

»»»» DIGITAL EDITION

# TED

TRENDS ELECTRONICS & DESIGN

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WHAT'S NEW? • AND MORE... | VOLUME 03 NO 01

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# TED

TRENDS ELECTRONICS & DESIGN

## Trends, Electronics & Design Magazine

450 436-1777  
www.tedpublications.com/en  
info@quebecaudio.com

Editions Mizka inc.  
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Messageries Dynamiques  
450.663.9000 1 800 361.5699

## Subscription &

## Address Change / Correction

Magazine Trends, Electronics & Design  
450.436.1777  
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www.tedpublications.com/en

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Quebec National Library, 1994  
Canada National Library : 994-6872  
ISSN 1498-4318

## EDITORIAL

# Posivity!

Artist **Bob Marley** said *Create a path for the coming of positive days!* What a wonderful thought! That's pretty much what most of us have done over the past year and a half to deal with periods of lockdown and partial reopenings. God be praised because, with time, the vaccines and the different sanitary measures, as restrictive as they are, have played their role fairly well. Beating this Covid-19 crisis takes the whole planet to succeed. Of course, we remain cautious since if we want *It to be fine* we have to do what needs to be done.

The artists, with their talents and imagination, have chosen a new way to share their creations with us. The shows were presented on screen, not necessarily by the usual means of broadcasting such as TV or radio, but by means of various software such as **Zoom**, **YouTube**, etc. But what I am getting at is that we have all faced obstacles in our work as well as in our lives. We have had to create different, and sometimes very unusual, ways, as artists have done, to reach others.

In this edition of magazine **Trends, Electronics & Design**, our staff had the pleasure of seeing, using and testing new models from a variety of brands, some better known than others. We offer a range of products that we hope you will enjoy. It is very interesting to note how the collaborators were able

to identify the qualities that were required from the creators (engineers, craftsmen, etc.) to manage to incorporate several positive aspects into these products appreciated by music and film lovers, regardless of the price. Some low-budget devices can be quite amazing in terms of value for *money*. Of course, the offer of so-called *high-end* products still exists.

Nowadays I invite you to listen to your favourite music or movie while enjoying, if you feel like it, a glass of wine or a good glass of milk with a little treat whose recipe is proposed by our newcomer to the *Buon Gusto* — *Recipe* column, **Léa Gariépy**. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome her. And, as always, we thank **Claude Lalonde** for the selection of wines, always as varied as interesting.

If you're not sure what music to listen to for a better relaxation, go quickly read the articles of our columnists of the *Rhythm & Music* section, because, there too, you could make some discoveries or simply reconnect with artists you already know.

As the New Year has just begun, the team joins me in wishing you a New Year full of Health, Joy and Success and let's be calm and positive and *it will be fine!* You just have to put in the time and keep your spirits up! Happy New Year!



Lucie Beauchamp  
Co-publisher and Public Relations Manager

# CLASSICAL MUSIC

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS

## FEATURING

**YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN**  
**RENÉE FLEMING (soprano).**

**Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene**  
Works by: Putts · Fauré · Hahn Liszt · Muhly · Grieg

Decca, 485 2089.

Interpretation: \*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is here at the piano to accompany a program of melodies around the theme of nature. This is his second foray into the field of melody after *Le voyage d'hiver* by **Schubert** with **Joyce DiDonato (Warner)**, and we appreciate the attention he pays to the voice through beautiful inflections in his playing.

**Renée Fleming's** performance is an excellent surprise. The 62-year-old singer, whose voice does not fluctuate too much, takes great care in the pronunciation of the many French melodies without, however, having the exact style of this genre, which stands very far from her natural universe. The CD is distinguished by the presence of three creations by **Kevin Putts, Nico Muhly** and **Caroline Shaw**. It is not a musical revelation, but a pleasant record.

## YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

**Sibelius: Symphonie No. 3**  
**Orchestre Métropolitain**  
Atma, ACD24033—digital release  
Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

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

The *Sibelius* symphonic cycle by **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** and the **Métropolitain** is built on the basis of one symphony recorded per season. The spoils are a bit meager for **ATMA** to publish records in a market that usually pairs symphonies two by two. The 3<sup>rd</sup> *Symphony* is therefore only available in digital format, i.e., as a download and on-demand listening (*streaming*).

This is the second part of the complete works, after the 1<sup>st</sup> *Symphony*, and



**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** continues on the path of great legibility and fundamental honesty in relation to the score. There are no tricks, no bluster, but an admirable neatness and logic of construction. Above all, on the technical level, under the direction of **François Goupil**, this is the finest recording ever made at the **Maison symphonique**, spectacular in its definition and transparency. Unfortunately, the conditions in which it was realized will never be reproduced: spaced out orchestra and 250 people in the room!

## YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

**Florence Price:**  
**Symphonies No. 1 and 3**  
**Philadelphia Orchestra**  
DG, 00028948619009—digital publication  
Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*\*  
Same data here as for the *Sibelius* on **Atma**. **DG** publishes this album, at first, only in digital, waiting for the conclusion of the integral for a physical publication. In this case, it is one of the great artistic crusades of **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** the resurrection of the music of the African-American composer **Florence Price** (1887–1953) from Little Rock, Arkansas. **Florence Price's** symphonic universe is born from the *New World Symphony* by **Dvořák** (the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Symphony* is modelled on the same model) and

the music of the mixed-race Englishman **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** (1875–1912) who integrated elements of spirituals and traditional dances into his works. Characteristic of these scores is the presence, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, of *Juba Dances*, Afro-American folk rhythms. **Price** said *We are awakening to the rich possibility that we already have a folk music, the spirituals—a powerful, poignant, compelling music. A music to discover.*

## CHARLES RICHARD-HAMELIN AND ANDREW WAN

**Beethoven: Violin Sonatas n° 4, 9 & 10**  
**Analekta AN 28,796**  
Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*\*  
This third volume marks the end of the complete collection of **Beethoven's Sonatas for Violin and Piano** undertaken in 2018 by **Andrew Wan**, the concertmaster of the **OSM** and **Charles Richard-Hamelin**. Since the beginning, this adventure has been characterized by a magnificent understanding, a great seriousness and a balance respected by a well-balanced sound recording. Alas, for Quebecers have arrived, since, **Frank-Peter Zimmermann** and **Martin Helmchen (Bis)** who brought the degree of refinement, of elastic and playful approach of the music, to another stage. So that's all well and good,

but today there's more to it and we've talked about it extensively here.

## KENT NAGANO

**Messiaen: La transfiguration de Notre seigneur Jésus-Christ. Poèmes pour mi. Chronochromie.**  
**Pierre Laurent Aimard (piano), Jenny Daviet (soprano), Bavarian Radio Symphony Choir and Orchestra, Kent Nagano.**  
BR Klassik, 3 CDs, BR 900,203.  
Interpretation: \*\*\*\*

Technique: \*\*\*\*\*  
The former music director of the **OSM** is back with a collection of three Munich concerts from 2017, 2018 and 2019 dedicated to **Olivier Messiaen**, when **Kent Nagano** conducted the **Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra**. Compared to the repertoire presented, it seems anachronistic to have a booklet only in English and German. The centrepiece of the set is the oratorio *The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ* for choir, seven solo instruments and orchestra, composed between 1965 and 1969. The thing is as complex as it is rare and only the initiated (**Chung, De Leeuw, Cambreling**) record it or listen to it. If you are a fan of **Kent Nagano**, you know his passion for the pope of the modes of limited transposition. Otherwise, be aware that the complexity of this music is a high-risk challenge.

## RECORD OF THE MONTH VIKINGUR ÓLAFSSON

Mozart & Contemporaries

Deutsche Grammophon, 486 0525

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

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

Vikingur Ólafsson has already seduced us with a disc dedicated to **Bach**, and a project coupling the music of **Debussy** with that of **Rameau**. We often see him with touches of colour or, here, with a feather, as if he were a painter of sounds or an illuminator. In fact, this Icelandic pianist has a particular talent related to the composition of programs. We had seen it with **Debussy-Rameau**. Here **Mozart** is joined by movements by **Galuppi**, arrangements by **Cimarosa**, a *Rondo* by **Carl Philip Emanuel Bach** and the 47<sup>th</sup> *Sonata* by **Haydn**. In the **Wolfgang** chapter, the *Sonatas K. 545* and *457, Rondos and Adagios*... The arrangement creates a kind of musical and emotional journey. This journey is served by an exquisite touch. There are many precious and rare moments on this disc, including some real discoveries in the arrangements of **Cimarosa** including his *Sonata No. 55*, a kind of waking dream.

## SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH THE IMAGINARY MUSIC BOOK OF J.S. BACH

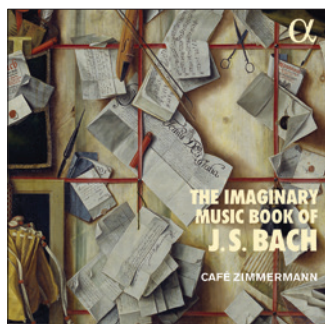
Café Zimmermann

Alpha, 766

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

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

The **Café Zimmermann** ensemble, centred around violinist **Pablo Valetti** and harpsichordist **Céline Frisch**, has numerous **Bach** recordings to its credit with **Alpha**. This *CD* also highlights flutist **Karel Valter**. The idea of this imaginary notebook (one of those where musicians note down the musical themes they appreciate) is to propose an intimate version of movements (for example arias) composed by **Bach** shortly before his death. In addition to



the tunes transcribed for instruments, we hear the *Trio Sonata* of *The Musical offering* (tracks 12 to 15), in a climate of general concentration that leads **Alpha** to title its notice *Gospel without words*. This concentration is very well captured by **Aline Blondiau**'s microphones at the **Temple Saint-Jean** in Mulhouse. The instruments are clean, but the music breathes. Masterful balance at the maximum possible proximity.



## THE BOXSET OF THE MONTH BÉLA BARTÓK

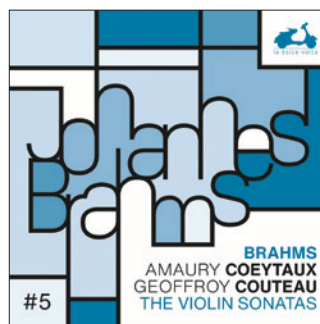
The Hungarian Soul

Warner, 20 CDs, 0190296729317

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

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

Third anthological box set devoted to the music of the great 20th-century composer, **Béla Bartók**, after the complete *Hungaroton* and the **Decca** boxed set. We obviously think things are fixed after such editions, but they are often in limited editions and therefore become inaccessible. This is indeed the case here. The **Decca Bartók** boxset having disappeared from the market, it is necessary to see if this **Warner** box set can replace it advantageously. The bonus is the addition of two historical *CDs*, including recordings by **Bartók** himself. The shortcoming is necessarily the piano music, since **Decca** had **Zoltan Kocsis**. But *Mikrocosmos* and *For children* are well served by **Desző Ranki**. For the rest, **Warner** often resorts to old **György Sebök** recordings. The concertos are excellent, but the large symphonic pieces (**Jansons, Oramo, Conlon, Saraste, Welser-Möst**) are a notch below those chosen in the past by **Decca**. A good and very useful anthology for those who missed the previous editions, but not a box set for those who own them.



## THREE RECORDS THAT WILL MARK 2021 JOHANNES BRAHMS

Sonatas for violin and piano

Amaury Coeytaux, Geoffroy Couteau

La Dolce Volta, LDV, 67

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

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

This disc is a continuation of the complete chamber music of **Brahms** of which the pianist **Geoffroy Couteau** is responsible. **Couteau** has recorded a highly acclaimed complete set of piano music. **Amaury Coeytaux**, violinist of the **Modigliani Quartet**, had already participated in the *Trios*. The two accomplices deliver here a dream version of the famous three *Sonatas for violin and piano*. This is not, as in many versions, an instrumental joust, but a series of shared confidences. This disc proves once again that chamber music and its spirit do not necessarily have to do with the *Star* system. There is a melody by **Mendelssohn** which is entitled *On Wings of Song*. This record embodies it.

## FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Studies op. 25. Scherzos N°s. 1-4

Beatrice Rana

Warner, 0190296764240

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

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

While we have just experienced the *Chopin 2021 Competition* won by Montrealer **Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu**, Italian pianist **Beatrice Rana**, winner of the 2011 *Montreal International Competition*,



offers us a historic version of **Chopin**'s *Études opus 25* and the *4 Scherzos*. The **Chopin** defended at the *Competition* by **Xiaoyu Liu** is a lively composer whose discourse is detailed, but very natural and roborative. In her album, **Beatrice Rana** combines these fireworks with textural refinements that sometimes defy understanding. The advantage **Beatrice Rana**'s vision compared to that of the many young pianists, competitors of **Bruce Liu** heard during the competition, is that these sometimes unreal nuances never get in the way of the discourse. This is much more than a record, it is a music lesson. One sometimes wonders how such a level is possible.

## BARITENOR

Airs pour baryton et pour ténor  
Michael Spyres, Orchestre philharmonique de Strasbourg, Marko Letonja  
Warner, 019029515666

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

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

Is *Baritenor* a real voice, i.e., a historically documented phenomenon that can span three octaves, or is it a construction of a program, offered to a gifted singer capable of assuming tunes covering two types of voices? A delirious *Largo al factotum* (**Rossini**, baritone) is followed by *Le postillon de Lonjumeau* and *La fille du régiment*, two bravura and steep arias for tenor. When **Spyres** continues with *Le Comte de Luna* (*Le Trouvère*) and *Hamlet* by **Ambroise Thomas**, one thinks that whatever the explanation, we are facing a phenomenon. **Michael Spyres** who argues that *baritenor* is a voice in its own right, does everything and can do everything. Nine arias for tenor, nine for baritone. What we are hearing here, from the same human being, is truly hallucinating. This is, to our knowledge, unprecedented, *never seen before*, at this level in the history of recorded singing in the post-war period.



# A NEW HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER OFFERING

BY MICHEL DALLAIRE

British manufacturer **Naim** is known worldwide for its amplifiers and, in recent years, for its digital music playback systems. With the increase in networked and downloadable music, a multitude of devices have appeared on the market that are referred to as *streamers* or *all-in-one* digital devices. With the new *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition*, **Naim** has changed the game a little in the *streamer* market, since it is in this case an amplifier aimed at headphones.

This manufacturer, which later became **Focal-Naim**, is not at its first achievement in the field of headphone amplifiers. First there was the all-analog *Headline* amplifier, then the *DAC-V1* launched in 2013, which combined multiple digital inputs with analog outputs to feed an amplifier block or active speakers. Let's see how the new *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* differs.





### The Uniti Series

Focal-Naim's *Uniti* series consists of five unified designs, including the *Uniti Core* music server and three *all-in-one* integrated amplifiers, including the *Uniti Star*, *Uniti Nova*, and the *Uniti Atom*, which is the most compact and entry-level of the series. All three amplifiers include *streaming* and digital-to-analog conversion functions. The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* completes this series with the same dimensions and *look* as the *Uniti Atom* amplifier.

However, the amplifier section of the *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* has been specifically designed to power just about any headset on the market. It is therefore not equipped with outputs to amplify loudspeakers, but it is equipped with variable gain outputs of its preamplifier on *RCA* and *XLR* connectors. These allow the *Uniti Atom HE* to be associated with an external amplifier or active speakers in much the same way as the *DAC-V1*.

### It Is Compact and Feature Packed

As mentioned above, the *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* features the same design as the *Uniti Atom* with a beautiful backlit volume control on top of the device. This design touch was introduced with the launch of the *Statement* series and the *Mu-so* devices. Its dimensions are 24.5 cm wide by 26.5 cm deep for a height of 9.5 cm. Its massive cooling fins located on each side of the case, its cover machined from a 0.5 cm aluminum plate and its huge toroidal transformer contribute to its substantial weight of at least 7 kg. The 1.5 cm thick plexiglass front panel and its high-definition display screen give it a very *classy look*. The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* is based on the same *streaming* platform that powers all *Mu-so* and *Uniti* devices and the *ND555* player, which represents the pinnacle of **Naim's** networked music players.

In the centre, there is the high-definition display screen, which is not touch-sensitive, but which displays all the useful

## NAIM UNITI ATOM HEADPHONE EDITION AMPLIFIER

information as well as the album covers. To the left of this screen, you can see from top to bottom a button that selects the headphone outputs or the variable gain outputs of the preamplifier. Further down, there is a **Pentaconn** 4.4 mm *jack* for headphones that use this increasingly popular balanced output. Then, there is the output in the standard 6.3 mm *jack*.

« The performance of these two musicians is reproduced with acuity and exemplary speed of execution. In the case of the *Uniti Atom HE*, an additional softness enhances its transparency and subtlety in the delivery of the message. Insofar as one can speak of a stereophonic image when listening through headphones, the *Uniti Atom HE* always remains well centred on the performance of the musicians while not giving me the claustrophobic sensation of music essentially concentrated in my head. In short, the music floats freely around my head without the need for an electronic function that would alter the signal to make it sound like a pair of speakers in front of you. »

At the back, there is another balanced output for headphones on a four-pin *XLR* connector. This will be able to accommodate certain **Focal-Naim** high-end headphones. On the right side of

the screen there is the sleep button, the *Play/Pause* control, the input selector and finally the favourite source selection button. At the back, there are two *Preamp Outputs*, one on *RCA* connectors and the other on *XLR* connectors. On the digital side, there are five inputs, one of which is an *Ethernet* standard on an *RJ45* connector and a *USB-A* as on the front panel, allowing you to connect storage devices such as a *USB* key or an external hard drive. Finally, three other *S/PDIF* standard inputs are provided, two on *Toslink* optical connectors and one on *RCA* coaxial connector. There is no asynchronous *USB-B* input for direct connection to a computer or music server. However, the *Uniti Atom HE* includes a *Bluetooth* wireless receiver module and no visible antenna. All incoming digital signals are first upsampled and then filtered by a **SHARC** processor before being sent to a design was introduced with the launch of the *Statement* series and *Mu-so* devices. Its dimensions are 24.5 cm wide by 26.5 cm deep for a height of 9.5 cm. Its massive cooling fins located on each side of the case, its cover machined from a 0.5 cm aluminum plate and its huge toroidal transformer contribute to its substantial weight of at least 7 kg. The 1.5 cm thick plexiglass front panel and its high-definition display screen give it a very *classy look*. The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* is based on the same *streaming* platform that powers all *Mu-so* and *Uniti* devices and the *ND555* player, which represents the pinnacle of **Naim's** networked music players.

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### Universal Compatibility

*WiFi* and the **Naim** app allow the *Uniti Atom HE* to do multi-room listening with other wireless speakers such as *Mu-so*. It is also possible to do multi-room listening with *Airplay 2* compatible wireless speakers using the **Apple Home** app or with **Chromecast** compatible devices using the **Google Home** app. There is, however, an analog line input on *RCA* connectors at the rear, further expanding the already diverse connectivity of the *Uniti Atom HE*.

The *Uniti Atom HE's* streaming platform uses the *UPnP* data transfer protocol, making it capable of playing music stored on all such devices connected to an Internet network, such as computers, servers or *NAS*. Its *Ethernet* and *WiFi* connections support

music streaming sites such as **Qobuz**, **Spotify Connect**, **TIDAL** and Internet radio. The *Uniti Atom HE* is also compatible with the **ROON** playback software. Apart from the **Naim** application, it can also be used with other networked music playback platforms such as the **Logitech Media Server**. The *Uniti Atom HE* makes it easy to switch from one platform to another without having to play around in the adjustment menu or select a particular input on the device. Its user interface has the intelligence to reset the volume to zero when changing platforms to avoid the unpleasant surprise of a volume that would have remained too high. The *Uniti Atom HE* comes with a beautiful backlit remote control that gives access to the full menu of functions in dim light.

### Installation and Usage Context

Most of the time, I used the *Uniti Atom HE* connected to my wired *Ethernet* network that covers most of the rooms in my house. This ensures the best stability of the digital signal and a bandwidth that supports the highest resolution rates. As soon as the *Uniti Atom HE* was connected to my Internet network, it recognized my *CeolBOX* server and indexed all of its content without requiring any further configuration on my part. From that point on, I was able to use three network music playback programs without any problems, including the **Naim** application, the **Logitech Media Server** and the **ROON**. All three of these platforms' apps are installed on my tablet. When using these three applications on my tablet's touch screen, I found that the volume control could be finely and precisely adjusted with a gradual rise from 0 to 100 positions. I was also able to use the *Uniti Atom HE* successfully as a preamplifier in my main audio system. To do this, I connected it to the *BYPASS* input of my integrated amplifier which became like an external amplifier. The headphones used were my **HiFiMan Sundara**, the **Grado RS2** and a **Sennheiser Momentum**. As for the in-ear headphones, two pairs were used, one from **MartinLogan** and one from **1More**.

### Universality in Music

I started my listening with a new album of the German composer **Nils Frahm**. He has at least twenty albums to his credit and

his latest is entitled *2X1=4*. This opus is the fourth in which he collaborates with the German *dub* specialist **F. S. Blumm**. These two artists from the German *underground* music scene offer us a very well-recorded album, since **Nils Frahm** now has his own recording studio and has founded his own label under the name of **LEITER**. He can now control the production of his albums from A to Z.

My first moments of listening remind me of the very lively sound of the **Naim** devices that I have tested in the past. I'm talking about a muscular dynamic with a well-supported tempo by a consistent power supply. The performance of these two musicians is reproduced with acuity and exemplary speed of execution. In the case of the *Uniti Atom HE*, an additional softness enhances its transparency and subtlety in the delivery of the message. Insofar as one can speak of a stereophonic image when listening through headphones, the *Uniti Atom HE* always remains well centred on the performance of the musicians while not giving me the claustrophobic sensation of music essentially concentrated in my head. In short, the music floats freely around my head without the need for an electronic function that would alter the signal to make it sound like a pair of speakers in front of you. I continue my listening with superb jazz singer **Youn Sun Nah** and her album *She Moves On*. Her magnificent voice is revealed to me in all its texture and sumptuousness. The musicians who accompany her are precisely placed in the airspace that revolves around my head. The timbres of their instruments are scrupulously respected and the *Uniti Atom HE* transfers perfectly to me the emotions that the interpreter wanted to give certain pieces. Whether on soft passages or on crescendos, the finesse of this amplifier does not exaggerate the sibilant notes and its sound always remains relaxing.

The different keyboards such as the piano, the **Hammond** organ as well as the **Fender Rhodes & Wurlitzer** electric pianos are perfectly identifiable in their intrinsic sound. The double bass and drums have a strong impact with deep, well-defined low notes. While the *Uniti Atom HE* is musically very comfortable and satisfying, its level of neutrality and transparency still allowed

## NAIM UNITI ATOM HEADPHONE EDITION AMPLIFIER



me to get a good feel for the different sounds of each of my headphones.

With classical music, the *Uniti Atom HE*'s performance is equally satisfying and accurate. A good example is *Fanfare for the Common Man* by composer **Aaron Copland** on the **Reference Recordings** label. This grandiose music was written by **Aaron Copland** in 1942 for the **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra**. The dynamics of this recording are particularly high for a concert hall recording. The bass drum and cymbals remain, as they should, at the back of the room. The blows on the skins reach me without delay and with a striking impact. The *Uniti Atom HE* does not distract my pleasure when listening to the brass and wind instruments which remain majestic to the point of giving me goose bumps. This piece has been successfully covered and reinterpreted by progressive music group **Emerson, Lake & Palmer**.

### Conclusion

In short, you will have understood, I loved having fun with this little engineering jewel. The *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition* has been designed by engineers who are committed to ease of use and configuration. Its industrial design, which is, in my opinion, one of the most successful, has been the subject of special attention so that it can integrate harmoniously into all types of decor.

The *Uniti Atom HE* sounds great no matter what kind of music you're listening to. It can combine power, control and fine detail on just about any type of headphone. Its universal connectivity and ease of use make it one of the most successful products of its kind. Its \$4,290 price tag may seem substantial for a headphone amplifier, but its all-in-one nature makes it an ideal candidate to be the central link in a complete, high-performance hi-fi system. Add a pair of active speakers or a stereo amplifier block followed by a pair of performance speakers and your musical enjoyment will be multiplied. Its wireless multi-room sound system is just the icing on the cake.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$4,290

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Focal Naim Canada, Tel: 1 866 271.5689,  
<https://www.focalnaimamerica.com/>

### Mediagraphy

Nils Frahm / F.S. Blumm, 2X1=4, LEITER, FLAC, 24 bits / 96 kHz

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

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

Billie Eilish, Happier Than Ever, ProStudioMasters, FLAC, 24 bits/44.1 kHz



# What's New?

By the newsroom

## NAIM — Update integrating TIDAL Connect

This free update is initially available for the *Uniti* range and players aimed at streaming.

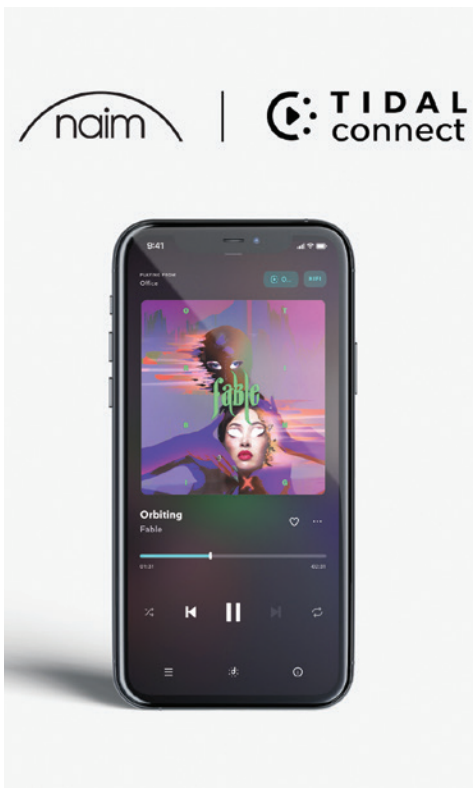
**Naim Audio** is pleased to offer even more listening options in its award-winning range of music players and *streaming* systems with a free software update that provides access to **TIDAL Connect**.

*Nova* music streaming systems as well *ND5 XS2*, *NDX 2* and *ND 555* streaming players is available since September 23, 2021. A similar update will be available in a second time for the *Mu-so 2nd generation* wireless speaker range. The update is simple and quick to install using the **Naim** application.

*It's great to be able to offer Naim system owners even more music options with this free update, and to know that more features*

*will be available on our evolving streaming platform* says a delighted **Paul Neville** Paul Neville, Director of Research and Development at **Naim Audio**.

**TIDAL Connect** is available to all subscribers of this *streaming service*. A free 90-day trial is offered to new users when they purchase any of the *streaming* products in the current **Naim** range. [www.focal.com](http://www.focal.com); [www.naimaudio.com](http://www.naimaudio.com)



**TIDAL Connect** will allow you to explore all the features of the **TIDAL** application and *stream* your favourite tracks with exceptional sound quality, directly on your **Naim** player or system. Users who wish to do so can, of course, continue to use the basic **TIDAL** *streaming* via the **Naim** app.

The 3.7 software update for *Uniti Atom*, *Uniti Atom Headphone Edition*, *Uniti Star* and *Uniti*

ROCK  
PROG

By RICHARD GUAY

**ISILDURS BANE & PETER HAMMILL****In Disequilibrium**

<https://isildursbane.bandcamp.com/>  
After more than 50 years of career, 41 solo albums, 13 **Van Der Graaf Generator** albums, and countless collaborations, **Peter Hammill** is a progressive rock veteran who needs no introduction. And it does not seem to slow down with two releases in 2021; *In Translation* his 41st solo opus and *In Disequilibrium*, his second collaboration with Swedish group **Isildurs Bane**. I liked the previous one, *In Amazonia* (2019) a lot; therefore it is with joy that I see that the experience has been renewed. Each of **Isildurs Bane's** works involve a remarkable team of musicians playing virtually every possible instrument, be it electric, electronic, wind, string or percussion. Let us underline the absolutely remarkable orchestral capacities of this Nordic formation. Over the years, the latter often cooperates with major progressive rock artists by offering them turnkey services. For a creator like **Peter Hammill** whose usual collaborators just don't seem to be able to keep up with him anymore, this alternative is just right. Although he usually works alone, he still desperately needs to participate in group adventures. Being in a different ensemble than **VDGG** will give him a new energy and it is often the **Peter Hammill** of his best years that we find in these two British-Swedish opuses. This last record seems even more successful. The title track, which lasts 25 min, is divided into three parts and

revives his solo albums released in the late 1970s and 1980s, especially in the *hard* and twisted passages that support a corrosive and impenetrable text; recall *The Future Now*, *PH7* and *Black Box*. We are obviously entitled to all the registers of this irreplaceable voice that we would like to be eternal. In contrast, the 19-minute sequel, *Gently (Step by Step)*, divided into four chapters, is much more composed, symphonic and esoteric. This union between a monument of British progressive rock and an impressive ensemble of a dozen experienced musicians and composers gives us a new perspective on an artist who has been part of our lives for decades. *In Disequilibrium* is not **Hammill** solo album, and even less a quasi **VDGG** but rather a new way to rediscover a timeless, larger-than-life monster who has not yet finished surprising us.

**GLASS HAMMER****Skallagrim: Into the Breach**

<https://glasshammer.bandcamp.com/album/skallagrim-into-the-breach>  
Here are other progressive rock artists who are not idle! At the rate of an album every one or two years, our inimitable duo, **Steve Babb** (vocals, keyboards, bass) and **Fred Schendel** (keyboards, vocals, guitars), are keeping busy, to say the least! *Skallagrim – Into the Breach*, the 21<sup>st</sup> instalment of the series, is also the sequel to *Dreaming City*, released last year. However, the links with the latter end there, because the musical style is quite different. **Babb** has recently declared that he makes a point of producing albums

different from each other. We can only agree with him! This time we are dealing with an epic theme about a thief who has lost his memory as well as the girl he loves. To get it all back, he must go to war against evil forces with his sword as his only ally. In short, an ideal concept to produce an album with a strong character. The essential therefore favours a fairly hard style, warlike history obliges, but very tasteful, even if the muffled passages are still omnipresent. The complex and cerebral variations are legion, the whole well camped in a rather strange dreamlike universe. The voice of new singer **Hannah Pryor** masterfully seconds that of the two companions. As we know, each **Glass Hammer** brings its share of surprises and discoveries. This one is no exception and is especially aimed at the ultimate fans of the band who, like me, will know how to tame and worship this beast. What an exceptional group!

**Il Porto Di Venere****E Pensa Che Mi Meraviglio Ancora**

<https://maracashrecords.bandcamp.com/album/e-pensa-che-mi-meraviglio-ancora>  
What happens when six experienced Italian progressive rock musicians, two of whom are members of such prestigious bands as **La Maschera di Cera**, **Höstsonaten**, **Moongarden** and **Submarine Silence** decide to get together to have a good time? Answer: one can only expect an album of pure RPI (*Rock Progressivo Italiano*) as daring, audacious and irreverent as one could wish. And this is exactly what **Maurizio Di Tollo** (voice, acoustic

guitars, drums), **Cristiano Roversi** (keyboards, guitars), **Marco Remondini** (cello, saxophones), **Stefano Zeni** (acoustic and electric violins), **Elisa Minari** (bass) and **Erik Montanari** (acoustic and electric guitars with 6 and 12 strings), plus three collaborators on saxophones and guitars, offer us. Phew! quite a line-up, isn't it! The result is simply breathtaking and in line with the classic Italian progressive of the 1970s, with a good dose of madness. *Il Porto Di Venere (The Port of Venus)* is the kind *RPI* band that we were cruelly missing. Its music is serious and symphonic, but also very adventurous and exploratory. The register is out of proportion. It passes cheerfully from the traditional frenzied pieces and punctuated with catchy choruses to the dark and meditative passages. The surprises are present throughout the opus. The lyrics, obviously Italian, are very well matched with **Di Tollo's** voice, the whole bathed in a twisted and multicoloured musical facture. All delivered by an impressive number of musicians and instruments. The introductory piece, *Formidabile* surprises by its abrupt and jagged turns. On the contrary, *Miserere Sovietico* makes us discover a darker side of the album. *E Pensa Che Mi Meraviglio Ancora (And do you think I'm still amazed?)* brings a breath of fresh air for its delirium and its civilized atypicalism. Should I add that *RPI* fanatics, of which I am a part (but you already know that) will certainly find their satisfaction in it?

MCINTOSH MA12000 HYBRID INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

# SOFTNESS, RICH TONE, DYNAMISM & POWERFULNESS!



BY GEORGE DE SA

When I think of **McIntosh (McIntosh Laboratories Inc.)**, I think of an audio brand with a long history of delivering high quality products to a loyal crowd of consumers. It's a brand that became that made the 1974 **Greatful Dead Wall of Sound** not only possible but legendary

and before that there was Woodstock. Over the years many musicians have stuck to **McIntosh** products and this served to bring the brand into the eye of the masses. Founded in 1949, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S. before being resituated to Binghamton, NY in 1951, the company continues to embrace craftsmanship, *built-in-the-U.S.A.* manufacture and classic



design and build. Their products are an evolution of performance and style which served to make them famous worldwide. Like **Ferrari** or **Harley Davidson**, **McIntosh** amplifiers are praised for more than the sum of their parts.

The **McIntosh Group** encapsulates **McIntosh Labs** as well as **Sonus Faber** and **Sumiko**. **McIntosh** itself delivers a full line-up of products including both analog and digital sources (that's turntables, phono stages, streamers, and **DACs**), along with amplifiers and speakers. They even cater to home theatre enthusiasts needs as well. There are nine models within the **McIntosh** integrated amplifier line-up. The **MA12000** is the current flagship of the **McIntosh** integrated amplifier design and took that position, above the **MA9000** last year in October. Different than the **MA9000**, the **MA12000** is a 2-Channel Hybrid Integrated Amplifier, combining a vacuum tube preamplifier with a solid-state power amplifier. It reigns as the most powerful integrated amplifier that **McIntosh** has ever produced! With 350 Watts into 8, 4 or even 2 Ohm loads, the **MA12000** has power sufficient to drive virtually any consumer speaker, without breaking a sweat.

The design and build of the **MA12000** embraces the classic and most recognizable features of the brand, including large twin blue lit power meters; round chrome-accented control knobs; contoured rocker switches; a real glass faceplate; Medieval font green LED back-lit logo; and an immense and hefty no-nonsense stainless-steel mirror-polished chassis with matte black panels and heatsinks. Yet the **MA12000** has a couple aesthetic design features that set it apart from the **MA9000** – a unique front and centre window that shows off its four **12AX7A** vacuum tube complement and glows fiery amber on power up before going to a **McIntosh** goblin green once its ready to rock. As well, the **MA12000** sports a top porthole-like nameplate, reminiscent of a coffee cup holder, yet attractive, nonetheless. The **MA12000** is menacing in its stature and form. Its visual composure is one of brutal majesty, big (17 1/2" x 21" x 9 1/2"), super brawny (108 lbs/48.9 kg), and elegant – combining heritage romanticism with industrial purposefulness. The control knobs and rocker switches are retro, both in their look and feel – though the function well, don't expect silky smooth or weighty sophistication. Build materials, fit and finish are all very good though not quite what I would call luxury level; think **Shelby Cobra** rather than **Bentley**. That said, the provided full function



## MCINTOSH MA12000 HYBRID INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

remote has a stylish, almost luxurious appearance and feel, without being fashioned out of expensive materials. There is no doubt that the MA12000 is an attention grabber, in part due to its large glass face, imposing size, massive silver front handles and who's forgetting those intoxicating glowing green lights.

« The opening guitar plucks on **Albinoni, Giazotto: Adagio in G minor** were sweet and saturated like honey, while conveying the tension and intensity with their bite. The sweeping of the string instruments within the orchestra in the background conveyed the emotion and flow of the music, while the bass plucks were copious and embodied. There was a sense of effortlessness to the presentation; relaxing and enchanting was the sound. The presentation was utterly smooth yet vivid, appetizingly detailed without being forensic. »

This flagship integrated just draws admiration unto itself, testified by the reaction I customarily got from visitors to my home, who, upon seeing the MA12000, exhaled a customary *Wow*.

### Its Technical Design

Unlike the MA9000 the MA12000 is a hybrid amplification design that combines a tube preamplifier together with a solid-state amplifier. Why did McIntosh go with a hybrid design? Perhaps, I'll just quote what McIntosh has to say, *it gives you the best of all worlds with the warm nuances of a vacuum tube preamplifier combined with the speed and raw power of a solid state amplifier*. The MA12000 uses McIntosh's Autoformers to control its output and ensure it can deliver its rated 350 Watts per channel into  $8/4/2 \Omega$ , having corresponding speaker taps on the back for optimization. Maximum distortion of the amplifier-section at rated power is 0.005% and McIntosh's Power Guard prevents clipping, making the tubes glow amber when engaged and capping output distortion to 2%. Of note, is that the preamplifier has a 0.03% maximum distortion, and a maximum A-weighted signal-to-noise ration of 95 dB below rated power.

### Its Characteristics

The MA12000 integrated amplifier has a broad set of features, including adjustable (resistance and capacitance) MM and MC phono stages; eight-band (25 Hz to 10 kHz) equalizer, headphone amplifier and DAC (DA2) module with 2 x coaxial,



2 x optical, 1 x USB, 1 x MCT and, 1 x HDMI-ARC) handling up to DSD 512, DXD 384 kHz, and PCM up to 24b/192 kHz or 384 kHz via USB. The **McIntosh DA2** is *Roon Tested*, for maximum compatibility and will be automatically identified and configured. The DA2 is the same DAC module that's in the **McIntosh C2700** preamplifier and an upgrade to the DA1 currently shipped within the MA9000. Though the MA9000 doesn't ship with a DA2 installed, owners can upgrade to DA2 after-the-fact. Rounding out the feature set are 6 x RCA (unbalanced) and 2 x XLR (balanced) analog inputs, variable and fixed unbalanced outputs and finally, three pairs of very large (1 3/4" length) brass-like speaker binding posts for each of the 8/4/2 Ω taps. Only one thing makes the MA12000 short of being an *all-in-one* and that is it doesn't have a built-in digital music streamer. I evaluated the MA12000 in my dedicated, and acoustically treated, listening room (13' x 19' x 8'). Speakers used were primarily my **Dynaudio Confidence C2 Signature** speakers, but I also did some listening with my **Focal Electra 1008 Be** standmounts. Digital source was the current **Bluesound NODE** (3rd ed.) and analog was my **VPI Scout** with **Dynavector 10x5**. For comparisons, I did swap in my **Gold Note PH-10 & PSU-10** and **ADL** by **Furutech Esprit DAC/ADC**. I used a Pangea AC-9 power cable, **Audio Sensibility Statement** speaker cables and **Atlas Cables Hyper Integra RCA** interconnects and **Eos dd** digital interconnect in completing my assessment of the MA12000.

### The Evolution of McIntosh's House Sound

My first real listening session with **McIntosh** amplifiers was just about 20 years back, at a store just north of Toronto, Canada, called **Audio Excellence**. That was a memorable listening session with an entry-level **McIntosh** integrated amplifier and a pair of **Magnepan 1.6** quasi-ribbon panel speakers. Over the years since, though I've had the chance to hear **McIntosh** equipment in stores and

shows, I can't say that I've been blown away with those demonstrations. Though I would say they've been good overall, I had not found them great. My impressions were that the sound was a tad dark, lacked some fine detail and was somewhat blunt. Over the last few years, I've heard quite a bit about the evolution of **McIntosh's house sound** and that in its more recent models has embraced more closely those characteristics that many discerning years crave, namely, finer detail, transparency, large soundscapes, and imaging. With this in mind, I approached the MA12000 audition with open arms, looking forward to what one of the latest examples of **McIntosh's** new breed might offer.

### Here's What the Evolution of House Sound Now Offers

One of the albums that made a real impression on me with the MA12000 was **Dominic Miller's** 2004 album, *Shapes*, via **Tidal HiFi** music steaming. The opening guitar plucks on **Albinoni, Giazotto: Adagio in G minor** were sweet and saturated like honey, while conveying the tension and intensity with their bite. The sweeping of the string instruments within the orchestra in the background conveyed the emotion and flow of the music, while the bass plucks were copious and embodied. There was a sense of effortlessness to the presentation; relaxing and enchanting was the sound. The presentation was utterly smooth yet vivid, appetizingly detailed without being forensic. Moving to the track *Shape of My Heart*, vocals by **Sting**, the naturalness and humanness embodied in **Sting's** voice was most apparent through the MA12000. Once again, detail, focus and clarity but also beautifully natural. The bass had impressive weight and bloom, forgoing some ultimate depth and articulation but not leaving me wanting. And then, the track **J.S. Bach: Suit No. 3 in D, Air on the G String**, here the MA12000 portrayed the bass with a mellifluous character, resonant, profuse, and suave. The bows across the strings had buoyancy and a great sense of ease that bathed me in a sonic succulence.

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## MCINTOSH MA12000 HYBRID INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

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across the strings had buoyancy and a great sense of ease that bathed me in a sonic succulence.

I put on **Ray LaMotte's** title track *God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise*. The soundstage presented was very wide, as I've come to expect, with a depth that reached just past the front wall of my room. Though I have had deeper soundstages with a couple solid stage amplifiers what the *MA12000* was capable of was gripping. To confirm my impressions, I went to the *Tron Legacy – Motion Picture Soundtrack*, by **Daft Punk**, via **Tidal HiFi**. Listening to *Outlands* the opening violin strings that play silently and deep to the right of the soundstage came on with intensity and authentic texture; however, not quite matching the deepest presentations that I've heard. With more listening I concluded that the *MA12000* is most capable and producing clear and wide soundstages, those that reach even beyond the side walls, though in recreating depth it comes up somewhat short of the best.

I played **Metric's** *Grow Up and Blow Away* album and the track *Rock Me Now* off a **Tidal** music streaming. The opening drumbeat was taught and tuneful and clearly separated from the bassline that comes in on the chase. The electric bass had a snappy impact, and the articulation was apparent in its growl. It was evident on this track that the *MA12000* had no problem with throwing a wide soundstage, reaching beyond the outer edges of my **Dynaudio C2 Signature** speakers.

Is the *MA12000* utterly neutral in tone? I'd have to say no. Rather, there are a couple of added helpings of warmth to be found across the spectrum, and along with this warmth, a most noticeable add weight and fullness in the lower frequencies. The



upper mids and treble sound relatively even but there isn't any noticeable high frequency air and openness; you get an extended, detailed, and delicate treble that is wet rather than dry and is most definitely not extroverted. This character does though go far in making lesser recordings less harsh and more enjoyable.

I played some vinyl to evaluate the *MA12000* integrated MM phono stage. Phono stages are the key to getting the best in vinyl playback; you may have the best turntable and cartridge, but that micro-voltage signal must travel through the phono stage to be useable by the preamplifier and that is exactly where its most vulnerable to sins of omission or commission. I listened once again to **Sting**, an original LP pressing of his album *Nothing Like the Sun*. On the track, *Englishman in New York*, I was convinced of the quality of the *MA12000*'s in-board phono stage. The opening sax was smooth and liquid yet brassy, while the bass had thickness with an elastic character that maintained the jump factor of the piece. Listening to the piano notes, though there was some muting of vivacity in the keys the ivory warmth and tone was well conveyed. The break of the drum roll was portrayed with wonderful weight, transients though were slightly rounded. The cymbals with were crisp, if somewhat recessed, just shading the tail of their sustain.

The phono stage was strong in its delivery of harmonics, providing a full tonal palate, paired with a honied treble and anchoring bass notes. Comparing back-to-back with my **Gold Note** phono stage, using the same tonearm interconnect but now connecting to the *MA12000* via XLR, it was evident that the **Gold Note** was a clear step-up in performance. The **Gold Note** provided more front-to-back sound stage layering, more air, more definition & detail with a more visceral, and dynamic delivery. However, the **McIntosh** stage's only sins were small and those few were only ones of omission. This must be taken in context; the **Gold Note** with separate power supply is priced at

\$1,599 + \$1,099 and is a very high achiever. In short, the **McIntosh** phono stage is a very well designed and executed integrated solution and will surely satisfy most vinyl listeners. In my estimation, the *MA12000*'s in-board phono stage is competitive with standalone stages nearing \$1500. Now, what's not to love about that!

I did some listening to the headphone output of the **McIntosh** with my *Grado 325e* cans. I expected that the sound would be respectable but to my surprise, I found that the **McIntosh** headphone output was more than respectable, it was great! The presentation was relaxed and effortless and the bass was full, no sense of struggle across the frequency range. Resolution and detail too was very good, providing strong focus and clarity. My typical headphone amplifier is my **ADL Esprit** but I found the **McIntosh** to outperform it. **McIntosh** employs a proprietary **Headphone Crossfeed Director (HXD)** circuit as the default setup, which can be disengaged with the menu selections. The *HXD* changes the presentation from the typical between-the-ears to a more forward-of-ears experience, emulating a near-field speaker setup. I preferred the *HXD* presentation with several recordings, so it's worth experimenting. A feature like this could easily get missed if you don't read the manual... like anyone doesn't read the manual?

The *MA12000* includes **McIntosh**'s latest modular DAC, the *DA2*. I previously mentioned its functionality and key specifications but how does this DAC stand on its own. For that, I compared it to my **Bluesound NODE**'s built-in DAC as well as to my **ADL** by **Furutech**, *Esprit* DAC. Beginning with the *Esprit* DAC, which is now seven years and uses a 24-bit/192kHz **Wolfson WM8716** chip, I played **Shelby Lynn**'s *Just a Little Lovin* album, title track. It was obvious from the get-go that the bass resolution, bass grip was superior with the **McIntosh DA2**. The midrange of the *DA2* was clearer and more explicit. There was more air and extension, with added clarity in the high frequencies. Also, too, the **McIntosh DA2** had more accurate timbre, cymbals hits portrayed with improved extension, faster transients, stronger dynamics, and more extended decay.

Next, I put the **McIntosh DA2** up against the current **Bluesound NODE**. The gap

was smaller vs. the *NODE* but still here the **McIntosh DA2** in the *MA12000* eclipsed the *NODE*. With **Lori Cullen**'s, *Moon River* off **TIDAL HiFi** streaming, the opening metallic notes were noticeably more resolved, realistic, and focused with the **McIntosh DA2 DAC**. **Lori**'s voice was clearer with the *DA2*, as if removing a gauze from the *NODE*'s image. There was also more dynamic energy and a greater sense of speed with the **McIntosh DA2 DAC** module, in play. I'm confident that the **McIntosh DA2 DAC** module would fare well against standalone DACs in the sub \$1500 range.

### In Conclusion

The **McIntosh MA12000** is an incredibly feature packed integrated amplifier. As a preamplifier and amplifier combined, it offers practically limitless power and delivers a bounty of powerful bass. There is a comforting warmth in the tone of the *MA12000* that is heard from top-to-bottom that prevents it from sounding dry or harsh. Smooth, tonally rich, yet dynamic would apply to this **McIntosh** integrated. The *MA12000* brings together warmth, fullness, smoothness, and forgiveness with a level of clarity, detail, and definition that will surely satisfy both music lovers and audiophiles. Is this the *new McIntosh* sound that I've been hearing about? If so, then I'm all ears. True, the *MA12000* is not the last degree in transparency, neutrality, or depth of soundstage but it does excel at presenting music in a beautiful manner with plentiful incite that will captivate the discerning listener. At a *M.S.R.P.* of U.S. \$14,000, the *MA12000* won't be an amplifier for the masses; however, within high-end audio and compared to separates, it offers brilliant value. Gorgeous styling, rock-solid build, high quality parts and wonderful craftsmanship, combined with high performance make the *MA12000* a most desirable integrated amplifier. More so, with **McIntosh**'s heritage, the *MA12000* may not only be an endgame for the buyer but also for those who might inherit one

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$14,000 US

Warranty: 3 years, parts & labour

Manufacturer: McIntosh Laboratory, Inc.,

T.: 1 607.734.4623, [www.mcintoshlabs.com](http://www.mcintoshlabs.com)

*Buon gusto*

By CLAUDE LALONDE



# Larose Vineyards — Superior and Exceptional Cru Bourgeois !

You have probably already seen the mention “*cru bourgeois*” on a bottle of Bordeaux wine and wondered, like many others, what this mention could mean. To answer this question, nothing better than to go to the sources.

So I recently met with **Franck Bijon**, president of the **Alliance des Crus Bourgeois du Médoc** and general manager of **Vignobles de Larose**, an important player in this classification. This house’s wines are part of the *cru bourgeois* including *Chateau Larose Perganson Cru Bourgeois Superior*, *Chateau*

*Larose Trintaudon Cru Bourgeois Superior*, *Chateau Arnaud Cru Bourgeois Exceptional*, *Chateau Tour de Pez Cru Bourgeois* (recent acquisition in 2019). The goals are high for the latter, since they aim at no less than the *Exceptional* classification by 2030.

As for the *cru bourgeois*, let’s say in simple terms that they are part of a classification system of the wines of the Bordeaux region defined according to the intrinsic quality level of the wine. This quality is determined by a panel of impartial experts.



### Classification systems for Bordeaux wines

The regions of Bordeaux (as well as Burgundy) are recognized for the classification system of their wines established according to criteria that will attempt to establish their value. It goes without saying that this classification has a significant impact on the sales and profits of producers. It is safe to say that the better the classification, the more expensive the wine. Criterion *sine qua non*: the wine must maintain this classification especially in cases where it is renewable as in the case of the *crus bourgeois*. Bordeaux pioneered the concept of classification under **Napoleon III** in 1855, and it has since become synonymous

with quality and prestige around the world. The classified growths principle seeks to be a synthesis of a soil's typicity, man's work, and the impact of wine growing techniques on the intrinsic qualities of a wine.

There are several classifications in the *Bordeaux* appellation, including the 1855 classification (red: 60 Médoc crus and 1 Pessac Léognan; white: 27 crus), that of *Graves* (16 crus), that of *Saint-Émilion* (82 crus), that of the *Crus Bourgeois* (249 châteaux) and that of the *Crus Artisans* (36).



# Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE



## The classification of the Crus Bourgeois du Médoc

The **Alliance des Crus Bourgeois** announced in 2020 a revised classification (the first one was in 2003) which includes 249 châteaux spread over the 8 appellations of the Médoc, namely Médoc, Haut-Médoc, Listrac, Moulis, Margaux, Saint-Julien, Pauillac and Saint-Estèphe.

In addition to the quality of the wine, the classification is based on criteria such as environment, traceability, authentication and organoleptic controls.

This classification is valid for 5 years, which allows producers to develop 5-year business plans.

All wines were selected from blind tastings (of 5 vintages of each wine from 2008 to 2016) conducted by recognized but unpublished experts. So no undue influence.

Three hierarchical levels have been reintroduced: *Cru Bourgeois* (179 Châteaux), *Cru Bourgeois Supérieur* (56 Châteaux) and *Cru Exceptionnel* (14 Châteaux).

To consult the list of châteaux that are recognized as **Crus Bourgeois**, go to <https://www.crus-bourgeois.com/>

All in all, **Franck Bijon** and his association aim to ensure that the *Cru Bourgeois* label on a bottle is a solid guarantee of quality.



## Larose Vineyards

**Vignobles de Larose** is owned by the insurance company **Allianz**, and has been for 35 years, which is very special. This ensures the financial solidity of the company and, in return, allows acquisitions (Château Arnauld - 2007 and Château Tour de Pez - in 2019) and investments in viticulture, viniculture and wine tourism.

**Vignobles de Larose** is an important player in the *crus bourgeois* not only with its 4 châteaux, but also with its 255 ha of vineyards, a production of 1.3 million bottles of which 30% are exported, all according to a philosophy of sustainable agriculture and certified *High Environmental Value* and *Terra Vitis*.

When you talk to **Franck Bijon**, you can feel his desire to constantly raise the quality level of his wines. The fact that these are *Superior* and *Exceptional* levels is a testament to that.

<https://www.vignoblesdelarose.com/>





### The Wines

I suggest the following wines that I tasted with Mr. **Bijon**: *Chateau Larose-Trintaudon Cru Bourgeois Supérieur 2016 and 2018, Chateau Larose Perganson Cru Bourgeois Supérieur 2010 and 2012, Chateau Arnould Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel 2012* as well as a brand new wine, *the No Sulfites Added Experience Haut Médoc 2019*.

The availability of the wines may vary depending on the time of the year.

I recommend contacting the agency Merchants of the Americas, which represents them, to find out when they are available at [info@marchands-desameriques.com](mailto:info@marchands-desameriques.com).



## Château Larose-Trintaudon Haut-Médoc 2018



On notes of fresh red fruit creams and black fruits (blackcurrant, blackberry), the mouthfeel is velvety, the tannins are smooth, melted and well structured. Some roasted, black cherry flavours create an aromatic profile that is hard to resist. The whole is of a beautiful balance and a very beautiful length.

*Chateau Larose-Trintaudon 2018, Cru Bourgeois Superior is coming soon. It reveals itself on a perfume of fresh red berries, floral notes (violet) with a slight spicy touch and some discreet and well-integrated woody notes. The attack is fresh and rounded with a velvety texture. The tannins are balanced and tightly woven with a beautiful finesse.*

**Château Larose-Trintaudon  
Haut-Médoc  
Bordeaux  
Cru Bourgeois 2016  
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur  
vintage 2018+**

**Price:** \$26.70

**Grape varieties:** 40 % Cabernet Sauvignon, 56 % Merlot, 4 % Petit Verdot

**Sugar:** 1,9 g/l

**Alcohol:** 13.5%

## Château Larose Perfanson Cru Bourgeois 2012, Bordeaux Cru Bourgeois Supérieur vintage 2018+

**Château Larose Perfanson  
Cru Bourgeois 2012, Bordeaux  
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur  
vintage 2018+**

The aroma combines notes of black fruits, red fruits, eucalyptus, cigar, licorice and sandalwood. In the mouth, the aromatic profile is very youthful with few tertiary notes. The attack is of a beautiful complexity composed of red fruit flavours, woody notes well integrated with a sensation of minerality. The whole is juicy, of an interesting volume with a very long and velvety finish.

The 2012 vintage, made from 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Merlot, is dominated by black fruits with more tannins than the 2010, while exuding a lot of finesse and power.

**Château Larose Perganson  
Cru Bourgeois 2012, Bordeaux  
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur  
vintage 2018+**

**Price:** \$37.25

**Grape varieties:** 50 % Cabernet sauvignon, 45 % Merlot, 5 % Petit Verdot

**Sugar:** 2,3 g/l

**Alcohol:** 14%



# Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

## Château Arnauld Cru Bourgeois Haut-Médoc 2012 Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel vintage 2018+



Although sold at a higher price than other **Vignobles de Larose** wines, it offers exceptional value for money, as it is often compared to much more expensive crus classés, including 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> crus.

This wine reveals aromas of black fruits, cigar notes, ash with a light woody taste. The mouth is dense and powerful, marked by well-structured tannins of great finesse.

The 2018, which is classified as *Cru Bourgeois Cru Exceptionnel*, is discovered on a rather intense dominance of fresh black fruits (blackberries – blackcurrants – blueberries) as well as some floral notes. The texture is unctuous, of a particular finesse and elegance. Beautiful tannic structure with balanced, fine and tightly woven tannins. Incredible length in mouth with the right persistence.

### Château Arnauld Cru Bourgeois Bordeaux

#### Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel vintage 2018+

**Price:** \$60.25

**Grape varieties:** Cabernet  
Sauvignon 46 %, Merlot 36 %

**Alcohol:** 13.5%

## L'Expérience sans sulfites ajouté Domaine Perganson Haut-Médoc 2019



This wine marks the entry of **Vignobles de Larose** in the world of wines *without added sulfites* and this is good news! Over the last 10 years, we have been presented with several of these wines, which, more or less well made, were unstable and generated, in many cases, more or less pleasant smells. The arrival of houses like **Vignobles de Larose** with such wines ensures a higher level of quality.

It is important to know that the addition of sulfites tends to erase the primary aromas in a wine, i.e., the smell of fruit. When there are no sulfites, we leave them all the room!

This wine reveals fresh red fruit aromas (red currants, cranberries, raspberries) and beautiful floral notes. The palate is juicy and the pure flavours are bright and vibrant. The fresh acidity adds a lot of freshness and persistence.

### Happy tasting!

**Grape varieties:** Cabernet  
Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 30%

This wine is upcoming. Watch for it on the **SAQ's** site!

**AUDEL SONIKA MK2 ART EDITION** LOUDSPEAKERS AND **LIGHT** STAND

# *A fragrant melody from Sicily*

By JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

As soon as you open the package of these beautiful little loudspeakers, you can smell the honey, wood and beeswax. These **Audel** loudspeakers smell amazing! They breathe the meticulous work of craftsmen and the expertise of a cabinet-maker from Italy. Here is a product which is really out of the ordinary, with musical qualities all in delicacy which is addressed to the amateurs of beautiful objects. The appearance of the **Audel Sonika mk2** is impeccable and the quality of the construction stands out from other speakers on the market. Newcomer on the Canadian territory, the **Audel** brand comes to us with very interesting products thanks, among other things, to the use of high-quality transducers and a flawless tuning. So let's take a look, and a listen, at these fascinating Sicilian loudspeakers.



**Audel** is a small loudspeaker manufacturer in the vicinity of Palermo. This young company relies on processes that combine the traditions of Italian woodworking with the latest cutting technology using a *CNC* machine. Thanks to the precision of the cuts obtained with *CNC* machines and the almost maniacal care taken during the manual assembly, **Audel** is able to offer its customers boxes of an uncommon quality. The designs of **Audel**'s acoustic and electronic products are the result of engineer's **Davide Ballo** work and that of the founder, **Walter Carzan**. Despite the young age of the company, their loudspeaker designs have already received worldwide critical acclaim from their peers.

**Audel**'s catalogue includes seven models, all of which are easy to *live with* and integrate into their surroundings. The realistic sale prices reflect the quality of the products offered. Three product lines are offered: *Classic*, *Prestige* and *Art*. The version of the *Sonika mk2* that I received belongs to the *Art* series. It is an edition whose front panel is hand-painted by the **Mendini**

**Studio** under the direction of master designer **Alessandro Mendini**. They are absolutely gorgeous and very *lady friendly*. With the beautiful colour of the front, as well as the back plate, the *Art* version of the **Audel Sonika mk2** received instant approval from my spouse. The loudspeakers produced by the small **Audel** team offer a breath of fresh air in the loudspeaker market. Now let's see what it's all about technically speaking.

#### Technical Description

The first thing that catches your eye are the boxes. Like all **Audel** loudspeakers, they are assembled from hollowed-out pieces of plywood using a *CNC* rotary saw. These are then stacked and glued together to form the box. This type of assembly requires a lot of time and guarantees an extraordinary rigidity. In addition, it allows the creation of irregular shapes inside the enclosure, which **Audel** calls *ribs*. These have the effect of reducing the inert waves inside the cabinet and help to minimize coloration. These *ribs* also act as multiple small arches that increase rigidity.

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## AUDEL SONIKA MK2 ART EDITION LOUDSPEAKERS AND LIGHT STAND

The *Sonika mk2* cabinet has a vent that has been integrated into the shape of the box. This way, there is no risk of emitting sounds that could interfere with the sound reproduction. The *Sonika mk2*'s finish was achieved by applying beeswax which was then polished to a beautiful patina. It's beautiful, and it smells good. In addition, beeswax is of natural origin and therefore good for the environment!

The *Sonika mk2* is a two-way loudspeaker using a four-inch woofer and a twenty-nine-millimetre tweeter. These loudspeakers come from the renowned manufacturer **SB Acoustics**. These transducers have been adopted by several other high-end loudspeaker manufacturers. Their presence in the **Audel** *Sonika mk2* loudspeakers suggests that they will be very good listeners. The *tweeter*, in particular, is a marvel of technology.



Despite its price, which is quite reasonable, it is at the *top of* what is being done as a high frequency transducer. Its ring-shaped dome prevents any form of resonance at very high frequencies and guarantees a fine reproduction of harmonics. This **SB Acoustics** *tweeter* is equipped with a neodymium magnet and pure silver connecting wires.

The small, four-inch, natural-fibre *woofer* has a substantial magnet, cast aluminum bowl and rubber suspension. The use of such high quality transducers allowed the designer to simplify the crossover of the loudspeaker as much as possible. It is based on a simple first-order circuit, reducing the number of components in the path of the music.

### Installation and Start-up

The **Audel** *Sonika mk2* were delivered to me with their own stands. After a few tests, I can confirm that they are essential to bring the *Sonika mk2* to its highest level. These stands are made of the same laminated wood that is used for the loudspeaker cabinets. They are really light and offer some flexibility.

For some reason beyond my comprehension, the *Sonika mk2s* suddenly come to life when installed on their stands. An ingenious fastening and uncoupling system makes installation easy. On the other hand, a simple explanation sheet on how to assemble the stands would have saved me some head scratching. The *Light Stand* is equipped with polymer half-spheres instead of the traditional decoupling spikes. These are simply glued under the support and do not allow any adjustment. Unfortunately, not everyone has perfectly level floors. In my opinion, **Audel** should offer a solution that allows for adjustment.

The positioning of the *Sonika mk2*, after a few tests, was easily done at home. They ended up about two feet from the back wall, separated by about six feet and facing slightly inward. The *four-ohm* impedance and 87 dB output at 1 W didn't really cause any particular challenge for my integrated amplifier.

### Listening Impressions

#### A vision of your musical universe with finesse

**Audel's** *Sonika mk2* loudspeakers shine, from the first listening, by the absence of grain. Here we are dealing with small loudspeakers capable of finesse and subtlety that far surpass the majority of loudspeakers of this price. With the **Brahms** piano concertos, performed by **Nelson Freire**, the *Sonika mk2* rendition paints a beautiful three-dimensional musical picture. The absence of resonance of the **SB Acoustics** *tweeter* leaves all the room for the subtleties of the music. Here is finally a small loudspeaker, able to reproduce the dynamics of the high notes of the piano, without the *tweeter* giving the impression that it will tear at any moment. The impacts of the instrument's hammers are rather striking by their dynamism and the infinite length of the resonances. And what about the stereophonic effect! Simply superb! When a loudspeaker has this level of finesse, reverb details appear, the extension of notes is prolonged and the scene becomes larger. The music can then spread out in all its grandeur and occupy all the space it deserves.



### A Tonality Worthy of the Greatest

Judging by the tonal balance offered by the **Audel Sonika mk2**, it becomes clear that their designer understood a thing or two about music reproduction. Indeed, this pair of minimonitors achieves a perfect balance of low, medium and high frequencies. This is an important feature, which greatly expands the musical choices that these loudspeakers will allow you to enjoy. If the rest of your audio system is of good quality, the *Sonika mk2* will not be afraid to *rock* or *jazz* and will love the great classical music orchestras.

There is absolutely no need to feed them with top quality *audiophile* recordings. These loudspeakers are perfectly capable of reproducing the best of a 1970s recording and focusing on the essence of the musical message, for example, when listening to **Isaac Hayes' Best of Shaft** album. This vinyl transports us, thanks to *Sonika mk2*, in another time, without question. The *groove* of the music flows easily from room to room thanks to the superb tonality of these loudspeakers and their perfect balance between the different registers. If there is one interesting comparison I would make, it would be that the tone of the **Audel Sonika mk2** loudspeakers reminds me a lot of the high-end **Grado** headphone models.

### Resolve to Spare

On the occasion of a party, where I invited a friend to come and listen to the splendid **Thorens TD124DD** turntable, the *Sonika mk2* were plugged into my audio system to start with. I mentioned to my guest that we were going to start with the **Audels** and later on we were going to use my usual loudspeakers, in order to get a good feel for the qualities of the turntable. Finally, the *Sonika mk2* remained plugged in all evening and allowed us to appreciate the incredible amount of information that a turntable of this level can inject into an audio system. **Audel's Sonika mk2** have few limits in terms of resolution. Give them quality up front, they will give you back a hundredfold. Their only limit will remain the absolute volume. The small four-inch *woofers* certainly don't lack bass, and the loudspeakers still maintain a nice warm tone. However, they will not be able to provide sound in a large room at high volume. The *Sonika mk2* are therefore loudspeakers that target a clientele that listens at a *reasonable* volume and is looking for absolute refinement. She will then get a holographic musical presentation, impeccable tonality and will discover a lot of unsuspected details in her recordings.

### Conclusion

**Audel's Sonika mk2** loudspeakers certainly deserve their place in the sun. Newcomers to the Quebec audio landscape, these loudspeakers really bring something different to the current offer. They are splendid objects made with the care and craftsmanship of a musical instrument. Refined and versatile, they will easily capture the hearts of music lovers looking for the finer things in life. Plus, they smell so good!



### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Loudspeakers

Price: \$3,200 for the walnut or ebony finish; \$3,400 for the burl walnut finish and \$3,800 for the Art by Mendini finish

Warranty: 2 years parts and labour for transducers/separator filters; 4 years on the cabinet

#### Loudspeaker stands

Price: \$1,100

#### Grids

Price: \$240/pair

Distributor: Tri-Cell Enterprises Inc, T.: 905.265.7870, [www.audel.it](http://www.audel.it); [www.tricellentprises.com](http://www.tricellentprises.com)

#### Mediagraphy

Brahms, The Piano Concertos, Nelson Freire, Tidal file, Decca

Isaac Hayes, Best of Shaft, MGM, 0052 504



# What's New?

By the newsroom

## McIntosh Announces Two Amplifier Stands



### The New AS125 and AS901 Provide a Proper Foundation for McIntosh Products

**McIntosh**, the global leader in prestigious home entertainment and ultimate-quality audio for over 70 years, is proud to unveil its new *AS125* and *AS901* Amplifier Stands.

The *AS125* is ideally suited to be used with a variety of **McIntosh** monoblock amplifiers, including the brand's current offerings, but can also be used with any previous models. A single *AS125* can also be used with a **McIntosh** stereo or integrated amplifier, along with other home stereo system components. The *AS125* is 17.813" (45,2 cm) wide x 4.051" (10,3 cm) tall x 18.013" (45,7 cm) deep.

The *AS901* is specifically designed to be used for the **McIntosh** *MC901* Dual Mono Amplifier, a groundbreaking product with unique characteristics in terms of weight and dimension. The *AS901* is the same width and height as the *AS125* but is 11.8" (30 cm) longer, measuring in at 29.813" (75.7 cm) deep. This is the same length as the *MC901*, allowing the *AS901* to perfectly complement the *MC901* and display it proudly on an appropriately sized amplifier stand.

### Shared Features of the AS125 and AS901

- Made from sustainably sourced solid white ash, an incredibly strong and durable wood, and resistant to scratches and dents. Constructed using a face-glued technique with

edge grain top, which provides extreme strength, durability, and stability.

- Finished with multiple coats of jet-black stain, with a catalyzed lacquer topcoat to provide added vibrancy and depth to the finish.
- Each have a 3" (7,62 cm) thick wood slab to firmly hold the gear.
- The feet have a protective pad on the bottom to protect floors and minimize vibrations.
- Each includes a faceplate with the **McIntosh** logo that can be illuminated green via the *Power Control* ports.
- The wood slab is made by **Symbol Audio**, who have received *Silver Exemplary* status from the **Sustainable Furnishings Council**. Final assembly, packing, and shipping is done at the **McIntosh** factory in Binghamton, NY.

### Pricing and Availability

Orders for the *AS125* and *AS901* can now be placed with Authorized **McIntosh** dealers. Shipping of both stands is expected to begin in January 2022 to the United States and Canada, and to the rest of the world shortly thereafter. Suggested retail price (VAT, shipping and any customs duties related to current standards of individual countries are excluded):

**AS125:** \$3,000 USD

**AS901:** \$3,500 USD

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

# MONITORS WITH GREAT SOUND

BY ADRIEN ROUAH

Small monitors that come directly from the distributor, in two individual boxes, well protected for the trip. It is the imitation walnut version with a black front that I unpack. At first contact, I find them interesting and rather discreet. From memory, the name **PSB** reminds me of two products, the imposing and high-end *Stratus* series and the miniature *Alpha* model which was only miniature in price! In the meantime, this manufacturer has not yet crossed my life and it is only today that I find the Canadian brand **PSB**, an acronym of the names of **Paul** and **Sue Barton**.

To say to a fan of little speakers such as me that with monitors we don't get enough bass is a bit like saying that riding a motorcycle is less enjoyable when it rains! This is a bit of a narrowing of the subject and is rather sectarian. I have always thought, said and written that there is *more accurate bass in a monitor than in big speakers that often preach excess!* And your brain will tell you, in audio, it's better to have less but better than more and too much. In addition, a pair of monitors can be easily positioned in a room, something that high-volume speakers cannot do. Let's move on to our topic of the day, the *Synchrony B600* by **PSB**.



### Technical Description

Thanks to the small **IsoAcoustics** insulators placed under the boxes, we know which way to put them. It is not a matter of trends nor a novelty, but it is indeed the *tweeter* which is positioned under the bass transducer, to be in conformity with the design aimed at by **PSB**. If the crossover takes this particular

« An *a capella* introduction, to get a good feel for what a pair of newly used speakers is capable of. A unique voice does not forgive anything and, above all, underlines any exaggeration. The presence is beautiful, the artist well positioned – I mean standing in front of me, which indicates a filter perfectly in tune with this *tweeter* positioning inversion. The layering is good and so is the depth. Thanks to **PSB's B600s**, you can listen with attention. »

arrangement into account, as is the case here, the distribution of the sound beam will be propelled slightly upwards, i.e., between the bass speaker and the part clearly above the cabinet. This prevents an orchestra from being limited to the height of the speakers. Instead, we create a sound image with a nice upper range.

The *Synchrony B600s* are small monitors that will be recommended for the secondary channels of a home theatre set – as suggested in the **PSB** companion booklet or, as I use them in this article, as the primary channels for a conventional audio system. The general look of the boxes is sober with a few particularities that I must focus on. Let's start with the large aluminum plate on the front panel that acts as a screw cover – for the *woofer*, as well as serving as a mounting and diffusion plate for the *tweeter*, the *tweeter* being paired with this plate. This plate is securely anchored in rubber inserts, much like the old transducer grill mounts. It is intelligently conceived, because several functions that we do not suspect are attributed to this metal plate, like the screw covers, the support and the diffusion of the *tweeter*, the whole displaying, of course, an interesting design.

The back of the cabinets displays a reminder of the aluminum plate principle, this time to include the bass reflex tuning tube of the bass transducer, the dual terminal block to allow for bi-wiring or bi-amping, and the model identification. Note that these black metal plates are all chamfered, which adds a very elegant touch to the overall design. It's nice work, without any visible screws, with a method that I much prefer to the crowns surrounding the transducers, which are often just simple plastic covers fitted in the chassis' perimeter.



## PSB SYNCHRONY B600 SPEAKERS

The drivers chosen are really high quality with a 6.5" bass transducer with a carbon fibre diaphragm and a solid chassis, and a titanium dome *tweeter* cooled by ferrous liquid – liquid that lowers the resonant frequency of the *tweeter* at the same time as it cools the moving coil, which no *tweeter* will complain about! This *tweeter's* magnet is made of neodymium with, on its front part, an acoustic horn lead which will facilitate the dispersion of the frequencies. It also has a lens, in the centre of its dome, which will increase its dynamics and propel the frequencies along its horn.

The filter cutting at 2,200 Hz includes elements of quality, inductors and capacitors chosen with rigour, the whole installed on a printed circuit, it is really well realized. The internal damping of the cabinets is entrusted to a thin layer of glass wool held in a kind of net, with meshes larger than those of a mosquito net, skilfully placed at critical points. If the exterior work is of high quality, the interior is not to be outdone. As you can see, the *Synchrony B600s* are as well cared for on the inside as on the outside!

### Installation

For my personal listening, I own monitors that I have been delighted with for many years. The stands of my speakers are already in place, I just have to check if I direct the cabinets towards me or rather towards the sides of my sofa. No grid on the *B600*, no bicabbling either. I keep the terminal jumpers, installed by **PSB**, and I find my usual arrangements. I only put a board on

my *stands* made of multiple birch plies that was almost identical in size to the base surface of the cabinets – it's a coincidence, but sometimes it works out well! The purpose of this addition is to take full advantage of the **IsoAcoustics** pads that are standard on **PSB's B600s** and to have the base isolated from the pedestals, as intended by the manufacturer.

### The Music

After an obligatory passage on the side of the *shows* and films in aperitif, I choose, as usual, some compact discs for the pleasure of the moment. Don't worry, there will be jazz, classical, world music and also something totally different, unusual to taste the versatility of this pair of **PSB** speakers. As you know, speakers are the ultimate transmitters of all the emotions that our musical choices bring, and that pass through our electronics, so why deprive ourselves of versatility and unusualness? I start with **Angelique Ionatos** and her latest album, *Reste la lumière*. This great artist, who passed away this year, always benefited from exceptional sound recordings, often and even in the studio, with a sound close to a public show. An *a capella* introduction, to get a good feel for what a pair of newly used speakers is capable of. A unique voice does not forgive anything and, above all, underlines any exaggeration. The presence is beautiful, the artist well positioned – I mean standing in front of me, which indicates a filter perfectly in tune with this *tweeter* positioning inversion. The layering is good and so is the depth. Thanks to **PSB's B600s**, you can listen with attention. In the very long introduction of *Female Angels*, the artist manages to surprise us by appearing suddenly, and I salute the *B600s* for their respect of the general atmosphere of this track.

With **Feu! Chatterton**, we also start slowly, but it changes quickly! It is a beautiful feeling of space that is created in front of me, a lot of amplitude with a generous bass, well beyond what one could suspect from the size of the cabinets. The precision is good and the listening is pleasant, with an intelligibility of the lyrics that I like – it would be a pity to deprive oneself of the poetic texts of **Feu! Chatterton**. Having listened to this album often with headphones, I know that the instrumental balance is perfect. **PSB's B600s** accentuate the low register without it becoming unpleasant, but it *is* accentuated. I would even say that it is purely complementary to speak about this accentuation, because thanks to it, one quickly forgets that one is in the presence of a pair of speakers whose cabinet volume is only about fifteen grams! Beautiful text with *Cantique*, embellished with a constant rhythmic that never exceeds the voice of the singer. It is well balanced and well reproduced by the **PSB B600s**. I like these compositions that at first seem very simple, but are really challenging for speakers with balance problems.

I am now moving on to classical music. It is under the direction of **Esa-Pekka Salonen**, on his album dedicated to **Igor Stravinsky**, that we discover **Béla Bartók** and his *Miraculous Mandarin*. And for this work, a pair of speakers has to do well! The variations of intensity immediately plunge us into the difficulty. By difficulty, we mean our interest or lack of interest in what we hear, that is, whether we keep our attention or,



because the effort is so great, we drop out. In the case of the B600s, the bass emphasis does not harm classical music, quite the contrary! It is this register, which must remain of high quality, that will give the music its fullness and match the intensity of the orchestral masses. So we go from a truncated register, for most of the poorly designed monitors, to a well-balanced register for the **PSB B600s**, with a delightful tone. And once again, we are surprised by the number of low notes felt.

I promised you something unusual, here it is. This is a somewhat unlikely duo that introduces us to two unusual instruments. It is a Persian-Inca duet, a dialogue between the music of Iran and that of the Andes, with instruments such as the charango, a small 10-string guitar and the Kamancheh, surely the ancestor of the violin with 4 strings and a bow as well. It is with some unusual compositions, played by equally unusual instruments, that the pleasure of discovering the music at the same time as what diffuses it,

will lead us to applaud or to hate, to understand that we have made a good purchase or to say that we will change these speakers in a short time! The **PSB B600s** are endearing speakers.

### Conclusion

The freestanding model, *T600*, from the **Synchrony** series, is used as the main speakers in a system in which the *B600s* will be secondary, in the rear or centre channels. At least that's what we understand when we look at the provided leaflet that serves as our instruction manual. However, and this is what I wanted to get at by offering you these speakers in my own way, using them as main speakers will suit them perfectly. I can easily understand that, if we want to offer small speakers today, we have to get rid of the lack of bass usually found in smaller cabinets. In the case of the *B600s*, the listener is never frustrated by the lack of extreme low register, our concurrence being perfectly provided for! Musically, and having

verified it in all registers and in many musical genres, the **PSB B600s** will delight music lovers eager for music and discovery. Let's salute once again a Canadian manufacturer, responsible for our high-fidelity pleasures, pleasures of yesterday and today.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3499/pair

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labour

Distributor: The Lenbrook Group of Companies,

Tel: 905.831.6555, <https://lenbrook.com>;

<https://www.psbSpeakers.com>

### Mediagraphy

Angélique Ionatos, Reste la lumière,

Ici d'Ailleurs, IDA104

Feu! Chatterton, Palais d'Argile, Sony, 354 314-2

Igor Stravinski, Le Sacre du Printemps,

Dir. Esa-Pekka Salonen, DG, 483 9953

Duo Perse-Inca, Echoes of the Mountains,

Analekta, AN2-9174



# Buon Gusto -Recipe

## Classic Banana Bread

By Léa Gariépy

This recipe takes me back to childhood with every bite. Its well-balanced banana taste with the caramelized taste of brown sugar will delight children and adults alike! A nutritious and delicious bread to enjoy for breakfast, as a snack or for dessert!



Photos : Luto Photographie

## Ingredients:

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup wheat germ
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of soft butter at room temperature
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 ripe bananas mashed
- 2 tbsp. plain 0% Greek yogurt

## Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Mix together flour, wheat germ, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Put aside.

Mix together mashed bananas and Greek yogurt.

Using an electric mixer, cream the butter with the brown sugar. Add egg, vanilla and banana mixture.

Add flour mixture and mix until smooth.

Pour batter into a loaf pan lined with parchment paper or coated with vegetable oil.

Bake for 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the bread comes out clean.

Let cool for 10 minutes before unmolding.

Serve alone or with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



# A MONUMENT CELEBRATING DECADES OF EXPERTISE

BY JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

We live in a creative and fascinating time. If you told me that one day, someone, somewhere in Germany, in 2021, would design a new version of the **Thorens 124**, I would never have believed you! And yet, **Gunter Kürten** did it. It is real, it stands like a monument with a timeless look and a simplicity that commands respect. This reissue of the **Thorens 124** is called **124DD** and is packed with modern technology. While respecting the spirit of the legend that preceded it, the new **TD-124DD** will have to be more modern, more reliable and, logically, more efficient. This **Thorens TD-124DD** will have some big shoes to fill. Judging by the reception it has received from the specialized press since its release, we can believe that it will be really special. Will it be able to honour and ensure the continuity of the original **124**? Let's see.

**Thorens** is a legendary turntable manufacturer. Many **Thorens** products would certainly have a place in the *hi-fi* hall of fame, if there were one. **Thorens** was originally a Swiss company founded in Sainte-Croix by Hermann **Thorens** in 1883. It is one of the oldest manufacturers of high-fidelity products on the planet. The company is now located in Germany and its various operations are done between Switzerland and Germany. Most recently, in 2018, the brand was relaunched by **Gunter Kürten** who set it up in **Bergisch Gladbach**, Germany, in the heart of what is now appropriately called the *Analog Valley*. Since the

arrival of **Gunter Kürten**, the brand has literally taken off. Boldly designed models follow one another while respecting the traditions and spirit of the brand. The current **Thorens** design team seems to have a special talent for bringing legendary models back to life. We saw it with the **TD-1600** which is a reincarnation of the **TD-160**. In addition, **Thorens** will soon launch the **TD-1500**, a worthy replacement for the venerable **TD-150**. This time, with the **TD-124DD**, the challenge was great. It was a question of reviving an absolutely legendary model, the **TD-124**, from its ashes. A model still widely used today, followed and adored by a whole community of fans, who would not change this turntable for anything in the world. The former **TD-124** has an entire ecosystem of newsgroups, aftermarket manufacturers and online sales sites. A community that ensures the survival and proper functioning of these magnificent machines, even today. The new **TD-124DD** comes with several innovations, respecting in many ways the soul of the original model. The main change is the adoption of a direct drive motor in place of the complex roller and belt drive mechanism. Even if some purists see this as heresy, I can assure you that the training solution chosen has been beautifully implemented and that the results are really there. The **TD-124DD** is a very high-end turntable, delivered with its own **TP-124** tonearm and a **Thorens SPU** moving coil cartridge manufactured by **Ortofon**. This set has the ambition to recreate the musical magic of its glorious ancestor. To better understand how **Thorens'** team was able to meet the challenge, let's explore the technical aspects of this turntable.

## The TD-124DD Turntable

As mentioned above, the **TD-124DD** is a direct drive turntable. There are no belts, rollers or drive wheels, since the platter is driven directly by the motor shaft. This type of drive has long been decried by audiophile purists. Indeed, during the golden





« **Suzanne Vega's** album *Solitude Standing* [...] despite the fact that this one is an edition that has absolutely nothing *audiophile* about it, the *TD-124DD* gives it an unsuspected lustre and clarity. The album's title track bursts through my speakers with an infectious energy. The singer's voice whispers the lyrics, right in front of me, almost at my feet, with an intimate closeness. A true festival of sonic subtlety graces the song while the drums resonate with a strong impact. That defines the **Thorens TD-124DD** as well as it defines the old *124*. »

years of analog reproduction, Japanese manufacturers popularized the use of this type of drive through a variety of inexpensive models. Often, the musicality of these turntables suffered from a blatant lack of speed stability, as the motor spent most of its time adjusting itself, trying to correct its own mistakes. Today, direct drive has become the technology of choice for a growing number of high-end manufacturers. **Thorens, Brinkmann, VPI, Technics**, and many others have now proven that when this technology is well implemented, it is by far the best. In the case of the *TD-124DD*, the designers made no compromises. The motor and its shaft are generously dimensioned and the 3.5 kg aluminum plate has been machined with amazing precision. Unwrapping this one, we can't help but be speechless and let out a hearty *WOW!* The platter rests on a substantial diameter rotation axis attached to the aluminum subframe. The latter rests on rubber mushrooms. Similar to those found on the original *TD-124*, they act like a semi-rigid

suspension. The level of the subframe is adjustable thanks to three casters located at the front and rear of the stage. This operation is facilitated by the presence of a small bubble level placed on the top of the plate. At the front, a second wheel allows fine adjustment of the turntable speed.

The **Thorens TD-124DD** returns with a rather unique feature that was present on the original model. This is a lever on the side, which allows you to pause the rotation of the platter when changing the disc. It's simple, practical and effective! The subframe rests on a wood base with a flawless matte black finish. Too bad other real wood finishes are not available. It may come one day.

At the back of the base, we find all the necessary connectors and, rather rare, a pair of *XLR* connectors allowing to route the delicate signal of the cartridge in perfect silence. There is also a connector for the board's power supply, which is located in a separate housing. This linear power supply has been designed with great care and undoubtedly contributes to the turntable's performance.

#### **The Thorens TP-124 Tone Arm**

This new tone arm from **Thorens** is a nice surprise and is a nod to the old tone arms from the 1970s made by **EMT**. It has a *J-shaped* aluminum tube. The inside of the tube is damped to minimize resonance. **Thorens** supplies two brass counterweights of different masses. This allows the *TP-124* to be compatible with any type of cartridge and more specifically with the **Thorens SP U** supplied with the kit. A shell compatible with the **SME** bayonet is also provided for use with a conventional mount cartridge. As the *TP-124* is equipped with an **SME**



bayonet, it will be possible to use another type of shell, and to make cartridge changes easily.

The *TP-124* has an innovative traction control system that works like a pendulum. It fits inside the base of the arm and has a small weight at the end of a wire, coupled to a jewel bearing. The **Thorens** design team chose to use very high quality ball bearings for both arm axes. These are remarkably well implanted and offer no play while ensuring exemplary rigidity. Curiously enough, **Thorens** also chose to install a motorized arm lift with the control located at the front. Quite honestly, a simple manual arm lift would have been less noisy, faster and much more pleasant to use.

#### **The Thorens SPU Cartridge**

This superb cartridge is manufactured by **Ortofon** from **Thorens'** specifications and has been designed to work in perfect synergy with the *TP-124* tone arm. Based on **Ortofon's** *SPU Synergy G*, the **Thorens SPU** features a perfectly polished elliptical diamond shape. At **Thorens'** request, the cartridge mass has been reduced to allow for a lighter weight requirement when reading, resulting in a recommended weight of three grams as well as better tracking. The 0.5 MV output level of the

**Thorens SPU** is a little higher than that of its **Ortofon** counterparts. It will therefore be much easier to match with different phono stages.

#### **Unpacking and Installation**

The version of the **Thorens TD-124DD** that I received was a package that included a gorgeous reinforced carrying case. This is a small pleasure that adds to the joy of unpacking such a classy *machine*. The installation was a breeze and the instruction manual is quite clear. It is presented with the same retro look. All the necessary tools and accessories are provided and in less than an hour, the **Thorens TD-124DD** had already started singing.

#### **High-end like no other**

From the very first minutes the cartridge needle was in the grooves, I knew I was dealing with a very different high-end beast. While the vast majority of turntables in this price category manage to extract an impressive amount of information from the discs, this **Thorens** does it in a completely different way. The *TD-124DD* places, first and foremost, the emotional aspects of the sound reproduction before the resolution. The dynamics are

**THORENS TD-124DD** TURNTABLE AND **THORENS SPU** CARTRIDGE



devastating with a bass so full that you can hardly believe it.

With the reissue of the famous album *Moving Pictures* by Canadian band **Rush**, the result is simply epic! The *TD-124DD* then injects in my audio system a quantity of energy that I never perceived before. It does this by emphasizing the rhythm, the melodic variations, the drum attack and the bass drum *kick*. **Thorens' TD-124DD** renders **Alex Lifeson's** electric guitar's music with an incisive impact and a bite not unlike the character of the original *124*. The tone is close to perfection and we let ourselves be carried away by the energetic surge of this **Rush** album. This turntable is in complete contrast to the current offer in the high end. Music lovers who find that expensive turntables often give too sterile a result will certainly find something to their liking with this *TD-124DD*.

**The Great Explorer of Record Collections** What do **Steely Dan**, **Boston**, **Sarah McLaclan**, **Suzanne Vega** and **Tears for fear** have in common? Their albums all sound great on **Thorens' TD-124DD**. It behaves like a real explorer of our record library. Each album has surprises in store for us and it makes us rediscover some that we thought we knew perfectly.

**Suzanne Vega's** album *Solitude Standing* is a perfect example. Despite the fact that this one is an edition that has absolutely nothing *audiophile* about it, the *TD-124DD* gives it an unsuspected lustre and clarity. The album's title track bursts through my speakers with an infectious energy. The singer's voice whispers the lyrics, right in front of me, almost at my feet, with an intimate closeness. A true festival of sonic subtlety graces the song while the drums resonate with a strong impact. That defines

the **Thorens TD-124DD** as well as it defines the old *124*.

A turntable capable of finesse, delicacy and subtlety while offering a dynamic range that bursts out of my speakers without any feeling of compression. Moreover, anecdotally, I carried out a good part of my listening with the small **Audel Sonika MK2** speakers. Powered by the *TD-124DD*, these gave the impression of having completely tripled in size! When synergy makes magic!

The **Thorens TD-124DD** offers a unique and simply magical level of performance. Of course, it is equipped with high-quality components. But it is the synergy between them that makes all the difference. The fact that the cartridge was specifically designed for the *TP-124* tone arm and that the tone arm was specifically designed for the *TD-124DD* turntable brings a *plus* to the

## THORENS TD-124DD TURNTABLE AND THORENS SPU CARTRIDGE

music reproduction. It is a quality that is difficult to quantify, define or isolate. However, when I let this turntable *play* for friends, they all said that the cartridge worked perfectly with the tone arm and that the *match* seemed perfect with the turntable. An essential synergy, which raises the listening to another level, which allows to forget the turntable and to better appreciate the music. Like with this **Harmonium XLV** record that I played on the *TD-124DD*, just to have an idea of the result. I ended up listening to the whole thing, completely forgetting what I wanted to evaluate. By the way, my ratio of albums listened to in their entirety has never been as high as with this *TD-124DD*!

### Conclusion

The **Thorens TD-124DD** takes up the challenge of reviving the original *124* with brio. It achieves this through judicious technical choices, impeccable manufacturing quality and, above all, a perfect synergy between the various elements that make it up. It is a magnificent turntable, with reasonable dimensions, sober and classic aesthetics and of which the use is a pure pleasure. With its lively sound, infectious dynamics and smooth tone, it is a completely different offering from other turntables on the market. For all enthusiasts looking for a turntable of this level, the **Thorens TD-124DD** is a must-have, to be *visited* and *listened* to at your dealer.



### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$20,500

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

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

### Mediagraphy

Rush, Moving Pictures, Anthem, B0022380-01

Suzanne Vega, Solitude Standing, A&M Records, SP-5136

Harmonium, XLV, Universal, 0816224



# What's New?

By the newsroom

## Focal Powered by Naim Space in Saskatoon



*Edition* turntable, **Naim** streaming music players and the latest **Focal** headphones - *Clear Mg* and *Celestee*. Unveiled this year, the **Focal 1000 Series** wall and ceiling speakers, the ultimate in **Focal** integrated products are also shown. In addition to these solutions for the home are **Focal Alpha Evo** studio monitors, part of the *Professional Collection*.

### First Focal and Naim Space in Canada, 14th store in the world

**Focal Powered by Naim Saskatoon** is open now and will be followed by some of the biggest cities in Canada in 2022, including Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal and Toronto. It joins the global network of **Focal Powered by Naim**: Australia, France, China, South Korea, Germany, Czech Republic, United Kingdom and United States.

### Focal Powered by Naim Saskatoon

2009 Alberta Ave.  
Saskatoon, SK – S7K 1S2  
**Pulsworks.com**  
**www.focal.com**  
**www.naimaudio.com**

In early January 2022, First **Focal Powered by Naim** shop in Canada joined the Growing Global Network of *Next Generation Audio Retail*. **Focal Powered by Naim Saskatoon** joins the network of **Focal** and **Naim** stores to open around the world.

**VerVent Audio**, which unites the two iconic brands in acoustics and electronics, continues growing its global network of destination audio stores.

### Customer Experience in the Spotlight

In Saskatoon, *the City of Bridges*, located in the heart of the province of Saskatchewan (Canada), the **Focal Powered by Naim** space opens in the **Pulsworks Audio Arts** store. It is more than a place dedicated to audio; it is an experience. This sophisticated space invites customers to explore the unique world of **Focal** and **Naim**. Listening areas as well as a headphone bar invite each customer to fully enjoy the hi-fi and home cinema listening sessions. The expertise of the team on site provides high-end service for everyone.

### The Best Focal and Naim Products

A wide range of products are on display, including the high-end **Naim Statement** amplifier system, the iconic **Focal Utopia Scala Evo** speaker, the recent **Naim Solstice Special**



# What's new?

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

## NAD C 700 BluOS Integrated Amplifier



### A more affordable Masters M10?

In 2019, **NAD** introduced the *M10 BluOS*, which is part of the *Masters* series, which revolutionized the field of so-called

*all-in-one* integrated amplifiers in its own way. In 2021, **NAD** is doing it again with the *Masters M10 V2 BluOS* which includes some power improvements and an update

to its *BluOS streaming* platform. At the end of September 2021, it's the *C 700 BluOS's* turn to make its appearance in the *Masters* series. This new integrated has essentially the same solid case design and half-size as the *Masters M10 V2 BluOS*. It also features the same *BluOS streaming* platform that, through its application, allows you to select your digitally stored music from your network. Internet radio is also available as well as music from sites such as **Spotify**, **Amazon Music HD**, **Tidal** and **Qobuz**. The *C 700 BluOS* supports *Airplay 2* playback platforms from **Apple**, **Spotify Connect**, **Tidal Connect** and **ROON**. Its *BluOS* application allows it to wirelessly sound several rooms in your home over 63 zones with the **Bluesound** wireless speakers. The *C 700 BluOS* can also be controlled by voice via **Amazon Alexa**, **Apple Siri** and **Google Assistant**.



The *C 700 BluOS* is therefore a modern and compact solution to which you only need to add a pair of speakers to obtain an ultra-complete and powerful *Hi-Fi* system. Its 80W per channel power is provided by *HybridDigital UcD* class *D* amplifier technology. The latter is the result of a collaboration between **NAD** and renowned manufacturer of amplification modules **Hypex Electronics**. The price of the *C 700 BluOS* is almost half that of the *Masters M10 V2 BluOS*, making it a more affordable option while still being as user-friendly as its big brother. At the time of writing, the **NAD C 700 BluOS** is listed at a Canadian price of \$1,999 and should currently be available at authorized retailers.

[nadelectronics.com](http://nadelectronics.com)

# BLUES

BY PIERRE JOBIN

## NIGHT BLUEMERS

Welcome Aboard The Midnight Train  
Self-production, NB 01

**Night Bluemers** is an experienced blues rock band from Quebec, also known as **Les Patriarches Blues de la Mauricie**. In pandemic times, the band decided to present us their very first album, *Welcome Aboard The Midnight Train* an opus of seven original songs and three covers. The band is composed of **Normand Béliveau** voice and guitar, of **Jean Boudreau** bass, of **Jacques Livernoche** drums and percussion, and **Pierre Verville** piano/B3 and of **Christian Gamache** guitar. Together, they concoct an original blues with contemporary impulses that draws from the roots to transform them according to their personal style and energy! I was particularly attracted by *Dr. Blues* an excellent slow, electric blues in the purest tradition of this style that tells a simple story about the facts of life, in words and music expressed naturally with feeling and guts. Among other excellent selections, *Obey* is an up-tempo piece that allows the musicians to have a great time and the fans to dance to a wild rock 'n' roll. Among the few guests, **Dawn Tyler Watson** a well-known blues fan and *Juno* award winner. **Dawn Tyler Watson** will be performing with **Normand Béliveau** the traditional *You Gotta Move* from *Mississippi* **Fred McDowell** to which she instills a physical groove and funk impulses. **Breen LeBoeuf** also participates, in a substantial way, in this first recording of his road chums, as much by his contributions to the compositions as by his signature vocal sound. In short, the **Night Bluemers** were ready, well prepared, surrounded and unstoppable to break the ice, whatever we say, whatever we do! As we say, we wish them *The Best on The Road!*

## ELLY WINNINGER

**The Blues Never End**  
Earwig Music Company, Inc,  
Earwig, CD4978

**Elly Winger** is a folk-blues legend that I did not know and that, as an

appreciator of the interconnected musical styles of blues, folk and country I discover with great pleasure and delight. These roots musics, with which she had been in contact since her early childhood, had been revisited during the folk-blues revival of the 1960s, and it continues! The more I listen to this artist, member of the *New York Blues Hall Of Fame* since 2014, the more I appreciate her original and refreshing talent, as well as her qualities as a singer-songwriter. Her singing is authentic, just, smooth, without frills, and his guitar playing is impeccable in fingerpicking and magnificent on the slide acoustic guitar. Just listen to her beautiful interpretation of *God Moves On The Water* by *Blind Willie Johnson* to be convinced. As a young child, even before she could read and write, she was conquered, impregnated and inhabited as if by osmosis by the sincere and free feeling of those great blues creators, the **Vera Hall**, **Blind Willie Johnson**, **Huddie Ledbetter** a.k.a. *Leadbelly*. And that disposes a woman to the worlds of the blues, as well as the aspirations of originality and creativity! On her new recording, *The Blues Never End* (The blues which I really appreciate), the artist offers us four varied compositions of his own and nine covers of great blues founders, from **Skip James** to **Blind Lemon Jefferson** through **Texas Alexander**. . . Her original pieces remain not far from the traditional and she updates it with new stories and a

wider instrumentation, introducing, here and there, the lap steel the pedal steel Tuba, trumpet, clarinet, trombone, bass, banjo also have their word to say and their experiences to tell in this animated, convivial, playful music. I leave you with a quote from the artist, written while she was working on this opus delivered with love and skill. Traditions endure and remain vital when artists interpret rather than just copy. Enjoy your trip to the heart of the Blues magic!

## TERESA JAMES & THE RHYTHM TRAPS

**Rose-Colored Glasses Vol. 1**  
Blue Heart Records, BHR-015

**Teresa James & The Rhythm Tramps** is twenty-three years of recording experience, a dozen albums, a *Billboard Music Awards* and a nomination for a *Grammy Award* for *Here In Babylon* in the *Best Contemporary Blues Album* category in 2018. It's solid! Here is a dedicated, natural, versatile singer, full of soul who has recorded with the

greatest, the **Tommy Castro**, **Eric Burdon**, **Spencer Davis**, **Randy Newman**, **Neil Diamond**, **Walter Trout** and the list goes on. . . Her band, enhanced by expressive keyboards and horns, keeps on excelling with each album. For *Rose-Colored Glasses* the particularity is that they invited several quality Texas guitarists, among them **Anson Funderberg** and **Johnny Lee Schell** to infuse the pieces with their six-string talents. The twelve new compositions that form the framework of this opus are signed by **Terry Wilson** the singer's partner, bassist and producer of this new CD with the involvement of her and other collaborators. The compositions are presented in shades of optimism, jubilant love, redemption, strength and joy. Danceable R&B, groove, ballads, rumba and even reggae enliven this eclectic, always lively, quality and relevant record. See and appreciate the passionate commitment and multiple talents of this star-studded group, as well as the abundant energy, skill and expertise of this singer with a capital S!



# ENTRY LEVEL *WITHOUT* ENTRY LEVEL QUALITY

BY DAVID SUSILO

In the world of complicated receivers and audio systems, we should never forget that sometimes not everyone needs an *overly* luxurious receiver. Perhaps the listening room

does not require it. Maybe we just want something basic without being entry-level quality. So, when such a context arises, **Onkyo** offers me to play with the *TX-NR5100*.

## HDMI 2.1 8K capability, but not only!

I tested the *TX-NR5100* and found that it supports 4K/120 Hz signals. However, to get 4K/120 Hz with this device, I first had to dig into the receiver's menus, i.e. Settings > 1. Input output assignment > TV output/OSD > HDMI 4K/8K signal format > 8K standard. This should have been the default setting, but I can

understand why there are still more people using the normal 4K signal format as opposed to the 8K standard.

Aesthetically, it is a *well-made* receiver. It looks clean and elegant, with just the right amount of buttons on its dashboard. The 525 × 240 × 405 mm receiver is not light (27.6 lb), but it doesn't look *cheap*. The remote control, on the other hand,







while not exceptional in feel, looks *cheap*. I prefer a larger remote, but again, all the features are well presented using each of the buttons on the remote.

### Some technical specifications

This receiver is rated at 165 W per channel x 7 channels, and since it is designed for a small room and/or entry-level installation, the power is large enough for the *SMPTE* reference level. When using the **Klipsch 6.1 Reference Theater Pack**, the receiver can even produce the *THX-recommended* average sound level of 85 dB without any problems.

In terms of performance, the *TX-NR5100* offers powerful, dynamic sound with the right hardware. I connected a set of **PSB Century 300i** speakers (5 of them) and a **PSB SubSeries 450** subwoofer to watch movies using my trusty **Panasonic UB9000 UHD BD** player, games (*Xbox* and *PS3*), digital cable box, and **Nvidia's Shield Pro 2019**, as well as to listen to music, and they were all as entertaining and detailed as I could have hoped. I particularly liked the **Onkyo's** unique ability to simultaneously stream music to the **Chromecast** device's built-in output while playing *Mini Ninjas* on my projector using its separate video switching capability.

There is no phono preamp on this receiver, but I didn't expect one. I would rather not have a phono preamp than have the manufacturer waste his budget on a mediocre phono stage. Budgets need to be focused elsewhere. In this case, four *HDMI 2.1* inputs that actually work right out of the box.

### There are things I would like to be different

What I don't like about this receiver is the lack of *HDMI* inputs. There are only four (but all are *HDMI 2.1* inputs, as opposed to

the usual single *HDMI 2.1* input on other brands of receivers), so for someone like me who has 7 *HDMI* devices, this device is a failure. On the other hand, I am not part of the target audience. In addition, one can simply connect all *HDMI* inputs directly to the TV and use the *eARC* to connect to the receiver. So it is not a total failure.

Another thing is the use of spring clips. I mean, it is 2021 after all. They should have been banana plugs. Only the left and right front sections use banana plugs, and the rest of the spring clips are not satisfactory when I try to connect bare AWG 12 wires. The AWG 14 is okay, however. These are, of course, mere details that do not affect the audio quality.

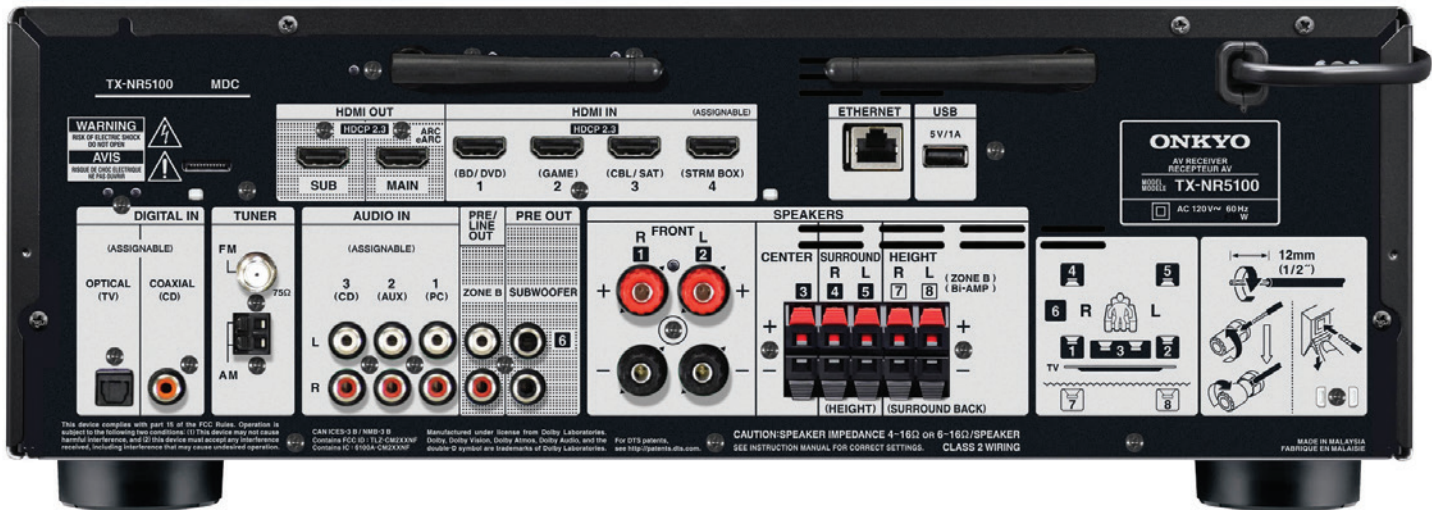
### How does it behave in terms of performance?

Watching movies in **Dolby Atmos** is also quite satisfying, although I only use a 5.1.2 configuration. The same goes for **DTS:X**. Watching the opening scene of **Netflix's** 20 minutes *6 Underground*, I was surprised at how good the 5.1.2 sounded. This does not mean that it is as good as the 5.1.4 configuration, but it is nevertheless very satisfactory.

The orientation in the channels of said 5.1 and the near-constant use of the upper speakers creates huge and quite immersive imaging although it cannot be compared to my reference 5.1.4 system using the **PioneerElite SC-LX704**. Even when testing the *Pod Race* scene from *Star Wars Episode 1*, which is filled with swirling sounds coming from everywhere, this device did not disappoint. Often, I even had the impression that the immersion was quite good, despite the affordable price.

Although not really designed for this, I also tested the receiver in 2-channel mode by connecting my **System Audio Aura 30**

## ONKYO TX-NR5100 7.2 CHANNEL AUDIO-VIDEO AND NETWORK RECEIVER



in 2.1 (with, again, the *SubSeries 450* from **PSB**) and in 2.0. Used with a sufficiently revealing recording and source component (audio CD playback tested with the **Panasonic UB9000** and used both in transport mode via *HDMI* and using the analog stereo output), it simply takes the music and presents it before us in a way that only high-end hi-fi systems can.

All my **Telarc** and **Deutsche Gramofon** audio CDs played nicely with what I consider to be a decent soundstage. Like the *Goldilocks* of high-fidelity. The sound stage is neither too small nor too large. It pulled me into a performance almost without my realizing it, held my attention from beginning to end, and then left me unsure whether to continue listening for the sheer pleasure of it or to continue my evaluation process.

### A little music now

This **Onkyo** receiver exudes a sense of sonic maturity and technical sound solidity that's fully reflected in the way it plays music, with enough *drive* and *liveliness* to animate powerful bass lines, and just the right combination of extension and smoothness in the highs to make cymbals feel spacious and vibrant.

It transmits orchestral music with as much ease as the famous pieces arranged by **Erich Kunzel** and the **Boston Pops**. It allows you to hear all the nuances of late-night jazz (**Diana Krall**, for example), and has the dynamism and vitality for everything from a **Celine Dion** concert to the latest blockbuster movie. All of this is offered to the consumer for only a third of the price of my super powerful reference device. For the price, it's surprisingly impressive. Playing several **DTS: X** movie clips from the **DTS 2020 DTS: X** demo disc and **4K UHD BDs** such as *The Thing and Jumanji 2*, the sound experience is quite satisfying. Not bad at all for a unit like this. In fact, I'm pleasantly surprised that this entry-level device doesn't look or sound *entry-level* at all.

### Conclusion

As you may have guessed from the title of this article, I would recommend this receiver to the budget conscious, as it offers *much more* than I expected coming from a *low budget* receiver.



Although it doesn't have features like *Dirac Live* (reserved for **Onkyo's** high-end units), this receiver offers more than just decent sound. Considering its price, the sound reproduced by this device is always excellent. Add to that, **FOUR** ready-to-use *HDMI 2.1* inputs, and this **Onkyo** system is still superior to what a receiver of this price range typically offers ... especially for universal gamers around the world. Imagine connecting *Xbox* and *PlayStation* video game consoles to the same receiver ... it's unheard of!

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$899.99

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Gentec International inc., Tel. : 905.513.7733,  
www.gentec-intl.com

# What's New?

By the newsroom

## Luxman launches flagship M-10X power amplifier



An uncompromising new power amplifier from **Luxman**, the *M-10X* embodies advanced design methods to combine sonic nuance with formidable power. The *M-10X* replaces the classic *M-900u* of 2013 and joins the acclaimed *D-10X* digital player as flagship models that anticipate the company's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025. The *M-10X* power amplifier will be available in February at a suggested retail price of \$19,995 US.

### **Luxman Integrated Feedback Engine System (LIFES1.0)**

Amplifier negative feedback use has always been a double-edged sword. While feedback plays a central role in reducing distortion, even minuscule inaccuracies in its application can compromise the expressive power of music reproduction. For the *M-10X*, **Luxman** engineers were determined to deliver a dramatic advance in musicality, freshness, and overwhelming impact. The result of their concentrated efforts is the **Luxman Integrated Feedback Engine System (LIFES1.0)**.

To create *LIFES1.0*, **Luxman** engineers embarked on a systematic exploration of alternate designs, using dedicated software to simulate electronic performance across the entire circuit. Simulation enabled the team to examine many more alternate layouts and consider individual circuit components. After arriving at the most promising logically simulated circuits, the team's work had only just begun. **Luxman** designers carefully evaluated available components for their contribution to audio performance. Finally, the team connected assembled experimental boards to an existing amplifier, assessing prototype designs through repeated listening tests. The resulting circuit incorporates quite a few advances.

### **The epitome of power**

Connoisseurs of **Luxman** power amplifiers will immediately recognize the massively overbuilt heat sink stacks, giant power transformer, super-sized 80,000  $\mu\text{F}$  filter capacitors and quadruple parallel *push-pull* output stage with sixteen transistors per channel. The result is prodigious power into just about any conceivable load: not only 150 W + 150 W into 8 ohms, but also an instantaneous 1,200 W + 1,200 W into 1 ohm, or even 2,400 W into 2 ohms in *BTL* monaural mode. As with previous **Luxman** amplifiers, damping factor is high (710) for extraordinary control of speaker motion. As a result, power is instantly and effortlessly available, regardless of the challenges of loudspeaker impedance or the dynamic requirements of the music. Another result of these design choices is an amplifier chassis of uncommon heft: 107 lbs. (48.4 kg).

### **Classic design**

The front panel is understated in blasted white finished aluminum, with small-diameter function switches and generous, needle-type analog level meters, illuminated by incandescent-toned LEDs. **Luxman** designers repositioned the left channel meter to the center, as a respectful nod to *BTL* mode monaural listening. Like the companion *D-10X* digital player, the *M-10X* incorporates hairline detailing and a beveled front panel for added visual interest. **Luxman** designers have examined, tested, auditioned and refined every aspect of the *M-10X* power amplifier. This power amplifier will certainly answer most consumers' desires.

<https://www.luxmanamerica.com>

## JAZZ

By CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ



## NEW WAVE

Film music  
1957-1962

Frémeaux & Associés/Naxos 3 CDs  
In September one of the last sacred monsters of French cinema took his leave. **Jean-Paul Belmondo**, *Bebel* for friends, was one of the artisans of the new wave of cinema. In three discs, and as its title indicates, jazz is honoured in this nice gift that you can slip under the tree and that will delight lovers of the 7<sup>th</sup> art as well as jazz, obviously. With great care, master builder **Olivier Julien**, who supervised a complete **Michel Legrand** revisits the so-called classics. Throughout the three discs, **Michel Legrand** is well present in *Une femme est une femme* (1961) as in *Lola* by **Jacques Demy** (1961). The prize obviously goes to the unforgettable *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1958) with music by the young trumpet player **Miles Davis** as well as the drummer **Art Blakey** and his **Jazz Messengers** in *Dangerous Liaisons* with the bewitching score of the instrumentalist **Barney Wilen**. Let's also mention *Tirez sur le pianiste* (1960), music by **Maurice Jarre** then *Jules et Jim* (1962) of which

the song *Le tourbillon* was interpreted by the singer and actress **Jeanne Moreau** on music composed by **Georges Delerue**. A box for enthusiasts, and at a small price.

## J. F. GIRARD

Dans ma boîte à surprises  
Hommage à Herbert Ruff

Bros productions

The name of the composer **Herbert Ruff** is probably unknown to you, and yet! Born in Poland in 1918, he moved to Canada in 1952 and composed more than 2,000 popular songs, advertising themes, soundtracks for hit shows, and more. From *Sol et Gobelet* to *Pirate Maboule* and from *Ribouldingue* to *Nic et Pic* and *Fanfreluche* as well as *La boîte à surprises* he was part of every adventure. This renowned composer is back in the limelight under the skilful fingers of pianist, composer and conductor **Jean-Fernand Girard**. For this box of surprises, he pays tribute to the one who was affectionately known as *Uncle Herbert*. With a solid team that includes drummer **Paul Brochu**, bassist **Frédéric Alarie**, guitarist **Michael Pucci**, harmonicist **Guy Bélanger**,

saxophonist **François d'Amour** and drummer **Paul Picard**, we also find our friends *Sol et Gobelet*. A favourite, I tell you, is harmonica player **Guy Bélanger** who evokes the memory of the late **Toots Thielemans** and then of **Jean-Fernand** who *swings* like a devil. More importantly, the dialogue he establishes with his harmonica will make you happy from the first note. On a rather muscular samba tune, he makes way for the smiling *Grujo* and *Delicate* featuring saxophonist **François d'Amour** then, surprise, to our *Pirate Maboule* with a funky feel. With *Ribouldingue* we are in the middle of a jazz festival and we will conclude with *Nic et Pic* in the form of a lullaby magnified by the cellist **Julie Trudeau**. This is how the youth of **JF Girard** like that of **Herbert Ruff** is eternal.

## TOMMY FLANAGAN

Solo piano

Storyville/Naxos

Pianist for the great **Ella Fitzgerald** for 15 years, and companion of **John Coltrane** (*Giant Steps*) as well as **Sonny Rollins** for *Saxophone Colossus*, **Tommy Flanagan** was an all-terrain

interpreter. Synonymous with inventiveness as well as precision, his playing covers almost every aspect of jazz. Despite his sudden death, this piano solo recorded in 1974 will give you a glimpse of his immense talent. Eleven remarkable tracks, well-researched standards, without forgetting a very nice tribute to the alter ego of **Duke Ellington**, **Billy Strayhorn**. You have to savour this slowly, in happiness!

## GERRY GIBBS

Thrasher dream Trios  
Songs from My father

Whaling City Sound/Naxos 2 CDs

Son of the legendary vibraphonist **Terry Gibbs**, drummer **Gerry Gibbs** frequented a part of the jazz gotha, not without having touched *funk* with the *Parliament Funkadelic*. This double is a godsend, since he has summoned the late **Chick Corea** with double bass player **Ron Carter**, pianist **Geoff Keezer** with double bass player **Christian McBride** or the organist **Larry Goldings**. The art of the trio in short, with a virtual wink to his father. Believe it or not, this is a gift that cannot be refused!

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