enjoyed listening to the music so much that I had to recharge them to continue. In these somewhat difficult times, they transported me elsewhere for long hours. Thank you **Bowers & Wilkins!**

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$329

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

Manufacturer: Bowers & Wilkins,  
[www.bowerswilkins.com](http://www.bowerswilkins.com)

### Mediagraphy

Tidal Master and Tidal HiFi



CONRAD-JOHNSON HVA-1 HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER

# AN IMPRESSIVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

In this magazine's pages, I have already had the opportunity to test the **Conrad-Johnson ART27A** amplifier, gratefully, which was a first for me with this American manufacturer. The **ART27A** is an exceptional tube stereo unit that is produced as a limited series and distributed among a selection of **Conrad-Johnson** dealers worldwide. What I am now being offered is to test another exceptional product, the **HVA-1**, which is the first and only headphone amplifier in the **Conrad-Johnson** catalogue.

The **HVA-1**'s circuits are based on those of the **GA**, which is the pinnacle of this manufacturer's preamplifiers.

The **HVA-1** is exceptional in the sense that

**Conrad-Johnson** never does things like anyone else, and that's what I invite you to discover in this article.







« This duo is presented to us in a recording of a confusing naturalness. The *HVA-1* gives me a piano that floats majestically in and around my head. All the colours of **Tomatito's** flamenco guitar are rigorously reproduced. [...] I can perfectly hear the metallic sound of the strings and the plucking and sliding of the guitarist's fingers on the neck. This flamenco virtuoso's speed of execution is totally highlighted by the *HVA-1*, which does not flinch when it comes to following such a musician's performance. »

### Physical Description

In the spring of 2019, **Conrad-Johnson** announced the *HVA-1's* release. When unpacking this amplifier, I discover an imposing device of which the front, top and sides are machined from thick metal plates with a finely brushed and anodized black finish. These plates are held securely to the rest of the housing by several *Allen* screws with hollow heads.

Its dimensions, for such a device, are generous with a depth of 42.5 cm, a width of 25 cm and a height of 11.5 cm including the legs. Its weight of almost 9 kg really makes me feel like I'm dealing with a good built-in amplifier of at least 50 W per channel, if not more.

The front end of the *HVA-1* is finished in the champagne colour that has been a hallmark of the brand since its inception in the mid-1970s. This face is very uncluttered with on the left, a selector button for the two line inputs located at the back of the device. Then there is the 6.35 mm *jack* headphone output on a professional type self-locking connector. In the centre, there is the volume control button and on the far right, the power button. That's all there is to it!

The back of the unit is equally sleek, with the *IEC* receptacle to hide the power cord. The receptacle also serves as a master switch and fuse holder. In addition to this fuse, there are six others scattered throughout the main circuit board for maximum protection of electronic components. Both line inputs

are on good quality gold-plated *RCA* connectors. Amateurs of *VU* meters, variable gain output, digital-to-analogue conversion and/or remote controls will have to reconsider, as the *HVA-1's* functions are reduced to the essentials. Gone too are the *XLR* connectors, because, to my knowledge, this manufacturer has never proposed balanced circuits on its devices, and this, in 46 years. In short, the *HVA-1* headphone amplifier is the result of a purist approach, and **Conrad-Johnson's** philosophy has always been to simplify the signal path as much as possible by inserting the highest quality parts when necessary.

### The Inside of the Beast

The *HVA-1* is described by its manufacturer as a reference headphone amplifier. For proof of this, just take a look inside the *HVA-1* to discover a plethora, not to say a profusion, of the highest quality electronics. *Nichicon* capacitors, in-house-made *CJD Teflon* capacitors and *Vishay* resistors are even used on the volume control which is also in-house-made. The latter is mounted from a string of *Vishay* resistors welded in a star shape around the central hub.

The voltage gain stage of the *HVA-1* is based on two 6922 triode lamps which operate in *SET* mode (**S**ingle **E**nded **T**riode), therefore in pure class A. These lamps are followed by a high-current buffer stage composed of three *FET* transistors (**F**ield **E**ffect **T**ransistor) per channel. The latter are each mounted on their

## CONRAD-JOHNSON HVA-1 HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER

own cooling fin block, and the whole is powered by two good toroidal transformers. One of the two transformers is smaller than the other, but I can't see exactly which section it feeds. Each channel is completely independent and equipped with its own DC regulator.

Even though the *HVA-1* is only rated at 3 W per channel on an impedance of 20 ohms, this power is amply sufficient to power just about any headphones on the market. As these watts are pure class A, they give off a lot of heat, hence the importance of the generous dimensions of the device that are necessary to evacuate all these calories as well as those of the buffer stage. In this regard, the manufacturer recommends that the unit be allowed to warm up for at least one hour to reach the ideal operating temperature.

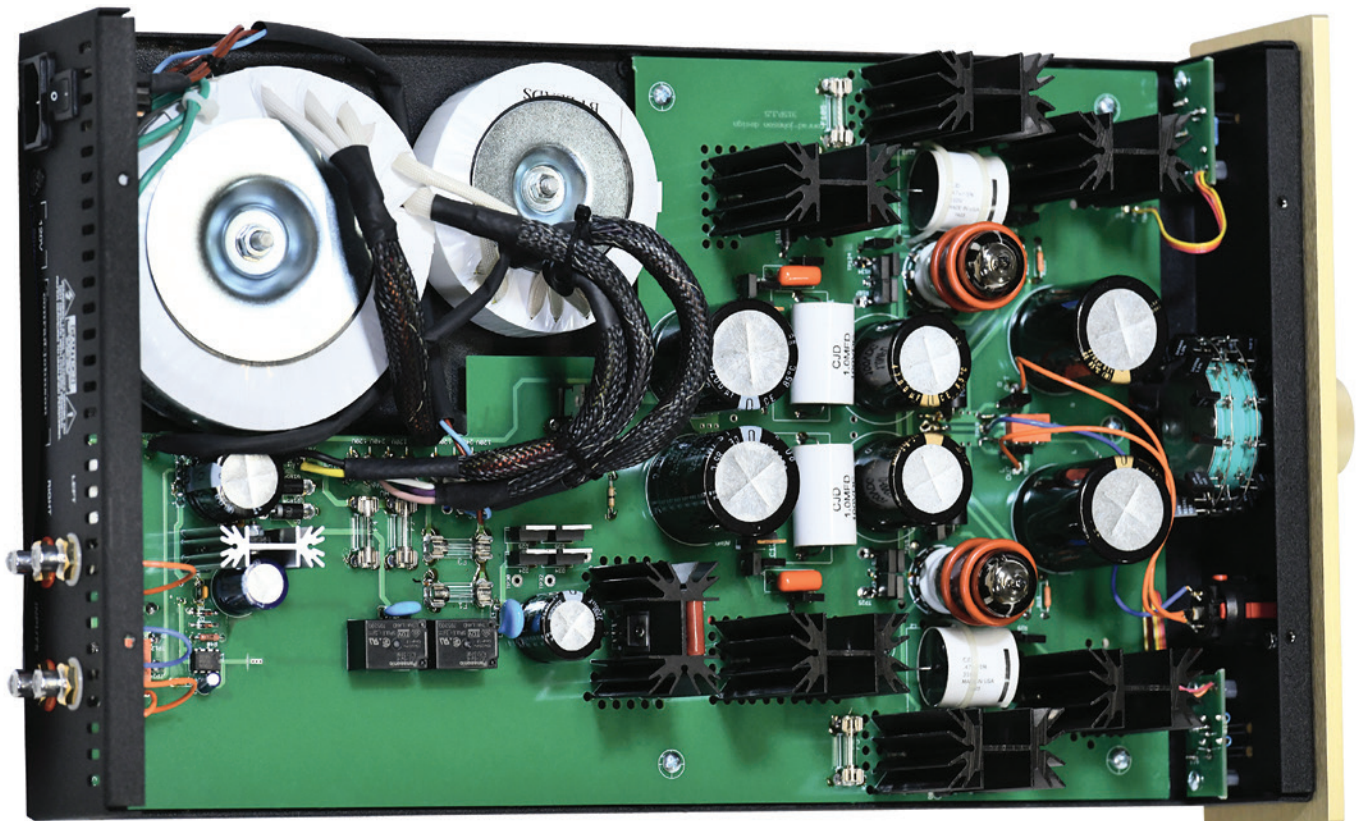
### Installation and Usage Tips

I installed the *HVA-1* on my work desk in the basement right next to my *iMac* computer. The latter contains the heart of the *ROON* playback software that gives me access to all the music stored on my *Ethernet* network as well as on my **CeolBOX** music server. Between my computer and the *HVA-1* amplifier, the digital-to-analogue conversion was done using an external converter that I still had in residence for another test bench. The headphones used are **HiFiMan Sundara**, **Grado RS2**, **Sennheiser Momentum** as well as **Martin Logan** in-ear headphones. Importantly, the volume control has only twelve detented positions reducing the fine adjustment of the listening level. As each album has its own ideal listening level, it is possible

that on some of them and depending on the sensitivity of your headphones, the transition from one level to the other is a little too abrupt. This makes it more difficult to fine-tune the listening level. However, this small inconvenience became less annoying with the **HiFiMan Sundara** which is more power hungry and my *ROON* playback software which has its own volume control. I was able to adjust the listening level to my liking. My recommendation would be to use it with high-profile headphone models with low sensitivity. Nor should you skimp on the quality of the sources with which it is associated.

### Conrad + Johnson = Music

I started listening with **Dominique Fils-Aimé's** first album, *Nameless*. This record, along with those of his other two albums, is pure happiness. Needless to say, with all the resources that went into making the *HVA-1*, it is virtually impossible for this amplifier to *play* badly. This is indeed the case with sweet music that invades my ears and is immeasurably beautiful. It is certain that listening to headphones is more immersive than with speakers, because you are in a bubble isolated from ambient noise. But the *HVA-1* really makes me feel like I'm hearing more of the minute details that put us right into the heart of a recording. Ms. **Fils-Aimé** sings close to the microphone, so the slightest vocal inflections and all the little sounds from her mouth are transmitted to me precisely, but without the exaggerated sibilant notes. I can hear precisely that drummer **Laurent Saint-Pierre** uses his hands to hit the skins of his drums with a frank and dry impact. For his part, **Jacques Roy's**







double bass maintains its roundness and the woody character of its resonance box. With the *HVA-1*, one is immediately seduced by a rich, full and complete sound. Its tonal balance borders on perfection and is most satisfactory. Its level of transparency gives me good ventilation between the singer and the different instruments. This clarity is directly dependent on the quality of the associated equipment.

I continue with *Spain Forever* by jazz pianist **Michel Camilo** and guitarist **Tomatito**. This duo is presented to us in a recording of a confusing naturalness. The *HVA-1* gives me a piano that floats majestically in and around my head. All the colours of **Tomatito's** flamenco guitar are rigorously reproduced. This Spanish guitar differs somewhat from its classical counterpart in its finesse and lightness. I can perfectly hear the metallic sound of the strings and the plucking and sliding of the guitarist's fingers on the neck. This flamenco virtuoso's speed of execution is totally highlighted by the *HVA-1*, which does not flinch when it comes to following such a musician's performance.

I complement my listening with music by **Sohn**, a British musician, composer and producer. On his album *Rennen*, electronic keyboards, *drum machine* and drums are in place for music that could be described as *Indie Electronic*. The *HVA-1* follows this

syncopated music with all the speed and power necessary to honour it. Although its design is based on a conventional approach to tube circuits and analogue signals, this does not mean that the *HVA-1* is not capable of reproducing current music and digital recordings. It is fast, limpid and its level of neutrality does not come at the expense of a certain organic side that makes the performers more human, perhaps even more carnal. In this regard, I believe that its hybrid design gives us the best of both worlds between thermionic and semiconductor technology.

#### Conclusion

The **Conrad-Johnson HVA-1** is the most seriously built headphone amplifier of them all. It doesn't claim to be the Swiss Army knife of headphone listening, but what it does, it does extremely well. Its uncompromising construction, as far as sound is concerned, makes it not the only one in its price category. On the other hand, it will undoubtedly compete with some devices much better equipped in terms of connectivity and functions. However, it must be considered as a niche device for a clientele loyal to the **Conrad-Johnson** brand. Some will criticize its limited features while others will simply listen to it and buy it outright. As for me, I have been under the spell of the

*HVA-1* which sticks to what it does best, that is to say reproducing as faithfully as possible an analogue signal which it magically transforms into a musical performance. Its level of transparency and neutrality allowed me to hear every nuance of each recording perfectly. This device offers only happy moments of listening pleasure.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$9,999

Warranty: 3 years parts and labour – except for tube replacement

Distributor: Atoll Electronics Canada,  
Tel: 438.380.8906, [www.atoll-electronique.ca](http://www.atoll-electronique.ca)

#### Mediagraphy

Sohn, *Rennen*, 4AD, FLAC, 16 bits/44.1 kHz

Dominique Fils-Aimée, *Nameless*, Ensoul Records

Michel Camilo & Tomatito, *Spain Forever*, Universal, 0602557025583

Monoswezi, *Monoswezi Yanga*, TUGCD1090

Youn Sun Nah, *She Moves On*, ACT FLAC, 24 bits/96 kHz

#### REMERCIEMENTS

The editorial team sincerely thanks **Atoll Electronics Canada** and **Mario Gagnon** for lending the device for the duration of the test bench.

# A BEAUTIFUL REUNION WITH THIS BRAND

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

From 1993 until about 2006, I owned devices by Danish manufacturer **Copland**. It was then the *CSA 14* integrated amplifier and the *CDA 277* player. I had chosen them for their sound and the quality of their manufacture. The **Copland** brand was founded in 1980 and was first known as a manufacturer of tube amplifiers. Hybrid models (tubes/transistors) appeared around 1993, of which the *CSA 14* integrated amplifier that I had acquired as soon as it came on the market. Since then, other models have appeared despite the fact that Copland does not launch a new device very often. When this happens, the announcement is made without fanfare and becomes an event for the brand's fans. What was offered to me today is to test the *CSA 100* integrated amplifier which is part of this manufacturer's latest generation of integrated amplifiers. Together we will be able to see if the brand has evolved over the years and with the new trends in digital music.



### Once a hybrid, always a hybrid!

For a brand regular like me, the new *CSA 100* integrated amplifier is not disorienting at all. Its aesthetics and manufacturing quality have remained almost unchanged for over 40 years. A good industrial design can easily become timeless. The *CSA 100* is therefore a hybrid design which operates with a single 6922 dual triode lamp in the voltage gain stage and with *MOSFET* transistors in the output stage. It is conservatively specified at 100 W per channel in 8 ohm impedance rising to 180 W in 4 ohms. Its front panel has the same **Copland** aesthetic features, but with simpler buttons and controls.

In the centre of the front, we notice a small concentric black circle that looks like a display, but is rather an infrared receiver for the remote control. Around this circle, there are a series of *LED* indicators that show which source is selected either through a rotary knob, located on the left side of the unit, or through the superb remote control. The latter is oblong with rounded ends. It is entirely metallic and its compact dimensions make it fit well in the hand. This remote control allows you to control the motorized volume and to select the sources. It also allows you to control an eventual *CD* player which does not appear in **Copland's** catalogue for the moment.

### A Gateway to Music

The *CSA 100* has been updated with an internal digital-to-analogue converter based on an **ESS Sabre ES9018** chip, with all eight channels configured in *Quad Mono* mode for stereo output. This *DAC* allows the processing of *PCM* files up to a resolution of 32 bits/384 kHz and *DSD 128* files. The asynchronous *USB* input is provided by a **Amanero Technologies Combo384** interface card.

To select the digital sources, you will have to use the small button located on the left at the bottom of the amplifier. This last one allows to select the *S/PDIF* (including one coaxial), two optical *Toslink* types and asynchronous *USB-B* inputs independently. You can also select the optional *Bluetooth* wireless receiver module. Three small *LEDs* below this button indicate whether the conversion circuit is working, whether the digital signal is well received and stable or whether it is of the *DSD* type.

The analogue connections include an *MM* phono input with a nut for connecting the turntable's ground. A *Tape In* input and two line inputs labelled *A1* and *A2* are part of the connectivity. Another balanced line input is available on *XLR* connectors. To complete the analogue connectivity, two outputs labelled *Tape Out* and *Preamp Out* are also included.



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## COPLAND CSA 100 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

The speaker terminals are not doubled for bi-wiring, but they are of excellent quality. A headphone output in 6.35 mm *jack* format is available on the far right of the front panel. It is designed to work with headphones of which the impedance is higher than 40 ohms. To this end, I can confirm that this output is not universal and that it performs better with headphones designed for *walkman* type players. The interior of the *CSA 100* is, as always with **Copland**, a model of quality workmanship. A good size toroidal transformer is followed by six high value capacitors, while the four bipolar *MOSFET* transistors are mounted

on a heat sink that is substantial for the announced power of 100 W per channel.

### Installation and Usage Tips

I simply installed the *CSA 100* in my audio cabinet, because it gives off very little heat. The sources used are my CD player and my **CeolBOX** music server. Based on my previous experiences with different digital-to-analogue converters, I can confirm that the *CSA 100*'s digital board is of excellent quality. So I did most





of my listening using the *USB* input of the amplifier as well as its coaxial input connected to my *CD* player's *S/PDIF* output. Its *user* interface is user-friendly and my only complaint is that its motorized volume control is a little too fast under the effect of the remote control. This makes it more difficult to fine-tune the listening level from a distance. But then, in the 1970s and '80s, we didn't have to complain about this little defect, since we had to get up from our armchair anyway to change our vinyl face and adjust the volume level at the same time.

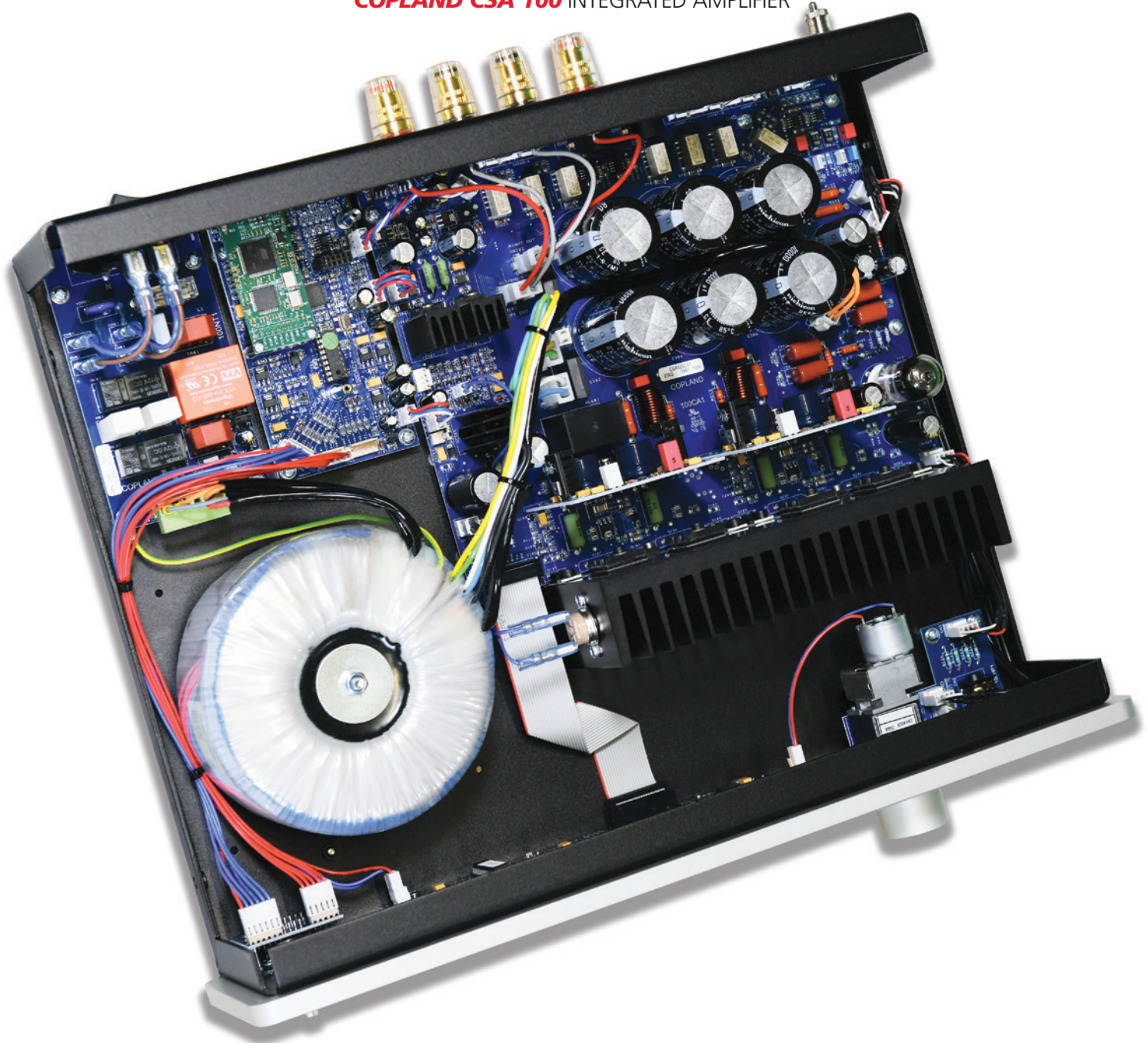
### **Copland via Copland**

Under the influence of the brand name, I began my listening sessions with a work entitled *Fanfare For The Common Man* by American composer **Aaron Copland**. This recording on **Reference Recordings** is, in my opinion, one of the best recordings of a symphony orchestra. On this opus, the brass and wind instruments are majestic. The dynamics and the map of the recording give me a bass drum perfectly located in the background of the musical scene. This huge drum sounded loud and clear at the back of the room. The **Copland CSA 100** integrated





## COPLAND CSA 100 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



amplifier has no hesitation in making me feel its location and weight. The brass instruments are gleaming, impressive by their presence. If my auditory memory is good, I have the clear impression that the CSA 100 is an obvious evolution compared to the CSA 14 that I already owned. With the new CSA 100, one gains in smoothness, in detail, in dynamics and in opening of the stereophonic image.

I continue with an album by **Béla Fleck & The Flecktones** entitled *The Hidden Land*. This American jazz fusion group mixes *bluegrass* and *country* genres while occasionally making a foray into classical music. **Béla Fleck** is a multi-instrumentalist specializing in the guitar and banjo. He is usually accompanied by **Victor Wooten** on bass and **Roy Wooten** on percussions. *Hidden Land* won the 2007 *Grammy Award* for Best

Contemporary Jazz Album. The **Copland CSA 100** allows me to perceive very well the subtle difference between the **Gibson Mastertone** acoustic banjo and the **Deering Crossfire** electric banjo. The percussionist **Roy Wooten**, alias **FutureMan** gives a special colour to this music with his *Synth-Axe Drumitar* instrument which is nothing less than an electronic drum set configured as a guitar. He enriches his playing with various other acoustic percussion instruments. What characterizes the compositions of this group is also **Victor Wooten's** funky style on his electric bass. All these musicians are jazz fusion virtuosos and the **Copland CSA 100** literally transports me into their world. The dynamics are there and there is no ambiguity between the playing and the tonal nature of the different instruments. Thanks to a good ventilation between the musicians, you can





« On this recording, the piano is captured in a masterly way and the **Copland CSA 100** renders it to me in all its tonal splendour. As always, Ms. **Young**'s voice is sublime and, thanks to the precision of the **Copland CSA 100**, this accomplished duo gives us access to an atmospheric, intimate and most moving recording. »

feel the atmosphere and the natural reverberation of the recording studio.

I end my listening with a magnificent album by two exceptional artists, singer **Karen Young** and magnificent jazz pianist **Marianne Trudel**. They came together to create an intimate piano and voice album entitled *Portraits: Songs of Joni Mitchell*. The project is modest and even without any accompaniment other than the piano, these two artists master this repertoire well. They interpret it creatively with sweet improvisations and harmonic explorations. On this recording, the piano is captured in a masterly way and the **Copland CSA 100** renders it to me in all its tonal splendour. As always, Ms. **Young**'s voice is sublime and, thanks to the precision of the **Copland CSA 100**, this

accomplished duo gives us access to an atmospheric, intimate and most moving recording.

### Conclusion

Since 2007, I have done numerous test benches for this magazine of amplifiers ranging in price from \$500 to about \$50,000. Of course, I haven't had the opportunity to test everything that is made in the world, but let's just say that in a price range of \$4,000 to about \$7,000, I can pick out about 10 that, for me, stood out more than the others. The **Copland CSA 100** is part of this personal selection.

In high-fidelity, the competition in this field is strong and some of the competitors' models will possibly have more power or look more dynamic than the **CSA 100**. However, some of them will not have the level of tonal finesse, detail and transparency of our Danish candidate. The build quality of the **CSA 100** is impeccable and the level of its digital-to-analogue conversion section is out of the ordinary.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$5,990

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Divergent Technologies, Tel.: 519.749.1565, <https://divertech.com>

### Mediagraphy

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

Béla Fleck & The Flecktones, The Hidden Land, Columbia, 82,796 96,417 2

Marianne Trudel and Karen Young, Portraits: Songs of Joni Mitchell, TRUD, 2018-1

Oscar Peterson, R. Brown, M. Jackson, The Very Tall Band, LIM, UHD 050

Sohn, Rennen, 4AD, FLAC, 16 bits/44.1 kHz

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editorial staff thanks **Codell Audio** for the loan of the device for the duration of this test bench.





# BUON GUSTO

By CLAUDE LALONDE

## TASTE THE RICHNESS AND THE GENEROSITY OF GERARDO CESARI'S WINES!

I love this Valpolicella region with its *Amarone*, *Ripasso*, *Recioto* and Valpolicella wines [*Classico*, *Superiore*]. I had the pleasure of visiting it a few times and doing several interviews with its producers. It is a region that distinguishes itself from many others thanks to its wines, which are made using the *appassimento* process, where the grapes are dried after harvesting in order to concentrate the sugars, this process concentrates the sugar, aroma and flavour of the grapes and adds colour to the wine to make *Amarone* and *Ripasso*.

Founded in 1936, **Gerardo Cesari** has quickly become synonymous with Verona's wines all over the world. The success of the company began with the launch of the *Amarone Cesari* which made it world famous. In fact, the idea behind this product was to create a wine that could compete with the great international reds. It was with the 1971 vintage that the house became very successful, especially in North America, and later, around the world.





Today, **Gerardo** Cesari produces *beautiful* wines based on tradition and using the latest knowledge of vine growing and environmentally sustainable cultivation techniques.

As for wine production, the **Cavaion Veronese** winery was designed and built with the importance of the wine's *rest* period in mind. Cesari believes that, after the shock of bottling, the wine must be left to rest for a period of time to allow it to regain most of its quality. The large underground refining room maintains a naturally constant level of humidity and temperature, ideal for ensuring the proper aging of the wines.

All the drying of the grapes, which will be used for the *Amarone* and *Ripasso*, the pressing, the fermentation and the first refining of the wines, takes place in the Fumane cellar. It was in 2018 that the winery was renovated and adorned with a modern design.

Four large vineyards make up the entire estate. The **Bosan** vineyard is located in the heart of Valpolicella, in the territory

of *Corrubbio di Negarine* [San Pietro in Cariano]. The **Il Bosco** vineyard is located southeast of Castelrotto, in Valpolicella. It is composed of 5 hectares located at an altitude of 150 m above sea level. The **Cento Filari** vineyard whose name comes from the number of rows in the vineyard [100] from which *Lugana* is produced. This vineyard has an area of 10 ha and is located between the villages of Peschiera del Garda and Pozzolengo. Finally, the 10-hectare **Jèma** vineyard is located in the village of Sant'Ambrogio, in the classic Valpolicella area.

#### **The Wines**

I suggest four wines that will give you an idea of the quality and range of the house wines. A superb white wine from the **Cento Filari vineyard** located in the *Lugana* appellation, the *Justo* red wine from the *leggermente appassite* which involves a short drying period of about 20 days, the *Mara* which is a *Ripasso Superiore* and finally the *Bosan* high quality wine which is also a *Ripasso Superiore*.

# BUON GUSTO

By CLAUDE LALONDE



## *Cesari Cento Filari Lugana 2020*

This wine, from the southern shore of Lake Garda in Peschiera del Garda and Pozzolengo, has been left in contact with the lees for about 4 months, which gives it a lot of aromatic intensity.

### **Tasting notes**

It reveals delicate aromas of white fruits, peaches, pears with beautiful floral notes and a hint of yeast. On the palate, flavours of white fruits, peaches and pineapple combine with a velvety texture and fresh acidity to create a rich, unctuous wine that exudes roundness and sweetness. The flavours continue in a more than appreciable length on a final on the peach as well as on a small acidulous side. What a great find!

You will make a beautiful pairing with fish, scallops in creamy sauce, seafood or delicate main courses.

### **Cesari Cento Filari Lugana 2020**

#### **White wine**

**Grape varieties:** Turbiana [Trebiano di Lugana] 95%,  
Chardonnay 5%

**Sugar:** 5.9 g/l

**Alcohol:** 13%

**Price:** \$25

**SAQ Code:** 13,846,363

<https://www.saq.com/fr/13846363>



# BUON GUSTO

By CLAUDE LALONDE

## Cesari Jùsto Veneto 2018

This wine is made from 60% *Corvina Veronese* and 40% *Merlot*, grapes from the Province of Verona in northeast Italy. The grapes are harvested towards the end of September and placed in a single layer [which facilitates drying] in bins for a short drying period [*leggermente appassite*] of about 20 days.

Fermentation on the skins lasts about 15 days after which the wine is racked into stainless steel tanks for malolactic fermentation, which softens the wine and reduces its acidity level. After a short period in the bottle, the wine is ready to be enjoyed. This wine has not touched the wood which highlights its fruity aromas and flavours.

The name Jùsto comes from a combination of the English word "Just" and the Italian word "Giusto" [who is right]. Jùsto was born from the idea of highlighting the characteristics of the typical grape varieties of the Veneto region.

### Tasting notes

Fruit of this process *leggermente appassite*, the aromas in the nose are of a beautiful concentration on the ripe cherries, plums and on a good dose of sweet spices. On the palate, it is suave, charming with a particularly velvety texture, fresh acidity and well-balanced and round tannins.

Beautiful, concentrated and savoury flavours of cherries, cherry pits and sweet spices create a most flavourful profile and appreciable volume in the mouth. The level of sugar, which is not very noticeable, adds a very nice roundness. In fact, this wine has *just* what it takes to please! And what about its excellent quality/price ratio!

You'll make a great pairing with a lasagna bolognese and an osso bucco.

### Cesari Jùsto Veneto 2018

#### Red wine

**Grape varieties:** Corvina 60%, Merlot 40%

**Sugar:** 6.1 g/l

**Alcohol:** 13.5%

**Price:** \$15.30

**SAQ Code:** 14,557,736

<https://www.saq.com/fr/14555736>



# BUON GUSTO

By CLAUDE LALONDE



## *Mara Valpolicella Ripasso Superiore*

After vinification, the wine is then re-fermented on the *Amarone* pomace [process for the Ripasso] for 15 to 18 days. It is then aged for 12 months in Slavonian oak barrels [80%] and French oak barrels [20%]. It will finish its refinement for 6 months in a bottle.

The wine then becomes a Ripasso and acquires a more intense colour, more structure, fragrance and tannins, as well as about 1% more alcohol than the original wine. It is important to know that the grapes used to produce *Amarone* have been previously dried using the *appassimento* method in order to concentrate the sugars.

### **Tasting Notes**

This *Ripasso* reveals aromas of fresh cherries, spices, blond tobacco with light notes of well-integrated roasting. In the mouth, the texture is velvety, the acidity is fresh and the tannins are almost full-bodied and supple. Lovely flavours of fresh cherries, cherry pits, spices and dark fruits make this wine irresistible. A real caress for the palate! Although it is a *Ripasso*, it is not heavy and has a nice sapidity and freshness. Very nice length! And what about its excellent quality/price ratio!

You'll make a great match with osso bucco, meat lasagna or braised and roasted meats.

### **Mara Valpolicella Ripasso Superiore**

**Red wine, 2018**

**Grape varieties:** Corvina 75%, Rondinella 20%, Molinara 5%

**Sugar:** 6.8 g/l

**Alcohol:** 13.5%

**Price:** \$19.55

**SAQ Code:** 10,703,834

**<https://www.saq.com/fr/10703834>**



# BUON GUSTO

By CLAUDE LALONDE

## Cesari Bosan Ripasso Valpolicella Superiore 2017

This *Bosan* is also a product of the *Ripasso* process as is the *Mara*. However, after the re-fermentation is completed, the final racking in March and the malolactic fermentation is done, the wine is aged for about 12 months in French oak barrels. Following the blending, it spends another 6 months in oak barrels. The ageing process ends with another 8 months in the bottle. This wine is the top of the range in the category of *Valpolicella Superiore* of the house.

Of note, it earned a *Grand Gold* medal at the *World Wine Selections Canada* where over 2,160 wines from around the world competed for medals. I had the pleasure of being a judge at this event.

### Tasting Notes

This wine reveals quite intense and complex notes of cherries, plums, tobacco, leather, cocoa, spices and undergrowth. The palate is velvety in texture and contrasts with a rather spicy acidity. A rather strong wine without being heavy, its structure is ensured by tightly woven and fleshy tannins. The flavours as perceived in the nose are prolonged in the mouth and create a beautiful sensation of richness, amplitude and volume. A few notes of dark chocolate, vanilla and roasting are added to this harmonious whole to make a totally sublime wine! What a beautiful finish with a greedy persistence. It is greedy, ample, opulent and simply delicious.

You will make a nice pairing with game meats, grilled meats and stews.

### Cesari Bosan Ripasso Valpolicella Superiore 2017

**Red wine**

**Price:** \$31.75

**Grape varieties:** Corvina Veronese 80%, Rondinella 20%

**Sugar:** 5.3 g/l

**Alcohol:** 14%

**SAQ Code:** 11,355,886

**<https://www.saq.com/fr/11355886>**

**Samples** – Montalvin Agency



# What's New?

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

## Gold Note, the new EVO II series



**Gold Note** is an Italian manufacturer known, among other things, for its vinyl turntables and electronic devices with sophisticated design. In this magazine we had the pleasure of testing the *IS-1000* integrated amplifier. **Gold Note** also produces speakers with a special attention to design, which we expect from an Italian manufacturer.

In this release, we present *EVO II*, the evolution of the *EVO* series. The *A3 EVO II* shelf speaker and the *A6 EVO II* freestanding speaker have undergone significant changes to the structure of their cabinets as well as their appearance. Both models now feature solid wood sidewalls, angled in shape, reminiscent of the facets of a diamond. These walls are sectioned by aluminum inserts. These, combined with the non-parallel shapes of the walls, serve to improve the control of cabinet resonances that can be detrimental to the sound of the speaker. These beautiful walls are covered with a clear lacquer in a matte or mirror finish for a small additional cost. The front panel has also been

redesigned resulting in a better visual integration of the transducers. The frequency filters have also been improved using **Mundorf** and **Clarity** components.

The *A3 EVO II* is an elegant two-way bookshelf speaker with a 25 mm diameter soft dome tweeter. Its low/mid range transducer is made of treated paper and has a diameter of 150 mm. A stand specifically dedicated to this speaker is offered among the **Gold Note** accessories.

The *A6 EVO II* is a three-way freestanding speaker. It is slender and equipped with a 25 mm soft dome tweeter and two 140 mm treated paper midrange drivers. The 150 mm woofer, for low frequencies, is installed inside and at the base of the speaker. It is directed towards the ground, hence its solid base which is designed to free up air space under the *A6 EVO II*.

At the time of writing, Canadian prices and availability of these speakers are *EVO II* in stores are to be determined.

<https://www.goldnote.it/>

Distributed by: <https://tricellenterprises.com/>



# What's New?



## FOCAL presents the new *On Wall 300* series

The French brand, known worldwide for its acoustic know-how, presents new speakers for the home, the *On Wall 301* and *On Wall 302*. Attentive to all uses and listening desires, **Focal** has thought and designed these speakers for both *stereophonic* and *home theatre* use, offering high-quality products that can be installed on a stand or mounted on a wall.

### **Focal Continues to Improve Its Home Listening Offers**

After presenting its excellent *1000 Series* integrated speakers in January, **Focal** reveals the *On Wall 300* line. Manufactured in its Saint-Etienne workshops, *On Wall 301* and *On Wall 302* are wall-mounted speakers to be fixed around the TV set for the pleasure of *home cinema* as well as for *stereophonic* listening. In the design and development of these *hi-fi* products, **Focal** never sets any limits. So, while the accessories needed to mount the speakers on the wall are included, speaker-friendly stands are also available as an option. Moreover, the installation is very easy and flexible. It is possible to create a configuration of two or three speakers around the screen.

### **Focal's Know-how**

*Innovation* has been **Focal's** hallmark since its inception in 1979. And it continues. These new speakers integrate technologies exclusive to the brand such as *Flax* loudspeakers, a membrane made of French linen whose advantages in sound reproduction are acclaimed worldwide. The speakers also feature the aluminum/magnesium *tweeter*, which offers well-defined highs. With

its new line, **Focal** promises, once again, a sensational listening experience made of realistic sound, clear and precise voices, and deep and resounding bass.

### **Design and Care of Every Detail**

Sleek design, *bevelled* silhouette, the *On Wall 300* speakers are distinguished by their shape that is as much about aesthetics as it is about quick installation. Available in *Black Satin* or *White High Gloss*, they blend in easily with any interior. Finally, **Focal** always thinks of its collections according to their specific assets and uses, but also as part of a global offer. Thus, this range can be perfectly associated with other **Focal** products such as the *300 Series in-wall* and *in-ceiling* speakers, the *Chora*, *Aria*, *Kanta* or *Dôme Flax* speakers.

**Availability:** As of September 2021

**Price** (per unit): \$1,290

**On Wall 301:** \$1,290/**On Wall 302:** \$1,890

**Tripods:** \$590/pair

**<https://www.focal.com/france/focal-la-marque>**

# IF YOU LIKE VINYL, YOU HAVE TO *LISTEN TO* ORACLE AUDIO

By ADRIEN ROUAH

*Where the lowest price is the law...* Do you remember this advertising slogan? Yes, well, so do I! And I believe that it is at the origin of the frantic race for the lowest prices. You talk about quality, we give you the lowest price. You ask about technology, you are still told the lowest price... Yet, if you ask around, as I did, and ask the question, "*would you pay more for a better quality product?*" everyone will tell you yes, and for any purchase, be it clothes, furniture, food and, of course, in our field, audio. Add to that the fact that the product in question is manufactured in its own country, sometimes even locally, and there will be total agreement. Well! That's what I'm going to tell you about today, a product made in Canada, priced to match the best in the world.





First, let's introduce this Canadian product. It is a phono preamplifier, named *PH100MKIII* by **Oracle**, which will be responsible for an electronic correction of your vinyl playback, before attacking your preamplifier or your integrated amplifier. It will also have the possibility to let you choose between the two families of available cartridges, the moving magnet (*MM*) and the moving coil (*MC*) cartridges, since the device offers all the adjustment possibilities according to the one you have selected. As these settings are made for a long period of time (a cartridge lasts for many years), this device does not have any control buttons, everything is done in a selection of long-term presets. In the case of **Oracle's** *PH100MKIII*, only a blue light diode brightens up the front panel. You can't ask much of this phono preamplifier, aesthetically speaking, the function imposes the *look*. And since **Oracle** has chosen a power supply outside the main cabinet, the cabinet containing the control and preamplification electronics will

become even more sober in appearance. It's pretty, discreet and seriously built, that goes without saying!

#### **Techniques and Connections**

I am talking about sobriety in the presentation, which does not exclude state-of-the-art electronics, you will have understood! First of all, let's talk about what is going to provide the power to our preamp module and the fundamental differences with its predecessor, the *PH100*. It is the envelope, the case, which is changed with a metal back and a wooden case for the *PH100* version, which is replaced by a fully metal version, case and front panel, on the *PH100MKIII* presented today. The power supply comes from an auxiliary box providing a 14V/840 mA AC voltage, but it is the main box that is in charge of the rectification, filtration and regulation to perfect the DC voltage. The main case is ultra-flat, which gives it a special elegance. At the back, the *RCA*

connections, both input and output, are of exemplary quality. The connection of the ground wire is made by screwing a mini brass terminal, and the connection of the *low* voltage alternating current by a plug-in connector. **Linear Technologies** *LT1115* operational amplifiers for the first stage and *LT1055* for the second gain stage were chosen by **Oracle**. The different cartridges' settings are located under the box and the operations to be performed are very explicit on the instruction sheets provided. These adjustments will be made by positioning a series of small jumpers, according to each cartridge manufacturer's data. The idea of placing these jumpers on the bottom of the device is smart, since we are in the path of the main circuit, and directly on the circuit board, and it is better to activate these settings there than to carry these adjustments to the back of the device. There is also the possibility to remove the ground connection with a small switch, as it can be problematic in some cases. We are

## ORACLE AUDIO TECHNOLOGIES PH100MKIII PHONO PREAMPLIFIER



talking about a mass loop in the whole system, which causes a background noise (the characteristic *hum*) and which can be solved thanks to this proposal of **Oracle**. I'm not talking about the wire that will connect a turntable to the *PH100MKIII*, which is an essential connection.

### Installation Prior to Listening

As usual, I used the same brand and length of cable for the input and output of the *PH100MKIII*. The turntables used were mine and the one proposed as a test bench in this same issue of **TED Magazine**. Different cartridges (origin and technique) were used, the one that equipped the **Thorens 402 DD** turntable and the ones I own, one with a moving magnet and the other with a

moving coil. This mix of genres allows me to emphasize the qualities of the *PH100MKIII* without the differences between the chosen cartridges being radically opposed. In other words, does the **Oracle PH100MKIII** make it possible to nuance the cartridges that have, all in all, very similar characteristics, even if, as far as price is concerned, we go from single to quadruple?

Of course, future owners will choose according to their own tastes and budget. I know that in the case of vinyl, tastes are quite marked and users are faithful to a sound obtained and appreciated thanks to a specific cartridge, a specific arm and also to a vinyl turntable that fits perfectly with a well matched set. In my case, and this will be the most important part of the report, it is with an **Ortofon 2M Bronze** that I will describe my listening.

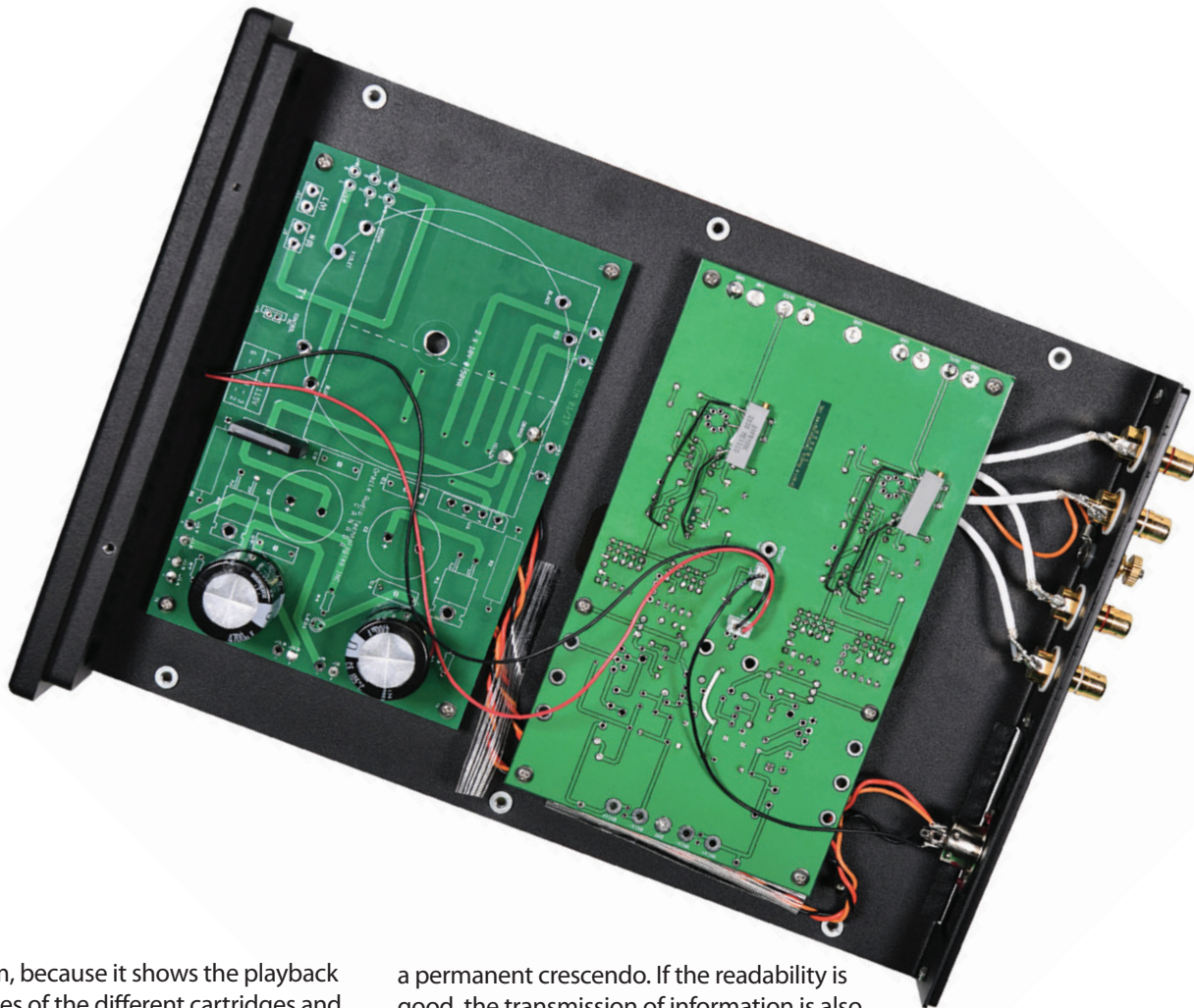
### The Actual Listening

And I'll say it, it's instantly *clean*, this listening! Immediately, no hesitation possible, no negative reflection, we are in the presence of an immediate sound quality. And to begin, the famous **Jacques Bertin**, a poet accompanied simply by a lively band that leaves room for the voice. That's what I like about this record, its intimacy and truthfulness, perfect for the analysis I do. The position of the singer in my listening room is easily visible, a little behind the orchestra, especially in *Carnet*.

Then comes **Carole Kidd** who will reveal a pleasant and soft voice. The accompaniment is somewhat similar to that of **Jacques Bertin**, since it is still a small jazz formation where the piano is very present. This choice is not made







at random, because it shows the playback possibilities of the different cartridges and, especially, the differentiation made possible by the **Oracle** phono preamp. It is with the **Ortofon 2M Bronze** that I feel the most carnal side of the voices, and it is what I like of this cartridge, but the listening is precise in the three cases. One can easily realize each cartridge's particular and subtle signature, which allows to warmly congratulate **Oracle's** work on its *PH100MKIII*.

The bass seems artificially accentuated, which is normal and intended on this type of disc under an *audiophile* label, which privileges the definition scrutinized rather than the musical authenticity and the spatial arrangement. Remarkable dissection on behalf of the *PH100MKIII* which does not miss this sound trick. In classical music, I choose a *Compilation of Overtures* by **Verdi**. I go from the dynamic to the sensitive, from the grandiose heart to the lyrical flights of fancy with soloists. I follow these overtures with attention. And this is what our competitor does today, to make us follow the music with attention and to transmit us all these musical nuances hidden in the magic grooves. And **Santana** will allow us to understand the preamplification of complex and especially repetitive signals. No quiet moment,

a permanent crescendo. If the readability is good, the transmission of information is also good. One can imagine what my **Ortofon** cartridge must endure from these incessant movements. And the *PH100MKIII* reflects the efforts well. I'm on familiar ground, because I know my **Santana** record well, although this *Caravanserai* album is not very well known. And I am conquered by the impeccable restitution of the *PH100MKIII* as a whole, a preamp which has above all a genuine musical versatility of which one does not get tired.

### Conclusion

Let's imagine that one day, we will start by inquiring about the origin of a product before buying it and let's dream that it will be the shopkeeper who will direct us to a product manufactured in the country we live in. Buying locally should not be a fad. Paying a fair price, or a little more if it's local, shouldn't bother us. And here we have, with the **Oracle PH100MKIII** phono preamplifier, the perfect example of a reasoned purchase, for the long term, which easily competes, as much on the technical level as on the price, with products coming from elsewhere, the elsewhere being often very far. Look also at what **Oracle** has created for more than 30

years, without publicity, just by the quality of the devices proposed which seduced many music lovers all over the world. Now it's up to you to make **Oracle** part of your family, to enjoy a well-made, electronically successful device. **Oracle** offers you all the possibilities of cartridge settings with its phono preamp, which favours personal choices, a rediscovery of vinyl and especially this pride well placed to say *since I love music, I listen to my vinyl with an Oracle PH100MKIII*.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Price:** \$1,295 for the black version and \$1,395 for the brushed aluminum version

**Warranty:** 3 years, parts and labour

**Distributor:** Oracle Audio Technologies, Tel: 819.864.0480, [www.oracle-audio.com](http://www.oracle-audio.com)

### Discography

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

Carol Kidd, *eponymous, Aloï Records, AKH003*

Chœurs De Verdi, Dir. Carlo Franci, *Decca Stereo, 7,013 A*

Santana, *Caravanserai, CBS, S65299*

**ARCAM SOLO UNO** INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER/NETWORK PLAYER

# A SMALL MUSIC BOX IN THE AIR OF TIME

By RICHARD SCHNEIDER

**Arcam** presents a very interesting device. It incorporates a built-in amplifier and a network player. All you need to add to it is a pair of speakers. It is named *Solo Uno*. This cute little item is wrapped in an absolutely flawless aluminum case. It will satisfy all the music lovers looking for a very compact, powerful and beautiful device that can be installed in the most cramped places. **Arcam's** new *Solo Uno* offers a compact solution for *streaming* without compromising the music quality associated with this manufacturer. Since the sound is worthy of this great manufacturer, let's take the time to discover it together.





**Arcam** is a well-known British manufacturer. It has a long track record and a worldwide reputation. Present in the audio world for over forty-five years, the manufacturer's track record is quite impressive. So don't worry, you'll be in good hands when it comes to taking care of your device. **Arcam** presents the *Solo Uno*. For those who want to know quickly in which category the *Solo Uno* falls, we can say that it is a serious alternative to the **Sonos Amp**. It is aimed at a clientele that wants a more relaxed approach to *streaming*. In this regard, the minimalist exterior design will appeal to the consumer looking for a product that will facilitate simple and user-friendly initialization and operation.

All you have to do is install two completely free programs. With a quality Internet connection and a pair of speakers, you'll have a compact audio system with amazing quality. Of course, it is often said that this type of process is very simple when in fact everything is complicated. In the case of the *Solo Uno*, I assure you that you will have no worries.

As with most electronic devices, **Arcam** will release updates for this device. If you leave the device on continuously, no action is required on your part, and they will set up autonomously at night, when the *Solo* is not in use. Updates are important. You will have understood that they will offer constantly improved *streaming* functions. When the device is not powered on – when you are not using it – there is a good chance that **Arcam's** automatic updates are not installed. Don't worry, because there's a plan *B*. You'll just have to go to the **Arcam** website and manually download the latest updates and unzip them onto a *USB* stick. Then, you just have to insert it into the *USB* input. Please note that this *USB* input is only used for updates.

### Some Technical Considerations

**Arcam** is stingy about releasing technical data about its *Solo Uno*. I think this is certainly intentional. Many consumers have little interest in an exhaustive list of technical data that is difficult to understand. The important thing is that the product



## ARCAM SOLO UNO INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER/NETWORK PLAYER

performs well and is easy to use. There are a few basic details that I can't ignore. The *Solo Uno* is equipped with a highly efficient first class *D* amplifier of 25 W per channel at 8 ohms and 50 W per channel at 4 ohms. The audio circuits are of very good quality, and as we will see later. The results are there. We are informed that the signal to noise ratio of the device is 117 dB, which allows the amplification to reproduce musical details with maximum precision and minimum background noise. Within the limits of said amplification, the level of distortion will be imperceptible.

### What does it look like?

The front of the device reflects the road to simplicity taken by **Arcam**. They keep it to the bare minimum. In the centre, there is a large power switch. Above the switch, there are three push buttons. Two of these buttons (left and right) are used to manually adjust the sound level of the device, while the middle one, *Mute*, has a double function. At first, it will be used when you want to mute the device. Then, in a second step, when using the auxiliary input, you must press and hold the same key for 3 seconds before releasing.

The back of the *Solo Uno* is sober and well ordered. The gold-plated speaker terminals are solid and very well made. They allow all types of connections. What was my surprise when I noticed that you can connect an active subwoofer to this little device thanks to an output dedicated to this effect! Amazing this *Solo Uno* finally, I tell you. An analogue audio auxiliary input allows you to connect a variety of devices such as a smartphone, TV, turntable with a preamplifier, etc. The input remains in auxiliary mode until an *AirPlay* or **Google Cast** audio stream is sent to the *Solo Uno*. In my opinion, all it needs is a fibre optic connection in *Toslink* format. This one would have been welcome to facilitate the connection of many TV sets. Although it is less popular, you will be able to use a wired connection to connect *Solo Uno* to your network via the *Ethernet* jack. The antenna supplied with the device will ensure a quality WiFi signal.

### Steps to take before using it

Apart from the device, the package, which can withstand a nuclear attack, includes the following items: power cable, Wi-Fi antenna, registration card and user manual.

The configuration of *Solo Uno* is very simple. It's simply a matter of choosing the right option. Being a broadcast device, you will have to choose between WiFi or an *Ethernet* wire connection. Now that the Internet link is established, a few more steps will open the door to streaming. The *Solo Uno* is controlled from a smartphone or tablet. First, I installed the **Google Home** app

« This little device by **Arcam** does very well when reproducing large-scale musical orchestrations. The textures are well defined. The depth and the sound stage are reproduced quite correctly. The rhythm is fluid and the amplification does not run out of steam if you respect the limits of the device. That doesn't mean that the *Solo Uno* will deprive you of sensations, quite the contrary, because it still has heart. »

on my phone and tablet from the *App Store*. Owners of devices running *Android* will download it from **Google Play**. It acts as a recognition system on your network. **Google Home** immediately recognized the *Solo Uno* without any intervention from me. **Google Home** remained in the background, without more. Then, you'll need to download **Arcam's** user-friendly *MusicLife* application, always on your tablet or phone, which becomes the control centre for the device.

*MusicLife* is the ideal controller for *Solo Uno*. Moreover, its use is strongly recommended for a large part of the devices in **Arcam's** catalogue. It manages the music you have stored either on *Mac* or *Windows* computer or on your *NAS*. It supports music files on **Android** or **IOS** devices. Internet streaming from **Tidal**,





## ARCAM SOLO UNO INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER/NETWORK PLAYER

**Qobuz, Deezer**, high-definition music stations, Internet radio and a wide variety of *podcasts* hold no secrets for *MusicLife*. In short, this application offers complete and total control of a networked music system.

Thanks to the *UPnP* protocol, the link was established between the *Solo Uno* and my digital file server. I was able to access a wide range of digital files from my music library. *MusicLife* allowed me to play files up to a sampling rate of 24 bits/192 kHz thanks to the excellent *DAC* of the device. In addition, it has a full *MQA* decoder that allows it to play audio files and *MQA* streams.

### What about listening quality?

As soon as the device is turned on, the sound of the *Solo Uno* is reminiscent of the signature sound of British devices, that is, a warm sound where the midrange is predominant. The highs are a little behind, offering a well-controlled reading during aggressive musical passages on certain recordings, while the bass is rich, dynamic and deep. Under my reference speakers, of good size, I didn't even think of adding a subwoofer. The frequency response is largely well represented, in all planes, without the need to add any. However, when using small speakers, this statement may not be true.

This little device by **Arcam** does very well when reproducing large-scale musical orchestrations. The textures are well defined. The depth and the sound stage are reproduced quite correctly. The rhythm is fluid and the amplification does not run out of steam if you respect the limits of the device. That doesn't mean that the *Solo Uno* will deprive you of sensations, quite the contrary, because it still has heart. However, you'll have to keep your expectations realistic, as this is a small amplifier that was obviously not designed as a power monster. Used within its limits, the **Arcam Solo Uno** will stand out for its refinement, realistic timbre and credible stereo imaging.

### Conclusion

This is a very nice music box that will please many music lovers looking for an affordable and refined solution. The *Solo Uno* will find its place in many homes. It will open up the world of online music to you with ease. Its surprising musicality will charm you. A device to discover.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Price:** \$1,099

**Warranty:** 2 years, parts & labour

**Distribution:** Erikson Consumer, Tel: 514.457.6674,  
[www.eriksonconsumer.com](http://www.eriksonconsumer.com); [www.arcam.co.uk](http://www.arcam.co.uk)



# BLUES

BY PIERRE JOBIN

## CHRIS DANIELS, HAZEL MILLER, DANA MARSH

### What We Did

Noon Voyage Records

Oh! What a superb album is *What We Did!* Plus, it's a group effort contributing to a good cause, that of **Inner City Health** in Denver, Colorado, which promotes access to health care and wellness for underserved populations in the area. **Chris Daniels** responded when he was asked to *present* a virtual concert with this in mind. In these pandemic times, the project kicks off with two virtual shows in July and October 2020, presented by singer and guitarist **Chris Daniels**, the amazing soulful singer, **Hazel Miller**, and her keyboardist and *B3* player, **Dana Marsh**. The results of these performances are so inspiring to our trio that **Daniels** continues to turn this quality project into a record. For this purpose, among his friends and acquaintances, he recruited the excellent **Freddi Gowdy**, who completed three natural and complicit vocal duets with **Miller**. Also appearing are **Victor Wooten**, **Kenny Passarelli** and **Gregg Garrison** on bass, **Todd Park Mohr** on guitar on two tracks, **Sam Bush** on mandolin, **Christian Teele** on drums and percussion, **Tom Capek** on keyboards and *B3*, as well as **Mark Oblinger** and **Linda Lawson** on backing vocals on the **Doobie Brothers'** *Takin' It To The Streets*, the opening track. In the end, we are treated to a magnificent album made up of ten choice covers including two by **Chris Daniels**, *I'm Still Lookin'* and *Better Days* which closes the album. Among the selections are *Born Under A Bad Sign*, *Cheek To Cheek*, *What A Wonderful World*, *Down Home Blues*, *You've Got A Friend*, classics that are often archaic, but that I often found myself listening to as if it was the first time I heard them. *What We Did* is a dynamic,

generous and touching recording where the songs, under the impulse of renewed arrangements and high level interpretations, suddenly take on new rhythms, flavours and colours. This is a remarkable opus by exceptional musicians and singers dedicated to a good cause. The six **Daniels-Miller** vocal duets on the album distill sensitivity, harmony and good taste. This record is the joy of a job well done, about which **Hazel Miller** spontaneously exclaims, afterwards *Look at what we did!* For me, too, it's a favourite!

## DEBBIE BOND

### Blues Without Borders

Blues Roots Productions, BRP2021

Rooted in the *old school* Alabama blues of **Johnny Shines**, **Eddie Kirkland**, **Willie King** and others, viscerally inspired by *R&B*, *soul*, *folk* and ballads, **Debbie Bond**, this experienced singer and guitarist, offers us *Blues Without Borders*, her excellent and eclectic fifth album. She is the composer of the ten original tracks, often with her husband **Rick Asherson** who plays keyboards, harmonica, among other things, as well as participating in the chorus. I particularly enjoyed the title track *Blues Without Borders*, co-written and co-sung with **Lea Gilmore**, the inspirational artist and human rights activist. **Rachel Edwards** and **Radiator Rick Asherson** also participate in the composition and implementation of this piece, whose dynamic, driving chorus modulates on the catchy *If We Only Knew What Love Can Do*. The Jamaican saxophonist **Ray Carless** (**Billy Ocean**, **Adele**...) infuses this contagious Latin rhythm with an extra soulfulness of his warm and fluid playing. On *Let Me Be*, the next

piece, **Debbie Bond** demonstrates her talents as a solo guitarist on the *Telecaster*. Of all the solid performances on offer, *Let The Freedom Ring*, that anthem of freedom in memory of **Martin Luther King**, is a must see for me, both for its essential subject matter and for its moving performance. With this inspiring song, she helps keep **Dr. King's dream** alive, with the fiber of brotherhood and resilience! On three pieces, including the dynamic *Radiator* inspired by the nickname of the singer's husband, the excellent saxophonist **Brad Guin**, member of the legendary **Muscle Shoals Horns**, shines with his intense, energetic and quality playing. *Blues Without Borders* is the result of teamwork at all stages of production and you can feel it. It is a beautiful record of shared passions, essential.

## TIFFANY POLLACK & CO

### Bayou Liberty

Nola Blue Records, NB015

*She has everything she needs, she is an artist, she looks good!* This free translation of lyrics from **Bob Dylan's** *She Belongs To Me* suits **Miss Pollack**

very well. She is a strange, original, unique creature with a soulful and vocal drive that belongs only to her. **Tiffany Pollack** is a refreshing singer/songwriter who comes to us from New Orleans with her first album under her arm. She composed the twelve titles that she interprets with the freedom of casualness and an intelligence of *life*. She *grooves* and modulates like a water creature fresh from the bayou to charm us with her engaging naturalness, her voice with unexpected and surprising inflections, as well as her sonorous ukulele. His music is infused with the rough guts of the saxophone, the ethereal float of the *pedal steel*, soaring guitar tones, and *West Coast*-tinged chromatic harmonica courtesy of **John Németh**, who also produces the album. A dynamic, driving rhythm section forms the pulsating backbone. **Tiffany Pollack** is an eclectic artist of the blues, *R&B*, *country*, etc. flavours of the bayou and America. It unfolds in a teeming imagination that seems to know no boundaries. **Tiffany Pollack** offers us a solid and adventurous first album. She has everything to be noticed, seduce and conquer. **TIFFANY POLLACK & CO**





Rediscover Music /

# Technics



## Debuts

Silver Direct Drive Turntable System  
SL-1200MK7



# A BRIDGE TO A BRIGHTER MUSIC

By JD DOYLE

It is now part of our lives. Apart from some diehards who continue to resist it, listening to dematerialized music, accessible online, via high quality download sites, is well and truly here to stay. Many equipment solutions are now available to make the most of it. But there was a missing link, a device that many of you wanted to see one day. I myself have dreamed of a manufacturer designing a small, high-quality, affordable, and well-imagined network drive. The latter would do only one thing: receive the digital signal from its network and route it to the digital-to-analogue converter of its choice, with the best possible quality. So here it is at last, the *Zen Stream*, from **iFi Audio**, an innovative device, full of good ideas and a very neat design. Let's see if it lives up to expectations.







**iFi Audio** is a UK company based in **Southport** and has been in the market since 2012. With more than 30 products in its catalogue, **iFi Audio** has distinguished itself over the years by the boldness and innovation of its products. The engineers at **iFi Audio** seem to have a special knack for designing the perfect little product that will make all the difference to the performance of an audio system. The *Zen Stream*, the subject of this test, is certainly no exception. This little network player is, in fact, quite unique, both in the technology used and in its price. In order to better understand what makes the *Zen Stream* so interesting, we must first look at the range of devices of this type present on the market. Most of the time, they are integrated solutions, that is to say that these devices incorporate a section that does the network reading and another one that ensures the digital to analogue conversion. Often, the digital output of integrated devices is just a convenience and is not given much attention. Although there are high-quality network players that do not incorporate any digital-to-analogue converters, they are usually at the very high end of the market and it is rare to find one under the two-thousand-dollar mark.

There is also the fascinating world of network drives based on minicomputers like the **Raspberry Pi**. Ultra affordable, they offer excellent performance in terms of sound quality, but unfortunately the stability is rarely there. Moreover, these devices are far from being *Plug and Play* and require a minimum of computer knowledge to operate them properly.

The *Zen Stream* is a genius at filling this particular market niche. Moreover, it is likely to sell like hot cakes. The *Zen Stream*

bridges the gap between very high-end network drives and **Raspberry Pi**-based solutions. It will allow you to keep the two sections needed for network playback in separate machines and protect you a little better against digital obsolescence. Let's see how and by what technical means it achieves this.

#### Technical Description

The **iFi Audio** *Zen Stream* is a true marvel of technology that will challenge many established references in terms of network playback. It is based on an *ARM Cortex* processor that operates on 64 bits. This standard, widely used in the professional world, guarantees unparalleled power and stability of operation. The *Zen Stream* is powered by an open architecture and, for the time being, it is based on **Volumio**. This platform, which has proven itself in the world of the **Raspberry Pi**, has been greatly optimized by **iFi** to obtain the best possible playback quality. This open architecture ensures that it will be able to run on several dedicated platforms in the future and be easily reconfigured or updated. **iFi Audio** promises that its own operating system will be available soon.

The *Zen Stream* can be connected to your network either through an *Ethernet* wire or through the *WiFi* signal. The two usual options, 2.4 GHz or 5.0 GHz are available and allow you to optimize the *WiFi* connection. The *Zen Stream* is really cut out to deliver high-resolution music to your favourite converter. Indeed, it is able to release at its outputs *PCM* in 384 kHz or *DSD 256*. The *Zen Stream* will also be able to route **MQA** files from **Tidal** to your converter. With standard *USB 3.0* plugs, the

## IFI AUDIO ZEN STREAM NETWORK PLAYER

*Zen Stream* will be compatible with virtually all resolution levels currently available. The *Zen Stream* will not be the bottleneck, that's for sure.

The interior of this beautiful little machine is a veritable feast of quality parts. It includes **TDK COG** capacitors as well as **Taido Yuden** and **Murata** inductors. Each of the unit's digital outputs has been carefully cleaned of digital noise, thanks to clever noise reduction circuits. In addition, quality **GMT** clocks have been selected to ensure a minimum level of *jitter*. Even the *Ethernet* socket has been given special care and has its own intelligent switch to optimize signal reception.

The **IFI Audio** Zen Stream has a circuit and a selector switch that allows it to be optimized and to have exclusive modes for its software operation. This is the only network player, to my knowledge, that is equipped with such a feature. The user can choose between a mode that does everything and 4 exclusive modes, namely *All-in-one*, **DLNA**, **NAA**, **Roon Bridge** and **Tidal streaming**. Once the mode is selected, the processor of the device closes all the unretained circuits, thus bringing an appreciable gain of the sound quality in terms of clarity. Finally, the *Zen Stream* has a *WiFi Hot Spot* mode that will allow you to connect to it from an *Android* or *iOS* mobile device, for those rare situations where a *WiFi* network is not available.

Phew! I think I have covered the main technical aspects of this innovative network player. Oh yes, I forgot, the *Zen Stream* comes with a separate **IFI Audio** power supply called *Ipower*.

### Installation

The **IFI Audio** *Zen Stream* will fit like a charm on your network. Its operating software is online. To access it, simply type in the following address: <http://ifi.local>. Once there, you will be able to configure all the settings that are available for the device. Here's a little tip: add this web page to your favourites the first time you open it. The basic application that is provided will allow you to access your files, located on a computer, or any type of storage device on your network. **Tidal** and **Spotify** connect directly to *Zen Stream* using the direct connection option in their apps. The instruction sheet, which accompanies the device, is very

well designed and informative. You should be able to listen to your music in a few minutes.

### Unexpected Improvement in Listening Quality

For many of you who believe that a good network reading section can't make that much difference, you may be in for quite a shock! Indeed, the addition of this small network player to a quality-digital-to-analogue converter, is immediately *heard* with an obviousness that jumps to the ears from the first notes. On the other hand, the gain in quality does not necessarily come from where we expect it.

Often, we imagine that a better quality of reproduction in digital audio means that we will necessarily obtain a warmer, rounder sound. Simply explained, one could say that for years, we have been trying to bury all the artifacts of digital, *jitter* and other distortions, by a surplus of bass. What if there was another way? How about providing a clean signal instead? When you connect the *Zen Stream* to its inverter, this is exactly what happens. The sound suddenly becomes more solid, clean, degreased in the right way, sharper and now with a beautiful clarity. I now feel like I'm hearing my favourite files at their full capacity.

By the way, my favourite album, *Beyond the Missouri Sky* by **Pat Metheny** and **Charlie Haden**, came out in a new light. The double bass playing is suddenly not stuffy anymore and leaves all the space the guitar needs to express itself. With the *Zen Stream*, this embellishment with an excess of artificial bass is over. The best part is that it does it without necessarily imposing an overly analytical tone on the music. Obviously, this device was developed by people who understood a thing or two about music reproduction.

### A Big Surprise or Two

For this test bench, I mainly used the **Tidal** and **Apple Music** online services. I also re-watched the excellent *The Crown* series on **Netflix** from my *MacBook Air*. As of June 2021, **Apple Music** is now available in high resolution and many of you will want to enjoy the 80 million tracks available on **Apple Music**. The





good news is that **iFi Audio's Zen Stream** offers excellent playback quality when using the *Airplay* protocol. In fact, this is the best quality, to date, for me using this transmission protocol. The quality is still not on the same level as a direct connection, as offered by **Tidal**, but it is still excellent. In fact, it's more than enough to enjoy **Netflix**, **YouTube** videos or any other media that can be consumed on a daily basis.

Listened to from **Apple Music**, *Seventeen Seconds*, by **The Cure** flows with great fluidity. The bass has impact, the timbres are beautiful and the playing of the various percussions is easy to listen to. There is rhythm and it is musical as one could wish. **Apple** seems to have done a great job of backing up its high-quality music library. The *Zen Stream* will help you enjoy it better.

I also had fun trying out the exclusive *Zen Stream* mode for the **Tidal** app. Another nice surprise, as the gain in clarity goes up another notch. I have rarely *heard* such a high level of quality from **Tidal**. Using the direct connection, exclusive mode and an **MQA** file, you will be able to *hear* this great online music site's true potential.

## Conclusion

The **iFi Audio Zen Stream** is a superb achievement. It sets a new performance standard for affordable network players. It does a remarkable job of getting the music available online and on your storage devices to your favourite converter. Whether it's with **Tidal**, **Spotify** or **Apple Music**, it will bridge the gap to a world of music with clarity and light. It's more than worthy of a best buy mention, and the unit I used for the test bench is actually going to stay with me. A *must have*.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$599

Warranty: 1 year, parts & labour

Distributor: Motet Distribution, Tel: 1 514.335.3131,  
<https://ifi-audio.com/products/zen-blue/>; <https://motetdistribution.com/>

## Mediagraphy

Charlie Haden & Pat Metheney, *Beyond the Missouri Sky*, ECM, Tidal File.  
The Cure, *Seventeen Seconds*, Elektra, Apple Music file.



**THORENS TD-402 DD** VINYL PLATINUM AND **AUDIO-TECHNICA AT-VM95E** CARTRIDGE

# A vinyl turntable for complete analogue pleasure

By ADRIEN ROUAH







In the May-June 2021 issue of **TED Magazine**, I had the privilege of presenting a **Thorens TD1600 Vinyl Platinum**, equipped with a **Goldring Heroica H** cartridge. I'm back, a few months later, with the **Thorens** brand, but as you will read, there are many differences on this **402 DD** model. The asking price is also quite different, as it is four times lower than its spring counterpart. And when I say four times lower, one should know that this **402 DD** is available with its factory-mounted **Audio-Technica** cartridge, with its integrated phono preamp circuit, a semi-automatic mechanism and, moreover, with a chic *look* that tends towards luxury. Unusual and also unexpected. Read on, as there are many surprises.

#### **Presentation and Technical Considerations**

It is mainly the gloss of the varnish that covers the walnut wood that immediately gives this model a very chic aspect. This base surrounds a brushed-aluminum plate that supports both the arm and the tray. In a nice little retro nod, the **Thorens** specific designs can be found on the gear (33 and 45 rpm) and start-stop controls as well as the general *look*. The tone arm is tubular and straight, made of carbon with a detachable cartridge holder.

The dynamic balance, weight and antiskating adjustments are classic and easy to make. The weight adjustment's vernier is very reliable and can be used if you do not have a scale. The 2 g required by the **Audio-Technica** cartridge will be obtained at the 2 g vernier scale graduation of the tone arm counterweight. This tone arm is quite discreet – a bit too much for my taste, but I understand that it's not the tone arm that they wanted to emphasize, but rather the whole device.

A thick rubberized mat covers an aluminum tray dampened by a plastic inner ring. **Thorens** thus saves on the cost of the tray, and therefore on its thickness, while still offering satisfactory tray damping. Since

this model is mainly aimed at the beginning of the manufacturer's range, I would like to point out that its realization is quite honourable. This is evidenced by the general rigidity of the base, the good seating of the turntable on its shock-absorbing feet and the care taken in its presentation, which confirms the always reassuring side that one has at the first approach of a **Thorens** turntable.

From a technical point of view, we are dealing with a direct-drive model (*DD* of the nomenclature), a semi-automatic vinyl turntable with rotating start of the platter, by tone arm movement, and stopping at the end of the disc. These automatics are disengageable thanks to a small button placed at the back of the **402 DD** for those who, like me, don't really see the point of an automatic stop that doesn't raise the arm at the end of the playback. But here again, I can easily understand that some users will be comforted not to have forgotten to stop their **402 DD** turntable at the end of the playback and this is surely what the designers of this turntable thought of. Contrary to what characterized almost all **Thorens** models I've seen in my life, this **402 DD** model has no suspension, i.e. no counter platter and tone arms suspended by insulating



springs. This is neither a saving nor an oversight on **Thorens's** part, rest assured. Most direct drive turntable constructions have no suspension.

The *402 DD* is equipped with an internal phono circuit for those who do not have one on their preamp or integrated amplifier. Like the semi-automatic control, this integrated phono circuit can be turned off with a small switch on the back of the turntable. A protective cover is also provided and we must congratulate **Thorens** for the seriousness of its hinges. Congratulations also for the triple packaging (the beautiful device will arrive safely) and the multilingual instruction booklet brilliantly translated into French – I am in a good position to tell you that this is becoming rather rare.

#### **The Audio-Technica AT-VM95E Cartridge**

The *402 DD* is equipped with a well-known moving magnet (*MM*) cartridge with a dual V-shaped magnet arrangement for each channel, unique to **Audio-Technica**. The diamond is elliptical and mounted on an aluminum cantilever support. The performance described on the manufacturer's document for this cartridge is top-notch, with serious predicted channel separation and bandwidth.

#### **Precisions Prior to Listening**

Like the phono preamp test bench described in this issue, tests were carried out with and without the circuit proposed by **Thorens**. I also used the phono preamp described in this same issue, but the listening report was written from the turntable and phono circuit demonstration integrated to the *402 DD*. It is also the preinstalled cartridge that was used for listening, but I changed the cables provided in the box, for mine... Which I strongly advise doing to future buyers.

#### **Preamble to Listening**

I should write "*listening*" in the plural because they were really numerous in this test bench. In the price range where the *402 DD* is located, the competition is very tough. One has to admit, the return of vinyl in our homes has resurrected – the word is not too strong – many brands and models. You almost seem to hear every manufacturer say *but I was there too in the vinyl days, do you remember me?* Of course we remember. Who wouldn't remember **Thorens**, among other brands? But it will be necessary to *listen* to this *402 DD* turntable, once you're past the interest in the integrated phono circuit, in its simplicity of use, in its aesthetics and in the supplied cartridge. Musically



speaking, does it stand out from its many competitors? Even if relied on my usual musical references, this time I'm bringing out a bit of forgotten artillery, some old for the sake of variety, but some newer to report, on the other hand, always the same diversity, musical versatility being for me a priority quality. Choices of classical, pop, jazz and world music, or varied intelligent music. It's my turn to play, my turn to write!

### Listening

I'll start with **Verdi**. The funny thing about this composer is that when you ask someone if they know about **Verdi's** operas, they say *no*. And when you put your tone arm on a record's introductory notes, they tell you that yes, they know! *Attila* is the perfect example, which, from the intro, takes you to a familiar tune. Later, in the first act, *Odabella's* voice (**Cristina Deutekom**) makes me forget to take notes. One expects the worst when choosing such a complex work, but nothing untoward happens. The **Thorens** set shines and immerses us in the world of Italian opera.

The sound stage is ample, deep, even if the definition could be more precise. Although the booklet doesn't say much about the recording, I'm relying on the date printed on the vinyl (1973) and the fact that the box set mentions the *first full-length and stereo recording*. As in many fields, priorities were chosen and, in this case, the priorities were a wide and deep sound stage, I imagine... Nice performance from **Thorens**, the box set can be listened to entirely with joy. It's an immediate yes for classical music lovers. I change subjects, I change genre, although... There is also theatricality with **A.N.G.E.**, this still active progressive French rock band and for whom only a pandemic has limited concerts. The sound is unusual and academic, perfect for discovering a turntable. The recording is quite respectable and so is the performance of the *402 DD* unit. This recording doesn't always sound perfect. Sometimes the cymbal is wonderful, sometimes the singer moves and his voice fades, and all this is well relayed by this turntable. It is precise and defined, the sonic breadth of the performances is also quite present.

We now relax with something more intimate, **Alain Chamfort**. I skip the known



titles to lean towards the less known ones. A *1980s* orchestration and a shy voice that still manages to hold our interest. **Thorens' 402 DD** takes on what may seem too easy with ease. Not so easy to translate the delicate, the muffled, the softness. The sound stage is clearly visible and wide. The depth is a bit lacking, but the recording is responsible for that, not the turntable. Rest assured that rock and pop music are a perfect match for the **Thorens 402 DD**.

And a little jazz to conclude? With the **Modern Jazz Quartet**, a classical formation, double bass, drums and vibraphone... Ah, a vibraphone, that's not *quite* classical! And that instrument is as difficult to transcribe on an audio device as the flute or the piano. There is a continuous vibrato that will make listening very tiring if the performance is not well executed. Someone will come off, the cartridge perhaps, the tone arm or the overall resonance of the table, or the non-conforming readability, who can say? But here, none of that, a clear sign that **Thorens** knows what they are talking about when creating a coherent vinyl playback package. This cartridge is an excellent value for money and above all it is very versatile, I have had proof of that.

### Conclusion

The records I chose have this particularity, it's a bit like a voluntary approach towards *records that we were wrong to forget or to*

*leave in the shadows* in a certain era. Just like the **Thorens** brand, which deserves the greatest respect for its historical contribution to high fidelity, but also for this continuous offer of satisfactory musical renditions. Of course, we would like this *402 DD* to be more affordable, more accessible to a greater number of music lovers. Even if the market is what it is and passion for audio has become very expensive, it is still one of the most sensible musical entertainment when you think about the long term. Once again, I salute the perseverance of manufacturers, including **Thorens**, and distributors, not to mention the dealers who will be able to give you an auditory demonstration of what I am reporting on. And you too will say that performance and versatility, in materialized music, taste much better!

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$1,499.99

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Erikson Consumer, Tel.: 514.457.6674, [www.eriksonconsumer.com](http://www.eriksonconsumer.com)

### Discography

Verdi, *Attila*, Philips, 6700 056, 2LP

A.N.G.E., *Beyond Delirium*, Philips, 9101 004

Alain Chamfort, *Poses*, CBS, PFC, 90 586

Modern Jazz Quartet, *Jazz Spectrum*, JS-356

# PROG ROCK

By RICHARD GUAY



## METAMORPHOSIS

*I'm Not a Hero*

[www.facebook.com/metamorphosisprogrockswiss/](http://www.facebook.com/metamorphosisprogrockswiss/)

Twenty years after the foundation of **Metamorphosis**, a project of

French-speaking Swiss **Jean-Pierre Schenk** (vocals, keyboards), the latter continues the adventure by offering us the sixth album of his beloved band that he has been able to lead with a master's hand during all these years. Flanked by **Olivier Guenat**, his faithful guitarist since *Then all was Silent* (2005) and drummer **Alain Widmer**, who appeared on the previous opus, **Metamorphosis**, now a trio, continues its original mission of producing conventional, but extremely interesting, neoprogressive music, well put together and presented without a hitch as that of the purest British tradition. *I'm Not a Hero* reflects a healthy evolution of a style more or less well-defined during the first opuses. The melodies are more assured, catchier, but above all better framed. The whole is of a surprising symphonic complexity and the harmonic variations are of great art, in continuity with the most recent albums. Once again, **Schenk's** story revolves around the existential miseries that every human being faces. This disarray is particularly well illustrated in the title song, which relates the moods of an ordinary, tired man who would like to do more, but is unable to, hence his great psychological distress resulting from an oppressive feeling of guilt. In fact, a quick look at the track list, which includes titles such as *Dark World*, *I'm Not a Hero*, *Little Stars Desintegrate*, *I Will Leave Tonight* or *So Hard's the Road*,

tells us a lot about the degree of gloom in the lyrics. Nothing festive on the horizon! However, **Schenk's** sad voice (English lyrics, but French-speaking artists!), his enveloping keyboards as well as **Guenat's** energetic guitars make the listening very ludic. The introduction, *Dark World*, is almost worth the price of the disc so much it is enjoyable. *I'm Not a Hero* is a must have for lovers of British-inspired neoprogressive music!

**BIG BIG TRAIN**  
**Common Ground**  
[www.bigbigtrain.com/](http://www.bigbigtrain.com/)  
<https://bigbigtrain.bandcamp.com/>  
**Big Big Train** appeared in the progressive rock scene in the mid-1990s and is one of the few British bands that can still be called *classic*. Indeed, several elements developed in the 1970s in this country remain incorporated in the music of this atypical group which offers us its thirteenth album, *Common Ground*. **Gregory Spawton** (bass), the only remaining founding musician since the recent departure of **Andy Poole**, is still assisted by singer **David Longdon**, to whom were added **Nick D'Virgilio** (drums) in 2009 and, above all, **Rikard Sjöblom** (guitars, keyboards), *leader* of late and lamented Swedish band **Beardfish**. In my opinion, the latter has energized a group that was in great need of it. His modern guitar and keyboard-playing technique added that little something that makes a musical ensemble still interesting, although it was starting to get old with its somewhat old-fashioned conformism and its sometimes pretentious variations where the symphonic passages were stretching and generating a certain

weariness. **Big Big Train** often left me cold, even indifferent, before the two *English Electrics*. It was from *Folklore* (2016) that this formation had a second wind. Let's mention the penultimate release, *Grand Tour* (2019), which amazed me. *Common Ground* continues in this same register offering finely sculpted tracks, funny effective variations, re-searched chords and a perfect balance between simple and accessible melodic lines and complex and bewitching instrumental passages. With a Swedish member (**Sjöblom**) as well as an American one (**D'Virgilio**), **Big Big Train** becomes more international and incorporates new elements to its early music that blend in very well. Although we still find guests on orchestral instruments, they are rather discreet, making possible a delirious, playful and more rock opus. **Longdon's** voice and texts, making analogies between space exploration and the problems the British experience, do very well on this surreal stage. *Common Ground* is therefore another **Big Big Train** that cannot be ignored even if some may deplore too brutal a change of style. As for me, well, I like it a lot!

## THE SAMURAI OF PROG

**The Samurai of Prog—The White Snake and other Grimm Tales II**

<https://www.facebook.com/thesamuraiofprog/>; <https://www.seacrestoy.com/>

For the July issue, I wrote a text to introduce you to **The Samurai of Prog**, this unusual international trio that was born in the middle of 2000s and in which American guitarist, soloist and violinist **Steve Unruh**, Finnish drummer **Kimmo Pörsti** and Italian-Finnish

bassist **Marco Bernard** are working. *The White Snake and Other Grimm Tales II*, its tenth opus, obviously follows *The Lady and The Lion and Other Grimm Tales I* which was mentioned in the last issue. The latter, without taking anything away from it, nevertheless displayed some shortcomings, including a heavy and painful narration centred on the childish themes of the **Grimm** fairy tales, an emotional and often irritating singing, an excessively airy musical style and too many pastoral moments. The **samurai** fans probably found their account there, but the lack of inspiration weakened the recreational side that we used to experience with the previous albums. This second part, on the other hand, is a revised and improved version of the first. The narrator has been given the day off and the musical content has been given a whirlwind of rich, dense and flavourful pieces. The instrumental excerpts are numerous and lead us into a waltz where a plethora of styles emerge, including medieval folklore which fits so well in this context. The long epic suite *The White Snake* (5:37 pm) gives us back the **Samurai of Prog** we're used to, with its diverse vocals, cerebral instrumentation and explosive emotional content. And as usual, our companions did not hesitate to surround themselves with a brigade of musicians and soloists who support them admirably well with their personal touches always relevant. *The White Snake and Other Grimm Tales II* offers a more familiar and interesting content than the first chapter, while approaching the traditional style of this atypical group.

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## JAZZ

By CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ

**GEORGES GERSHWIN**

Georges Gershwin (1898-1937).

From Broadway to the Metropolitan Opera  
An American in Paris –  
Rhapsody in Blue – Porgy and Bess  
Frémeaux&Associés, 3 CDs

Composer, pianist and spearhead of the **Tin Pan Alley**, a small New York street square that gave birth to the *Great American Songbook*. With his brother **Ira**, popular music and jazz found in them an unforgettable material. This three-disc set, which is far from being a compilation, will bring you much joy. Around the booklet, skilfully constructed, which reveals a little of the secret of **Gershwin's** art, the jazz high society is there.

If we start with the late **Nina Simone**, with *I Love you Porgy* (1958), and the trumpeter **Chet Baker** in 1957. **Miles Davis** of course, under the direction of **Gil Evans** in 1958 with *It Ain't Necessarily So*. We continue with the tandem **Louis Armstrong/Ella Fitzgerald** under the direction of **Russel Garcia**, for the unforgettable *all-Gershwin*, followed by our friend **Oscar Peterson** with his accomplices **Ray Brown** (double bass) and **Ed Thigpen** on drums in *Oscar Peterson plays Porgy & Bess*.

Classical and little heard, the pianist **Daniel Wayermberg** under the direction of **Georges Prêtre** and the **Orchestra of the Conservatory Concerts Society** for *Rhapsody in Blue*.

**ELLA FITZGERALD**

There was a voice in America

By Steven Jezo-Vannier

Le mot et le reste, 368 p

The writer and biographer **Steven Jezo-Vannier** (born in 1984) surprised me two years ago with a biography of **Frank Sinatra**. In this spirit, you will rediscover the abundant life of the singer **Ella Fitzgerald**. A real success machine, she earned a very good living at less than thirty years old. This sweet lady who never touched any illicit substance had a flawless career. Despite the passing of time and fashions, the appearance of the *First Lady of Jazz* on stage was a guarantee of success. Always worried, she never wanted to disappoint her audience, and her life is intertwined with the history of jazz. In thirty years and counting of jazz, how many times have I crossed paths with the great **Ella**! From *Porgy and Bess* in tandem with her friend **Louis Armstrong** and **Duke Ellington** to the French Riviera, the *JATP* concerts, not to mention everything she did for the *Great American Songbook*, **Ella** was jazz. In more than 300 pages, the author hides nothing, telling the story of the beginnings of a teenager who would have liked to become a dancer, but who had an innate talent for

singing and an equally innate sense for *swing*. **Ella** loved musicians and it was by their side that she developed this sense of rhythm. From trumpeter **Dizzy Gillespie**, pioneer of *bop*, to pianists **Jimmy Rowles/Tommy Flanagan**, guitarists **Joe Pass/Herb Ellis**, without forgetting her great love, bassist **Ray Brown**, or her work, this eternal *young girl* crossed the eras. With her agent, **Norman Granz**, a wise businessman who fought against segregation all his life, she worked in the best conditions, defending, as she could, her African-American friends. A starry life. **FITZGERALD**

**JÉRÔME ETCHEBERRY**

Popstet

A Tribute To Louis Armstrong

Camille productions/import

Born in Arcachon, the beautiful Atlantic coastline, trumpeter **Jérôme Etcheberry** made his name with the *swing* group **Les haricots rouges**. At the heart of this novelty, we find a tribute to the king, **Louis Armstrong**. And it's not a flat cover of titles. It is beautiful and joyful around a visceral *swing*. With the opening piece *Tight Like This*, the featured trumpeter is sometimes

reminiscent of **Rex Stewart**. The young pianist **Ludovic Allainmat** evokes **Jess Stacy**. Good words also for the alto saxophonist **César Poirier**, and we enjoy the judicious combination of the tandem **Johnny Hodges/Daniel Huck**. It *swings* with *Here Me Takin To Ya, Hotter Than That* or *Struttin With Some Barbecue*

**DANIEL GASSIN CROSSOVER BAND**

Change of Heart

Jazz Family

A lawyer by training, but also a pianist, **Daniel Gassin**, Australian by birth, is in tune with the times. With his **Crossover Band**, which includes American singer **Alisa Moses** and *Grammy* Award-winning guitarist **Josiha Woodson**, the set-up is airy. In finesse, the six compositions are very close to contemporary *soul*. At the heart of all this work, **Alisa Moses'** voice is really a big part of it. A very nice novelty that goes beyond the framework of conventional jazz.



# What's New?

By THE NEWS ROOM

## New cables series Odin Gold by Nordost



Attendees of the **Hong Kong High End Audio Visual Show 2021** were the first to view **Nordost's** innovative new *Supreme Reference* line, *Odin Gold*. *Odin Gold* achieves the unthinkable, eclipsing *Odin 2*. While *Odin 2* will continue to remain available as a beacon of audio prowess throughout the industry, *Odin Gold* is now taking its place at the apex of **Nordost** offerings, as the new flagship line.

*Odin Gold* advances the revolutionary technology generated throughout the development of the *Odin 2* range, and improves upon its elemental composition. With this new pre-eminent cable range comes the introduction of a new material to **Nordost's** award-winning design philosophy. One whose stability, conductivity, and tolerance yields transformative, never before experienced enhancements to performance. That material is gold.

*Odin Gold* cables harness the full breadth of **Nordost's** technological advances, innovative manufacturing techniques, and revolutionary, proprietary materials. The *Odin Gold Power*





Cord is constructed using seven gold-plated, close tolerance, 14 AWG 99.999999% oxygen free copper conductors. **Nordost's** patented *Dual Mono-Filament* technology creates a virtual air dielectric between the extruded *FEP* insulation and each individual conductor. **Nordost's** gold-plated *TSC* technology is then carried throughout the cable and into its purpose-built, 100% shielded, gold-plated *HOLO:PLUG®* US (Nema), EU (Schuko), AUS or UK to *HOLO:PLUG®* IEC-C15 or IEC-C19 terminators. The retail price is \$34,999.99 for a 1.25 meter length; additional 1.25 meter increments are \$9,500.00.

*Odin Gold Analog* interconnects consist of ten gold-plated, 23 AWG 99.999999% OFC conductors, each utilizing proprietary *Dual Mono-Filament* technology, precise *FEP* extrusions, and gold-plated *TSC* shielding. **Nordost's** patented, gold-plated *HOLO:PLUG®* connectors, in both phono and balanced varieties, give the *Odin Gold Analog* Interconnect an overwhelming advantage. Notably, the low mass *RCA HOLO:PLUG®* offers an ingeniously devised dual ring design which creates an *symmetrically balanced* cable. Gold-plated pins, also present in the *XLR* termination, reduce vibrations and eddy currents. The retail price is \$34,999.99 for a 0.6 meter pair; additional half meter stereo increments are \$5,000.00.

**Nordost** *Odin Gold Tonearm Cable +* takes every element under consideration, from design, to material, to technology, to construction – it even perfects aspects of grounding that remain an unsolved mystery for most audio cable manufacturers. Its construction consists of four, gold-plated, solid core 23 AWG 99.999999% OFC conductors, wrapped in a patented *Dual Mono-Filament* suspension. The conductors are then individually shielded using **Nordost's** unique, gold-plated *TSC* technology, allowing for 100% coverage and protection from external pollution (such as *RFI* and *EFI*) and crosstalk.

**Nordost's** *Odin Gold Tonearm Cable +* uses a two-prong grounding approach. Firstly, **Nordost's** flagship tonearm cable



runs a fully isolated bond ground throughout the cable which can connect the chassis of the turntable and photo-stage, creating a secure, low noise connection between the two components. The second approach ensures that the gold tonearm cable will be able to address any grounding need, regardless of the unique construction of the components in the sound system. Each *Odin Gold Tonearm Cable +* will include two, detachable, gold-plated ground whips, complete with *Dual Mono-Filament* technology and gold-plated *TSC* shielding. When needed, these ground whips connect to the shielding of the tonearm cable, totally eliminating any noise that could be introduced during signal transfer. The *Odin Gold Tonearm Cable +* is terminated with customized, extremely low mass, gold-plated *HOLO:PLUG®* connectors which include straight or 90° *Din*, *XLR* and *RCA* terminations. The retail price is \$21,999.99 for a 1.25 meter length; additional meter increments are \$6,000.00.

*Odin Gold Loudspeaker Cables* begin with a base constructed using 28 gold-plated, solid core 20 AWG 99.999999% OFC conductors. Each conductor takes advantage of **Nordost's** *Dual Mono-Filament* technology and is encased in a high purity *FEP* extrusion. However, in contrast to **Nordost's** previous loudspeaker cables, *Odin Gold Loudspeaker Cables* utilize an innovative tiered-termination process which eases the transition from cable to connector over several stages. This process minimizes the conversion points of conductors, using eight gold-plated, 14 AWG 99.999999% OFC conductors on either

# What's New?



end of the cable. In decreasing the number of conductors without decreasing the overall gauge, **Nordost** eliminated overcrowding and creates orderly and precise connection points, while decreasing the impedance introduced, which occurs in standard termination practices. This revolutionary technique allows perfect mass-matching to occur between the conductor and connector.

*Odin Gold Loudspeaker Cables* are terminated using **Nordost's** gold-plated *HOLO:PLUG®* spade and *Z-plug* banana connectors. The retail price is \$54,999.99 for a 1.5 meter length; additional half meter stereo increments are \$8,000.00.

*Odin Gold Bi-Wire Jumpers* have an identical construction to the base of the *Odin Gold Loudspeaker Cables*, making them the perfect extension to accommodate bi-wire speakers. By integrating **Nordost's** *Odin Gold Bi-Wire Jumpers* into your system you are not only taking advantage of *state-of-the-art* technology and improving upon the overall performance of your loudspeakers— you are ensuring a consistent sonic signature

throughout your entire system. The retail price for *Odin Gold Bi-Wire Jumpers* is \$13,999.99 for a 0.33 meter set.

**Nordost** *Odin Gold* audio cables are a revelation to the highest echelon of two-channel systems available in the audio world, producing a realism in playback that erases any confounds of an audio system, and provides you with a hyper-realistic audio experience that has to be heard to be truly appreciated.

The **Hong Kong High End Audio Visual Show** marks the beginning of a year-long rollout period, during which this exceptional product will be introduced to audiophiles around the world. To experience your reference audio system as it has never been heard before, elite customers will soon be invited to schedule personalized *Odin Gold* auditions led by **Nordost's** most exclusive *Supreme Reference* dealers as they become available.

[www.nordost.com](http://www.nordost.com)





## Performer m1000

Our powerhouse mono-block.

With the power of 1000 W this amplifier controls every loudspeaker effortlessly. Thanks to VOLTAiR technology it is fast, direct and highly efficient with an outstanding sound.



### Plus & Minus

The loudspeaker binding posts can accommodate banana plugs as well as a stranded wire with a diameter of up to 4mm.

For bi-wiring operation, both types of connection can be used together.

No loudspeaker with less than 2 ohms impedance may be connected.

### AMP CTL

The power amplifier can be switched on and off using the AMP CTL connection between the Performer m1000 and a preamplifier such as the Director Mk2 or the Crossover.

To do this, connect the 3.5 mm jack sockets with a cable with 3.5 mm mono or stereo jack plugs.

Third-party preamps can also switch the Performer m1000 on and off with a 12 V trigger.

### Better safe than sorry

The Performer m1000 has a protection circuit against DC voltage and a limiter against output overload. If direct current (DC) is detected, the output stage switches off automatically and the Protect LED lights up red. To protect the output against overdriving, an LDR limiter (light-dependent resistor) is used. Since it works optically, the audio quality is not affected. The Protect LED lights up yellow when the limiter responds.

**SPL Performer m1000 | \$5 719.00**



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