

TRENDS

Electronics & Design

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450 436-1777

Publisher and publication Manager
Franco Moggia

**Co-publisher and
Public Relations Manager**
Lucie Beauchamp

Writing Team Contributors
Lucie Beauchamp, Michel Dallaire,
Jean-Denis Doyle, Léa Garépy,
Claude Lalonde, Adrien Rouah & Richard Schneider.

**Writing Team Contributors
Rhythm & Music Section**
Richard Guay Christophe Huss,
Pierre Jobin & Christopher Rodriguez.

Texts Translation
Gabrielle de Bellefeuille

Infography
Editions Mizka Inc.

Photography
Robert Guevremont
and Franco Moggia

Advertising Sales Representative
Lucie Beauchamp
lucieb@quebecaudio.com
450.436.1777

Distribution
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EDITORIAL

What's in store for us?

Surely what 2022 has in store for us will be just as varied as the last two years. Only one thing is on our side, vaccination. The further we have gone with the COVID-19 crisis, the more we learn to act differently and adapt to just about everything. The world is beginning to learn different life lessons from this, even though it is sometimes enormously difficult for many. Some populations have been, and still are, very divided as to how we should be taking down the restrictions.

The health crisis caused by COVID-19 spared no one, from partial or complete closures, to job losses, to the monetary assistance offered, to the postponement of vacation time for health care workers, etc. Then vaccines came along and with them, the return of hope.

Are we too quick in returning to our activities as before? Phew! It is possible. Collectively, we have learned a lot, although it seems that there is still a lot to learn from this famous health crisis that spared no one. We just lost too many good folks...

Presently, most provinces are letting go of the obligation of most of the restrictions and are adopting the philosophy of letting each citizen decide for themselves. Especially as the number of hospitalized people due to COVID-19 are gradually lowering and

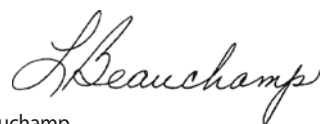
the situation is becoming more and more manageable for the health workers.

But now though, we do have to keep an eye on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Another world folly! There isn't much we can do about it except let our governing folks know what each and everyone of us think. Other than that, we can help with material and financial donations to the Red Cross or any other charitable organization of your choice. And let's pray God, that this war does not last too long. The Ukrainian people should be allowed to live in peace and within their land without being bullied by one of the world's top bully, **Vladimir Putine**.

Let's change the subject and allow us to suggest you read our product reviews in order to be well informed as well as to entertain yourself by listening to music or watching a good movie.

In this edition, we have different articles about electronic devices (integrated amplifier, CD player, *all-in-one* device), very affordable loudspeakers and two vinyl turntables. These devices offer us an excellent quality-price ratio and they might bring an improvement of our audio system for some of us.

As we are at the very beginning of spring, let's enjoy the warmer weather and the slacking of restrictions and enjoy returning to a more normal way of life!



Lucie Beauchamp
Co-publisher and Public Relations Manager

UNISON RESEARCH S6 INTEGRATED TUBE AMPLIFIER

**IT IS VERY BEAUTIFUL,
IT IS VERY GOOD AND
IT IS VERY ITALIAN !**

By ADRIEN ROUAH



I have always enjoyed looking at an object made in Italy, much like looking at a piece of antique furniture or a piece of clothing designed by a great designer. Even if we do not necessarily install the period furniture at home, or wear said garment, there is something that attracts us, that makes us savour these masterpieces for a longer period of time, with our eyes. I have often thought that Italians are the masters of design in most areas. Let's take, for example, the **Unison Research S6** integrated amplifier which will bring together aesthetic success and mechanical-electronic know-how, in order to propose a timeless object. I bow down with respect. Added to that is the music we're talking about today with this all-tube integrated, a device that sublimates my definition of a beautiful object and the description I'll give you.

A tube device, switched off, let's admit it, always exerts a particular fascination and even more, of course, when the tubes light up. A bit like a turntable whose material support we see spinning in connection with the music, and that then we imagine, perhaps, to see the music dancing in the lights of the tubes, our brains always rejoicing in front of the device that diffuses music. If the preamp and power sections are tube type, and this is the case here, it will take a tour de force to make it look good and take up as little space as possible. Let's the details.

Presentation and Techniques

From the start, a challenge presents itself. Should we hide the tubes and create a standard enclosure (i.e., a transistor object), or can we use this tube technology and improve it aesthetically? You know the answer, of course, because you can see from the photos accompanying this article that the challenge is perfectly overcome. For the **Unison Research S6**, a perfect symmetry has been chosen, with a boxlike support as a base for the electronics, a box that will be embellished with solid wood on the front. In the natural cherry version, the circles surrounding the controls, i.e., the function selector, the volume button, the on/off switch and the infrared sensor, are encircled in black. In the version with black front, these circles are surrounded by wood.

The transformers will be hidden in another box, which is cleverly rounded in the front, and which sits majestically in the



UNISON RESEARCH S6 INTEGRATED TUBE AMPLIFIER



middle of the cabinet. On both sides of this cover hiding the transformers, the tubes for each channel are all of Russian origin. I'm digressing here about the tubes installed because, true to **TED Magazine's** habits, I'll describe what I hear with what the manufacturer has chosen as tubes. We have per channel, 1 tube *12AX7 TungSol* and 3 tubes *EL34* of the same brand. The technology chosen is not the traditional push-pull one, but rather an asymmetrical triode mode working in class A. The polarization and its adjustments are facilitated, since **Unison Research** proposes them to us as being both semi-automatic and manual. I found this operation pleasant in the case of the *S6* with, let's emphasize again, a feature made pretty by these Italian designers. The illuminated dials are clear and legible and the adjustments are easy, even for the amateur who is worried about this operation.

There are 4 line input connections in addition to the tape loop *In* and *Out* pair (or for other uses, if you prefer). The loudspeaker connections are nice screw terminals, accepting forks or bananas depending on your preference again.

In photos or images, the **Unison Research S6** looks smaller than it is in reality. It is a nice 25 kg behemoth displaying 30/35 W per channel in muscles. This mix of wood, black metal and stainless steel, shimmering orange lights, all perfectly orchestrated and makes this device very elegant. Even the protective grids of the tubes, a two-way protection, since we are talking about the protection of the tubes at the same time as we are securing some curious fingers, present a very aesthetic design, taking up the roundness of the cover of the transformers. So, aesthetically, the **Unison Research S6** is a success that honours its beautiful country of origin. And the remote control is not to be outdone. The electronic circuit is embedded in a massive piece of wood that matches the colour of the device. And it stands upright, please, nice thought from the designers... This controller will be operational for all devices from **Unison Research**, but in the case of the integrated *S6*, it will only act on the volume.

Preparation:

By respect for this *S6* integrated amplifier, we will leave it a little free room so that it can easily cool down... Or warm us up in

the winter. All connections will be made before commissioning and the *BIAS* (the settings of each tube) will be checked after a few minutes of operation. And that's exactly what I did. Then, for the speakers, I thought I would try not two pairs of different brands, but rather two of different outputs, one pair of 90 dB and another of 95 dB. But it is the 90 dB pair which was definitively retained for the drafting of the listening part.

Listening

As usual, I started with TV sound, some live concerts, then movies, then vinyl and finally a more focused listening with compact discs. So, of course, as is often the case when dealing with tube technology, I started with jazz. Something simple, sweet, like we have to do with this old technology! It is **Melody Gardot** and her latest album that opens the session with sensuality.

Unison Research's S6 device is at home here. Normal, since it is a tube device! Of course, I'm kidding, but have you noticed at audio shows that it's always (if not very often) jazz music that's played when it comes to tubes? Cool and sweet jazz as if we didn't think that a tube device could be stirred by other music could be dynamic and sometimes much better in definition than transistor electronics. And let's admit it, if I never felt a lack of dynamics with tubes, I was always subjugated by the middle part, this very important part of our listening. And I'm not the only one, fortunately! Listening to the beautiful voice of the lovely **Melody Gardot** with an *S6*, *It's Beautiful*, as the title of a track from her latest album. There the tube device, the *S6*, imposes itself as an absolute master. It confirms what we know or what we have heard about the tubes: an undeniable magic, a presence and refinement. There is also an unsurpassed live music feel.

Now that I've been ironic, I have to make my point. Do the tubes perform well for other, let's say more stirring, music? Let's test with **Manchester Orchestra**. If the intros are often calm, the continuation easily strikes on each track. I am impressed by the breadth of the music. It invades the room with great accuracy. The singer is easily seen, life-size. His voice timbre, quite particular, is charged with a beautiful emotion that the *S6* always amplifies pleasantly. Excellent performance from our integrated amplifier, which is not only beautiful!

For my next choice, world music that mixes violin and accordion with virtuosity, especially on the piece *Der Gasn Nigun* where the musicians start slowly and then unleash themselves incredibly. We expect the **Unison Research S6** integrated amplifier at the turn. I have used this **Proprius CD** many times, which is almost perfectly recorded (in my opinion), and I know it well enough to enjoy it, once again thanks to what our *S6* integrated amplifier is capable of. A great musical performance.

I then chose another **Proprius** compact, but in *HD CD*, this time. Funny to think that the two-channel recording dates back to

1981 and that it was remastered in four-channel simulation in 2004. The recording took place in two different churches in Stockholm, Sweden. And we don't need to strain our ears to realize the natural reverberation of the recording locations. The first twenty or so pieces are performed in a fairly modest-sized church and the last four in what is more like a cathedral. The *S6* integrated amplifier is very revealing and does not make mistakes in its demonstration of sound reverberation or in the effect of presence. The difference in scale is masterful and the quality of the music makes it easy to forget the technique. We expect greatness and we get greatness with the **Unison Research S6**.

Conclusion

From enchanting jazz to world music, from adult and children's choirs to complex rock, the **Unison Research S6** is ready for anything. The tubes have their reason to exist, still today. I would add that I understand that this extraordinary technology has never been forgotten. Besides, apart from commercial imperatives, what music lover can forget what gave us so much pleasure? I would add this particular point too, which may explain the great devotion to tubes in amplification. There is something mature with tubes, something incredibly human in the diffusion of music, and that makes the ear will always be charmed, and this, unlike the electronics with transistors, more pointed, more rigorous, and with which one grants less compromise. With the *S6*, we are in the presence of a reliable, beautiful, particularly faithful device, no matter what we give it to amplify. It can be accompanied by analog or digital sources and connected to powerful and dynamic speakers, subtle and above all pleasing. Forget the clichés that are unfairly spread about tubes, and listen to your music, any music, because the **Unison Research S6** is capable of many unexpected things.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price : 5 910 \$, black cherry or natural cherry finish

Warranty : 3 years / 90 days on tubes

Distributor : Tri-Cell Enterprises, T. : 905.265.7870,
<https://tricellent enterprises.com>

Mediagraphy

Digital format

Melody Gardot, *Sunset in the Blue*, Decca, B0032927-02

Manchester Orchestra, *The Million Masks of God*, Loma Vista, LV1792

Doïna Klezmer, *Sorj Tanz*, Proprius, PRCD2009

Now The Green Blade Riseth, *Kornet har sin vila*, Proprius, PRSACD9093

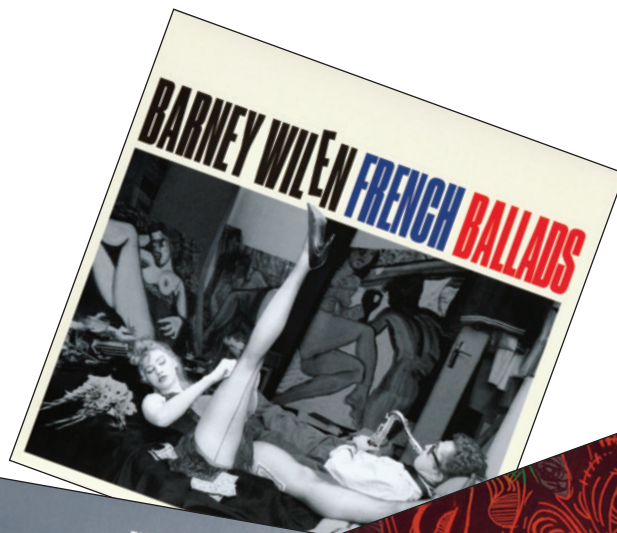
Analog format

Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique*, Dir. : Carlos Païta, Decca, 7659

Sweet Smoke, *Just a Poke*, EMI Columbia, 2C 062 28 886

JAZZ

By CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ



BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB:

25th Anniversary Edition

World Circuit/BMG, 2 DC

To you, our readers, we wish you a happy new year 2022, and we hope that the virus will disappear. To open the festivities, a sunny look at the 25 years of the **Buena Vista Social Club**. This double disc, in a travel journal format, or almost, tells us, in images, as well as in music, of course, what was one of the most beautiful musical achievements of singers and musicians who contributed to the golden age of Cuban music. Under the leadership of dynamic guitarist **Ry Cooder**, who also became the producer of this crazy adventure, we discovered nice musicians, sometimes surprised by their popularity. Far from being second-rate performers, this *classical* passion for Cuban music took them from New York to Montreal, not to mention all the European stages. It was impossible to resist the finesse of pianist **Ruben Gonzalez**, the saucy voices of **Ibrahim Ferrer** and **Compay Segundo**, and the charm of **Omara Portuondo**. Even more, we rediscovered bassist **Orlando Lopez**, trumpet player **Manuel Maribal** and, of course, the sinuous chords of

guitarist **Ry Cooder**. This double, which includes the original record, is peppered with photos and short stories about the recording process at the legendary **Egrem** studio. In addition, the second part includes alternative takes and some unpublished works like *Ensayo* and *La Cleptomana*. Since then, many of these giants are in musicians' paradise and for us, mere mortals, there remain these legendary interpretations.

BARNEY WILEN

French Ballads

Elemental Music (import)

Since his son **Patrick** decided to reissue, with great care, the phonographic memoir of his father, saxophonist **Barney Wilen**, we are delighted! From those first notes with trumpeter **Miles Davis**, in *Ascent for the Scaffold*, then with **Art Blakey** and his **Jazz Messengers**, as well as his flight as a soloist, his career was almost unique. Just like his sound! Heir to tenor saxophonist **Lester Young** with hints evoking violist **Paul Desmond**'s diaphanous sound, **Barney Wilen** touches the heart. Wrapped up in your armchair on a cold winter's evening, you will set off for a walk-in

Paris with, in the background, a certain idea of French composition. Surrounded by late pianist **Michel Graillier**, bassist **Riccardo Del Fra**, and drummer **Sangoma Everett**, *French Ballads*, recorded in 1987, has never lost its incantatory lustre. Everything develops slowly around the sound and ideas of the saxophonist who covers *L'âme des poètes*, *Un été 42*, *La vie en rose*, *Les moulins de mon cœur*, *Syracuse*, a legendary composition by the **Salvador/Dimey** tandem, etc. Beautiful and touching from an interpreter too soon lost.

JAZZLAB

Orchestra

Loguslabusmuzikus

Effendi/Naxos

The modern jazz formation masterfully led by double bassist **Alain Bédard**, **Jazzlab**, as its name suggests, is an incubator of ideas. If you like the blue note that abounds, with leading Montreal instrumentalists, this novelty will make a nice niche in your discotheque, virtual or not! In nine compositions, each as personal as the next, which are almost the memory of this collective,

we have plenty to satisfy ourselves. Whether with *La grande sauve Majeure*, *Lunes & Marées*, and why not *Pum-La-Suite!* We are in the presence of a highly invigorating jazz that will make your daily life vibrate.

ART BLAKEY

Live in Scheveningen - 1958

Devialet/Fondamenta/Naxos 2 CDs

A very rare fundamental double to understand the history of jazz and the quintet. Thanks to the **Devialet** record company, which specializes in *treasures*, here is drummer **Art Blakey** with his famous **Jazz Messengers** band. As **Boris Vian** would have written so well, *no need to quibble*. This timeless jazz, marked by the seal of dynamism with trumpeter **Lee Morgan**, saxophonist **Benny Golson**, pianist **Bobby Timmons** and bassist **Jymie Merrit**, is part of the pantheon of the greats. Jazz lovers, let's vibrate like the audience from the first notes of *Whisper Not*, the indestructible *Moanin'*, as well as the moving *I Remember Clifford*. Not a note too many, everything is there to get your 2022 off to a good start!



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DYNAUDIO EMIT II 50 LOUDSPEAKERS

THE ENTRY-LEVEL SERIES REVISITED





By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Among Quebec audiophiles, manufacturer **Dynaudio** doesn't really need any introduction. This Danish company started its activities at least 42 years ago in the small town of Skanderborg in Denmark. Its goal was essentially to produce the best speakers with advanced technical means and new materials. Today, this manufacturer has one of the largest transducer and speaker manufacturing plants on the European continent. **Dynaudio** is also equipped with one of the largest and most modern deaf rooms in Europe to design its products. **Dynaudio's** amplified monitors are even used in London's **Air** and **Abbey Road** Studios. An automotive division allows **Dynaudio** to supply speakers for car brands like **Volkswagen** and **Bugatti**. In this test bench, I was offered to test a recently introduced loudspeaker in the new entry-level *Emit II* series. It is the *Emit II 50*, a three-way, four-driver floorstanding loudspeaker.

DYNAUDIO EMIT II 50 LOUDSPEAKERS



Emit Versus Emit II

The entry-level *Emit* series from manufacturer **Dynaudio** was introduced in 2018. Three years later, this series was updated with the *Emit II*, which was very much inspired by the *Evoke* series and its speaker configuration. The new *Emit II* series also benefits from some of the innovations introduced to the *Evoke* series, both of which are intended for stereo listening as well as for home theatre use. The new generation of *Emit II* includes five models, two of which are bookshelf models, the *Emit II 10* and the *Emit II 20*, as well as two freestanding models, the *Emit II 30* and the *Emit II 50*. The latter was recently added to the catalogue. Finally, a centre model for home theatre dialogues has been renewed and is called *Emit II 25C*.

The *Emit II* series retains the classic parallel-wall design, but with an elegantly chamfered front. This detail softens and modernizes the physical appearance of this entry-level series' speakers. All these speakers benefit from a new 18 mm thick *MDF* chassis which is more rigid than the previous series. They are covered with a nice laminate and the finishes available are black and white gloss or an imitation walnut with a black front. All sides have been improved by eliminating all visible speaker mounting screws. The holes used to secure the protective grids in place have also been replaced by an invisible magnetic fastening system. At the rear, the single terminal block is retained while the vents are now doubly flared. The interior of the tube is longitudinally traversed by small spiral-shaped grooves that serve to eliminate the turbulence caused by the escaping air's noise. The frequency crossovers are now hybrid by mixing 1st order, 2nd order or 3rd order ones to better adapt to the needs of each loudspeaker model.

Dynaudio Emit II 50

The new *Emit II 50* freestanding speaker is a three-way speaker with four drivers including a 28 mm soft dome *tweeter*, a 15 cm midrange driver and two 18 cm *woofers* for bass. Its external dimensions are relatively generous (20.5 × 114 × 311.5 cm). Its weight of 26 kg is not negligible even if the *Emit II 50* is quite slender. Its height and narrowness could make it easy to destabilize, but **Dynaudio's** designers have foreseen this. It comes standard with four sturdy cast aluminum feet that screw into the four corners of the loudspeaker, providing a significantly larger footprint. These are equipped with decoupling spikes or rubber caps to protect wood floors. Synthetic foam plugs are also provided to mitigate the effect of the vents in cases where the speaker should be placed closer to the rear wall or in a corner. The frequency response of the *Emit II 50* is 33 Hz to 25 kHz with an impedance of 4 ohms. Its sensitivity is 86 dB and the manufacturer announces a power handling of 24 W. The load of the *woofers* is *bass reflex* type with two vents emerging at the back of the speaker.

The Cerotar Tweeter

This *Emit II* series *tweeter* is the same as the *Evoke* series which is itself derived from the *Esotar tweeter* developed for the superb *Special Forty* speaker. The latter was introduced in 2019 to commemorate **Dynaudio's** 40th anniversary. The *Cerotar tweeter* is equipped with a 28 mm soft fabric dome.

is driven by a ferrite magnet containing strontium carbonate, and its winding is made of aluminum. This *tweeter* is equipped with an isolation chamber located at the back of the transducer. Another internal dome named *Hexis* is located just behind the soft dome. Its rigid and perforated structure allows controlling the resonances that form behind the soft dome while controlling its movements. The *Cerotar's* distortion is thus considerably reduced by the *Hexis*, which also softens its response curve.

The Midrange Driver

The midrange driver was designed specifically for the *Emit II 50*. It uses a technology that **Dynaudio** has been using for a few years now, which consists of manufacturing the cones of its speakers with a composite material called *MSP*. It is a polymer enriched with magnesium silicate. On all speakers, the cones are moulded in one piece including the core cover rather than using a glued-on insert. Its design is inspired by the *Evoke* series midrange driver, which in turn is a direct descendant of the high-end *Contour* series. This midrange driver of the speaker is driven by a powerful ferrite ceramic magnet. Its 38 mm diameter aluminum coil is a vers modified especially for this speaker. According to the manufacturer, the *MSP* moulded cone and lightweight suspension give it the speed and accuracy to reproduce all the nuances of voices, strings and wind instruments.

The Woofers

The two 18 cm *woofers* also use technology derived from the *Evoke*, *Contour* and *Confidence* series. However, their winding is made of copper wire, a detail that increases the weight of the cone/winding assembly to obtain a better impact in the low frequencies. Their powerful motorization features double magnets glued one behind the other, which allows the magnetic field strength to be aligned more directly with the winding.

Installation and Usage Context

I installed the two *Emit II 50* loudspeakers about 45 cm from the rear wall and more than a meter from the side walls. I gave them a slight tilt towards the listener. My listening room is an open-plan living room of about 25^m2. The sound in this room is relatively well damped thanks to curtains on the windows, rugs on the floor, upholstered sofas and bookcases leaning against the walls. Under these conditions, I did not feel the need to use the foam plug in the vents. The source used is mainly my *CeolBOX* music server connected directly to the *USB* input of my integrated amplifier. The music files used are in *CD* format as well as 24-bit *PCM* and *DSD* formats purchased by download. The technical specifications of the *Emit II 50* loudspeaker stipulate a nominal impedance of 4 ohms and a sensitivity of 86 dB. It therefore requires a relatively powerful amplifier, which was not a problem for my 150 W per channel integrated amplifier.

Let's Hear the Music!

I started my listening with the excellent Quebec jazz trio **Emie R Roussel Trio**. Their latest album, titled *Rythme de Passage*, is not a new release, as it is from 2019. It was superbly recorded at the **Opus** studio near l'Assomption. Pianist **Emie Rioux Roussel**

DYNAUDIO EMIT II 50 LOUDSPEAKERS

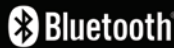


and her husband enjoyed their stay in this studio so much that they have decided to become its owners during the summer of 2021. From the first piece, which is catchy, I notice a smoothness in the high frequencies thanks to the *Cerotar* soft dome *tweeter*. The upper midrange and midrange also show a slight restraint that contributes to the overall smoothness of the *Emit II 50*. This characteristic combined with a deep, well-controlled bass is a sound signature I have often encountered in past test drives of other models. This typical and warm signature of **Dynaudio** products can be found in all its loudspeaker ranges. Obviously, the entry-level *Emit II* series does not have the same level of transparency as the *Confidence* or even the *Contour* series, but it comes close. The level of dynamics allows me to perceive well the strokes on the cymbals of **Dominic Cloutier**'s drums. **Nicolas Bédard**'s electric bass has all the desired depth, while his double bass keeps the woody character of its resonance box. The next album is a high resolution *FLAC* 24 bits/96 kHz download. This is the fourth collaboration between the German composer **Nils Frahm** and *dub* specialist **F. S. Blumm**. These two artists of the German *underground* scene an album which was very well recorded in **Nils Frahm**'s personal studio. The *Emit II 50* gives me a good measure of the depth of the synthesizers' low frequencies while maintaining sovereign control over the *woofers*' travel. In the midrange and high frequencies, the details are well present, but I always perceive this softness and this light restraint which can benefit certain recordings a little too accentuated on the high frequencies or even aggressive in the high-medium. Is this tonal balance adjusted for home theatre use where soundtracks are often explosive? Or has this loudspeaker been calibrated

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Roussel environments that are a little too reverberant? I can't say, but I can assure you that the *Emit II 50*, with its two woofers, can handle very high volumes without flinching or sagging.

On classical music pieces, this loudspeaker also performs very well in giving me a good idea of the depth of the concert halls. In works for choir and chorus, I get a fairly good staggering of the rows of choristers as well as the grandiose aspect associated with this type of formation. On *Fanfare For The Common Man* performed by the **Minnesota Symphony Orchestra**, the blasts on the big drum resound powerfully from the back of the room and with surprising weight. On this opus, the brass and wind instruments are majestic. The violins are shimmering while remaining silky on the friction of the strings by the bows. The *Emit II 50* speaker doesn't make me feel like I'm sitting in the front rows, but a little further back towards

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the centre of the concert hall. Its sound is always soothing regardless of the type of music.

Conclusion

The **Dynaudio Emit II 50** is part of a very respectable entry-level series. Prices for the new *Emit II* series start at \$999 for a pair of the small *Emit II 10* bookshelf loudspeaker and go all the way up to \$2,850 for the *Emit II 50* pair – the subject of this review. The build quality suggests an obvious attention to detail and the use of state-of-the-art driver technology. Honestly, I don't understand how **Dynaudio** can offer such products in such a sweet price range. Whether in a home theatre setup or simply for stereo music listening, the *Emit II 50* can serve as a prestige front-firing loudspeaker. In my listening room, it was easy to position, close enough to the back wall without feeling a bass boost. Its stereophonic image goes far beyond the speakers and its smoothness

makes it very permissive for lesser quality recordings. In short, the **Dynaudio Emit II 50** likes to play loud, and that's how you get the most out of its qualities without feeling the need to add a subwoofer.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: 2 849 \$

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Dynaudio USA, T.: 514.389.1377, www.dynaudio.com

Mediagraphy

Emie R Roussel Trio, Rythme de passage, UNI Musiqc 2019, UNICD-4720

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

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

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

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



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Buon Gusto -Recipe

By Léa Gariépy

Lemon Kale Salad

This salad is a fresh, vitamin-packed and versatile side dish. It is sure to please many at birthday dinners and takes only a few minutes to prepare!

Ingredients:

Salad

- 3 to 4 cups of kale
- 1/3 cup of currants
- ½ cup of pine nuts
- ½ cup of grated Parmesan cheese

Dressing

- The juice of 1 lemon
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Preparation:

In a skillet over medium-high heat, toast pine nuts until golden brown

Put aside.

Roughly chop kale, taking care to remove the stiffer stem.

Put aside.

In a large bowl, combine kale, pine nuts, currants and Parmesan cheese.

In a small bowl, mix all dressing ingredients and add to salad.

Mix again.

Serve as an appetizer or side dish.



Photos : Luto Photographie

Exceptional Loudspeakers!

By RICHARD SCHNEIDER

It is with a poorly concealed curiosity that I received the *Motion 60XTi*, the top of the *Motion* range, for this test bench. **MartinLogan** being recognized as the undisputed *leader* in electrostatic panels, I have to admit that my curious mind was very eager to unpack these freestanding speakers, conventional at first glance, but which had some surprises in store for me.

I must admit that I wondered about the motivations of a manufacturer with such a vast expertise in the creation of electrostatic loudspeakers to venture into the design of *more traditional* loudspeakers. We find, in the genes of the *60XTi*, the signature sound of **MartinLogan**. Quality and design are offered at prices accessible to a much wider audience. That's it on history!

The *Motion XTi* series is the revised and improved version of the *XT* (for *eXTreme*) series to which the *i* for *improved* was added. At first glance, the differences are cosmetic, especially with the front grilles, but let's go further. An aluminum band, on which the manufacturer's logo is set, divides the front of the loudspeaker into two sections in a very chic way. The upper grille covers the midrange driver and tweeter. The bottom grille covers the woofers. These grilles are magnetically fixed. The *look* is clean, modern and neat. More importantly, changes have been made to improve the acoustic treatment.

What do they have that others don't?

This new version benefits from increased internal reinforcement and slightly larger panels to eliminate vibrations and harmful resonances. The *crossovers* and speakers have also been revised and improved.

The undisputed star of the *Motion 60XTi* loudspeaker is the folded ribbon. It is a creation by **MartinLogan**. The technical name is *Folded Motion Transducer* (FMT). The ribbon lies in a small space where its thin diaphragm is finely folded in an accordion-like fashion. The low mass diaphragm compresses the air. This technique increases the sound dispersion by an astonishing 80 degrees horizontally and 30 degrees vertically. It is a real tour de force that borrows some of the characteristics of a large dynamic electrostatic panel, including high frequency finesse and reproduction speed in a very small space. With *FMT*, the sound dispersion is eight to ten times greater than the radiating area of a traditional dome tweeter. In addition, it minimizes the level of distortion considerably, not to mention that they are ultra-fast.

The midrange has a 165 mm aluminum cone, which reproduces frequencies between 400 Hz and 2,200 Hz. It features a moulded polymer basket, powerful magnet structures and aluminum cone diaphragms. **MartinLogan** has adopted aluminum for many reasons. This material greatly increases the rigidity and strength of the components without adding unnecessary weight to the enclosure. Moreover, aluminum has very interesting damping properties which, in this case, reduce resonance and ensure perfect harmony with the *FMT tweeter*. I learned during this test bench that aluminum has excellent heat conduction capabilities that allow the cones to serve as an effective heat sink for the voice coils. The designers opted for a very rigid suspension to increase the resonance frequency of the driver, thus maximizing the frequency range naturally associated with the midrange. Otherwise, the result would be a woofer.

By the way, the *Motion 60XTi* are 2.5-way loudspeakers. The two 200 mm woofers, similar in design to the midrange, are located towards the bottom. This concept was born out of a desire to solve a harmful problem in audio, namely, floor bounce, which occurs when the drivers are positioned too high in the cabinet. When this problem occurs, the waves are



MARTINLOGAN MOTION 60XTI LOUDSPEAKERS



directed simultaneously to the listener and to the ground creating an interference that results in an incoherence between the bass and the midrange. Careful positioning of the loudspeakers eliminates this problem. Like the midrange driver, the woofers are equipped with a rather unique concave dust cap, which has the task of increasing the strength and rigidity of the cone. The filters used to separate the frequency ranges of the 60XTi are named *Vojtko* after **MartinLogan's** chief audio technologist, **Joe Vojtko**. His out-of-the-box approach has made him one of the main architects of the unique sound associated with **MartinLogan** and *FMT* ribbon tweeters. The philosophy behind *Vojtko's* crossovers is that all speakers should operate in an optimal frequency range in balance with each other. The filters feature low DF polypropylene electrolytic capacitors, custom inductors and thermal current protection. The gold-plated terminals, connected to the

that I have a weakness for ribbon tweeters and these loudspeakers had nothing to disappoint me. **MartinLogan** products have a very accurate stereophonic speaker image. They must be listener-oriented. Ideally, if space is available, the manufacturer suggests installing the cabinets 2 to 3 m from the front wall and 2 to 3 m from the side walls. Although my room is large, I don't have that luxury. At 24 inches, I *have to be* satisfied. It is true that the further away from the wall these loudspeakers are, the more accurate the bass notes will be, because let's not forget that there are two vents at the back. I left a distance of 6 feet between the loudspeakers. They were slightly directed towards my listening position (+/-60 degrees), about 10 feet away. In the end, the distance will depend on the size of your listening room and its acoustic treatment, which is not usually discussed enough. In this regard, I would like to digress. No matter how good your equipment is, it is generally impossible

« With *Midnight Sun* by **Tsuyoshi Yamamoto**, on his *Midnight Sun* record, it's make or break. [...] *Motion* passed the test with flying colours. The piano reaches very high notes, sometimes gently, sometimes with great vigour. The performance is precise and wonderfully defined. Supported by an amplification that has a lot of reserve, the loudspeakers offered a sustained restitution without breathlessness. These 60XTi's have a lot of power. »

filters, are very well made. All types of connections existing in the industry are present.

We unpack and install!

Installation does not require extensive knowledge. All you have to do is attach the stabilizing bars to the bottom of the box, on which you can install the crampons if necessary. Everything is provided in the package. The factory installed rubber spikes must be removed first if the bars are to be installed. Otherwise, they can be left in place. They weigh 66 lb and are 48 inches high. I suggest you place the boxes on the floor and lift them out, taking care to cover the floor with a good-sized tarp to protect the boxes. A break-in period of approximately 72 hours, at a sound level of 90 dB, is recommended by the manufacturer. However, from the start, I found the sound to be excellent. From the very first notes, the seductive effect played. I must admit

to get the best sound in a room that is not acoustically treated.

The reference listening position, or if you prefer the *Sweet Spot*, will allow you to obtain a perfect sound. This *Sweet Spot* is *surgical* and very specific, a bit like full range speakers, at least in stereo listening. In multi-channel, it's a different story.

Listening

I have selected three records to describe my impressions. First, I read an article by a reviewer who had nothing but praise after listening to *Hotel California* from the **Eagles' Hell Freezes Over** album. I thought, why not? Listening to this record did nothing to calm my ardour. The harmony of the guitars, particularly well recorded, is a real delight. They are clear, powerful, dynamic and very authentic. In fact, on these loudspeakers, acoustic guitars shine brightly. The coherence between the midrange and the treble



is uncommon. The *FMT tweeters* are very silky. This is their main quality. Note that the highs are a little more recessed than they would be with a cone *tweeter*. However, their generous dispersion ensures that one does not miss any of the micro-details. In contrast, the predominant bass drum, especially at the beginning of this piece, is reproduced with great dynamism and authority. The bass guitar and the drums are in perfect harmony. **Don Henley's** voice is front and centre. The whole is very coherent and pleasant for the ear.

With *Midnight Sun* by **Tsuyoshi Yamamoto**, on his *Midnight Sun* record, it's make or break. This piece makes the most of the resources of an enclosure. I have rarely heard a jazz record with so much dynamics. **Yamamoto's** piano is of a rare intensity. The loudspeakers have to behave themselves. *Motion* passed the test with flying colours. The piano reaches very high notes, sometimes gently, sometimes with great vigour. The performance is precise and wonderfully defined. Supported by an amplification that has a lot of reserve, the loudspeakers offered a sustained restitution without breathlessness. These *60XTi's* have a lot of power.

It is impossible for me to ignore **Patricia Barber's** *Café Blue*, in *DSD* format, when evaluating a device. It was a treat. The dynamics and presence of these loudspeakers are in a class of their own in this price range. In fact, the *MSRP* does not represent their sound performance. The mid-range driver, where most of the musical performances take place, will give you an earful. Although the ribbon *tweeter* is located a little higher than the seated listening position, its 80% dispersion ensures that no detail is missed. The bass and drums, on this record, are references in several benchmarks. They offer such vitality that sometimes a little shiver tickles your back. In fact, the deep extension of the lower midrange and bass connects us to the music.

Conclusion

I would definitely recommend **MartinLogan's** *Motion 60XTi*. In my listening room, they charmed me to such an extent that it would be very tempting to make them my reference loudspeakers. The manufacturer wanted to offer a high-fidelity musical product, in accordance with the sound tradition of the house, as well as being aesthetically pleasing, at an affordable price. The mission is brilliantly accomplished.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3,999/pair

Available finishes: red walnut, glossy black (Grand Piano) and matte white

Warranty: 5 years, parts and labour

Manufacturer: MartinLogan, T.: 514.891.0764 in Quebec, <https://www.martinlogan.com/>

Mediagraphy

Eagles, Hell Freezes Over

Tsuyoshi Yamamoto, *Midnight Sun*

Patricia Barber, *Café Blue*, in *DSD* format

A TOP CHEF ACHIEVEMENT!

By ADRIEN ROUAH

For several years, I have been following a very high-level French culinary arts competition called *Top Chef*. A challenge is proposed to the candidates and if the competitor falls into simplicity, a quasi perfection of execution and taste is required, nothing less. The classic choice of recipe requires a flawless execution. Often another type of challenge must also be met, which may be to revisit a classic and make it gastronomic. You can think of a cassoulet or a tourtière, for example. Transposed in the audio field, shouldn't we expect a flawless realization from **Atoll Electronics** if the presented device is a classic?

The **Atoll Electronics CD100** player is marked with the *Signature* label, which already *indicates* the category of the device. In fact, I find it beautiful in its simplicity, sought after in the symmetry of its front panel with its three discreet control buttons on either side of the drawer and window, both designed identically. The front end has been rounded off, giving it an unconventional look. The version of the *CD100 Signature* we received is black, but there is a silver version, which is also attractive.

The internal manufacturing reveals a particularly careful realization, with selective power supplies for each section, that is to say the audio stages, the digital stages and rigorous and specific regulations, in particular as regards the converter (**Burr-Brown PCM 1796**) which was the subject of a particular attention. The transport mechanism is original **TEAC**, which guarantees a long



and trouble-free working life. The current-to-voltage converters are bipolar transistors and the differential output stages are made of discrete components polarized in class A. I like this mix that combines digital and analog when, as it is the case with **Atoll Electronics**, we have a perfect expertise.

The Converter Card

The tested device was not equipped with one. This card is offered as an option and has three digital inputs. Of course, everyone will have their own way of using this compact disc player. If it is bought to listen mainly to a CD collection, say 90%, the converter will not be useful... Although, maybe one day! If, on the other hand, we are talking about shared digital reading, the optional card will be considered.

The Remote Control

I think it's very nice and among the most readable I've seen. It is complete and supports all **Atoll** devices including the *CD100 Signature* player.

Installation Prior to Listening

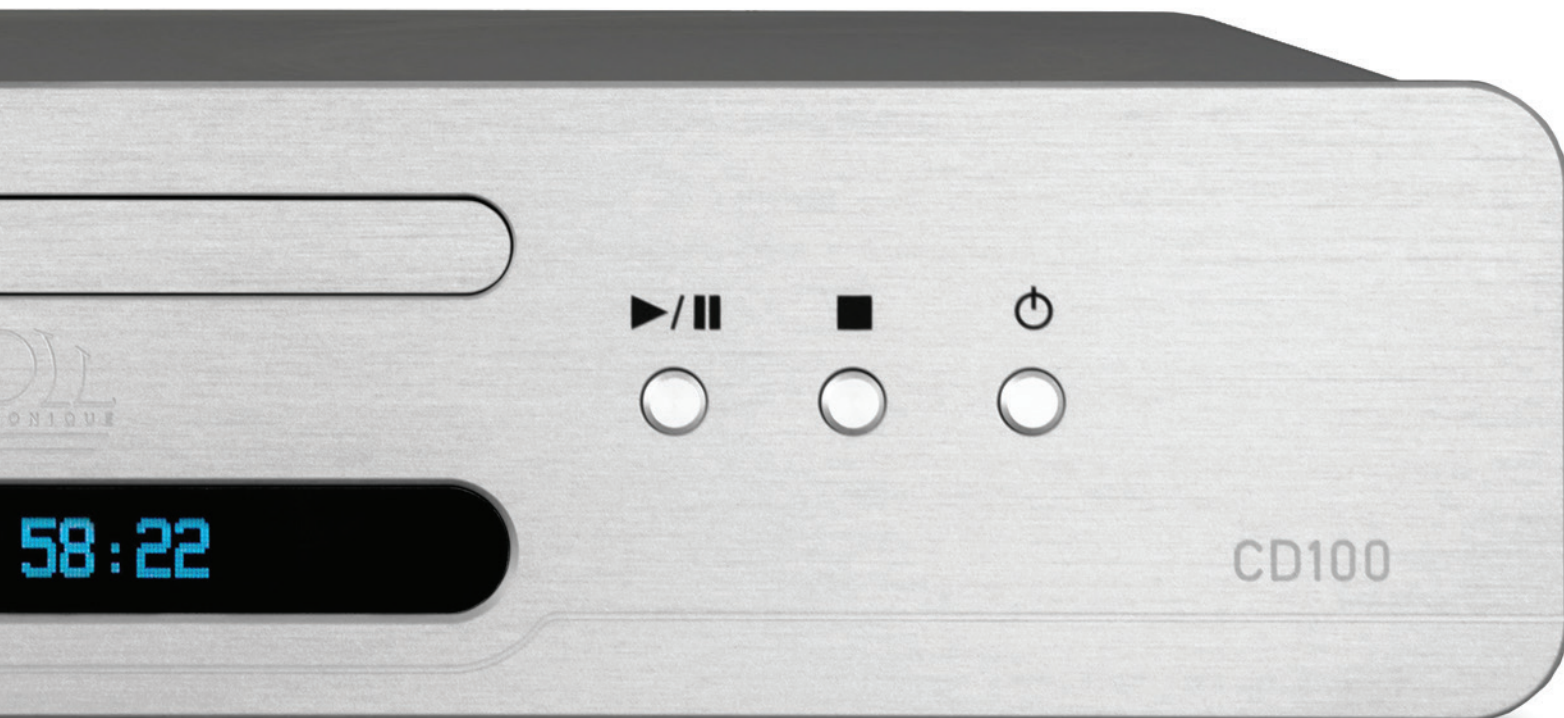
If it wasn't for the return of the analog playback, vinyl records, I would almost feel a little old school about listening to my thousand compact discs! But I know that there are people who will never get rid of their finds, finds always attached to happy stories. I think of CDs received as gifts, bought because I was intrigued by a performance seen on TV, etc. And I won't open a debate here, but I must say that the quality of what I hear with my own player often equals what I'm told is superior in dematerialized form... The installation is quite easy for me I unplug my personal player and plug in the newcomer. Same

personal *RCA* cables, including power cord and I'm getting ready to tell you about my listening. I add a last point that concerns the discs, each title of which will be displayed by the *CD100 Signature* player, as well as the possibility of reading CD, CD-R, CD-RW, and MP3, WMA, ACC formats. The display is *OLED* and is well readable under artificial light as well as in daylight.

Listening

I decided to remain very *French* in the choice of music, as if to make a friendly nod to the French designers, but rest assured, it is very versatile, no doubt, it *music* several languages! A surprise awaits me from the first notes. I feel a noticeable and immediate difference. But what is going on? It is in the mid-range, the voice especially, more present, as if put forward. Would my own player be more reserved than this device of French origin? And so he would have hidden something from me during my listening? Let's not get carried away, let's continue our analysis. My starting point is **Louis Sclavis'** jazz record, clarinet and soprano saxophone in classical formation. I listen carefully, some details that I know well and there, I confirm it to you, there are additional details in this restitution! The play *The Sleep of the Mermaids* is a good choice to detect some notable differences. And indeed, from the intro, the percussions are noticed differently, in a very precise way, with a slightly more pronounced dynamic.

Well, nothing is final, let's move on. **Francis Cabrel**, for example. Beautiful compositions as always with this artist, musically rich and diversified in the album *À l'aube revenant*. That's final, I conclude already, without saying that the **Atoll CD100 Signature** player is better, it is, without any doubt, more generous than my own player. It is *normal that at the beginning, it can surprise*,



ATOLL ELECTRONICS CD100 SIGNATURE CD PLAYER

we start from so far that we have to start again, even quite a lot of people, it is not certain that we are answered, too bad, let's talk... It is **Cabrel's** lyrics for title track *Let's Talk*, they are rather relevant, are the not? And I didn't do it on purpose, but the *It's normal that at first it can surprise*, is very appropriate! Excellent sound recording, which should be emphasized and which our reader also emphasizes to us, without us making any effort.

A female voice now, beautiful and mature in her words. Because **Salomé Leclerc** writes her texts, plays many instruments and

« Let's move on. **Francis Cabrel**, for example. Beautiful compositions as always with this artist, musically rich and diversified in the album *À l'aube revenant*. That's final, I conclude already, without saying that the **Atoll CD100 Signature** player is better, it is, without any doubt, more generous than my own player... »

produces this album. A complete artist in a way in this work entitled *The External Things*. Musically very different too, from track to track, no musical similarity. And it is particularly interesting to propose a different artistic work to the device under test, not to test it, but rather to detect its analytical capacities. And it does it admirably, I must say. This precision of reading adds pleasure to the listening as in the piece *Nos révolutions* where street noises and voices are added to the piece, without one being immediately aware of it, with a very surprising authenticity. The notion of space is also well rendered, such as the cymbal in the last piece of the album, *Pour te garder*, cymbal very present in my room, very real.

In classical music, I chose *Duets from the French Opera*, which allows me to have a good musical diversity while offering a choice of French classics to this device, which is also French, because the company that created the *CD 100 Signature*, **Atoll Electronics**, can proudly offer us a completely French realization with practically all its products. A rare thing these days, let's face it! In **Gounod's** *Romeo and Juliet*, the musical intensity easily delights me, but who wouldn't be delighted when listening to a romantic duet? And in this case, it is rather the musical



intensity that we must pay attention to, an intensity that the player perceives very well and above all that he transmits to us with a lot of conviction. Let's salute the well-designed *CD100 Signature*, which honours compact discs. Let's salute its ability to move us by its delicacy and accuracy. And let's not be fooled by its rather classical presentation, which is precisely its particularity. It is discreet only to magnify its playback work!

Conclusion

In the last piece of **Massenet's** *Cid, Ô souverain, Ô Juge, Ô Père*, the text says *Ah tout est bien fini, mon beau rêve de gloire, mes rêves de bonheur s'envolent à jamais, tu m'as prix mon amour, tu me prends la victoire...* Well, what I'm feeling right now is not as strong, but it feels a bit like that. This *CD100 Signature* is a great discovery and deserves to be recommended here by your favourite audio magazine! And by myself who describes the surprises I get from this device with a surprising price too. I know you must be wondering, *but is the Electronic Atoll player better than the writer's personal player? And at a virtually similar price for both devices?* And this is where writing a descriptive and subjective text is exciting, because you notice notable differences





while not talking about flaws, for once. I will keep my own device for a long time to come, although I can say that the *CD100 Signature* is more defined, more precise in its message analysis. I could easily live many years with it, just as I have lived for years with my companion, designed and made in Japan, but which is significantly different in its musicality. The answer is clear and self-evident when making your choice. If you like radical precision, accurate timbre and a silky envelope of detail in your precious records, don't hesitate, this **Atoll Electronics CD100 Signature** player deserves your full attention and will become the centrepiece of your personal music setup. It is a classic achievement that knows how to elevate the recipe of a classic to the level of audio gastronomy. A realization worthy of the future chefs of *Top Chef!*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Player price: 1,999, optional card

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Atoll Electronics Canada, Tel: 438.380.8906, <https://www.atoll-electronique.ca>

Mediagraphy

Louis Sclavis, *Lost on the Way*, ECM, 2098 179 8497

Francis Cabrel, *À l'aube revenant*, Sony Music, 19 439 809 182

Salomé Leclerc, *Les choses extérieures*, Audiogram, ADCD 10417

Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, *Grands duos d'amour de l'opéra français*, SMCD, 5072

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS

RECORD OF THE MONTH

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN
CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

Sonatas & Rondos
Hyperion, 2 CDs, HYP, 68,381
Interpretation: *****
Technique *****

2022 starts with a new release by **Marc-André Hamelin** published on January 7th. The Quebec pianist was one of those whose recording projects were cancelled in 2020. This program is therefore like an outlet, but its great virtuosity is exercised in the finest of laces. **Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach** is a logical extension of **Hamelin's** work on **Haydn**, materialized in three 2-CD albums. Even though he bears the name of **Bach**, this son cuts the umbilical cord in a spectacular way and leads directly to the music of the classical period (**Haydn** and **Mozart**). **Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach** composed so much that one does not know how to approach his work. **Marc-André Hamelin's** skilful and varied selection shows the great modernity of this composer, whose life and work have accompanied notable developments in the instrument. **Hamelin's** approach contrasts with the exhaustive work of **Miklos Spanyi (BIS)**, who opts for antique instruments, while the Quebecer chooses a modern piano, which he plays with a lightness and freedom that belong to him alone.

SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH

JAMES EHNES
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
Sonatas & Partitas for Solo Violin

Onyx, 2 CDs, 4228
Interpretation: *****
Technique *****

Record of the month and sound recording of the month are interchangeable, because the new productions by **Marc-André Hamelin** and **James Ehnes** are

as flamboyant in music as they are in sound. This is the second version of the *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* by **James Ehnes**, 20 years after the first one (**Analekta**, 2000).

The framework of this new proposal is the same as for **Ysaïe's Sonatas** presented in May 2021. By April 2020, **James Ehnes** had taken advantage of the pandemic to turn his living room into a recording studio, investing in microphones (**Telefunken**, *M60 Master Set*), an audio interface (**Audient iD44**), tripods and professional lighting. He filmed himself, with the help of his wife, returning to the essentials of the solo violin repertoire and combining the **Bach's Sonatas and Partitas** of and **Ysaïe's Sonatas** in *Concerts From Home* webcasts. The result is not at all DIY and the comparison with the 2000 recording is fascinating. In 2000, **Analekta** had operated in the traditional way by placing the violin in a rather large, church-like space. The more direct sound of the new recording, without being dry, allows the listener to be much more attentive to his playing, which is simply extraordinary

REMASTERING OF THE MONTH

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Symphony No. 9
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Elisabeth Höngen, Hans Hopf, Otto Edelman, Bayreuth Festival Choir and Orchestra, Wilhelm Furtwängler.
BIS, SACD, 9060 9060.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: ***

This recording is one of the legends of recording history. The concert for the

reopening of the **Bayreuth Theatre** in 1951 was chosen after **Furtwängler's** death, in November 1954, as "the" 9th *Symphony* by **Beethoven** that was to represent him, because his publishers (**HMV** and **DG**) had forgotten to have him record this work in the studio!

We have known this concert forever, but from the same **Bavarian Radio** band. What changes radically in this record, that **BIS** releases in this month of January 2022, is that, as the concert had been broadcast in many countries, the Swedish label **BIS** had the bright idea to listen to how the analog mono tape sounded digitized by the Swedish radio that had also broadcast the event. But this one is clearer (treble and transparency) than the source known until now. In the notice, **BIS** writes *We have chosen not to change anything, not to "brush" the sound, not to clean up (...), but to keep the original as it was. We hope to recreate the feeling of sitting in front of an old radio in 1951.* By doing nothing, they have just restored the Sistine Chapel.

THE BOX SET OF THE MONTH

SOLTI LONDON
The Orchestral Recordings
Decca, 36 CD, 485 1717
Interpretation: *** to *****
Technical: *** to *****

Of the great Hungarian conductor **Georg Solti**, **Decca** released a monumental box of his recordings with the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, which correspond to his most famous tenure. When one thinks of the **Solti-London** connection, one

thinks especially of his early **Mahler** recordings of 1st and 2nd *symphonies* and his **Bartók** anthologies. But **Solti** had as much impact in London as he did in Chicago, as Music Director of the **Covent Garden Opera** from 1961 to 1971. It has also been forgotten that he began recording in August 1949 with the **London Philharmonic**, which he conducted from 1979 to 1983. Unlike the Chicago box set, the **Solti-London** box set offers a more extensive journey through time. There are the **Mahler** and **Bartók** of the 1960s that one naturally thinks of, but also British music prints (**Elgar**, *Belshazzar's Feast* by **Walton**) and spectacular discs from the late 1970s (*Oedipus Rex*, *Bluebeard's Castle*), plus concertos, including **Mozart** with **Alicia de Larrocha**. But above all, there is the rediscovery of the young **Solti's** mono recordings, very rarely reissued, a conductor who is often terse and flamboyant. His **Suppé** openings are incredibly powerful. **Offenbach's Gaité parisienne** will follow on the same mould at **Covent Garden**.

DVD OF THE MONTH

PLATÉE
Opera by Jean Philippe Rameau
With Marcel Beekman, Jeanine de Bique, Cyril Auvity, Marc Mauillon, Les Arts Florissants.
Conductor: William Christie
Director: Robert Carsen
Theatre an der Wien, December 2020
Unitel, Blu-ray, 804,804.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****
We can never say enough to what extent **Jean-Philippe Rameau**



(1683–1764) is a creator on par with, and completely complementary to, his contemporary Bach. Unlike **Bach**, **Rameau** illuminated the world of opera with his lightning inventiveness. *Platée* is one of his easiest works to enter his universe. The king of the gods, **Jupiter**, is a womanizer and his wife, **Juno**, is very jealous. So the gods make her believe that **Jupiter** is in love with **Platée**, a nymph of the marshes (a humanized frog, in fact). They also make the poor **Platée** believe this, and it is she who will fall down in the end. Obviously, all this is allusion, parody and sarcasm: **Jupiter** is, at the time, the **King of France** and **Platée** symbolizes the provincial bourgeois who have come to try their luck at the king's court and who do *not know where they belong*. Faced with **Laurent Pelly's** show with frogs and owls, the Canadian **Robert Carlsen** has chosen allusion and transposition. **Platée** (an excellent **Marcel Beekman**) is a retiring fifty-year-old woman, a *fashion victim* who wants to get into the fashion business, where she ends up meeting **Karl Lagerfeld**. The transposition has made some people grumble, but it works very well and is spectacular. **William Christie** at the baton is bewitching.

NEW RELEASES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH SCHAGHAJEH NOSRATI (piano)

Partitas BWV 825–830.

AVI, 8,553,491

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

The German pianist **Schaghajegh Nosrati**, winner of the Leipzig *Bach Competition* a few years ago, recently became **András Schiff's** teaching assistant, which speaks volumes about the esteem in which the greatest scrutinizer of **Bach's** work of our time is held. In a text, **Nosrati** is moved by **Bach's** statement that the sole purpose of music should be *the glory of God and the recreation of the human spirit*. "I see," she writes, "that he was clearly excluding himself—a gesture that stands in stark contrast to the chronic pride and unbridled egocentricity of my own generation..." This little statement says a lot about the musical approach that such a performer can have. It is not surprising that she is self-effacing, but that she does everything to bring to light, with a kind of disarming simplicity that hides a colossal work. Like the tempos, the ornamentation is perfectly balanced. Lighting and breathing are perfectly

rendered by an excellent sound recording. The order of the *Partitas* does not follow the printed version in order to place the two *longest and most diametrically opposed works* (according to the performer), *Partitas 4 and 6*, at the beginning and end of the recorded collection, thus achieving a certain degree of symmetry.

JOHANNES BRAHMS JONATHAN FURNEL (piano)

Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 5 & Handel

Variations

Alpha, 851

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

The year 2021 was a good one for piano lovers, as the winner of the 2021 *Queen Elisabeth Competition*, **Jonathan Fournel**, equals the winner of the *Chopin Competition*, **Bruce Liu**. **Fournel** dedicates his first recording to **Brahms**. And it impresses strongly. As with **Nosrati's Bach**, the record is a *whole*. Recorded at the **Théâtre populaire romand** in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, a venue renowned for its warm acoustics, by **Jean-Martial Golaz**, the piano deploys a palette of sounds that the young and already very experienced pianist can make the most of, especially in the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*... a real highlight of the disc, despite the luminous intuitions and the powerful build that mark the 3rd *Sonata*. These *Variations* are based on a formidable combination of vigour and lightness. **Fournel** has the great intelligence not to fall into false solemnity under the pretext of **Brahms**. He seeks transparency and colours in an irresistible musical gesture. *Poetry, intelligence, intensity: beautiful playing, natural, frank as gold* are the words that the French pianist **Philippe Cassard** immediately associated with **Fournel** when commenting on the Brussels competition. This record proves him right.

BRUCE LIU

Chopin recital at the 18th Chopin Competition, Warsaw 2021.

DG, 486 1555

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

It was in October 2021, a reason for immense pride for Quebec. The Montrealer **Bruce Liu**, whom we had known under his first name **Xiaoyu** and who had won the *OSM Competition* and the *Prix d'Europe* when he was a teenager, won the most prestigious piano competition



in the world to the indifference of many of the local media. At the end of November, **Deutsche Grammophon** released digitally (and on CD in Europe) his best performances at this event. The physical disc will finally be released on January 22, 2022, in Canada.

Bruce Liu's artistic vision is nestled in a response to an interview with the daily *Le Devoir*: *I'm a pretty optimistic guy who is easily satisfied. So, in my approach to Chopin, we end up forgetting the sadness, we dance and celebrate*. The dominant dimension is not that of a tortured **Chopin**. **Bruce Liu** celebrates the joy of playing in the *Variations Opus 2* the *Grande polonaise brillante*, *l'Etude op. 10 No. 4* and the *Waltz Op. 42*. In more intimate pieces such as the *Nocturne op. 27 - No 1*, he conveys a musical naturalness that is very welcome, whereas many pianists lose themselves in meanderings.

Last point: **Bruce Liu** did not win this contest by chance. The jury has made its score sheets public. For three weeks, as the tests went on, he dominated it from start to finish.

ANNA NETREBKO

Amata Dalle Tenebre

Orchestra Del Teatro Alla Scala,

Riccardo Chailly

DG, 486 1543

Interpretation: ****

Technique: ****

The most absolute diva of the opera scene returns to us in recital with a

project bringing together heroines marked by love and the fatality of darkness (that's the meaning of the title). Since the beginning of her career, **Anna Netrebko's** voice has evolved a lot. She has grown and darkened to be today a very natural **Lady Macbeth**, whereas 20 years ago she was seen as a perfect **Adina** in *The elixir of love*. **Anna Netrebko** is always as convincing and burning in *Sola, perduta, abbandonata* from *Manon Lescaut* by **Puccini** that we hear on track 9. But she has other ambitions that a record can allow (roles that she will not tackle on stage, but that she thinks she has in her voice), including three **Wagner: Isolde, Elisabeth (Tannhäuser)** and **Elsa (Lohengrin)**. On these, an old Alsatian proverb says *We speak as the beak has pushed us*. There is therefore a gap between the German language and **Netrebko** which means that, in these arias, the vocal line comes before the words. But the impact and broadening of the voice is striking, without the intrusion of an overly invasive vibrato. *Manon Lescaut, Adriana Lecouvreur, Aida* and the *The Queen of Spades* aria are the great moments of an impressive recital.

By CLAUDE LALONDE

CHABLIS — THE CRYSTALLINE EXPRESSION OF A TERROIR !

Here are four of the most qualitative white wines that express the Chablis terroir so well. In this text, I have tried to summarize what Chablis is about from a wine point of view and I give you my impressions on four wines that I loved. Go and discover and taste *Chablis*!

What is there to know about the Chablis appellation?

The *Chablis* appellation is part of the Burgundy region, located in the north of France. It represents about 18% of Burgundy wines. This region is, in fact, a rather small territory located in the department of Yonne, in the north of Burgundy. Twenty communes make up the Chablis vineyard, which covers just over 5,589 hectares [2018] in 379 estates and where, in its centre, flows the river Le Serein.

Chablis, these small valleys, these hillsides exposed to the sun, to the winds and to the climatic conditions which are perfect for the *chardonnay* grape variety, but where one fears the spring frosts which can destroy many hopes. Some nights in April or May, a clear sky and a cold wind rushing through the Serein Valley can wipe out the work of an entire season. Moreover, the 2021 harvest is considered one of the worst in living memory. I was just talking to a producer who lost 70% of his crop!

The terroir of Chablis is unique. It is composed of a limestone soil, formed in the Kimmeridgian [about 150 million years ago], when a warm and shallow sea covered Chablis. It contains fossils, small oysters called *Exogyra virgula*.

Only one grape variety is used, the *chardonnay*. In this environment, limestone soil, semi-continental climate, the maturity of the *Chardonnay* reaches a unique and fragile balance, without over-ripening. It gives elegant and mineral wines that give it a *crystalline purity*.

The Appellations

The wines of Chablis come in two categories, including *Appellations Village*: Petit Chablis [19% of the volume produced] and Chablis [66%], an *Appellation Village Premier Cru* [14%] and an *Appellation Grand Cru* [1%].



The Wines

Petit Chablis are wines of immediate pleasure, easy to drink, accessible to all. Above all, don't be influenced by the word *Small*. These wines reflect the aromatic profile of Chablis.

Chablis are wines distinguished by their purity, their freshness and their minerality. Excellent with a meal or as an aperitif. They represent a good aptitude for aging.

Chablis Premier Cru wines offer an unparalleled aromatic palette. They are declined on 40 classified climates.

Chablis Grand Cru offer emotion and power. These wines come from precisely delimited plots [seven climates] which benefit from specific climatic conditions. We are talking about very complex wines that offer excellent aging potential.

These seven climates are *Blanchot* – floral, supple and flattering [12.7 ha], *Bougros* – round, mineral and supple [15 ha], *Les Clos* – mineral and powerful, great ageing potential [25.9 ha], *Grenouilles* – floral, fruity and fat [9.4 ha], *Precious* – long, powerful and concentrated with an exceptional ageing potential

[10.8 ha], *Valmur* – mineral, fruity, very well balanced [10.5 ha], *Vaudésir* – lively, floral and round [15.4 ha].

The Vinification

Chablis wines are most often aged *on lees*, a technique that consists in not separating the wine from its lees [its natural deposits] in order to increase its roundness and its aromas. The winegrower then regularly carries out a *bâtonnage*, i.e., the resuspension of the lees. This maturation period varies according to the winemakers and the profile of the wine sought. For the *Chablis Grand Cru* appellation, the wine must be aged at least until March 15 of the year following the harvest.

In Chablis, the barrels are used sparingly and rather on the appellations *Chablis Premier Cru* or *Chablis Grand Cru*. The proportion of new barrels is often reduced in order to preserve the expression of the terroir. In fact, there is no tradition of new wood in Chablis.



Buon Gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

Coquillage Moillard

This **Coquillage** comes from stony soils, clay-limestone and marl soils. Following the harvest, the berries are selected on sorting tables and then completely destemmed. The alcoholic fermentation is done at low temperature [about 20° C]. Then, the wine is quickly raked, filtered and bottled to preserve all the richness of the aromas. The wine is then matured in stainless steel tanks to preserve all the fruitiness and youthful aromas.

Tasting Notes

This wine reveals aromas of peach, citrus, white fruit notes especially pear as well as beautiful floral notes. In the mouth, the texture is particularly velvety with a fresh acidity as well as a nice sensation of minerality quite pronounced. Flavours of white fruits on apple and pear do their part to make this wine straight and full of freshness. Very nice finish with citrus notes and a touch of iodine.

You'll make great pairings with crab legs and fresh butter, steamed lobster and butter and pastis, smoked salmon and white fish burgers with lime.

Coquillage, Moillard
France, Chablis, 2020

Grape variety: Chardonnay 100%

Sugar: 1.6 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5%

Price: \$28.45

SAQ Code: 14,042,973.

Sample – Divin Paradis Agency

Terroir de Chablis, Patrick Piuze

This excellent **Patrick Piuze Terroir de Chablis** was made from two parcels, both facing north, very close to the *1^{er} Cru Montmains*. Interestingly, these quality vineyards are located on steep slopes, which are more difficult to work than average and impossible to harvest mechanically. This suits **Patrick** well as he hand harvests each vineyard.

During the vinification, only indigenous yeast is used. The *Terroir* series, village-level wines like this one, are fermented and aged primarily in old stainless steel tanks that are not temperature controlled, which adds a good layer of risk during wine-making. You have to do it and go against the grain!

Originally from Quebec, **Patrick**, after working for **Marc Chapoutier, Olivier Leflaive, Verget** and **Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**, launched his own micro-merchant in 2008. He does

not own any vines and sources his wine from old vines from Chablis winemakers. He thus elaborates several vintages which reflect the soul and the aromatic palette very typical of Chablis.

Tasting Notes

This straightforward, chiselled wine reveals aromas of pear, citrus, peach, floral notes and a stony mineral feel. On the palate, it is the lively acidity as well as the stony minerality that surprise and make this wine straight and linear. The fruit flavours are bright with notes of citrus, apples and lemon zest on the finish. Lots of energy in this wine with a superb sapidity.

You'll make a great pairing with fresh oysters, scallop *ceviche*, snow crab, lobster and seafood.

Terroir de Chablis, Parick Piuze
Chablis, 2020

Price: \$37.75

Grape variety: Chardonnay 100%

Sugar: 1.5 g/l

Alcohol: 12%

SAQ Code : 11 180 334

Sample – La Céleste Agency

Domaine Louis Moreau

The vineyard where this wine comes from is located in the village of Beines. The vines, 40 years old, grow in soils composed of clay and limestone layers. The harvest is done manually. The grapes are pressed by means of a pneumatic press and the settling is done cold. Fermentation in stainless steel tanks for the alcoholic part [100%], activated by indigenous yeast for 15 to 18 days at low temperature [18° C], and for the malolactic conversion [100%], which is started with natural bacteria.

After a first filtration, the wine is aged in vats on fine lees for at least 6 months during which weekly pumping over is practised. Then, the wine is raked before the passage in the cold, and bottled.

Tasting Notes

From the outset, one can sense that this wine has undergone a malolactic conversion and that frequent stirring has taken place. The texture is slightly oily and the whole wine has a richness that testifies that it is a *1^{er} Cru*. The nose reveals nice buttery, peach, floral and yeast notes. The palate is rich, voluminous and elegant at the same time, with dense flavours of peaches,



peach pits, pineapple and a pleasant sensation of minerality that lingers on the palate with a finish of citrus and butter.

Domaine Louis Moreau, Chablis 1^{er} Cru Vau Ligneau, 2019

Price: \$34.25

Grape variety: Chardonnay 100%

Sugar: 2,5 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5%

SAQ Code: 480,285

Sample – Vins Balthazard agency

Domaine Buisson-Charles

The **Buisson-Charles** estate, of modest size, 6.3 ha, today managed by **Catherine Buisson** and her husband **Patrick Essa**, has been exploiting for several generations parcels located on the Meursault territory which it completes with crus of Volnay, Pommard, Corton and Chambertin for the red wines as well as Chassagne-Montrachet, Puligny-Montrachet, Chablis Premier Cru and Grand Cru, Pouilly-Fuissé and Corton-Charlemagne for the white wines.

From 2011, the estate has expanded its range by developing a small trading activity in Corton-Charlemagne, Chablis Grand Cru Vaudésir and Premier Cru Les Lys, Montmains.

Tasting Notes

A wine in a class of its own, dense and elegant, revealing aromas of peaches, buttery milky notes and hints of citrus. In the mouth, it is opulent, voluminous and rich at the same time. The slightly fatty texture is harmonized with fresh acidity and flavours of peaches, apricots, yeast notes and some iodine to create a wine out of the ordinary that can be savoured for a long time. What a beautiful feeling of volume and amplitude that lasts and lasts...

You'll make great pairings with seafood, crab, lobster and processed oysters.

Domaine Buisson

Charles Chablis 1^{er} Cru, Les Lys, 2019

Price: \$65.50

Grape variety: Chardonnay 100%

Alcohol: 12.5%

SAQ Code: 14,317,228

Sample – Vinifera agency

UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE AND SOUND QUALITY!

By RICHARD SCHNEIDER

Just over two years ago, **Arcam** announced a new intelligent integrated amplifier, the SA30. We are pleased to present it to you in this section. In a discreet and classic-looking case, you will find a multitude of functions that will please most of you. **Scott Campbell**, director of sales at **Arcam** describes it this way: *The SA30 represents the new pinnacle of stereo amplification and the latest technological advances at Arcam.* The British manufacturer joins the parade of *all-in-one* devices, presenting the flagship of its integrated amplifier range, the SA30. Let's take the time to discover together what makes it such an interesting device.



Arcam was founded in 1976 in Cambridge, UK, and its entry into the high-fidelity market has been an unexpected and astonishing success. As the firm launched its first amplifier, the *A60*, on the shelves of a few stores, it hoped to sell at least 50 units. Eventually, sales reached the number of 30,000 devices. Throughout its development, **Arcam** has remained at the cutting edge of innovation. The integrated *SA30* is the result of a long series of technological innovations. It is a modern, state-of-the-art device that caters to a trendy clientele.

The Device Itself

The front panel is sober and very functional. It has a little *retro* feel to it with its rotary volume control. This is a feature that I particularly appreciate. Under this control, there is a headphone output and an auxiliary input for a mobile device. Under the *LED* screen, you can find all the controls of the device if you do not use the remote control.

This integrated amplifier is at the top of the *SA* series. Like the *SA20* integrated, the *SA30* is equipped with an **ESS Sabre ES9038K2M** digital-to-analog converter, known for its great musicality, compatible with *PCM* 768 kHz and *DSD* formats. However, this is where the comparisons end.

The amplification is 120 W per channel under 8 ohms and 220 W under 4 ohms. It operates using the *Class G* principle. It is a variation of *Class AB* that supports multiple power rails operating at different voltages. This technique, which is still not very widespread, maximizes the efficiency of the amplifier and considerably reduces thermal losses. The amplifier can therefore remain in *class A* for a longer period of time, and then slide into *class AB* when necessary. This class of amplification, which is

also used in prestigious active studio monitors, would certainly benefit from being better known by audiophiles.

On the back of the unit, I was surprised to find *MC/MM* phono inputs, as I am a big fan of vinyl records. The arsenal of digital inputs includes two *Toslink* optical inputs, two *RCA* coaxial inputs, one *HDMI eARC* input, one *USB* input. As for analog, four line inputs will satisfy most audiophile needs. Let's not forget the *WiFi*, *Ethernet* and *RS-232* connections. **Arcam** has provided us with a preamplifier output, which will allow us to connect a second amplifier or a *subwoofer*. The gold-plated speaker terminals are solid and very well made.

The Installation

The **Arcam SA30** intelligent amplifier is a device that needs to be tamed. The instruction manual will be our new bedside reading. It is necessary to take the time to study it well and to assimilate its functions to be able to appreciate all the possibilities that the device offers.

First of all, we will have to install the **Arcam MusicLife** application on our mobile devices. When started, the application will detect all physical devices (*NAS*, *PC*, *MAC*) on the network as well as some Internet music applications through *UPnP/DLNA* protocol using *WiFi* or *Ethernet* wired networks. For my part, I used the *WiFi* network with success.

The MusicLife Application

On the surface, *MusicLife* is nothing spectacular, but we will appreciate its efficiency. It detected my entire music library stored on the hard drives of my digital server, connected to my *WiFi* network. From here, you can control the volume of the



AMPLIFICATEUR INTÉGRÉ SA30 D'ARCAM



SA30 remotely and view the photos in the albums. You will have access to countless radio channels including most local AM/FM channels. Since the SA30 incorporates a modern network player, access to major online music services, such as **Tidal** (with full MQA decoding), **Qobuz**, **Deezer**, **Spotify** and many others, is possible. Users of **Roon** music playback software will be happy to know that the SA30 is a **Roon end point**.

The network player also supports **AirPlay 2** and **Google Chromecast** protocols. Access to all the functions I have just described is possible by pressing the **NET** button on the remote control.

What Else Is There?

The **Arcam SA30** has other very interesting attributes, such as the ability to listen to music, using the **USB** input on the back of the device. It is a matter of inserting a **USB** drive, pressing the

USB button on the remote control. The content of the tracks stored on the key can be controlled at our discretion. It is displayed on the screen using the **INFO** key.

The other entries are very simple to use. They are of the **Plug and Play** type. I particularly liked the **ARC (Audio Return Channel)** input that connects the device to a TV via **HDMI**. This allows you to retrieve an audio input. What about the phono inputs? Great! The integrated phono preamplifier will not cause any problems, because we only have to connect our turntable without having to use an external preamplifier.

A less than ideal sounding listening room and the headache of locating speakers are very often the lot of new audio system owners. The **Dirac Live** correction system built into the SA30 will be a lifeline. **Dirac Live** is a real bonus that is hard to do without. With the help of free software available on the **Dirac website**, we will be able to correct and optimize the sound of our



speakers, and moreover, all of our audio equipment. The microphone needed to do the job is supplied with the unit. It is connected to a PC or MAC in which the software has been previously downloaded using a USB input. The process requires a certain amount of computer knowledge, but I am sure that a reseller will be able to help you get through the whole process. The benefits are conclusive. Let's forget, for a few moments, the access to the numerous musical sources offered by the SA30, because it is first and foremost an integrated amplifier. The access to a multi-discipline of sources is certainly very important, but by acquiring such a device we are entitled to expect a musical restitution beyond the average. You won't be disappointed!

Listening

Let's take the *Anthology* album by **Chantal Chamberland** and the track *Crazy*. We will never be so close to the artist. The

presence, the sound stage and the musicality are striking. Mrs. **Chamberland's** voice and her guitar are very centred. We can hear slightly husky side of her voice and her great sensuality. We no longer *listen* to the speakers, we listen to the melody. The great quality of an audio system, by the way, lies there. The speakers must *disappear* to make room for the music. Don't worry, *FLAC* files can't be beaten. Oh no! Being more accessible and often of very good quality, especially in 24/192, it is necessary to plan several hours of listening, a glass of wine or scotch in hand. It's going to be hard to let go, I tell you. I was impressed by the SA30's phono preamplifier's quality. *The Wall* by **Pink Floyd** hits you like a ton of bricks. The bass and drums have a lot of impact, especially when you turn up the volume. Although this may seem contradictory, the device reproduces the warmth of analog beautifully. The amplification has a lot of reserve. It never flinched. Vinyl after vinyl, I had immense pleasure in letting them spin.

ARCAM SA30 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER





« Let's take the *Anthology* album by **Chantal Chamberland** and the track *Crazy*. We will never be so close to the artist. The presence, the sound stage and the musicality are striking. Mrs. **Chamberland's** voice and her guitar are very centred. We can hear slightly husky side of her voice and her great sensuality. We no longer *listen to* the speakers, we listen to the melody. »

Conclusion

If **Arcam** made compromises in the design of the SA30, I confess that I don't understand them. I would have no problem integrating this device into my audio system. I was impressed by its versatility, but mostly charmed by the beauty of its sound reproduction.

For those who know **Arcam** well, one recognizes the signature sound of the firm that leaves no one indifferent. The coherence of the sound spectra is soft to the ear. The respect for timbres, voices and instruments is remarkable. As I mentioned above, it will take some getting used to. However, once all the pieces are in place, you will never regret this purchase. Plan to spend many hours with it.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$4,499

Warranty: coming soon

Distributor: Erikson Consumer,
Tel: 514.457.6674, www.eriksonconsumer.com;
www.arcam.co.uk

Mediagraphy

Chantal Chamberland, *Anthology*

Pink Floyd, *The Wall*

HIFI ROSE RS201E NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER/INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

A NEW REAL *ALL-IN-ONE* STREAMER?

By MICHEL DALLAIRE



HiFi Rose is a relatively new South Korean company in the production of high-fidelity devices. It is specialized in multimedia players and more particularly in networked music playback. Its catalogue includes four *streamer* models, one of which is also an integrated amplifier, such as the *RS201E* that was lent to me for this test bench. Two other models are also available as *Bluetooth* wireless speakers. These come in the form of a compact table radio in a nicely retro style. A *drive* type *CD*

player completes the **HiFi Rose** catalogue. This player allows the dematerialization of a *CD* in order to save it on a hard disk or to make its listening in real time. In this test bench, I will test the *RS201E* model which is a device that we call *all-in-one* in high-fidelity. More and more manufacturers are offering this type of network player, so let's see how the *RS201E* differs from other devices in a market where competition is numerous and fierce.



HIFI ROSE RS201E NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER/INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

What is the HiFi Rose RS201E?

In its case, the expression *all-in-one* is not abusive, because it combines the functions of amplifier, network music player, digital-analog converter and by extension, music server. Indeed, under the device is a trapdoor in which it is possible to insert yourself, as an option, an *SSD 3.0* drive. Add to that a *4K HDMI* output for viewing your album covers or watching **YouTube** videos on your TV and you've got the whole package. The *RS201E* is relatively compact, with dimensions of $278 \times 206 \times 76$ mm. The front panel is mostly occupied by a high-resolution 8.8 inches touch-sensitive screen. The latter includes a series of icons representing all the functions of the device. The *RS201E* can therefore be fully controlled by pointing to these icons and dragging them to the right or left. This gives access to the various adjustments and configuration parameters. A nice *Bluetooth* remote control allows you to navigate through all the options. Its operating system is based on *OS Android 7.0 (Nougat)* with the possibility of updating via the Internet. The *RS201E* can also be controlled using an app called *Rose Connect*, which is available for free for *Android* or *iOS* phones and tablets. On the far right, there is a small lever that tilts up or down to control the volume or to mute the device. Just below, there is a 3.5 mm *mini jack* output for headphones.

It is small but...

The compactness and relative lightness of **HiFi Rose's RS201E** player is due, in part, to its 24 V 5A universal switching *SMPS* external power supply. Its amplifier module, which operates in *Class D*, also saves a lot of space inside the case. Despite the manufacturer's claim of 100 W per channel, the *RS201E* generates almost no heat. It can therefore be installed in a closed cabinet, but as its beautiful display gives us a lot of information

on the selection of sources and on the music being played, it is interesting to leave it in full view on an audio cabinet or on a sideboard in a dining room. Especially since its headphone output appeared to me to be very powerful, so the idea of having it not too far from a good sofa is not crazy either.

Truly universal connectivity?

My answer to this question would be *yes* if **HiFi Rose** had not omitted to include an asynchronous *USB-B* input in order to connect a computer or a music server directly. But rest assured, on the other types of input and output, it is not outdone. On the back of the device, there is an analog *Line In*, analog *Preamplifier Out*, digital *Optical In*, digital *Optical Out*, *HDMI 4K* and *USB-C* input. The *USB-A 3.0* and *USB-A 2.0* digital inputs are used to connect a *CD* player, external hard drive or *USB* stick with music content. Since the *RS201E* is a network drive, it also has a *WiFi* wireless connection and a wired *Ethernet* connection with an *RJ45* port. A *Bluetooth 4.0* wireless connection and a slot for *Micro SD* cards complete the package. Simply plug in a pair of speakers and you'll have a very complete and space-saving hi-fi system.

A Great Opening to Dematerialized Music

HiFi Rose's RS201E is a member of the *DLNA* alliance, so it can be shared with any computer or multimedia device connected to an Internet network, be it a computer, a music server or a *NAS (Network Attached Storage)*. It is compatible with **Apple Airplay** devices and the **ROON** playback software. Its conversion chip is an **ESS Sabre** that can handle just about any *PCM* file type up to 32-bit / 384 kHz resolution. *DSD256* files are also supported as well as *streaming MQA*. Its *RoseFM* icon provides access to some 800 radio stations in various countries. The *Radio* icon gives



access to several Internet radio stations by selecting the zone of the chosen country. On the subscription-based online music side, streaming sites like **Spotify**, **Tidal** and **Qobuz** are accessible via their platforms. The *RS201E*'s beautiful touch-sensitive display requires a period of acclimation to all the adjustment possibilities that come with it. After spending some time navigating through its menus, its interface becomes a breeze. However, the *Rose Connect* app for phone and tablet is quite useful if you want to control the *RS201E* remotely.

Now I plug in the speakers and listen!

I was able to test the **HIFI Rose RS201E** player with a pair of three-way speakers equipped with a *tweeter*, a midrange and two *woofers*. I had them in residence for another test bench and they are known to be power hungry. The *RS201E* player didn't seem to have a problem feeding them, but I got the best results with smaller, two-way speakers. My listening was done with my usual speakers and another pair of bookshelf speakers that I also had in residence for a test bench. My *CeolBOX* server was used as the main source of music, along with an external hard drive and a portable *DVD Writer* from a well-known brand.

I started my listening with the album *Rythme de Passage* by jazz band **Emilie R**

Roussel Trio. What strikes me right away is the clarity of the message and the level of definition of *RS201E*. Its tonal balance is not overly focused on the upper end of the spectrum, which avoids falling into overdefinition or a sanitized or gaunt digital sound. Thanks to a good neutrality, the instruments keep their natural colour. The *RS201E*'s level of definition and its respect of the dynamic gaps allow me to perceive all their harmonics. The stereo image has good dimensions and allows me to detect a very credible space between the musicians. The difference in sound between the electric bass and the double bass is clearly distinguishable and these instruments are well supported in their low frequency foundation. The **Émilie R Roussel**'s piano and electronic keyboards are also well detectable with a nice presence in my listening room. I continue *Nameless* by the beautiful **Dominique Fils-Aimé**. On this well-executed recording at the **Opus** studio, the *RS201E* gives me a singer captured close to the microphone, with precise diction and a most suave voice. Listening to it on headphones, it's as if she were singing in my ear. The *RS201E*'s dynamic range enhances the drummer's subtle playing, especially when he uses his hands to hit the head of his drums. The bass drum's impact is more than satisfactory while the double bass keeps all its roundness and the woody character of its resonance box. Once again, the *RS201E*'s ability to read what's going on in a recording allows me to see or rather hear the singer in the foreground, while the musicians are perfectly positioned in the background. Other devices will go further in terms of a three-dimensional perception of the stereophonic image, but it will then be necessary to invest much more in multi-box equipment.

I continue with an album that can be described as *World Music* given the international origin of its musicians. It is **Monoswezi** which is a collective of musicians from Norway, Sweden, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They fuse modern jazz with traditional music from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In this album, singer, dancer and musician **Hope Masike** offers us her warm voice while accompanying herself on the Mbira, as well as with different types of African percussions. This recording is

sublimely realized and the *RS201E* doesn't hide anything from me about the array of sounds coming from the different percussions. The metal slats of the Mbira produce an enchanting sound that is close to the xylophone. This African instrument is a wonderful accompaniment to Ms. **Masike**'s voice. The *RS201E* is a perfect introduction to this very committed traditional music. The lyrics of these pieces are inspired by the socio-economic situation of African countries, but musically they do not completely lose sight of the rhythms that bring joy to life.

At the time of writing, we are about a week away from Christmas and I am taking the opportunity to finish my listening with **Marc-Antoine Charpentier**'s *La Pastorale de Noël* performed by the superb **Ensemble Correspondances**. This group specializing in the French baroque repertoire is composed of ten musicians and nine singers directed by **Sébastien Daucé**. Their album, on the **Harmonia Mundi** label, is always well recorded and the ensemble's performances are always perfect. The *RS201E* reader easily immerses me in the universe of this work on the Nativity, which is unusual in that it mixes secular and sacred genres. The soloists and the choir are presented to me in a divine if not sublime way in an almost palpable stereophonic image. Early instruments are accurately reproduced in their full range of sound and are equally well distributed in the stereo image. In short, the *RS201E* is not at all segregated in terms of where and what kind of music is presented to it.

Conclusion

As you can see, I had a lot of fun with the **HIFI Rose RS201E**. This little rascal hides its game well behind a compact case and illuminated by an interactive high-resolution display. Its multiple functions make it a very practical multimedia device for the user who does not want to turn his living room into a laboratory full of electronic devices and wiring. Its compactness even allows it to be used as a desktop player next to a computer, in a bedroom or even on the sideboard in your dining room. But don't let the playfulness of its design fool you. Combined with a respectable pair of





GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: 2 995 \$

Warranty: 2 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Zidel Marketing, T.: 514.781.3902., www.zidelmarketing.com; eng.hifirose.co

Mediagraphy

Emie R Roussel Trio, Rythme de Passage, UNI Musiqc 2019, UNICD-4720

Dominique Fils-Aimée, Nameless, Ensoul Records

Monoswezi, Monoswezi Yanga, TUGCD1090

Ensemble Correspondances, La Pastorale de Noël, Harmonia Mundi, HMC902247

June Trabor, Iain Ballamy et Huw Warren, Quercus, ECM, 2276 372 4555

speakers, it becomes the centrepiece of a truly comprehensive high-fidelity system for digital music. At a price of \$2,999, I feel the RS201E is very competitive in a category of *all-in-one* devices, most of which lack the 4K HDMI output to watch video. If you deduct from this price, the savings you make by not having to buy a multitude of connecting cables, the RS201E player from **HIFI Rose** becomes a very good deal.



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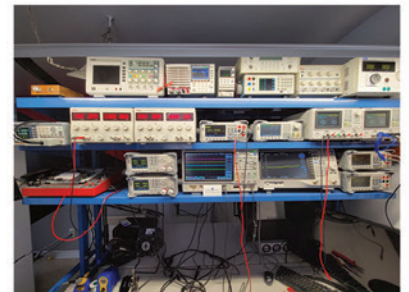
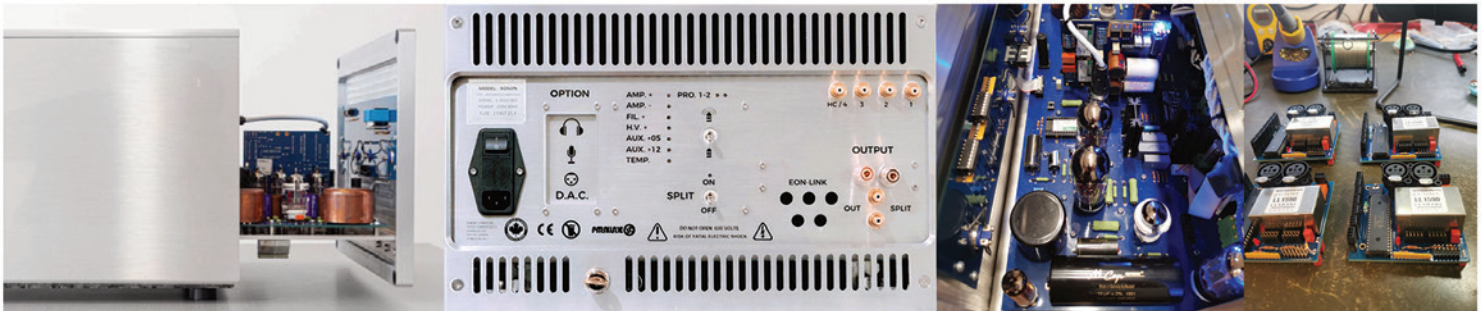


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CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT BLACK TURNTABLE, **SATISFY KARDAN** TONEARM
AND **PERFORMER V2 MM** CARTRIDGE

A SLICE OF HAPPINESS BY *CLEARAUDIO*

Par JEAN-DENIS DOYLE



I love it when a prestigious company decides to apply all its know-how, acquired while designing high-end products, in a product with a *realistic* price. My hat is off to **Naim** for their *Nait 5si* amplifier, to **MOON** for their *110-LP* phono preamplifier and to **Bower & Wilkins** for the *600 Anniversary* series. It's always great to see manufacturers redirecting the fruits of their research and development into affordable products. It is even essential for the expansion and survival of the audio industry. In turn, **Clearaudio** offers us its *Concept Black* turntable, equipped with the *Satisfy Kardan* tone arm and the *Performer MM V2* cartridge. It is presented as a ready-to-use kit. This set, offered at a reasonable price, will have to meet a challenge, that of giving us a good idea of the possible performances of a **Clearaudio** turntable. The bar is very high, so let's see if **Clearaudio's** engineers succeeded.

Clearaudio is an absolutely fascinating German company. Founded in 1978 by **Peter Suchy**, the **Erlanger** manufacturer is a true flagship of the high-fidelity industry. **Clearaudio** is above

all ultramodern and relies above all on the use of advanced technologies for the manufacture of its products. The company insists on manufacturing the vast majority of the parts used in its products itself. To achieve this, it has invested substantially in the tooling necessary to manufacture certain specific parts, in order to be as little dependent as possible on external suppliers. The **Suchy** family also invested heavily in personnel by surrounding themselves with a group of engineers and workers among the most qualified in the industry. At **Clearaudio**, professionalism and seriousness leave no room for compromise, so much so that when a measuring or manufacturing instrument proves inadequate, the team does not hesitate to design it itself to achieve the desired result. We are light years ahead of some obscure artisanal manufacturers. The quality of **Clearaudio** can be felt, seen and *heard*.

Clearaudio's engineering team is unwavering in its design philosophy. In the case of the *Concept Black* model, the team was able to use all the tools and technology at its disposal to create a high-performance turntable at a reasonable price. In reality, very few companies have so many assets to carry out such a project. Let's see what technical tricks she used to get there.

Technical Description The Concept Turntable

This turntable model is actually second in the **Clearaudio** hierarchy. A little more expensive than the base *Emotion* model, *Concept* is a very popular model and aims to be an affordable digest of **Clearaudio** technology. The *Concept Black* is a



CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT BLACK TURNTABLE, **SATISFY KARDAN** TONEARM
AND **PERFORMER V2 MM** CARTRIDGE

surprisingly simple turntable in design. It is essentially an *MDF* base covered with an anti-resonant composite material made of plastic, with a black satin finish. In the centre, we find a metal rotation axis machined with impeccable precision. At this price, it will be difficult to do much better. With a diameter of nearly one centimetre, it is attached to the aluminum sub-platter and is placed in a brass receptacle. The whole thing runs smoothly with minimal friction. Then comes the three-centimetre thick platter that rests on the sub-platter, which is assembled from a synthetic compound similar to that of a vinyl record.

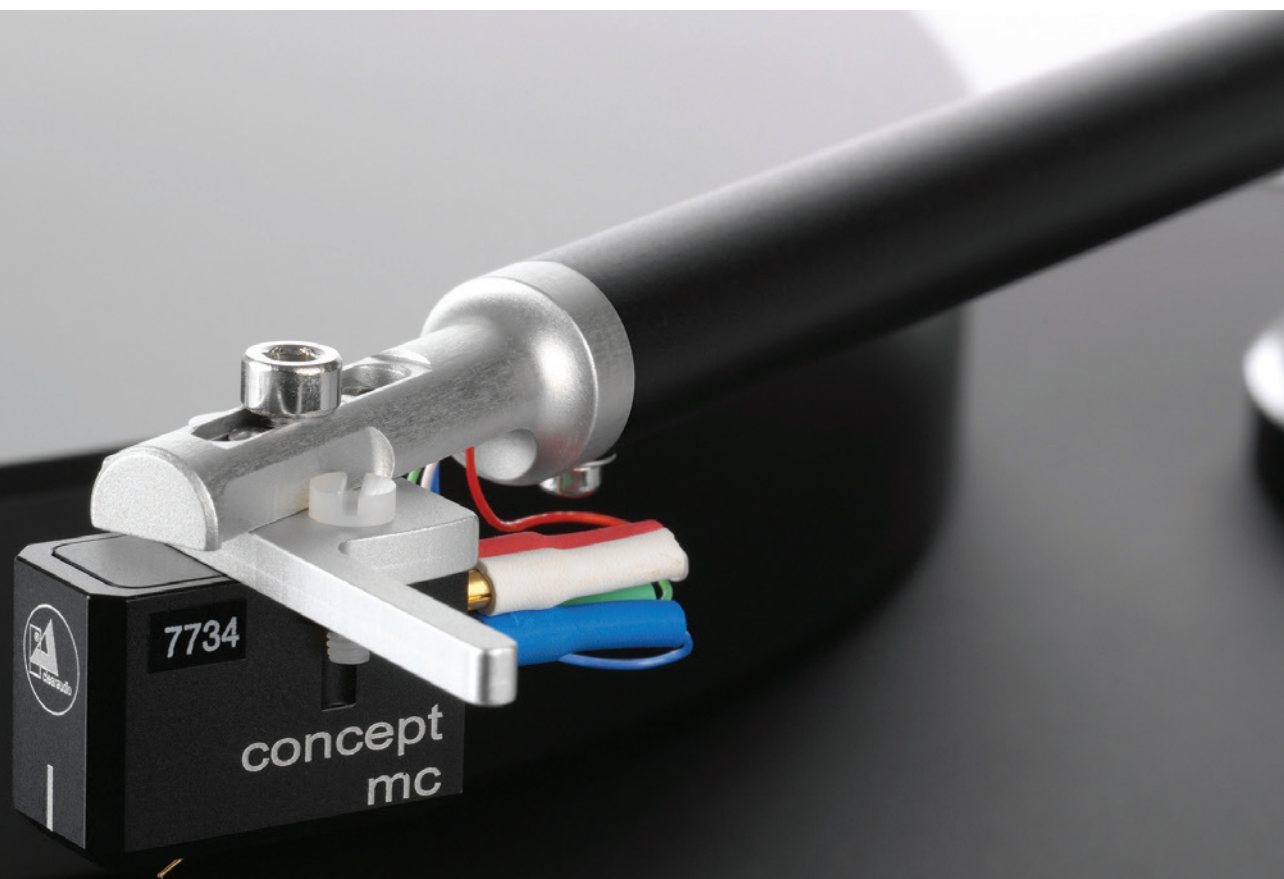
Clearaudio doesn't get too chatty about its composition. This is actually the same material found on the brand's other, more high-end turntable models, which have proven themselves. The platter is driven by a flat belt and a *DC* type motor which is started and the speed selected by a rotary switch on the front. This one even allows you to select a 78 rpm rotation. The engine is well built and has been carefully decoupled from the chassis to avoid any vibration transmission. The power comes from a small separate power supply, supplied with the board. The *Concept Black* turntable rests on four small adjustable feet. These offer a good level of insulation thanks to a certain flexibility, especially laterally.

The Satisfy Kardan Tone Arm

This tone arm is a **Clearaudio** classic. It has been part of its catalogue for several years and has benefited from several improvements. It can also be found on other manufacturers' turntables, proof of the relevance of its design. Based on a black aluminum tube, the *Satisfy Kardan* is equipped with a double rotation axis. A conventional ball bearing takes care of the lateral pivoting and the up and down movement is ensured by two captive pins. It is a simple and very precise mechanism that adds virtually no friction. The traction control system is magnetic and disarmingly simple. The *Satisfy Kardan* tone arm is equipped with high-quality wiring that is not interrupted or spliced, all the way to the *RCA* connectors of the preamplifier.

The Performer V2 Cartridge

This cartridge is a moving magnet type. Located at the beginning of **Clearaudio's** moving magnet cartridge line, it is a perfectly balanced compromise between cost and performance. Featuring an aluminum stylus and an elliptical diamond shape, the *Performer V2* is a cartridge that can deliver great musical performance. With an output level of 3.3 MV, a good level of separation and a wide frequency response, it is a perfect match



for the *Satisfy Kardan* tone arm. The *Performer V2* is assembled in a beautiful ebony case.

Unpacking and Installation

Clearaudio's *Concept Black* turntable is sold as a *Plug and Play* product, and it really is. The packaging is impeccable, and unpacking is a breeze. Just take your time and follow the instructions. In less than thirty minutes, the *Concept Black* was already spinning its first album. All necessary tools are provided and the cartridge is already mounted and aligned. There is even a rubber ring to mark the location of the counterweight on the back of the tone arm. I still validated the tracking force with a precision scale and it was perfect. The traction control is already set at the factory as well as the height of the tone arm. Exceptionally, the arm lift of the *Satisfy Kardan* is a real joy to handle. The turntable is designed to be used without any form of carpet on its tray. **Clearaudio** should have included a dust cover with this quality set, even if it meant increasing the price. An optional lid is available, and you'll definitely need to order one for yourself. Indeed, the beautiful, all dressed in black, is a real magnet for dust.

Listening Impressions

A beautiful light for each disc

Clearaudio's *Concept Black* set delivers a bright soundstage right out of the box. A sound signature that leaves no doubt about the origins of this turntable. It is indeed very **Clearaudio**. It's crisp, clear, clean and the background noise is surprisingly low for a product in this price range. With **Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette's** *Yesterday's* album, the trio's playing is easy to follow, each member holding their place perfectly in a scene that materializes with clarity, in front of me. **Jack DeJohnette's** bass is articulate and never intrusive. The piano is frank, incisive and free of any coloration. This is a turntable that can make quality recordings shine without needing a ton of bass to make them listenable. I was amazed at how effective the simplicity of the chassis design could be. Indeed, this little turntable seems immune to any *feedback* effect. Simply placed on a solid wood board, I was able to have fun with the volume without any problem.

A Perfect Synergy Between the Components

The *turntable-arm-cartridge* set proposed by **Clearaudio** presents such a beautiful homogeneity, that in the end the sum of the three gives the impression of dealing with, in terms of listening, a turntable of a much higher price. As I've often said, the synergy between the components of a turntable is paramount and the *Concept Black* is a perfect example. With **Muddy Waters' Folk Singer** album, the result is super holographic, with a very well realized and airy stereophonic effect. The resolution of fine details, creating a surprising effect of depth. The tone is also superb, giving a nice chest to the singer's voice, thanks to a good presence in the low frequencies. Quite honestly, the overall reproduction quality of this *Concept Black* pleasantly surprised me.

An Undeniable Family Resemblance

During a recent test bench, I had the chance to host the **Clearaudio** *Innovation Compact* turntable equipped with the *TT-5* tangential arm. I was therefore able to assess how well **Clearaudio** was able to pull off the challenge of offering a good sample of the performance achieved by its high-end turntables in a much more affordable model. Of course the *Innovation Compact* is *better, much better*, no doubt about it. Quite normal, it sells for several thousand dollars more. But still! The small *Concept Black* offers the typical clarity of **Clearaudio** sound. The tone is similar and the manufacturer's signature sound can be heard perfectly. You are not a millionaire? This is not a problem, since the *Concept Black* allows you to enjoy **Clearaudio** quality at a reasonable price. **Clearaudio** has clearly won its bet with this *Concept Black* turntable.

Conclusion

The *Concept Black* turntable from **Clearaudio** is a great buy. It is pretty, well designed and seriously constructed. With minimal maintenance, it should work perfectly for decades. Its clear, precise, clean and bright sound gives you a generous share of the joy of owning a prestigious **Clearaudio** turntable. It will allow you to enjoy your quality vinyl records for a reasonable price. Bravo and hats off to the **Clearaudio** team. *A must listen!*



GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3,499 for the whole package

Warranty: tone arm and/or cartridge, 2 years; electronics and *record cleaning*, 3 years*, parts and labour

Distributor: Focal Naim Canada, T.: 1.866.271.5689, www.focalnaimamerica.com; <https://clearaudio.de>

* The warranty card must be properly completed and submitted to ClearAudio or the warranty for the device has been submitted online at: <https://clearaudio.de/en/service/registration.php>

Mediagraphy

Keith Jarrett, Gary peacock, Jack DeJohnette, *Yesterday's*, ECM, 2060 179 4205

Muddy Waters, *Folk Singer*, Chess, LPS, 1483

VERTERE DYNAMIC GROOVE TURNTABLE

A FLASH OF GENIUS TO AWAKEN YOUR MUSIC

BY JEAN-DENIS DOYLE



It has an unusual shape, leaves no one indifferent, contains treasures of innovation and is full of good ideas. Here is the *Dynamic Groove* turntable from **Vertere**. A real darling of the European specialized press, this turntable, with its efficient design, has been praised for its exceptional sound quality. New to the North American market, **Vertere's Dynamic Groove** is the entry-level turntable from the prestigious British manufacturer. This bench test was really a good thing to write, since there is so much to say, describe and analyze about this turntable. Without further ado, let's go and discover this intriguing device whose performance the audiophile world praises so much.

Do you know **Vertere**? This young British brand, based in London, specializes in the design and manufacture of high quality turntables, high quality cables for audiophiles and some accessories. If the brand is relatively unknown in Canada, its founder and designer is a well-known figure in the *audiophile* world. It is **Touraj Moghaddam**, creator and co-founder of **Roksan**. **Touraj Moghaddam** is certainly not at his first turntable design. Creator of the famous **Roksan Xerxes** turntable, he knows what he's talking about when it comes to turntables, and he has for a long time. His designs, based on rigorous applied science, have always been the talk of the town. **Touraj Moghadam** has never been afraid to go off the beaten track, both in terms of materials used and solutions adopted. The *Xerxes* turntable, despite its peculiarities, was the reference for many audiophiles around the world and is still very much in demand today.

With the **Vertere** brand, **Touraj Moghaddam** was able to have fun and push his designs to new heights. You should take the



VERTERE DYNAMIC GROOVE TURNTABLE

time to explore the **Vertere** website to discover models of turntables of unprecedented sophistication. Some models reach stratospheric prices and are aimed at a clientele whose budget has no real limits. Eager to offer a turntable at a more affordable cost, the **Vertere** team has worked on the *Dynamic Groove* model. For this project, **Touraj Moghaddam** says he had to resort to several innovative solutions. These have resulted in a *Plug and Play* deck, at a reasonable cost and offering very high performance, worthy of a **Vertere**. Thus, the *Dynamic Groove* turntable was born, with its unique flat arm and its crazy design. Let's see how **Vertere's** team managed to do it.

« It takes about three seconds of **Pharrell Williams' *Girl*** album to realize how well the *Dynamic Groove* turntable lives up to its name. It's not complicated, it explodes with dynamics! Whether it's a big gap between the softest and loudest sounds, or just microdetails that pop out of nowhere, this turntable is truly the champion of live listening. »

Technical Description

The Dynamic Groove Turntable

When reading this technical description, you will have to put aside all your preconceptions about turntables. In fact, this turntable is unlike any other, both in terms of the solutions adopted and its *look*. As we will see, the appearance of this turntable is not only born from the delirium of a designer, but rather a consequence of the technical choices during its conception. **Vertere's *Dynamic Groove*** is a semi-rigid, belt-driven turntable. The turntable's chassis is made of cast acrylic and is anti-resonant.

The chassis is divided into two sections. A first section constitutes the outer perimeter and the bottom of the plate. Said plate is made of a sandwich of three layers of acrylic with the middle one being translucent. This unit stands on three adjustable feet and includes the control electronics and motor. This 24-pole motor and its electronics have been optimized by a microprocessor to minimize rotational vibration. The motor and the electronic board are isolated by a shielding plate in order to avoid any interference during the reading of a disc. The engine decoupling system is unique. It allows the motor to oscillate freely from left to right, which is surprising when starting it. Indeed, at the beginning of its rotation, the motor oscillates from left to right in a rather pronounced way in the manner of a *Bubble Head* statuette, and it stops thereafter. Fascinating!

The *Dynamic Groove* has a subframe located in the center of the turntable. This includes the platter and the tone arm. It is decoupled from the main chassis by a plastic blade system that offers some flexibility. This system is incredibly efficient, as there is virtually no vibration at the platter or tone arm. No matter how hard I hit my knuckles while playing a record, nothing, *nada*, not a sound can be heard, really fascinating. The set is quite particular too. It is made from an aluminum alloy. In order to prevent it from resonating, a disc made of cork, neoprene and nitrile is glued underneath. A rigid mat is glued directly to the top of the tray and cleverly incorporates the markings for the cartridge alignment. Brilliant! The plate rotates smoothly thanks to a precision stainless steel bearing that rests on a tungsten ball. According to **Vertere**, this avoids the use of a complex lubrication system. The plate is driven by a round belt made of a mixture of silicone and rubber. The power supply is provided by a small plug-in unit on the wall.





The Groove Runner Tonearm

If the *Dynamic Groove* turntable is definitely off the beaten path, then the *Groove Runner* tone arm goes deep into the forest. First of all, by the chosen shape. **Vertere's** team opted for this flat shape for a very good reason, it resonates very little. It is in fact an aluminum and polymer sandwich. Between the two layers, there is a printed circuit board that carries the signal from the cartridge to the output cables. This is a unique, very clever solution that allows many possibilities. Like any great idea, we wonder why nobody thought of it before. This flat arm design allows for a sliding counterweight near the cartridge for fine adjustments, and a larger one at the back for general adjustment. This arrangement also allows the effective mass of the arm to be varied and thus better adapted to certain types of cartridges. But that's not all, far from it! The most surprising feature of this tone arm is that it uses tension cables, instead of the traditional ball bearings, to move the arm. Precision-turned nylon threads reduce the level of resistance and friction to a minimum. In addition, unlike a bearing, the nylon thread has an absolutely constant resistance and does not suffer from any stagnation effect. The result is an exemplary tracking of the grooves and a sound reproduction of impeccable clarity. In addition, the nylon threads do not transmit any vibrations from the turntable to the tone arm. The vertically placed nylon line also acts as a traction control. This is done by increasing the twist of the wire with the knob on the top of the arm, Phew! Completely brilliant and awesome!

The Vertere Magneto Cartridge

Delivered with the *Dynamic Groove ready-to-play* kit, this cartridge is a moving magnet type. It is in fact an **Audio Technica AT-VM520EB**, of a acceptable quality. It is equipped with an elliptical stylus with a good output level which can easily be replaced by the user. Honestly, even if I was surprised by the performance of the *Magneto* cartridge, it is still obvious that the **Vertere Dynamic Groove** deck deserves to have a cartridge of a much higher level installed. I wouldn't hesitate for a second to mount a \$1,500+ cartridge on this very deserving deck.

Installation

I received the *Plug and Play* version of the *Dynamic Groove* deck from **Vertere**. Thanks to the nylon wire system of the *Groove Runner* tone arm, the turntable can be shipped with the counterweights already installed and adjusted at the factory. Since there are no bearings, there is no risk of damage during transport. All I had to do was unscrew the safety latch under the turntable, carefully place the tray, install the belt and make the connections.

The board is delivered with all the necessary cables and tools. Once ready, it lights up in different colors depending on the speed chosen. Fortunately, the lighting is adjustable. The turntable comes with a cover, which will be absolutely essential to install given the glossy black finish of the machine.



Listening Impressions

The assumed happiness of being born different from others

If the appearance and technology of the **Vertere** Dynamic Groove are different from other turntables on the market, so is its sound. Indeed, this turntable has its own signature sound. The sound of the *Dynamic Groove* is clear, very precise and the perception of the distortion level is excessively low. With this turntable, all the science and theory put into practice by **Vertere's** team makes sense. We were promised exemplary tracking and that is exactly how the tone arm and turntable behave. They seem to meticulously search the grooves for fine details, and they find them.

The noise level when playing a disc is surprisingly low, leaving all the room for the music. This turntable reproduces the music with a reassuring accuracy that leaves no doubt in the listener's mind. My **John Abercrombie Quartet** record flows

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through my speakers with a new light. The listening is surprisingly agile and easy. The effectiveness of the different decoupling systems used by the *Dynamic Groove* can be clearly heard. This turntable seems to be completely unaware of its surroundings and only picks up the good musical vibrations contained in the grooves. The recording studio room is there in front of me, with a picture of the space between the instruments worthy of a very high-end turntable. It is important to keep in mind that I did my listening with the *Magneto* cartridge from **Vertere** delivered with the turntable. I can't even imagine what the result would be with a high quality moving coil cartridge. The *Dynamic Groove* is definitely in the big league, but at a reasonable cost.

Living Up to Its Name

It takes about three seconds of **Pharrell Williams' Girl** album to realize how well the *Dynamic Groove* turntable lives up to its

name. It's not complicated, it explodes with dynamics! Whether it's a big gap between the softest and loudest sounds, or just microdetails that pop out of nowhere, this turntable is truly the champion of live listening. It *grooves* a lot, as they say in the *deejaying* world. **Vertere's Dynamic Groove** has the ability to transmit the energy contained in vinyls as few turntables can.

Techno, rock and metal fans will love this dance machine. The rockers will play *air guitar* and our *metalhead* friends will headbang themselves into torticollis. **Vertere's Dynamic Groove** is a powerful reminder of what makes us love vinyl so much: having *fun* first! This turntable is a real party machine, it transmits the energy of the bass and makes the speakers move with a very addictive *swing*. I had a blast cranking up the volume many times. Each time, the music remains solid and never becomes confused. The speed is superbly stable, allowing the turntable to reproduce the music with power and impact.

Conclusion

The *Dynamic Groove* turntable is a true flash of genius. We must salute the courage and audacity of the **Vertere** team to have designed a product that is completely different from other turntables on the market. I would not be surprised to see some of the ideas, which gave birth to the *Dynamic Groove*, being taken up by other manufacturers. Well installed and equipped with a high-level cartridge, this turntable will give its owner an impeccable musical rendering, very dynamic and downright electrifying. Don't miss the opportunity to *listen to it*. You'll see, sometimes I'm right to get excited!

GENERAL INFORMATION

DG-1 Magneto Package

Price: 5 195 \$

Warranty: 1 year, parts and labour

Availability at: Audio by Mark Jones,
T.: 289.314.3609, <https://audiobymarkjones.ca>

Mediagraphy

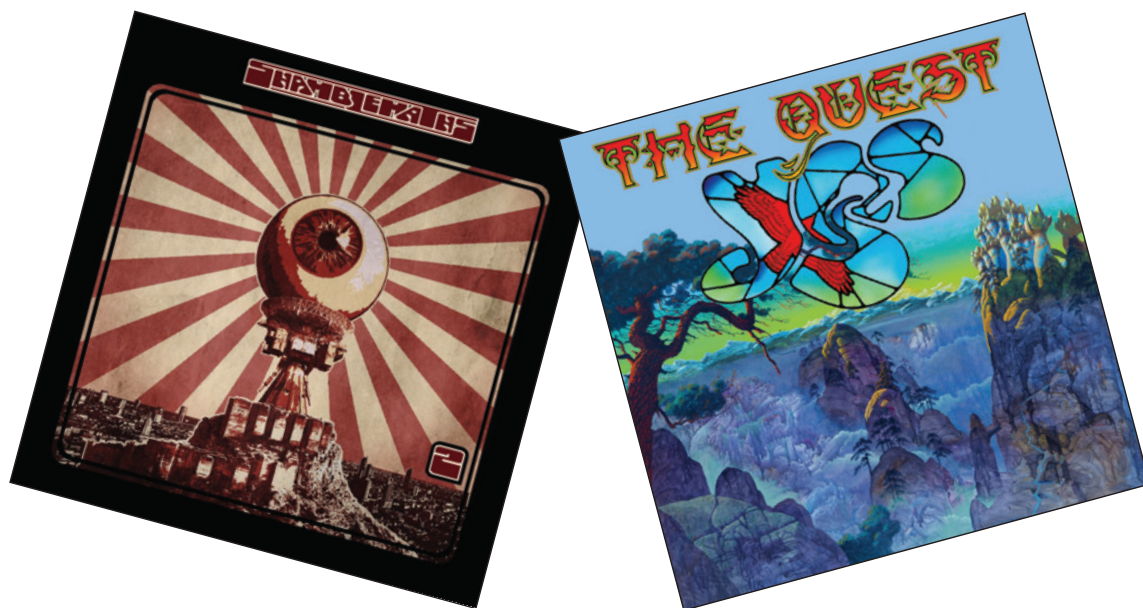
John Abercrombie Quartet, Up-and-coming,
ECM, ECM 2528 5,726,238

Pharrell Williams, Girl, Columbia, 88,843 05727 1

RHYTHM & MUSIC

ROCK PROG

By RICHARD GUAY



SHAMBLEMATHS

Shamblemaths II

<https://shamblemaths.bandcamp.com/album/shamblemaths-2>

Shamblemaths is a band from Trondheim, Norway. It is a project by **Simen Ellingsen** (saxophones, guitars and vocals), assisted by **Ingvald A. Vassbø** (drums, percussion) which proclaims itself part of the *eclectic band* movement. There are about ten guest musicians, mainly on bass and keyboards, as well as three female singers, including a child. *Shamblemath II* is the second opus of the band following the eponymous album of 5 years ago. Bands from this country are known for their ability to push the boundaries of our comfort zone as well as for the high quality of their music. *Shamblemaths II* is no exception and plunges us directly into the most enigmatic universe of Scandinavian bands. With an uncommon refinement, this opus literally transports us in a dreamy and mysterious atmosphere in which chamber music, jazz, classical music and, of course, the omnipresent progressive rock fraternize. The work is a long epic suite littered with recurring and syncopated themes, baroque variations and extremely refined progressive rock instrumental passages, some of which are quite *hard* and guitar-saturated, while others possess a more symphonic nature. After a confusing introduction of twisted saxophone chords, a slowly developing saga begins. Each chapter tells a part of a story and offers its own musical structure where all emotions are allowed. The lyrics, in

Norwegian, add to the intrigue of this strange atmosphere which, unfortunately, makes the concept absolutely incomprehensible. The saxophone is the dominant instrument and is the link between all the scores. The lyrical passages are breathtaking and the nursery rhyme sung by a little girl is simply delightful. The multiplicity of details makes it necessary to listen carefully several times in order to grasp all the subtleties. *Shamblemaths II* is the kind of album that keeps us *hooked on* progressive rock. It is the work of artists with a very high knowledge of classical music and an outstanding instrumental mastery. It is undoubtedly an essential masterpiece that I can only recommend passionately to any music lover looking for an outstanding and outstanding work.

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The Quest

<https://yesworld.com>

Let's face it, I never thought I would have to review a new **YES** release again. In my opinion, this band belonged to history. It's been a long time since we've had an album which can really be called one. People get old, that's normal, and *progressive rock* bands are usually only good enough to continue to exist. I thought that the departure of **Jon Anderson** and **Rick Wakeman** as well as the death of **Chris Squire** in 2015 would put a definitive end to the adventure and that, from now on, we would speak about **YES** in the past tense. However, it seems that

the *survivors* are holding on tightly to the ship. *The Quest* is the twenty-first original **YES** album in a fifty-year career, the twenty-second if you count the delightful studio part of *Keys to Ascension 1 & 2* (1996 and 1997) which marked the unfortunately too brief reunion of the musicians of the 1970s and the twenty-third if you include the exquisite *ABHW* (1989). That's a lot of studio performances when you consider that this band spends almost all of its life on tour. It is also the first album on which **Chris Squire** does not appear. It would seem that **Steve Howe**, whose absence was sorely felt in the 1980s and 1990s, took up the torch after the death of the imposing bassist and thus became the *guardian of the temple*. The latter not only took care of the production, but also of the writing of a large part of the compositions, which undoubtedly explains the place of choice reserved for the guitar. He is joined by a team of musicians, each of whom has some history with **YES**: keyboardist **Geoff Downes**, who played on *Drama* (1980) and *Fly From Here* (2011), drummer **Alan White**, who has been on the job since 1973 and has played on the most records after **Chris Squire**, and **Billy Sherwood**, who has the heavy burden of replacing him and who is used to gravitating to this sacred circle, especially as a producer. The team is finally completed by **Jon Davison**, the singer whose voice resembles that of the other, present since the very mediocre penultimate album, *Heaven and Earth* (2014) and who has participated

in the tours for a good number of years. What about *The Quest*? Considering the up and down career of this band, one has to wonder if this is not another disappointment knowing that there will probably not be another *big YES*. Curiously, this is a more than commendable effort in the vein of *Fly From Here* (2011) whose singer was our compatriot **Benoit David**. The content is resolutely progressive and there is none of the boring and easy refrains of the **Rabin** era. The songs are well done and enjoyable, especially *The Ice Bridge* and *Leave Well Alone* which weave links with those from the good old days. All the musicians are up to the task and do an excellent job with honourable mention to **Davidson** and **Sherwood** who have the thankless task of replacing two legends. *The Quest*, as you can see, is not an opus that will leave its mark on the imagination, and some purists will even say that it is not a real **YES**, which is defensible given the absence of the two founding members. Let's be honest, we are in the presence of a disc that is far superior to many others in the series and that will bring back sweet and distant memories. This group has had an eventful life marked by reversals, changes of style and games of musical chairs between its members. However, it has always aroused our interest and curiosity. And it seems that retirement is not in the cards yet. Didn't **Rick Wakeman** declare in 1991 that **YES** was not a group, but an institution that would survive in time?

BLUES

By PIERRE JOBIN

MIKE GOUDREAU BAND & DANY ROY

Christmas Rendez-Vous

Self-production, PMG CD 21

Light and festive atmosphere, musicality, *swing!* Jazz, jump, traditional! Blues, *gospel*, French *chanson* and even a warm bossa! The holiday season has just gone by and with it, **Mike Goudreau** and his 22nd album, *Christmas Rendez-Vous!* It is a magnificent Christmas album, fresh, joyful, sparkling like champagne.

Distinction, class and a variety of content embellish the whole, including five traditional Christmas hymns (*Let It Snow*, *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*, *I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus*...), five original tracks composed by **Goudreau** and pieces from the public domain (*Jingle Bells*, *Mon Beau Sapin*, *Greensleeves*...) all rearranged with an original touch of nuance and subtlety by **Dany Roy** and **Mike Goudreau**, those two musicians who were accomplices in the early days of the mythical **Boppin' Blues Band**.

Goudreau, always close to his musical roots, drinks from them, shares them, and draws inspiration from them for his compositions that *sparkle* in the opus. **Dany Roy** on tenor sax, trumpet, flute, glockenspiel and brass arrangements, performs a distinctive and elevated work that induces enchantment and draws us into the marvellous. From one listening to the next, I am inevitably charmed and carried away by the inspiring magic of these artistically and finely chiselled Christmas music. **Goudreau**, for his part, performs with talent, mastery, accuracy and dexterity on voice and guitar in each of the different styles. His compositions fit in naturally and the ensemble shines. In this respect, I was truly in love with *Christmas Wish*, for its touching and dancing melody, its natural and essential simplicity, as well as for its supple and careful interpretation in all respects. For me, this title contains and exudes the *substance*

and charisma of a Christmas classic, no matter what.

On a different note, the jazz-flavoured rhythm section features the excellent **Dave Watts** on double bass and **Richard Irwin** on drums. What more could you ask for! In terms of musical diversity and well-orchestrated fusions, *Christmas Rendez-Vous* also features **Toby Wilson's** dobro, *pedal steel* and acoustic guitars, **Erich Kory's** cello and **Antoine Fradkin's** violin. Only quality, there too! For an inspired, enchanting and delightful Christmas, let yourself be intoxicated and transported by the touching, vibrant, rhythmic and melodic Christmas music by **Mike Goudreau Band & Dany Roy!**

I don't usually give stars to the records I review anymore, but, in this past starry Christmas period and in view of a record I liked so much, I will make an exception. Four stars and one red dwarf out of five, for this record shining with enriching joy and dignity!

THE PORKROLL PROJECT

Papa Didn't Raise Me Right

Roadhouse Redemption Records

Papa Didn't Raise Me Right is the third album by **The Porkroll Project**, the dense and consistent sounding *hard rocking blues band* from the Philadelphia, PA scene. **Neil Taylor**, the singer, guitarist, multi-instrumentalist and producer wrote, or co-wrote, eight of the eleven tracks on this record. A dozen musicians, in all, take part in this opus with the appearance of a classic American blues rock, which generates a heavy sound, supported by guitars, voice, keyboards and horns, without forgetting the harmonica. The whole

is successful and highly recommended for lovers of this well-typed and intense style of blues. Blues, blues rock, *R&B*, *funk*, ballads, touches of *gospel* and New Orleans make up the substance of this production, which revisits the usual styles of inveterate blues practitioners. **Paul Matecki** is a guest singer on two tracks. On *Dancing With Angels*, one can appreciate the suppleness and dynamism of his voice coupled with the lively piano **Walter Runge's** and **Neil Taylor's** energetic guitar, which hit the spot. *Papa Didn't Raise Me Right* is a successful mix of experience and creativity, rendered by competent, complicit and fusional musicians. Thumbs up!

ZOOM WITH SHAWN KELLERMAN

Chocolate Cake

Self-production

Funk, energy, dance music, *raw power*, **Zoom** is back after a twenty-year break taken in order to raise her family. But,

You can't keep a good woman down, that's for sure! With her old friend, guitarist, bassist, co-writer and producer, **Shawn Kellerman**, who just returned from eight years of touring with the flamboyant **Lucky Peterson**, and a group of skilled and dedicated musicians, they produce flames, fire, dynamite! If you love *R&B*, powerful, husky vocals and *party blues*, **Zoom** is back to blow your mind and your soul away. **Zoom** knows, also, how to be tender at times to touch you, to move you in more intimate moments, lightened in her avalanches of blues which continue the tradition and the heritage of **Koko Taylor**, **Junior Wells**, **James Cotton**, and other strong and unavoidable characters. **Kellerman** and **Steve Marriner**, in guitar and harmonica fusion, are searing hot on the upbeat track *Amazing Nepenthe (Weed)*. Overall, **Zoom with Shawn Kellerman's Chocolate Cake** album is bursting with guitars and *soul*. Recommended as a *soul booster!*



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