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Tenacity

Is it a quality or a defect? It all depends on the circumstances in which *tenacity* is called upon to achieve one's goals. When an entrepreneur starts his business, he must be tenacious and diligent in order to do everything possible to carry out his project. On the other hand, if it happens that an entrepreneur fails, he must assess the cause, and then correct the situation. However, if the entrepreneur in question persists in doing things the same way, there is a great risk that he will repeat his first failure. It's all a matter of perspective. In general, we must keep in mind a certain perspective and balance in our decisions.

Currently, it is obvious that several changes, not to say upheavals, are taking place. The vast majority of them are more pessimistic than optimistic in nature. We must all not sink into fear of the unknown. This sentence seems very simple, but think again, because it is very difficult to achieve confidence when everything seems to be falling apart from minute to minute.

Some changes force us to question ourselves and sometimes even to surpass ourselves. Since we are all in this boat of the humdrum of daily life where we are quite

strongly tested, it is absolutely necessary for us to have a good time relaxing either by reading a book or a magazine, by listening to a good movie or music. Regardless of our favorite activity, music can, in principle, always accompany us (a cell phone and headphones do the trick in many cases).

I therefore invite you to read our articles on the different devices that we have been offered for this edition, ranging from integrated amp accessories to all-in-one devices, not to mention a turntable. These devices all meet different needs for equally different consumers and there is also something for every budget. Remember that many products can also be easily updated with new electronic developments. I take my hat off to all these manufacturers who have been able to hold their own despite all kinds of obstacles.

On behalf of the whole team, I wish everyone a great Fall season with lots of fun and some relaxing days ahead which ought to re-energize you for everyday life.

Magazine TRENDS, Electronics & Design will be back in November 2022, just a bit ahead of the *Holiday Season*.

LeBeauchamp

Co-publisher and
Public Relations Manager

FINE DETAILED RESOLUTION AND MUSICAL ACCURACY

By **GEORGE DE SA**

I'm a firm believer in using high quality cables in an audio system yet, I don't believe they are the priority. The components of the system come first and along with them, the room and basic setup – these are the main ingredients... the meat and potatoes. The next thing is the seasoning and good quality cables are just that... the salt and pepper but to tailor the audio dish to one's tastes and make it unforgettable, delving into the spices is a must... enter the high-end cabling. Here there's no hard and fast rules. Yes, the cables should be in-keeping with the overall system quality and price; however, critical listening is must in deciding whether a cable product does deliver on the value proposition. With that in mind, let me introduce you to a couple products from Furutech Co., Ltd. (Furutech) I've just auditioned: their flagship Power Reference III power cable and the GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor.

The Power Reference III is **Furutech's** flagship power cable product, incorporating all the company knows about cable architecture, materials, and construction. As a flagship product, it is aimed at showcasing the highest possible performance that **Furutech** can deliver in a power cable. The Reference III was introduced about 15 years ago and so is not a new product but it has received several accolades over the years and is still today the ultimate power cable offering from **Furutech**. Now, the GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor, is a recent **Furutech** product, launched in 2021. It sits as one of **Furutech's** latest passive power blocks and aims to ensure optimized and unimpeded power transfer. The GTO-D3 NCF(R) incorporates several of **Furutech's** proprietary power performance innovations at a cost-effective price. A prime objective of the GTO-D3 NCF(R), as a passive product, is optimizing power distribution without impeding flow.

The Manufacturer

For those unfamiliar with **Furutech**, the company hails from Japan, the land of the rising sun, headquartered in Shinagawa-Ku, Tokyo. **Furutech** was founded back in 1988 and both designs and manufactures a full range of cable products and accessories, including some audio electronic products. The com-

pany differentiates its cable products with a couple proprietary elements. The first is their two-stage *Alpha (a) Cryogenic and Ring Demagnetization* process, which is employed in their conductors to minimize noise and distortion. Second, is **Furutech's** in-house developed *Nano Crystal² Formula (NCF)* that is purported to enhance performance in a number of ways.

Let's Get More Specific AC Power Cord

Getting deeper into the technical features of these products, the *Power Reference III* cable incorporates **Furutech's** top of the line double-shielded *alpha (Alpha)-OCC* conductors. *Alpha* is a two-stage process that begins with a deep cryogenic freeze of all metal parts at between -196 to -250° C. **Furutech** states the cryo treatment bonds the molecules tighter, making the structure more stable, relieving internal stress and improving electrical conductivity.

The next stage in the *Alpha Process* is a *Ring Demagnetization*

treatment, which is said to use controlled attenuation to eliminate magnetization, further enhancing conductivity and improving vividness. **Furutech** holds that the *Alpha Process* works with the other design-in features to optimize AC power transfer and maximize several performance attributes. The copper used in the *Alpha Process* is *PC-OCC*, known for its performance advantages. The *Alpha* conductors are double-shielded and a *Formula GC-303* antimagnetic *EMI*-absorbent module surrounds a 2 ¾-inches section of the cable, intended to promote greater resolution and dynamics.

Furutech uses their *FI-25(R)* and *FI-25M(R)* rhodium-plated connectors with their patented ground/earth jumper technology and unique wire-clamping for improved (**Furutech Pure Transmission**) signal transfer. Three 49-strand (0.32mm/strand, 2.5mm/core) *Alpha-OCC* conductor cores are covered in irradiated *PE* insulation that reduces capacitance. The conductor bundle runs twin ultra-flexible lead-free *PVC* sheaths, the inner of which is carbon particle impregnated to suppress vibration.



The GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor

Let's now move to the technical aspects of the *GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor*. It is a passive power block with three in-line arranged dual-plug receptacle banks (6 outlets). All is independently star-wired with **Furutech's** high-purity μ -OFC Alpha-22 (3.8 Sq. mm) wire. Double layer FEP-fluoropolymer and polyethylene insulation shroud the conductor. The receptacles have rhodium plated non-magnetic phosphor bronze contacts and are insulated with RoHS compliant audio grade nylon/fiberglass with **Furutech's** own *Nano Crystal² Formula (NCF)*.

NCF is an anti-static and anti-resonance material formed with nano-sized crystalline, piezo ceramic particles and carbon damping material. The *GTO-D3 NCF(R)* body and cover also incorporates NCF. Its chassis is of CNC machined aluminum with a special FEP damping foil to shield against RFI, while a layer of *Formula GC-303* is bonded to the

bends as needed. Though garden hose thick, they only modestly resisted with twisting torque. The straight black tech-flex outer covering seemed durable as did the connectors, which had **Furutech's** typical over-built pins. Yet, the *Reference III* power cable are rather unadorned but for their 2 3/4-inches aluminum hexagon cylinder modules, their only extroverted expression. Those modules get extra care as well, with **Furutech** shipping the cables with elegant emerald-green, gold-embroidered velvet slip covers in place.

What did I have to work with?

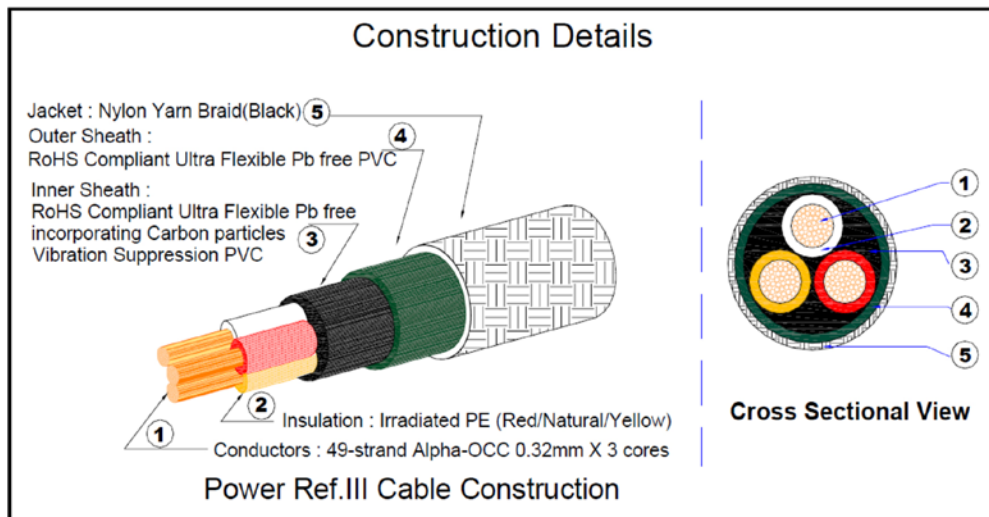
For this review, I was provided with two 1.8 m *Power Reference III* cables, one *GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor* and a 1.5 m **Furutech FP-S35TC8/FPFI-28(R)** custom power cable. The two *Reference III* cables were used to connect my **Bryston 7B³** mono-block power amplifiers to the

providing greater insight on the recording, while providing detail in a manner that was musically rewarding, thus, relaying the beauty of the music without clinical dissection. This resulted in very engaging listening sessions.

The **Furutech Power Reference III** cables presented soundstages in a very defined and clear manner, without flattening the soundstage but rather, preserving depth and layering. Imaging was precise and rock-solid, yet the *Reference III* didn't achieve this with *cookie-cutter* hard outlines but instead embodied the images with roundness, providing a sense of dimension, from left-to-right as well as front-to-back. The *Power Reference III* cables seemed to land right on that *Goldilocks* region, between ruthless-transparency and musical realism. Across the many tracks I listened to the *Power Reference III* cables consistently convinced me of their ability to deliver clarity and palpable nuance.

While listening to Ashley Monroe's, *Hands on You* from her album *Sparrow* via **Tidal HiFi**, not only was **Ashley's** voice rendered with delicacy and resolution, but the decay of the echo was also fully preserved. Too often echo and reverb comes with brightness and highlighting; however, that isn't the case with the *Power Reference III*; which instead provide insightful detail and completeness in the absence of treble emphasis. The treble always sounded extended, while at the same time both smooth and natural. Imaging was precise and layered, and bass notes on this track were tight, snappy and extended. The *Power Reference III* cables produced the rolling electric bass notes with appealing articulation and extension. On **Brandi Disterheft's**, *Prelude to the Crippling Thrill* also from **Tidal HiFi**, the *Reference III* cable did a superb job revealing the micro resonances of the upright bass, from the woody body to the strings. The instrument timbre, articulation, inflection, and dynamics were all notable strengths of the *Power Reference III* cables.

Moving to the track *The Shape of My Heart*, from **Dominic Miller's** *Shapes* album, again the treble notes were precise yet with no apparent etch or glazing – satin would apply here. **Sting's** voice was well focused and resolved as well as centrally locked and images presented themselves with buoyancy; the illusion of dimension and placement well developed within the soundstage. Timbral accuracy, timing and impact was



chassis bottom-plate to absorb EMI generated by the internal fittings. **Furutech's** uses their top-end audio grade IEC inlet, the *FI-09 NCF(R)* in the *GTO-D3*. The three receptacles are each secured independently to chassis with their own **Furutech GTX** Wall Plate and *top-of-the-line 106-D NCF* cover. Care is taken right down to the feet, with piezo nano-ceramic and carbon damping isolator footers employed. The *GTO-D3 NCF(R)* weighs in at 3.2 kg.

Back to the AC Power Cord

The construction of both the *Reference III* power cables and the *GTO-D3* were very robust, and exuding quality in their fit-and-finish. The *Reference III* power cables were unexpectedly flexible, allowing curves and

GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor, which was in-turn connected to the wall outlet with the 1.5 m **Furutech** custom cable. Since my existing wall outlet plug is a **Furutech GTX-D NCF(R)** dual receptable, on a 20A dedicated circuit, I had a full **Furutech** power chain to put to test. My **Pangea AC-9 MkII** power cables were used for comparison purposes.

The Listening Sessions

Listening to the **Furutech Power Reference III** cables with the *GTO-D3 (NCF)* in my system instantly demonstrated their proficiency for delivering impressive inner detail in the absence of unnatural highlighting or emphasis. It was obvious that the *Reference III* power cables were revealing,

« I love the track *New York* from **Cat Power's** *Jukebox* album. The dynamic prowess of the **Power Reference III** cables was well proved on this track, the **Furutech** cables delivering the opening kick-drum hits with punch and shudder... »

the sound of the guitar solo through the *Power Reference III*, yet a switch to the **Pangea AC-9 Mk II** demonstrated their comparative bloomy and ripe character. The **Furutech Reference III** balanced accuracy and detail retrieval with naturalness and musicality, treading the path between warmth and coolness so well.

I love the track *New York* from **Cat Power's** *Jukebox* album. If you haven't heard it, don't wait... time to add it to your play list. The dynamic prowess of the *Power Reference III* cables was well proved on this track, the **Furutech** cables delivering the opening kick-drum hits with punch and shudder. **Cat's** voice was open and airy, clear was a bell with the echo of the recording communicated fully. The amazing height of the soundstage, with **Cat** singing down on the audience was also splendidly done by the *Reference III*, via the **Pangea**, there was less on almost all counts except bass weight. However, though the ultimate sense of weight favoured the *AC-9*, the *Reference III* was clearly ahead in articulation, speed, and dynamic impact. I gave attention to the *GTO-D3 (NCF)* to determine just what it was bringing to the fight. I compared using the *GTO-D3* vs. connecting the *Power Reference III* cable directly to my *GTX-D NCF(R)* wall receptable. What I found was that with the *GTO-D3* in-play, the presentation was smoother, more liquid and might I say, more organic. With the track *New York*, there was less apparent quieter soundstage, the high frequencies somewhat subdued resulting in an increase in image separation – not so much more space between but more individualization. On the track *Earned It* by **The Weekend**, the effect was similar. The overall resonance and echo of the track was subdued drawing more attention to the bass. The midrange was smoother, making voices sound a little more corporeal, though with some shading of micro-detail. The effect on the soundstage was akin to turning down the flood lights, while leaving the spotlight on the performer. With the soundstage blacker, more attention was drawn to the performers. These effects were subtle, in combination with the *GTX-D* outlet, yet still noticeable. There greatest value is that the *GTO-D3* allows **Furutech NCF** benefits to be achieved across multiple components.

All in all, here are my conclusions

The **Furutech Power Reference III** cables and *GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor* were both welcome additions to my system. Given my own needs and preferences, the *Reference III* cables were a standout high performer. While apart from already having the *GTX-D (NCF)* wall receptable, the *GTO-D3* allows the benefits of **Furutech's NCF** technology to extend to multiple system components. I would recommend auditioning both products; however, I found the *Power Reference III* cables were exceptional in the skillful manner that they combine fine detail resolution and accuracy with realistic touch, tone, timbre, and musicality. Though not a new product, the *Power Reference III* still stands strong against the competition and a top performer among power cables I've auditioned.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Furutech (Juin 2022) Pricing:

Power Reference III Power Cable

1,8 m length: 1 797 \$ CAD

GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor: 2 097 \$ CAD

Distributor: Audiyo Inc., T.: 416.704.0105, <https://www.audiyo.com>

Mediagraphy

Ashley Monroe, Sparrow, Tidal HiFi

Brandi Disterheft, Prelude to the Crippling Thrill, Tidal HiFi

Dominic Miller, Shapes

Cat Power, Jukebox

The Weeknd, Fifty Shades of Gray

ANOTHER ÉON ART PRODUCT THAT IS OUT OF THE ORDINARY

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Éon Art is a Canadian manufacturer located in Chandler, Gaspé. According to its founder, Stéphane Hautcoeur, it is one of the best-equipped electronics laboratories in Canada in terms of audio equipment design. I had the privilege to test for TED Magazine, the Quark integrated amplifier. My conclusion at the time was that it is in the league of great brands in the world of high fidelity. In this article, I will have the privilege to test the Boson, a monophonic version of the Quark, but with a substantially increased power supply and performance. The Boson is therefore a monophonic power block to which the pre-amplifier section of the Quark has been retained. These two monophonic amplifiers are connected to each other by a connecting cord. The idea behind this unusual approach is to completely separate the left channel signal from the right channel. Let's see if this solution works, i.e., eliminating all crosstalk in a high-caliber stereo listening context.

The philosophy behind the Boson amplifier

According to a study published in the journal **Science**, the *W Boson* is a major challenge to the standard model of particle physics. Can the same be said of the new *Boson* integrated amplifier from Éon Art regarding the physics of sound wave reproduction? Science is also part of **Stéphane Hautcoeur's** approach to the design of high-fidelity equipment. Not only is he a music lover / audiophile, but he is also a man of science trained in robotics and software engineering. **Eon Art's** facilities include extensive quality control equipment as well as a research and development laboratory equipped with a powerful 800-core computer that computes algorithms for the design and optimization of printed circuit boards.

Éon Art amplifiers use reliable technologies that have their origins in the medical, aeronautical and marine electronics fields. Its amplifiers are, according to **Éon Art**, expertly crafted to reproduce music as seamlessly and naturally as if you were there when it was recorded. All this, of course, without losing sight of the environmental aspect, thanks to reliable products that can be updated and repaired over the long term. A capacitor replacement program is provided for this purpose every 5 years and the warranty covers the units for 10 years. At **Éon Art**, science and computers are the fundamental tools for designing the instruments, but the final evaluation is always done in the ear and in a specialized listening room.



First-class design

Visually, the *Boson* is virtually identical to the *Quark* stereo amplifier with its beautiful enclosure manufactured by **Oracle Audio Technologies** in Sherbrooke. Besides being a monophonic integrated amplifier, its weight of about 40 kg is justified by its generous dimensions and its quality of construction. The front panel is machined from a solid 19 mm plate and attached to a rail system that serves as a drawer for easy maintenance and replacement of the preamplifier tubes. This front panel will be graphically reproduced on a future application that will turn your tablet or smartphone into a touchscreen remote control. The 7 mm thick aluminum case is fixed on a semi-precious stone base called Labradorite. At the rear, a lock secures the rail system that provides access to the circuits inside. All surfaces, except the back plate, are covered with a beautiful mirror finish clear lacquer. On the front panel, there are

four buttons, including the one on the left for powering on, followed by a button for selecting sources and two buttons, on the right, for increasing or decreasing the volume.

At the back, there is the grid plate for ventilation, which consolidates the structure of the case. This plate has a fairly large rectangular opening that gives access to the back of the removable drawer. It shows a series of *LED* indicators that can be used to diagnose a problem on one of the *Boson*'s circuits, if any. Then there is a *SPLIT (On/Off)* switch that allows up to six *Bosons* to be chained together for multi-amplification. The other switch turns off the front panel *LED* lights, which come back on temporarily when the remote control is used. The *SPLIT* switch in the *On* position determines that this *Boson* becomes the *master* amplifier that will control all others in stereo or multi-amplification. For this purpose, small multi-strand sockets are installed at the

back to connect one or five other *Boson* amplifiers to the one designated as master. All this is done with special cables, provided, at predetermined lengths when ordering at **Éon Art**. Once connected together, all these amplifiers can be controlled by a remote control. There is also a plate at the back that closes off a space for future options such as a *DAC* card, a headphone output, a phono input or a balanced input on *XLR* connector. On the *RCA* side, there are four line inputs as well as a stereo output for multi-amplification. Each *Quark* or *Boson* amplifier comes in a sturdy **Pelican** transport case on wheels and surrounded by thick foam protection.

The interior of the beast

The *Boson* volume control consists of a set of individual medical grade metal film resistors of very high precision. These are transistor driven, eliminating the need for relays or a conventional mechanical po-

ÉON ART BOSON INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

tentiometer. This configuration ensures the lowest possible distortion rate while eliminating long-term mechanical wear. On the signal path, the capacitors used are all audiophile quality and brands such as **Amtrans**, **Clarity**, **Duelund**, **Mundorf** and **Solen**. Their quantity is adjusted in order to eliminate any phase rotation. All internal wiring is done with tin-plated *OFC* wire and covered with silicone or *PE* foam, or carbon-doped nylon.

The printed circuit boards consist of eight layers, each with a double thickness of copper. They are subjected to automated and very rigorous tests after the electronic parts are soldered. To do this, specific computerized analyzers are used. Then, the devices are subjected to a 24-hour endurance and stability test under the supervision of a 64-channel *M300* data acquisition system. Finally, an **Audio Precision** analyzer certifies that each amplifier meets the manufacturer's rigorous standards and criteria before packaging.

The power supply is provided by three transformers whose fifteen secondary windings total 840 VA. The power supply capacitors are mounted on a separate board to facilitate their replacement every five years as suggested by **Éon Art** in its maintenance program. The power of the monophonic *Boson* is 250 W at an impedance of 8 ohms. At 4 ohms, the power increases to 400 W. This is 20% more power than its brother, the *Quark* stereo, and twice the reserve of the latter. As with

the *Quark* design, the idea of a tube preamp stage combined with a transistor output stage with modules operating in class *D* was retained. For a single channel of amplification, the *Boson's* power supply has been almost doubled, which further improves its ability to drive demanding or difficult low impedance loudspeakers. To this end, **Éon Art** stipulates that the *Boson* should be stable regardless of the speakers that will be associated with it.

« The recording is sharp, precise and impressively dynamic. The *Boson* pair shows me exactly what it is all about in terms of the separation of the left channel from the right. The orchestra stretches out in front of me, while at the same time extending far beyond the confines of my speakers. The horns have an incredible punch, while the rhythm section composed of the drums and the double bass forces me to tap my foot. »

Installation and listening conditions

Mr. **Stéphane Hautcoeur** came personally to install the two *Boson* amplifiers at my home. He was accompanied by a collaborator for the handling of these two animals of nearly 40 kg





each. Given their generous dimensions (438 mm by 435 mm by 320 mm), I had to install them on the floor on each side of my audio cabinet. They were individually connected to my two dedicated circuits of 20A each. I had the opportunity to use them in listening with a trio from **Merging Technologies**, that is to say the *Nadac Player* streamer / converter with its *Nadac Clock* external clock and its *Nadac Power* external power supply. These three devices were at my house for a previous test bench.

The music source came from my **CeolBOX** server and the access to its content was done through my *Ethernet* network and the *RAVENNA* transfer protocol. The streamer section of the *Nadac Player* was equipped with the *ROON* playback software, which I could control from my tablet on which the application is installed. The speakers I used were the same ones I usually use, even though they were a totally disproportionate debalance compared to the value of the electronics. For the first time in my life and as an audio reviewer, I had about \$165,000 worth of electronics to test, in my living room, including the pair of *Boson*. As this kind of experience is probably a *once in a lifetime* experience, I made the most of it with high resolution *PCM* files as well as *DSD*.

The Boson pair in action

I begin my listening by revisiting **Lyle Lovett** who has just released his last album after almost 10 years of absence on the musical scene. This American songwriter evolves in a style that goes from bluegrass to blues to folk and jazz. In this album entitled *12th of June*, **Lyle Lovett** is back in the saddle with his **Big Band** surrounded by **Sam Bush** on vocals, mandolin

and guitar. **Mace Hibbard** plays tenor saxophone and clarinet. On drums we have **Russ Kunkel** and on bass **Viktor Krauss**. On some pieces, singer **Francine Reed** forms a superb duet with **Lyle Lovett**. This album, which I bought as a *FLAC* file (24 bits / 96 kHz), starts with an instrumental piece called *Cookin' at the Continental* in which the **Big Band** shows all its know-how and power. The recording is sharp, precise and impressively dynamic. The *Boson* pair shows me exactly what it is all about in terms of the separation of the left channel from the right. The orchestra stretches out in front of me, while at the same time extending far beyond the confines of my speakers. The horns have an incredible punch, while the rhythm section composed of the drums and the double bass forces me to tap my foot. On *Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You*, we are dealing with a blues where Ms. **Reed** comes into play. Her warm, slightly husky voice blends beautifully with the higher, sweeter voice of **Lyle Lovett**. The pianist's playing is superbly deconstructed by the *Bosons* and I can hear perfectly the rubbing of the brooms on the snare drum. Once again, the horns are gleaming and **Mace Hibbard's** saxophone is sensual as can be. The pair of *Bosons* are definitely not hiding anything from me and are telling me the truth, the whole truth.

I follow up with another recent acquisition of mine, which is a jazz album called *Nightjar in the Northern Sky*. I discovered Icelandic singer and pianist **Anna Gréta**. In what is her first album on the **ACT** label, she totally charms me with her sweet voice and a well assumed piano playing. On some pieces, her voice reminds me of the Polish artist **Anna Maria Jopek**, another of my favorite jazz singers. The monophonic *Boson* duet allows me to fully enjoy the sensuality and sweetness of **Anna Gréta**. Once again, his piano is perfectly rendered in all its tonality and harmonics. **Elinar Sheving's** drums and **Skuli Sverrisson's** bass have all the impact and weight necessary to make

me believe that my small, freestanding two-way speakers have become three-way speakers with a woofer of at least 20 cm. The effect of presence is incredible and the naturalness of the timbres makes me discover a level of transparency that I had not experienced until now.

I end with the album of excellent harpist **Valérie Milot** and cellist **Stephane Tétreault**. This recent opus entitled *Transfiguration* features pieces by several contemporary composers, the oldest of whom is **Camille Saint-Saëns**. This recording, purchased as a *FLAC* file (24 bits / 96 kHz), is superbly produced by the **ATMA** Classique label. The dynamic margin is exceptional. The pair of *Bosons* allows you to hear everything from the softest to the most playful passages. **Valérie Milot's** harp is superbly ethereal while **Stephane Tétreault's** cello has such a real woody character that I feel like I can smell his varnish in my living room.

The last piece is an adaptation of a composition by English band **Gentle Giant** entitled *Cogs in Cogs* in which drummer **Bernard Riche** plays. The result is a stirring performance that *Boson* duo serves up with aplomb and confidence. In the segments where the trio is having a great time, I have a clear view of each of the musicians' performances without the stereo image becoming blurred or overloaded. The definition is superlative, but without exaggerating in the sense of asepsis or disembodiment of the artists in their performance.

Conclusion

Even if the auditory memory is not the best in the long term, I think I can say that the *Boson* monophonic blocks by manufacturer **Éon Art** are certainly an advancement compared to its *Quark* stereophonic integrated. With the *Boson*, we gain transparency, control over the low frequencies and the stereophonic image which becomes panoramic. The *Boson* also facilitates multi-amplification at a very high level. Testing such equipment was an honor and a pure pleasure for me and, at the same time, it was a harsh revelation of the limits of my own high-fidelity equipment. My stereo system is indeed more modest, but it still provides me with a reference to be able to evaluate and appreciate as much the entry-level equipment as those that rise to the top of the world competition. The *Boson's* performance puts it directly in the league of the big international brands. Its unit price is indeed not within the reach of everyone, but if we compare it with the best in amplification, it is, surprisingly, not the most expensive in its category. The detractors of the *D* class will not be able to reproach it with a cold, acid or disembodied sound. Its hybrid circuit with tube preamplification combines the best of both worlds while being environmentally responsible in terms of power consumption and durability. Combining the *Boson* pair with a high-performance digital source is like bringing the title of **Led Zeppelin's** *Stairway to Heaven* to life. As I am unfortunately not the heir of a rich unknown uncle, it is with regret and a twinge of sorrow that this *Boson* duo will have to leave, and remain for me in the realm of the dream.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$56 670 per unit

Warranty: 10 years by following the manufacturer's maintenance program. This maintenance program can extend the life of the *Quark* to over 30 years.

Manufacturer: Éon Art, T. : 418.360.4332, <https://en.eon-art.com>

Mediagraphy

Lyle Lovett, 12th or June, Verve, *FLAC* 24 bits / 96 kHz

Anna Gréta, Nightjar in the Northern sky, ATC, *FLAC* 24 bits / 96 kHz

Valérie Milot and Stephane Tétreault, *Transfiguration*, ATMA Classique

Woodkid, *S16*, Universal Music Group, *FLAC* 24 bits / 44.1 kHz

Mercan Dede, *Breath*, White Swan Records, WS0078

Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank **Stéphane Hautcoeur** of **Éon Art** for the installation and technical support of the two *Boson* integrated amplifiers.



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

By CHRISTOPHE HUSS



RECORD OF THE MONTH

ALEXANDRE KANTOROW
(piano),
TAPIOLA SINFONIETTA,
JEAN-JACQUES KANTOROW.
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Concertos for piano n° 1 and 2.
Wedding-Cake. Allegro appassionato.
Rhapsodie d'Auvergne. Africa.
Bis-2400 SACD
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****

We have waited a long time for this second and last volume of **Saint-Saëns' Piano Concertos**, a set of five works now served by two supreme complete works, **Lortie-Gardner (Chandos)** and **Kantorow father and son (BIS)**, which supplant the previous references, from **Jeanne-Marie Darré** to **Stephen Hough**. This transcendent interpretation of the famous 2nd Concerto stands out from previous proposals (**Collard-Plasson**, for example) by a combination of virtuosity and spirit. This is a real paradigm shift. What was mainly in this repertoire an exhibition of virtuosity has now become much more subtle, fine, detailed, spiritual, with less forward piano playing and more playful soloist-orchestra interaction. In addition to the musical joy, there is the pleasure of having a generous and original coupling and a total duration of 85 minutes.



SOUND RECORDING OF THE MONTH

FIGARO ? SÌ !

Florian Sempey (baritone),
Karine Deshayes (mezzo),
Yoann Dubruque (baritone),
Nahuel Di Piero (bass), **Orchestre national Bordeaux Aquitaine,**
Marc Minkowski.

Excerpts from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,
La scala di seta, *La Cenerentola*,
L'Italiana in Algeri, *L'occasione fa il ladro*, *The Count Ory* by **Rossini**
Alpha, 791.
Interpretation: ****
Technique: *****

French baritone **Florian Sempey** has established himself in the last decade as an essential singer of **Rossini's** casts in Europe, even in Pesaro, the city of **Rossini**. The program includes arias in French and Italian and rarities such as **Germano's** aria in *La scala di seta* or **Don Parmenione's** aria in *L'occasione fa il ladro*. There are also three duets, two with **Karine Deshayes**, and one with **Nahuel Di Piero**. **Sempey's** voice, a wonderful interpreter of **Rossini's bouffe** register, is perfectly captured by **Laure Casenave** at the **Bordeaux Opera**. Similarly, the orchestra, agile and transparent, is perfectly proportioned and the duets, well balanced. The word balance is the one that best characterizes this impeccably successful publication. The voice is very well served these days since another release (**Bruhns**, see below) could very well have been in that place.



THE BEST NEW QUEBEC RELEASE

WILLIAM BOLCOM
MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

Complete Piano Rags
Hyperion, CDA 68391-2
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****

Ragtime is a musical genre that emerged in the United States between 1897 and 1918. The most famous composer of *ragtime* is the African-American, **Scott Joplin**. While the left hand handles the low notes, the right hand must make syncopations. In fact, the name *ragtime* (tattered time) comes from this shifted use of the right hand in piano playing. *Ragtime* enjoyed a revival in the 1960s and 1970s (notably with the music for the film *The Entertainer*). It is at this time, that a **Joplin Revival** encouraged contemporary composers, including **Bolcom**, to compose new ones. **Marc-André Hamelin** has been interested in **Bolcom's** music since the 1980s. Unlike his peers, **Bolcom** never gave up composing *rags* and created them until 2015. This record, which brings them all together, is a jewel and an enchantment that never gets old.

BOXSET OF THE MONTH

TRIO ZIMMERMANN
Trio Zimmermann -

A Retrospective
Bis-2677 SACD
Interpretations: **** and *****
Technique: *****

Bis, again? Well yes, these are pretty good records! The Swedish publisher brings together in a precious box set the five releases of a dream string trio:

Frank Peter Zimmermann, Antoine Tamestit and Christian Poltéra.

The 5th CD is a little more dry with two **Hindemith** trios and the **Schoenberg Trio**, but for the rest, we have two **Beethoven** CDs, a **Mozart / Schubert** and the extraordinary adaptation of **Bach's Goldberg Variations**. All these recordings date from the last decade, are SACDs compatible for CD playback and are both musical and sonic referents.

PREVIEW OF THE MONTH

FRANZ SCHUBERT
HERBERT BLOMSTEDT

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra
Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9
DG, 028948630455
Interpretation: ****
Technique: *****

The release dates of this disc vary worldwide between July 3 and 15, but it is worth waiting for the debut of **Herbert Blomstedt**, the 94-year-old veteran of today's great conductors, at **DG**. This is certainly an event, even though **Blomstedt** has already recorded these two **Schubert** symphonies with the **Dresden Staatskapelle (Berlin Classics)** complete works) and the **San Francisco Symphony (Decca)**. Like many older conductors, the Swede logically returns to the essentials of the repertoire. **DG** has very cleverly chosen a great concert given at the end of 2021 in Leipzig, a dense, deep, but almost serene **Schubert**, not unlike that of the octogenarian **Günter Wand** recorded by **RCA** when **Wand** conducted the **Berlin Philharmonic**. It is more successful and important to hoard than the complete **Brahms Blomstedt-Leipzig** published by **Pentatone**.

NEW RELEASES

JEAN-SÉBASTIEN BACH ENSEMBLE MASQUES, OLIVIER FORTIN

Suites Orchestrales
Alpha, 832
Interpretation: ***
Technique: ****

Olivier Fortin is a baroque musician from Quebec who is rarely heard in Canada, but who has made a successful career in Europe. Recorded at the Poitiers Theatre in February 2021, this performance gives a chamber vision of **Bach's** orchestral suites, focused on the woodwinds, with the oboes omnipresent. **Lars Ulrik Mortensen (CPO)** chose the option of getting rid of the brass and timpani in the **Bach Orchestral Suites** and reducing the number of instruments. Here, the tropism for oboes is such that they replace the flute in the *2nd Suite!* The recording of **Aline Blondiau** accentuates the intimate atmosphere of the subject. But the most surprising thing is that, as if everything here were normal, no one explains the perspective or the bias even to the extent of using a transcription of the *2nd Suite*. If you want the real *Suites*, buy **Fasolis** or **Savall**. If you want the more intimate version, go with **Mortensen**. If you're into oboes, buy this.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN MANFRED HONECK

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Symphony No 6, Pastoral. + Steven Stucky: Silent Spring.
Reference Recordings, FR, 747, SACD
Interpretation: **
Technique: ****

High hopes are placed on each release by conductor **Manfred Honeck**, who has given us some of the most exciting symphonic recordings in Pittsburgh, such as **Beethoven's 3rd, 5th and 7th Symphonies** and **Dvorak's 8th Symphony**. One problem, however, was revealed with **Beethoven's Ninth** in 2019: an incipient way of wanting to prove and demonstrate things in an insistent, even pedantic manner. So it is with this *Pastoral Symphony* recorded curiously 2 years (2017) before the *9th Symphony*. The *1st movement* is almost violent, the storm has to be the loudest ever with strident piccolos that twist your ears. Surely there is something going on. But does it have to come to that? Also, do record buyers, no matter how skillful **Steven Stucky's** contemporary work, want to hear artistically coherent concert hall pairings or programs?

NICOLAUS BRUHNS MASAAKI SUZUKI

Yale Institute of Sacred Music
Cantatas and works for organ
BIS, 2271, SACD
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****
Baroque music lovers and sound system testers, behold! Here is a jewel, both musical and technical (stereophonic and multichannel), recorded by **Hans Kipfer** at **Yale University**. The fields covered by this publication are instruments, voice and organ. The listener is very quickly seized by the depth of the timbres and the quality of the acoustic space surrounding the instruments and voices. The bass is perfectly defined without being bloated. The same is true for the two organ pieces recorded at **Marquand Chapel** in New Haven. Musically, the program offers works of very diverse atmospheres (from *De profundis* to the *Resurrection*), composed by a musician from northern Germany who links his master **Buxtehude** and the music of **Bach**. It is sober, unexpected and very beautiful.

EMILIANO GONZALEZ TORO AND ZACHARY WILDER (TENORS).

I GEMELLI
A Room of Mirrors
Arias and instrumental works
by Calestani, D'India, Turini, Marini, Castelli, etc.
Gemelli Factory, GFA, 001
Interpretation: *****
Technique: ***

Emiliano Gonzalez Toro is this fantastic tenor who gave us at **Naïve** a transcendent version of **Monteverdi's L'Orfeo** which he sings and conducts. He records here, on his orchestra's label, a sublime disc in which he mixes his voice with that of **Zachary Wilder**. One realizes from the *Dialogo della rosa* by **Sigismondo d'India** how ecstatic this intertwining of voices can become because the two voices, even if they are related to the same range, are ideally complementary: **Wilder** lighter, **Gonzalez Toro** more baritone. The repertoire is the one that follows the musical revolutions of **Monteverdi**, with a lot of subtlety (**Sigismondo d'India**) or more popular attires (**Biagio Marini**). The small downside that makes the presentation of the disc in a high-fidelity magazine interesting is the choice of a rather dry sound setting, with a clean cut reverb. The thing was concocted by **Benjamin Ribolet** at the **Seine musicale** in Paris. We are not fans.

JOHN WILLIAMS

Anne-Sophie Mutter,
Boston Symphony Orchestra,
John Williams.
Violin Concerto No. 2.
Three film scores.
DG, 486 1698
Interpretation: *****
Technique: ***
Those who are mainly interested in **John Williams's** film music will buy the records of his concerts in Vienna or Berlin, published by **DG**. There are three of them here: the theme from *The Long Goodbye*, and the themes *Han Solo* and *the Princess* from *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Marion's Theme* from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The goal here is different. It is the return of **John Williams** to scholarly music. We will not look for a cinematic atmosphere in this concerto. The goal is mainly to create movements before an individuality in a more profuse and abstract musical language. The *2nd Violin Concerto* written for **Anne Sophie Mutter** also takes into account the very strong personality of its dedicatee. On the whole, the work is interesting, but one will not return to it frantically

JOSQUIN DESPREZ DOULCE MÉMOIRE, DENIS RAISIN DADRE.

Tant vous aime - chansons
Ricercar, RIC, 436
Interpretation: *****
Technique: *****
Pure and absolute happiness for those who love *Renaissance* music. **Denis Raisin Dadre** and **Douce Mémoire** are references in his interpretation. The group includes a soprano and four singers, five instrumentalists playing lutes, harps, flutes, recorders, and bombards, and their album portrays the songs of **Josquin Desprez**. The rich note places them under an interesting musicological angle, since it was believed for a long time that Josquin had spent his life in Italy. However, it now appears proven (by research conducted between 1997 and 2009) that he was bathed in the French soil at the court of King Rene, where, around 1470 these songs would have been written. All of this is musically captivating and historically fascinating, **Raisin Dadre** raising an injustice: It is astonishing to note to what extent the songs of **Josquin Desprez**, which date from his time in the service of **René d'Anjou** and **Louis XI**, when he was between 27 and 33 years old, have not attracted the attention of the interpreters. The injustice is beautifully redressed.



AUDIOLAB OMNIA ALL-IN-ONE DEVICE

A CONCENTRATE OF TALENTS TO BE CONSUMED WITHOUT MODERATION





AUDIOLAB OMNIA ALL-IN-ONE DEVICE



Audiolab is a British manufacturer of audio products well known to audiophiles. Founded in 1983 by **Phillip Swift**, **Audiolab** has built its reputation on the now classic *8000A* amplifier. A super reliable, very musical device, sold for just \$1,000 at the time, and which has pleased many music lovers (including me) around the world. The company was sold in 1998, without much success, to the **Tag McLaren** group. In 2004, the current owners, the **IAG Group**, bought **Audiolab**. They have succeeded in giving the company a direction with well-targeted products. In fact, the **IAG Group**, which owns several other hi-fi manufacturers, is doing a remarkable job with the portfolio of brands it manages. **International Audio Group** is the owner of **Quad**, **Wharfedale**, **Mission**, **Luxman**, **Leak**, **Castle** and of course **Audiolab**. Like many products in this price category, those of the **IAG Group** are designed and engineered in England and assembled in Asia. All these brands are doing quite well, offering beautiful products, often with retro accents. In addition, the prices remain reasonable. The **IAG group** has kept the spirit and traditions that made the reputation of each manufacturer. In the case of **Audiolab**, the manufacturer offers several series of devices, including the *6000* series, which has been praised by critics on several occasions. The Audiolab *Omnia* is a condensed version of the best of the *6000* series

in a single device. It is the first truly *all-in-one* device from the manufacturer. All you have to do is add speakers. Let's see how **Audiolab** managed to make all these beautiful circuits cohabit inside the same device.

Technical Description

The *Omnia* is an ultra-complex device densely populated with electronic components. So I'll have to describe it to you by section, to eliminate confusion as much as possible. First of all, it is an excellent *CD* player. The mechanics and technology are the same as those used in the *6000 CDT* transport. This playback mechanism uses a very efficient buffer memory which allows to play fairly damaged *CDs*. This playback mechanism should therefore be able to offer a smooth sound. The *Omnia* is also a quality analog preamplifier. In fact, it is possible to connect four traditional analog devices, such as a tape recorder or a tuner. One of the four inputs has been designed for the use of a turntable with a moving magnet cartridge. This phono input, of superb quality, is very quiet and surprisingly conclusive. The *Omnia* incorporates a section that supports network playback. Operated by the *DTS Play-Fi* application, the device is able to access the main online music sites, including **Tidal** of course. For this purpose the device has a wired *Ethernet* socket and



two antennas located behind the device. On the front panel, a large LCD screen makes it easy to find your way around. The display of this screen provides a lot of information about the status of the device and is configurable in several ways. It even allows you to add VU- to the device. It's all very cool. Of course, the **Audiolab Omnia** is an excellent digital to analog converter. This section is based on the 32-bit **ESS Sabre 9038 Q2M** chip. **Audiolab** is not a new converter and has been able to benefit from all the experience acquired during the design of the *M-DAC*. Since there are five inputs, you can connect your TV via the optical input, your computer via the *USB* input and other digital sources. When playing **Tidal** over the network, the *Omnia* will be able to decode files encoded in *MQA* format, even from the *USB* input. The device is *Roon Tested*. This means that the device is still awaiting certification for *Roon*. Since it is an *all-in-one* device, the *Omnia* is equipped with a 50 W per channel amplifier. This amplifier operates in class *AB* and is powered by a toroidal transformer of about 30 VA. It is powerful enough for most speakers for quality listening under normal conditions. Finally, the *Omnia* has an excellent headphone amp with a particularly well thought out current feedback circuit. Listening through headphones should be very dynamic and lively.

Unpacking and Installation

The *Omnia* can be unpacked and installed like a charm by following the instruction manual. Since it contains a large number of circuits, it would be wise to give it some air to breathe. You will need to install the *DTS Play-Fi* application on your mobile device. This application is essential, as it supports the management of *Omnia's* networked playback and that of other *DTS Play-Fi* enabled devices. You'll need to take the time to get the hang of it and set it up on your various accounts. It should be noted that the *DTS Play-Fi* application does not support continuous music streaming. Indeed, it introduces a small delay of a few seconds between each piece of music, which can be annoying when playing certain types of albums. **Peter Comeau**, from **IAG**, confirmed that an update is planned, in order to solve this small inconvenience. The *Omnia* is not compatible with the **Apple Airplay** format. This is a special feature of the device, the practical consequences of which

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you should consider carefully with your dealer. The *Omnia* comes with a well-made remote control that includes all the functions of the device.

Listening Impressions
First and foremost, vinyl.

I decided to start my listening with one of my favorite vinyl records, *Up And Coming* by the **John Abercrombie Quartet**. This production, on the **ECM** label, immediately shone with a surprising clarity. In fact, the sound quality obtained from the **Audiolab Omnia's** phono stage is quite amazing. What I thought was a simple circuit, to accommodate turntable users, turned out to be an ultra-quiet, clear and accurate phono

stage. This circuit could challenge many separate phono stages with its incredible clarity. Fine details of the cymbal playing appear with ease and are placed far into the soundstage. The timbre is well supported by a beautiful restitution of the low frequencies, which comes to sit all the transmission of the music solidly. This phono stage will be perfectly at home with a \$5,000 turntable and will get the most out of a high quality moving magnet cartridge.

Now it's the CD player's turn.

It was my **Melody Gardot CD**, *My One And Only Trill*, that had the honor of being the first to play in the *Omnia*. This player is real velvet. The restitution is very smooth with an interesting





level of detail. The sound is delicate and well articulated, making it easy to grasp all the words the singer is saying. With the classic song *Who Will Comfort Me*, the *Omnia* does not disappoint. It renders the song with beautiful dynamics and precise placement of the various sound effects. It is rhythmic, playful and of very beautiful quality as restitution. This device seems to have multiple talents and to have been developed with great care. The timbres are always right and the power of the amplifier is there. Moreover, the **Audiolab Omnia** had no difficulty in driving my **Piega** speakers, whose 4 ohms impedance can put many amplifiers to shame. In addition, these speakers are ruthless with their unforgiving ribbon tweeters. However, to its credit, the *Omnia* was able to make the little **Piega** sing like champions.

Network playback in high resolution, a great asset.

In order to fully understand the capabilities of the network player, I have chosen, on the **Tidal** platform, several files encoded in *MQA*. No surprise, as with the *CD* player and the phono input, the sound of the **Omnia**, in network playback, does not disappoint. The sound stage is hyper detailed and huge. With the **Marcin Wasilewski Trio**, the new album *En Attendant* can be listened to with a magnificent fluidity that does not let the real price of the device show. The piano is impeccable, has no unpleasant resonance in the upper spectrum and sounds superbly accurate. It's quite amazing what this *all-in-one* can deliver in terms of sound quality. Maybe we're finally there. Perhaps simplifying the circuits and integrating them is the way

forward. Finally, a word about the headphone amp included with the device. This one is of very good quality and was more than enough to allow me to enjoy my **Grado Hemp** headphones. This headphone amplifier will be at home with quality headphones found under the \$800 mark. A nice bonus that this headphone amplifier only adds to a device that already offers a lot.

Conclusion

This *Omnia* from **Audiolab** is a total success from an audio point of view. Its quality of reproduction has simply nothing to do with its purchase price. On the other hand, you'll have to learn to live with the vagaries of the *DTS Play-Fi* application and hope that updates will come with solutions. For example, live streaming from **Tidal**, thanks to the **Tidal Connect** feature, would be more than welcome. I could easily live with this *Omnia* because of its musical qualities. A device full of talents, a condensed pleasure when listening that you must take the time to do.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Distributor : Erikson Consumer, T. : 905.457.6674,
www.eriksonconsumer.com

Mediagraphy

John Abercrombie, Up and Coming, ECM, ECM 2528 5726238

Melody Gardot, My one and only trill, Verve, 8001256302

Marcin Wasilewski Trio, En Attendant, fichier MQA, Tidal

Buon gusto

By LÉA GARIÉPY

Fig and honey cake

*A light and soft cake – easy to prepare
and enjoy on any occasion!*

Ingredients Cake

¾ cup unsalted butter, softened
½ cup honey
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla powder
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 eggs at room temperature
2 cups all purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
¾ teaspoon salt
½ cup buttermilk

Icing

6 oz cream cheese
½ cup powdered sugar
1 cup 35% whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a 9-inch circular pan.
2. In a large bowl, using a mixer, cream together butter, honey and sugar. Beat on high speed until smooth and airy. Add the eggs one by one.
3. In a small bowl, mix together all dry ingredients. Add these to the previous mixture, alternating with the buttermilk.
4. Spread cake batter in pan and bake for 40 min. or until inserted pick comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool completely.
5. In a bowl, cream cheese with sugar and vanilla. Add cream and beat until stiff peaks form on whisk.
6. Spread the icing on the cake and decorate with fresh fig wedges and honey.

For decoration

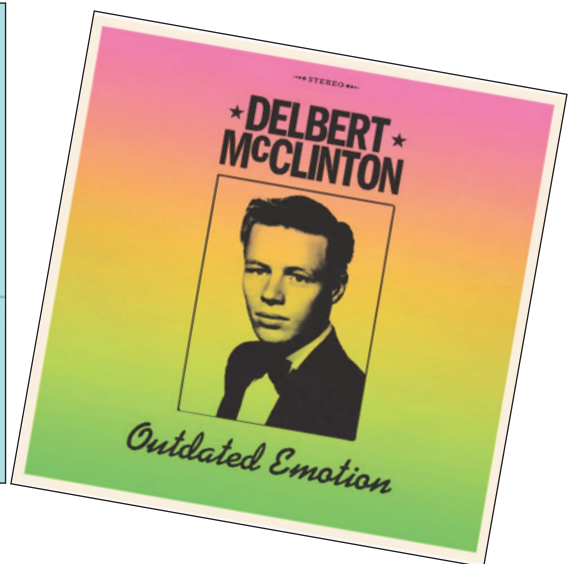
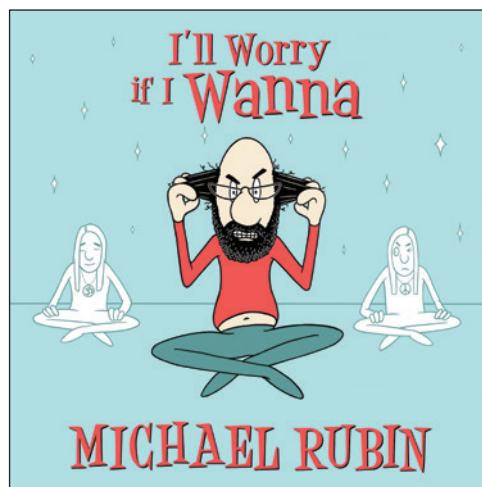
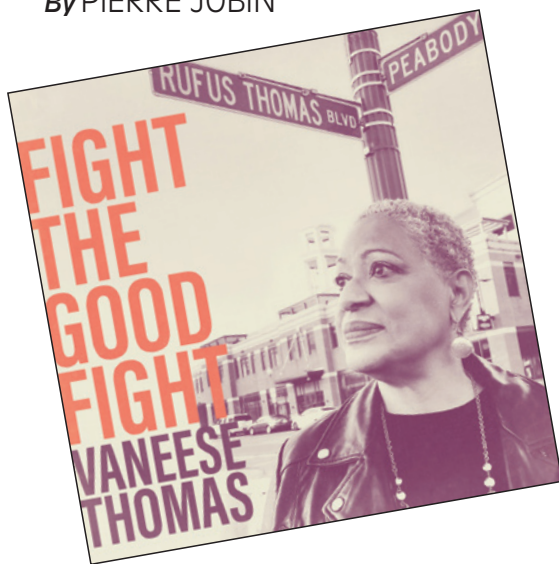
Fresh figs
Honey



Photo : Luto Photographie

BLUES

By PIERRE JOBIN

**DELBERT MCCLINTON**

Outdated Emotion

Hot Shot Records / Thirty Tigers, HSR003

With this 27th studio album, *Outdated Emotion*, **Delbert McClinton** was particularly keen to honor the artists of his first musical loves and influences, **Hank Williams**, **Jimmy Reed**, as well as **Ray Charles** and **Little Richard**, and to revisit several songs from that colorful and emotional era for him. We find, among others, his interpretation of **Stagger Lee's** *One Scotch - One Bourbon - One Beer*, *Long Tall Sally*, *Jambalaya*, *Move It On Over*, as well as five compositions or co-compositions by this young octogenarian, which are perfectly integrated into the whole! After 64 years on every sort of road, after having earned four *Grammys*, the man that **Rolling Stone** magazine presents to us as the *Godfather of Americana Music* had the taste, if not the sacred call of a legend who remembers, to share the founding music, dear to his heart for the benefit of current and future generations. He co-produced the album with multi-instrumentalist **Kevin McKendree** (piano, guitar, bass, drums) at his **Rock House Studio** in Nashville. The latter's son, **Yates McKendree**, participated in the recording and also played drums, double bass and guitar. For the less stripped-down pieces, and according to their needs, several musicians on saxophones, violin, steel guitar, pedal steel guitar, acoustic guitars and harmonica, as well as backing singers, participate in this musical compilation

of naturally integrated classics. In addition to his inspired vocals and supple voice, which magically render any style, **Mr. McClinton** plays harmonica on the two **Jimmy Reed** tracks. *Outdated Emotion* wonderfully fulfills its mission of bringing back to life in an authentic and playful way those thrills and gems of the past, from which modern popular music has its origins. Hats off to **Mr. Delbert McClinton!** Mission accomplished, pleasure guaranteed!

MICHAEL RUBIN*I'll Worry if I Wanna*

Many Hats Records 001

Michael Rubin first hooked me, seduced me, delighted me with his hilarious humor and his original, truculent, subtly presented performance. When I listen to this musician, I see his theatrical character, at least, I can easily imagine it. His extensive opus would seem to draw its origin from an unconventional and atypical spirit of an observer of the facts of life with a sharp, even eccentric eye, all coupled with a creative spirit, abundant, and an experienced and high-level harmonica player who knows how to surround himself well. In the furrows of a proven tradition in the blues, this harmonica player and singer handles with mastery, inventiveness and freshness the double meaning. In *Little Rabbit* which starts the ball, the rabbit sings, *Let you nibble my carrot and taste my carrot juice / I'm a little rabbit / You're a little rabbit, too...* The themes are varied, even

incongruous, from his *Beer Belly Baby* whose physical attributes he praises, got a *Beer Belly Baby and I love to watch her shake that thing...* to the *Kama Sutra Girl* with suggestive and refined turns of phrase, to the slow, heavy and tragically funny *Chain Letter Blues* which poses, comically, the existential question, namely, to be superstitious or not to be. **Rubin** has a gift for taking us out of our world and surprising us with his rather bizarre, even offbeat points of view. In the harmonica department, the legendary **Charlie Musselwhite** says of him **Michael Rubin** sure knows his way around a harmonica! I ain't lying! which, as far as I'm concerned, is surely very telling! The nine tracks on the album, including the instrumental *Fourth Coast*, are by **Mr. Rubin**. There is a lot more to say about this first album and the band's musician, the special guests and the choristers, who are excellent. I'll leave you instead with these refreshing lyrics from this talented (and funny to say the least) singer-songwriter *I'll worry if I wanna cause worryin' makes me feel alright... I'll worry if I wanna*, a hilarious, subtly crafted opus with a great outcome.

VANEESE THOMAS*Fight The Good Fight*
Blue Heart records, BHR1025

Vaneese Thomas, the youngest daughter of **Rufus Thomas**, one of the founders of modern rhythm n' blues, returns strong and inspired with her ninth album, *Fight The Good Fight*. Her

voice is powerful, expressive, overflowing with a deep and irrepressible soul. She co-produced this record with her life partner, **Wayne Warnecke**, during the pandemic, primarily at **Peaceful Waters Music Studio** in the Hudson Valley, New York. This opus includes a series of songs that cover just about every aspect of life, from the personal to the amorous, from life stories of all kinds to the socio-political, from spirituality to celebrations of human brotherhood... It also borrows several styles of American popular music, including R&B, soul, gospel, blues, country and Americana. The corresponding instrumentation is present, and includes guitar, bass, drums, organ, piano, accordion, mandolin, banjo, violin, trumpet, saxophones, harmonica, without forgetting the pedal steel, the chorus and the percussions to crown and enhance the whole. **Vaneese Thomas**, experienced and well surrounded, knows how to do it at each step, from writing to interpretation! You can't keep a good woman down... they say! Like a river, she journeys along tradition, through the ups and downs of life, choosing the good fight with her energy and her realistic yet inspiring songs! These, touching, connect us to the human and the universal *Same Blood Same Bone, One Heart, One Voice, One Song... We're not Alone!*... she sings to us. Thank you, **Vaneese Thomas** for this rich and diverse offer of soul and music!

PROG ROCK

By RICHARD GUAY



THE TANGENT

Songs From the Hard Shoulder <https://www.thetangent.org/>
The Tangent celebrates its 20th anniversary this year with its twelfth studio album, *Songs from the Hard Shoulder*. **Andy Tillison** (vocals, keyboards). For the event, he gathered his faithful team of collaborators who have been supporting him for more than 10 years, namely **Jonas Reingold** (bass), one of the founders of the band and also the only Swedish member still part of this project, **Theo Travis** (saxophone, flute) who has been with the band since *The World That We Drive Through* (2004) and **Luke Machin** (guitar) who joined the band for the *COMM* album (2011). The newest addition, **Steve Roberts** (drums), only recently appeared on *Proxy* (2018). Those who know the history of **The Tangent** know that it was originally an international Anglo-Swedish band composed of members of **Parallel Or 90 Degrees** and **Flower Kings**. From being a short-lived megagroup, this one, with time, changed its status to become a full-fledged British progressive rock band, looking for a less flashy and more characteristic music. **The Tangent's** constant evolution led to albums of rare perfection such as *Le Sacre du Travail* (2013) or *The Slow Rust of Forgotten Machinery* (2017). From *Auto-Reconnaissance* (2020), the previous opus, the traditional progressive formula was somewhat abandoned, without however abandoning it, to explore more variations borrowed from

a multitude of styles such as British rock with moderate tendencies, and, more daring, jazz, jazz rock and jazz fusion. *Songs From the Hard Shoulder* is composed of three long epic suites followed by a short conclusion. The first ones offer quite different contents. The opening track, *The Changes*, immediately plunges us into the band's familiar musical universe and offers a happy mix of progressive rock, jazz rock and several styles developed throughout its 17 minutes of music. The instrumental *The GPS Vultures* (17 min), the second track, sounds much more 1970s and at times reminds us of the legendary band **Soft Machine** with its energetic jazz rock with **Canterbury** incursions supported by a powerful rhythm section. *The Lady Tied To The Lamp*, the longest track (21 min), paints a dark and emotional portrait of a city's nightlife through the eyes of a homeless woman. It is also the most progressive part of the album, the one that still weaves links with the early **Tangent**, the one from the Swedish era. One discovers in particular many complex passages strewn with twisted arrangements, sometimes even psychedelic, as well as a jazz rock flirting closely with the progressive. But what jumps out the most in this opus is without a doubt the exceptional dexterity of the musicians who honor **Tillison's** pronounced taste for aestheticism and refinement. **The Tangent** is now a purely eclectic band that appeals to any serious and adventurous music lover, making this album quickly a must have.

KAIPA

Urskog www.insideoutmusic.com; www.kaipa.info
Hans Lundin (keyboards) continues his journey with **Kaipa**, the band he founded with **Roine Stolt** in the 1970s and which strongly contributed to light the first embers of Swedish neo-progressive. The five albums, in Swedish, produced during this first period (1975 - 1982) were rather successful, but did not manage to ensure the durability of the band. It was in 2002 that **Stolt** left the comfort of **Flower Kings** for a while to help his former colleague to relaunch **Kaipa** on a new basis. The exercise was successful. *Notes From the Past*, which was originally a solo album by **Lundin**, received much praise from reviewers, including yours truly. After three excellent records, **Roine Stolt** left the band for the second time in order to devote himself to his innumerable projects, convinced that **Lundin** could now take care of the destiny of the band alone, which he did with brio! This second period of existence, which began with the new millennium, saw the birth of nine albums, each one as good as the other. This new title, *Urskog* (primitive or primal forest), the fourteenth in the series, is definitely worth a look. The opus invites us to discover the Swedish nature and its changes of seasons by a country walk in the heart of the impenetrable and mysterious forest of this Nordic country. To do this, **Lundin** can still count on the solid and

reliable team recruited at the relaunch of the project, namely **Aleena Gibson** (vocals), **Jonas Reingold** (bass), **Patrik Lundström** (vocals) and of course, the indispensable **Per Nilsson** (guitars) who replaced **Stolt** from *Angling Feelings* (2009) onward. *The Frozen Dead of the Night*, lasts 19 min and starts the initiatory journey with a musical framework that transports us from the cold Scandinavian winter to the spring and the rebirth of the rich forest flora. This piece is the most progressive of the album and dives into the sources of Swedish neo-progressive. The keyboards are unleashed, as are the guitar scores. More melancholic, dreamy and emotional, *In A World Of Pines*, the second track, is overflowed by the aerial and strident voice of **Aleena Gibson**, voice that requires however a certain period of adaptation. The tenebrous *Urskog* takes us deep into a primeval forest, where legends come to life. *Wilderness Excursion*, an entirely instrumental piece, relies again on sophisticated jazz-rock elements. *The Bitter Setting Sun* lasts 15 minutes and constitutes the second main course of the opus by betting on an ambitious and complex progressive symphonic. *Urskog* is perhaps the most successful **Kaipa** of the last few years because of its enveloping musicality, its successful fusion of different styles, its intricate and complex instrumental scores, its highly symphonic content, its playful and catchy delivery, and the rare perfection of its musicians

SIMPLICITY IN THE

By YVES BÉRUBÉ

Are you looking for a quality device to listen to your dematerialized music without requiring advanced knowledge of electronics and computers? This test bench is for you! It will make you discover a complete device that fits in a single case. It is simple to set up and focuses on the pleasure of simply listening to music, online or from one's personal collection. Moreover, its musicality-price ratio is excellent. The ST300 Signature by Atoll is relatively new to the market and is becoming the flagship product of Atoll Electronics' network drives. I invite you to discover it with me in order to give you the taste to go and listen to it and make your own opinion.

I was very much looking forward to using a device designed and built in France, for a very special listening experience with a device from **Atoll Electronics**. I have been

the proud owner of French components for several years and I was hoping to rediscover the pleasure of simply listening to music with this sound that I particularly like. **Atoll** has been a French manufacturer of quality electronics for 25 years. The company is located in Normandy, more precisely in the Manche region.

Founded and still managed by the brothers **Stéphane** and **Emmanuel Dubreuil**, this company aims to offer to the widest possible audience, the possibility of listening to music with a maximum of realism.

Atoll Electronics has the particularity of designing and manufacturing its products in France. Except for a few specific parts manufactured in Asia, the vast majority of components are made in France.

Atoll's goal is to offer products with an exceptional price/musicality ratio. Since the beginning, important choices have been made, for example to develop products from the design stage by carrying out both

measurements and listening. In addition, in order not to affect the transparency and dynamics of the system, it has chosen not to use bass and treble correctors.

Technical Description

The *ST300 Signature* is a device from the manufacturer's reference series that sits at the top of **Atoll Electronics'** network drive lineup along with the *ST200 Signature* and *MS120* models, whose network drive platform it shares. Everything else about the *ST300* has been improved in several ways. More precisely, the *ST300* benefits from several component transformations compared to the *ST200 Signature*, from which it takes over the front panel with its 5 LED screen (800 x 480), its headphone jack and the chassis.



SERVICE OF MUSIC

The main improvement is under the hood. **Atoll's** new network player comes with a preamplifier portion with Class A biased output stages and four discrete component stages with no feedback. It allows a direct connection to an amplifier by means of analog *XLR* or *RCA* outputs, and the volume is managed by an analog control by means of switched resistors.

The digital portion is built with quality components that have the particularity to separate the two channels. We are therefore dealing with a double-mono construction. Thus, each channel has a **Texas / Burr Brown 1792** chip with double conversion and two toroidal transformers. Parallel operation

« This recording is full of special effects, phase-reversed tracks, directed stereo, and several other recording techniques that could confuse many a *DAC*, but the *ST300 Signature* rises to the challenge. It delivers the music without giving an analytical impression where everything is calculated and sent to the amplifier without the calculation work being finished. On the contrary, the *ST300* is in control and gives all the details of the pieces one after the other without running out of breath allowing us to appreciate the music that **Roger Water** wanted to offer us in this album. »

doubles the current capacity and greatly improves the musical result.

The *ST300* network player supports the known digital formats allowing *PCM 16-24 bit / 192 kHz DSD 64* and *DSD 128* resolutions. It allows the connection to an external *DAC* if you want to improve this aspect and keep the other features. Digital files can be stored on a network drive or an external drive or on a *USB* stick connected with the **Atoll's** *USB* inputs (one on the front or the other on the back). Finally, the *ST300* offers two analog inputs.

Unpacking and Installation

Right out of the box, I plugged the unit into my power conditioner, connected the *LAN* wire (it also works with *WiFi*) and made the *XLR* connection to the amplifier. Once it recognized my *Roon* server and I was able to connect the device to online music sites, I was ready to listen to music in less than 10 minutes. The *ST300* comes with a full-featured remote control that allows you to use all of the device's functions.

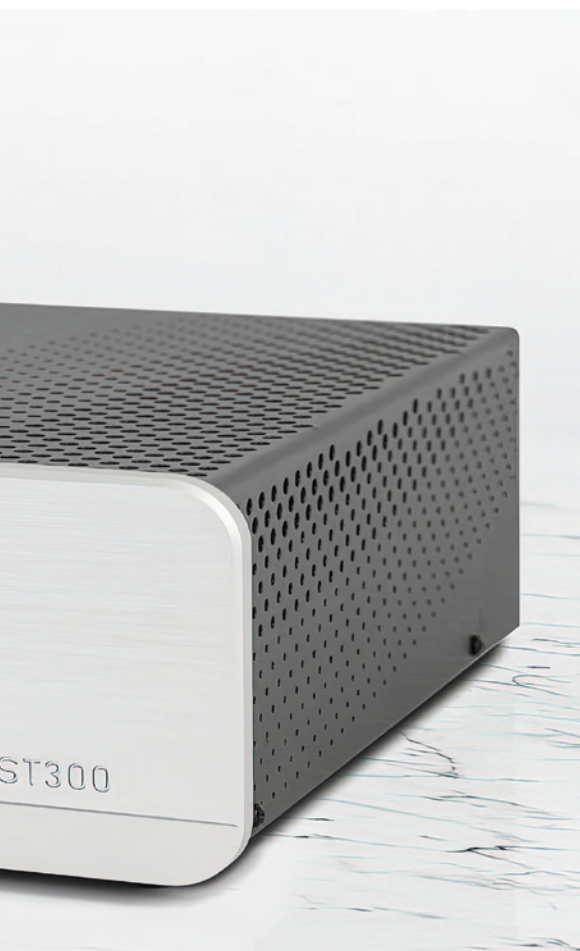
I did this bench test with the free **Atoll Signature** app (*iOS* and *Android*) and did not use the remote or the buttons on the front panel. Everything is controlled by the application and it is very user-friendly. You can see the album you have chosen through the application, and the cover is immediately displayed on the *ST300* screen whether you are directly on an online music site or with

Roon. It is a device that benefits from being left on continuously for several hours to improve listening results.

Listening Impressions

It was to the sound of **Shostakovich's 15th Symphony** that I heard my first notes with the **Atoll *ST300 Signature***. It is a remarkable work that presents several instruments of the orchestra almost in solo, one after the other. One can thus appreciate the timbre of each of the instruments of the orchestra as a whole. It is also a public recording, but we feel like we are alone with the orchestra. The reproduction of simple instruments, such as percussion, is often problematic for many *DACs*, especially with regard to attack and endings. For example, the *ST300* renders the glockenspiel at the beginning of the work in full musicality by letting the instrument vibrate and hear all the harmonics generated by the musician and his instrument. The rest of the work can simply be listened to with your eyes closed. We are able to place the orchestra in the concert hall and to position the musicians in the ensemble.

Many players often suppress information in the sound of the piano, thus diminishing the emotion felt by the musician. I decided to continue my musical exploration with **Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin**. While we know him as a conductor, he began learning the piano at a young age, and many



ATOLL ST300 SIGNATURE NETWORK PLAYER

will be pleasantly surprised to discover his pianistic talents. He has released an album, available only in dematerialized version, entitled *Introspection: Solo Piano Sessions*, recorded during the pandemic, in memory of his piano teacher who died last summer. The **Atoll ST300** reproduces here the piano of the musical director of the **Metropolitan Opera of New York** and the **Metropolitan Orchestra**, without any difficulty and with a beautiful musicality. The *ST300* leaves no detail untouched and reveals the keyboard attacks in harmony, the pedal movements are natural and you are quickly thrown into this enveloping music. The acoustics of the **Domaine Forget** hall in Charlevoix, where the recording was made, can also be appreciated in all its grandeur.

Without being a virtuoso, **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** offers us a very pleasant repertoire to listen to, allowing us to accompany him in this introspection, often a meditation. I listened to this album several times while going about my business in the house. This is music that is easy to listen to and the **Atoll Signature ST300** reproduces it accurately without causing any hearing fatigue in a fluidity that charms us. **Atoll's** network player presents all the details and gives the impression of being in the same room as the *Maestro*, in meditation.

We take a leap into the realm of popular music by listening to **Roger Waters' Amused to Death** album, which offers, with the help of *QSound* technology, sounds that

come from different places in your listening room, with only two channels, even behind you if your speaker placement is optimal. Originally released in 1992, the album was remixed in 2015 and released in higher definition.

This recording is full of special effects, phase-reversed tracks, directed stereo, and several other recording techniques that could confuse many a *DAC*, but the *ST300 Signature* rises to the challenge. It delivers the music without giving an analytical impression where everything is calculated and sent to the amplifier without the calculation work being finished. On the contrary, the *ST300* is in control and gives all the details of the pieces one after the other without running out of breath allowing us to appreciate the music that **Roger Water** wanted to offer us in this album.

No one effect is stronger than another and the balance remains stable. Low frequencies are found on many recordings, but I noticed that they were sharp and fast in this recording with the **Atoll** network player. Interestingly, they don't disappear when you turn down the volume, they are less pronounced, but they are still present, which shows the quality of the pre-amplification portion of **Atoll's** network player. Without the *ST300 Signature's* high quality preamplification, we would feel like we were losing bits every time we touched the volume control down. Unless you have special needs, we can say that the **Atoll**

ST300 Signature does not need an additional amplifier.

Jazz music is often a gift that you give yourself at the end to please yourself. Saxophonist **Dexter Gordon** makes his instrument sing joyfully on the *Montmartre 1964* album thanks to *2xHD's* high-resolution digital restoration. Note that this album comes from a mono analog recording and the pleasure is not diminished by the absence of stereophony, far from it! The main star of **Bertrand Tavernier's** film *Round Midnight* literally rocks the listening room and immerses us in the atmosphere of 1960s jazz clubs. Accompanied by a trio of musicians (piano, bass and drums), **Dexter Gordon** impresses us with the sound of a giant saxophone, literally. The timbre of the saxophone, one of the most appreciated characteristics of the great musician at the height of 2 m, vibrates in all the pieces of the album and each of his solos is a gift for the ears.

Conclusion

Atoll's ST300 Signature is an impeccably built network player, *DAC* and preamplifier in one chassis, which will satisfy even the most demanding music lover. The installation is simple and you can quickly start listening to music. With the *ST300 Signature*, **Atoll Electronics** has designed a new flagship product that will certainly leave its mark in this very competitive market segment. Its many connection possibilities





make it a device that will meet the needs of the various possible configurations. With more than 80% of the components designed and manufactured in France, it succeeds in offering a high quality product at an affordable price. There are several devices on the market with similar quality, but at a much higher price. I highly recommend it to those looking for a quality network player, DAC and pre-amplifier in an all-in-one format. Congratulations to **Atoll** for this new very musical product.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

Mediagraphy

Roger Waters, Amused to Death, Columbia-Sony, B00UA1NBj6, FLAC, MQA, 24/192

Bernard Haitink / Royal Concertbow Orchestra, Shostakovich; Symphony No. 15 (Live), RCO-Live, 0814337019891, FLAC, MQA, 24/192

Dexter Gordon, Montmartre 1964, 2xHD, - Storyville Records, 2XHDST1220, DSF, DSD128

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Introspection: Solo Piano Sessions, 0028948606191, Deutsche Grammophon, FLAC, MQA, 24/192



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Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

The Beaujolais? An unsuspected world to discover!

ER
ETIENNE RAMOUSSE
IMAGES

I have just returned from a rather incredible trip to the Beaujolais region where I met, for 6 days, winemakers totally committed to the revival of this region. Revival, you say? Well yes, it is an incredible effort to revalorize the region's terroirs

that is supported by the entire industry. And believe me, the people we have met all have the same message. They are all driven by the same mantra.

But why this quest for renewal? So let's see. If I tell you *Beaujolais* wine, what do you think of? Like the vast majority of people, you will talk to me about *Beaujolais Nouveau*. And with good reason! A marketing phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s, and propelled around the world by the **Georges Dubœuf** house, this wine was, and still is, available on the 3rd Thursday of November each year. To say that we sold a lot of them is an understatement. This wine once accounted for up to 50% of the wine production in this region. At that time, nearly 1.5 million hectoliters of wine were sold annually.

Over time, consumer habits and perceptions have changed. This *Beaujolais Nouveau* with its festive image has come to be perceived as a wine of inferior quality, a gimmick wine. Moreover, this new wine had no effect on the varied terroir of the region. It was not territorially based, as the consumer was not sure where it came from. The brand was

strong, but not its values. And predictably, over the years, sales have dropped.

For the past ten years, the *Beaujolais* wine industry has been rolling up its sleeves with the objective of improving the image of the region and its wines. There is not only *Beaujolais Nouveau*! We want to make the other appellations known for their intrinsic qualities and the specific quality of each terroir.

The rise in quality is achieved through projects supported by the winegrowers and the entire *Beaujolais* region, such as the *Pierres Dorées* project in the south and the *Terre de Brouilly* project (*Brouilly* and *Côtes de Brouilly*), where I met several winegrowers. They are looking for ways to have the quality of their wines recognized.

God knows how incredible the aromatic palette of *Beaujolais* wines is! During our trip, we tasted about a hundred wines from

most of the different appellations. Let's just say that the experience was an eye-opener. By the way, we even tasted a 1983 *Moulin-à-Vent*, a true testament to the ability of these wines to age beautifully.

But what is Beaujolais?

The vineyard is 15 to 20 km wide and 55 km long on the right bank of the Saône, between Mâcon and Lyon. It is really easy to visit the various appellations by car and to stop here and there as we did for some chateaux.

Appellations

There are more than 2,000 estates, 9 cooperative wineries and 200 merchants, including estates with a trading activity, in the 12 AOCs of the *Beaujolais* region, which covers 96 communes.

The regional *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée* (*Beaujolais*, *Beaujolais Villages*) are rather located in the southern part while the



communal *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée communales* (the 10 crus of *Beaujolais*) are located in the north.

These 10 crus are *Brouilly, Côte de Brouilly, Régnié, Morgon, Chiroubles, Fleurie, Moulin-à-Vent, Chénas, Juliéna*s and *Saint-Amour*.

Terroirs

What is amazing about *Beaujolais* is the diversity of the terroirs and soils. In order to properly identify them, a major study of them was carried out over a period of 10 years by the *Sigales* agency, which identified about 300 different ones.

To give you an idea, in Brouilly, the soils are composed of granite, blue stone and volcanic rock. In Côte de Brouilly, we find mostly blue stone and sloping soils. In Morgon, granite and blue stone soils and in Moulin-à-Vent, granite, marl and limestone. These different soils have a great influence on the aromatic profile of the wines, as we have observed during our tastings.

Moreover, several winemakers identify their wines according to the composition of the soils as *Pierres Dorées* and *Pierres Bleues*.

Grape varieties and winemaking

Beaujolais is Gamay! This sentence, we heard it all along our trip. In fact, two grape varieties are authorized in the *Beaujolais*, namely *Gamay* and *Chardonnay*.

Harvesting is mostly done by hand, because in general, we vinify whole bunches of grapes. As for the vinification, it is very particular and emblematic of the region. It consists of a semi-carbonic maceration. The whole bunches, once harvested, are vatted. At the bottom of the vat, the weight of the grapes releases the juice

and a fermentation process begins, which releases carbon dioxide that leads to intracellular fermentation in the berries at the top of the vat. At the end of maceration, the fermented grapes are pressed. Once they are combined (juice from the taffy and juice from the press), they complete their fermentation.

Wines

I have been writing about *Beaujolais* wines for a few years now and I always say that the wines from this region represent what consumers are looking for: fruit, freshness and moderate alcohol levels. My trip confirmed this perception. But it also showed me that this vision of things was simplistic, because the wines of *Beaujolais* express an incredible variety of terroirs with wines ranging from fruity and easy to drink to wines of character, powerful, dense, structured and generous, all from the same *Gamay* grape.

At the time of writing, few wines from the producers I visited are available at the **SAQ**. The situation is much the same for the entire *Beaujolais* industry, which is possibly due to shipping problems to Quebec caused by all the events that have been occurring for quite some time. Don't worry, they will be in Quebec in the near future.

The first two producers on this list are leaders in the *Beaujolais* natural wine movement. Under the impulse of **Jules Chauvet**, a wine merchant and chemist, the winemakers **Jean Foillard, Marcel Lapiere, Guy Breton** and **Jean-Paul Thévenet** launched, in the 1980s, a movement towards more ecological, more natural wines, closer to an old-fashioned approach that did not use chemicals.

Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

Domaine Marcel Lapierre France, Beaujolais, Morgon Natural red wine, 2020

Unfortunately, this wine is not available at the moment. Some stores have the 1.5 liter size.

The creation of the estate dates back to 1909. Today it covers 18 hectares planted with black *Gamay* with white juice, mainly in the *Morgon* appellation, and in *Beaujolais* on a few parcels. Vines cultivated in organic agriculture without weedkillers or chemical fertilizers. Manual harvest, carefully sorted, sometimes in two passages. Traditional Beaujolais semi-carbonic maceration, without SO₂ or yeast, from 10 to 20 days.

Tasting Notes

In this wine, the aromas and flavors are brilliantly pure. With beautiful elegance and iconic depth, it reveals itself on the nose with notes of cherries, violets, raspberries and a touch of licorice and sweet spices.

In the mouth, the tannins are velvety and balanced and the acidity is well present. The aromas perceived in the nose are prolonged in a joyful and flamboyant amplitude. With a beautiful precision, ample and juicy, this wine is enthroned in the firmament of *Beaujolais*.

Marcel Lapierre Estate
France, Beaujolais, Morgon
Natural red wine, 2020

Grape variety: Gamay 100%

Sugar: 1.9 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5%

SAQ Code: 11305344

Price: \$39.75

<https://www.saq.com/en/11305344>

Agency: Sélection Rezin



Jean Foillard, France Beaujolais, Morgon Cuvée Corcelette Natural red wine, 2019

Unfortunately, this wine is not available at the moment.
Carbonic maceration at low temperature on whole grapes for 3 to 4 weeks, without adding SO2.

Tasting Notes

A wine of impeccable depth, density and complexity. The nose is distinguished by a concentration of aromas with beautiful floral notes, cherries, ripe morello cherries and a framework of raspberries.

On the palate, we find tension as well as fruit flavors of exquisite depth. The structure is ensured by soft, ample and balanced tannins as well as by a surprising acidity and a feeling of minerality. What a superb aromatic amplitude which continues in a more than appreciable length. A real favorite!

Jean Foillard, France

Beaujolais, Morgon

Cuvée Corcelette

Natural red wine, 2019

Grape variety: Gamay 100%

Sugar: 1.2 g / l

Alcohol: 13.5 %

SAQ Code: 12201643

Price: \$47.75

<https://www.saq.com/en/12201643>

Agency: Sélection Rezin



Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

Domaine Emmanuel Fellot 2018 Bourgogne Chardonnay Natural white wine (Beaujolais)

Unfortunately, this wine is not available at the moment.

Although it has the appellation *Bourgogne* on the bottle, it is in fact a white *Beaujolais* that I consider a connoisseur's white wine. These wines are rare (about 5% of the appellation - LRVF) and here is an opportunity to enjoy these tasting wines.

The lands of predilection for *Chardonnay* are located in the extreme north of the vineyard and southwest of Villefranche-sur-Saône. The soils are clay and limestone on the mid-slope facing Mont Blanc, and the vines are treated according to the principles of integrated pest management / agro-ecology in conversion to organic. As for the vinification, we use indigenous yeasts (vs. selected commercial yeasts) without any chaptalization (addition of sugar to stimulate fermentation). Once pressed, the juices are put into 228-liter barrels after 24 hours.

The alcoholic fermentation at low temperature is done slowly during 25 days with natural yeasts and is followed by the malolactic fermentation. The wine is aged in vats for 3 to 6 months, then on fine lees for 6 months. We rack at the end just before the harvest and proceed to the bottling.

Tasting Notes

Oh, how I love this wine! It reveals fresh, pure and crisp aromas of pear, citrus, floral notes with a hint of beautiful buttery notes.

The palate is amazingly energetic with bright fruit flavors supported by fresh acidity. All in finesse with a certain elegance, the whole extends in a tasty length.

Be on the lookout for distribution in the branches to buy a few bottles!

You will make beautiful combinations with poultry, fishes with the cream, salad of hot goat, gratins with seafood.

**Domaine Emmanuel Fellot 2018
Bourgogne Chardonnay
Natural white wine (Beaujolais)**

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 13%

SAQ Code: 14703946

Price: \$22.10

Agency: Les InvinQ



Jean Loron, Rift 69 Wine without added sulfites, 2020 France, Beaujolais Village

Rift, is the meeting of the experience of sulphur-free wine made by *Maison Jean Loron* for 10 years and a terroir where the geological fault called *Rift* sculpted, several million years ago, the superb hills, and formed the *Beaujolais-Villages* appellation. The *Gamay Noir* expresses itself superbly on these sloping and complex terroirs formed of granitic, magmatic and metamorphic rocks which are so particular.

The hand-picked grapes are partially destemmed and fermented in stainless steel tanks for 15 days for optimal extraction that will bring a real consistency to the wine. The 9 months maturation on lees, protected from oxygen, nourishes, complexifies and stabilizes the wine by giving it a spicy and mineral side.

Tasting Notes

This wine reveals itself with bright aromas of sweet spices, blueberries and blackberries, with beautiful floral notes in the background. This purity of fruit continues on the palate with some herbaceous notes as well as a minerality that gives it a certain straightness. The tannins are smooth, the texture a little firm and the whole is very refreshing. Real **Beaujolais!**

You will make beautiful combinations with cooked pork meats, black pudding, veal and grilled sausages.

Jean Loron, Rift 69

Wine without added sulfites, 2020

France, Beaujolais Village

Grape variety: Gamay 100%

Sugar: 1.9 g/l

Alcohol: 13%

SAQ Code: 13915162

Price: \$18.45

<https://www.saq.com/en/13915162>

Agency: Céleste



Buon gusto

By CLAUDE LALONDE

Stéphane Aviron, Côte de Brouilly Vieilles Vignes, 2019 Beaujolais

Unfortunately, this wine is not available at the moment.

This superb *Beaujolais Côte de Brouilly* from **Stéphane Aviron** comes from soils composed of granite, schist and blue stones at 300 m altitude, facing south-east. Yields are 52 hl/hectare and the average age of the vines is 55 years.

The harvest is manual and lasts 10 days. They then proceed to a traditional *Beaujolais* vinification, semi-carbonic. Aged 10 months in oak barrels.

Tasting Notes

This wine confirms my appreciation for the wines of Beaujolais. It reveals bright aromas of cherries, strawberries, cranberries and beautiful floral notes.

On the palate, what is surprising is the almost lively acidity that combines with flavors of sour cherries, cherry pits, strawberries as well as a slight bitterness and some spicy notes. It's fresh, salivating, crisp, balanced, and supported by smooth to balanced, tightly woven tannins. Beautiful aromatic intensity with a pleasant persistence. What a pleasure to drink!

You will make beautiful combinations with cooked pork meats, terrines, sausages, calf's liver and ham.

Stéphane Aviron, Côte de Brouilly

Vieilles Vignes, 2019

Grape variety: Gamay 100%

Sugar: 2.7 g/l

Alcohol: 13.5%

SAQ Code: 14015094

Price: \$22.15

<https://www.saq.com/en/14015094>

Agency: Fréchette Vins d'exception – sample



Jean-Paul Brun, Terres Dorées Morgon, 2020

Here is what **Jean-Paul Brun** says about the vinification of his wines *I sort, I destem and I make very long vatting periods of about 4 weeks like the whole Beaujolais industry which vinifies in carbonic maceration. This allows all the information from the terroir to reach the wine.* He does not chaptalise, uses only very small amounts of sulphites and filters very little.

The viticultural and vinicultural practices that he puts forward are done with respect for the environment, and he integrates several organic practices. The soils are, for example, ploughed, and copper and sulfur are preferred to phytosanitary products to preserve the vines. The grapes are harvested by hand and only when fully ripe. In the cellar, the grapes ferment with their own yeasts, coming from the terroir. A minimalist intervention is practiced in the vineyard.

Tasting Notes

This *Morgon Terres Dorées* is of a more serious character. It exults in the nose of red fruits, pomegranate, sweet spices, aromatic herbs, undergrowth with a hint of blackberries.

On the palate, it is a wine that shows some power with balanced tannins, tightly woven and supported by a fresh acidity.

Flavors of red fruits, aromatic herbs, blackberries, sour fruits (pomegranate, cranberries) and undergrowth create a beautiful aromatic amplitude on a fruity and slightly acidic finish.

It goes well with sausages and andouillettes, game or meats in sauce.

Jean-Paul Brun, Terres Dorées

Morgon, 2020

Grape variety: Gamay 100%

Sugar: 2.5 g/l

Alcohol: 12%

SAQ Code: 11589746

Price: \$25.95

<https://www.saq.com/en/11589746>

Agency: Importations BMT



AN APPOINTMENT WITH DIGITAL PRECISION

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Playback Designs was founded in 2008 by Swiss engineer **Andreas Koch**. The release of its *MPS-5 CD/SACD* player was a revelation and a quick success at that time. This player included a good variety of digital inputs that made its digital-to-analog conversion section accessible to almost any digital source available at that time. The novelty was that instead of using a converter chip from another manufacturer, **Andreas Koch** had developed his own converter from an *FPGA* chip programmed with algorithms he had developed himself. What's more, this technology allowed him to design digital audio players that could be

upgraded later. At that time I had heard of **Playback Designs** products, but I never imagined that I would be able to test one one day. This is now done with the recent *MPS-8 Player*.

Andreas Koch

Before we go any further, I think it's important to talk about the founder of **Playback Designs**. **Andreas Koch** has an impressive track record which I invite you to read on the company's website. It would take too long to list all his professional experience, but just know that he has already worked for prestigious companies such as **Studer**, **Revox**, **Dolby Labs** and **Sony**. It was with the latter that **Andreas Koch** collaborated on the development and standardization of *SACD* and *DSD (Direct Stream Digital)* recording



technology. And that's not to mention his extensive involvement during the 1990s in the design of professional recording studio equipment. In 1997, **Sony** of San Francisco asked for his services to develop the world's first **Sonoma** software, which allows recording, editing and mixing *DSD* files on a computer with more than 32 channels. His *Sonoma* software is still in use today.

In 2003, he became a freelance engineer and until 2007, he designed all the algorithms and the architecture of the digital

«**Somi** has surrounded herself with various well-known [...] Thanks to the *MPS-8* Player, the drums all spread out in front of me and go way beyond the speakers. I can feel the space between the musicians while the singer **Somi**, who has a wide range, is presented to me without ambiguity as to her position in the stereophonic image. Her voice is powerful and well supported by the dynamics of the *MPS-8* player, which always keeps her in control without her sibilant consonants becoming a high-pitched hiss... »

products of Canadian manufacturer **EMM Labs**. In 2008, **Andreas Koch** finally decided to form his own company called **Playback Designs**. He then designed and marketed his first CD / SACD player. At this point, the *MPS-5* derives from its last 25 years of experience in digital music production and reproduction.

Bert Vogt

All **Playback Designs'** analog circuits are designed by a young and talented German engineer named **Bert Vogt**. As a specialist

in analog circuits, he was first involved in the design of the output stage of the famous *MPS-5 CD/SACD* player of the time. Its concept is to use only discrete components for all its circuits as well as for the *DAC* output filtering. Therefore, no operational amplifiers or integrated circuits are used in its output and pre-amplification stages. By selecting each piece individually, **Bert Vogt** maintains total control over every parameter of his circuit and, ultimately, his sound. He is also a specialist in designing circuit boards with optimized topology for the purest possible signal path. In this sense, **Bert Vogt** is involved in the design of the latest *Dream* series, which represents the pinnacle of all **Playback Designs'** ranges.

This series includes the *MPD-8* converter, the *MPT-8* transport / server / streamer as well as the *MPS-8 CD/SACD/streamer* player which is the subject of this test bench. A powerful stereo amplifier, the *SPA-8*, has also been added to the catalog in the meantime.

The philosophy behind the MPS-8 Dream Player

I remind you that this model is a *CD/SACD* player equipped with a **Stream-X** network music playback module that can connect you to different online music services like **Tidal, Quobuz, Deezer** and **vTuner**. The whole thing can be controlled by a free *mconnect HD* app available for *iOS* or *Android* tablets and phones. This module also supports the *Roon* network reading protocol. So it can also be controlled by the *Roon* software and its app installed on your *iOS* or *Android* devices. The *DAC* section of the *MPS-8* is accessible through multiple digital inputs such as a *USB-B* input for the computer, a *USB-A* input for the flash memory, a *Toslink* optical input, an *AES/EBU* input on *XLR* connector and an *RCA* coaxial input.

Another *PLink* digital input is available as the company's own optical link to connect **Playback Designs** devices together. There are two digital outputs, one *AES/EBU* and the other *PLink*.

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info@audiyo.com, 905-881-9555

e-TP80S NCF e-TP609 NCF

The analog outputs are provided on *RCA* and *XLR* connectors. For at least three decades, **Andreas Koch** and **Bert Vogt** have been refining their digital and analog circuit design. By developing their own digital-to-analog conversion algorithms based on an *FPGA (Field Programmable Gate Array)* programmable integrated circuit, they have developed a technology that can be updated over the long term as improvements are made to the devices.

It is well known that in the process of digital-to-analog conversion, the stability of the internal clock is paramount. The smallest variation in the sampling frequency results in temporal jitter, a distortion commonly called *jitter*. This distortion is very difficult to measure other than by listening, and it results in a sound often described by audiophiles as cold and dry. The engineers at **Playback Designs** have been working on this problem.

The architecture of the MPS-8 Dream Player

In order to eliminate intermodulation distortion between the left and right channels, the *MPS-8* player includes two completely independent channels, each with its own linear power supply circuit and its own toroidal transformer with a Mu-metal shield. The digital section and its *D/A* converter also have their own power supply circuit. Even the front panel display is separately powered and isolated from other circuits. Mechanical shielding is installed between the left and right channel power supplies



as well as between the various digital and analog circuits.

The *MPS-8* Player uses a single precision clock to synchronize all the circuits of the *D/A* converter as well as those controlling the digital inputs. This clock even controls the display circuit. According to the

manufacturer, *OLED* touch screens have their own clock that runs freely and at frequencies that are incompatible with those intended for audio, namely 44.1 kHz and 48 kHz. There may be a conflict and interference between these two clocks. This explains the choice of a simpler and more





rudimentary display for a device of this price. This display, which is red in color, can operate on the same frequency as the internal clock. Special attention has been paid to this clock, which is powered by a linear circuit based on the best regulators on the market.

The core of the DAC is built entirely with discrete components, but in the case of the *Dream* series, the architecture and topology of the circuit have been revised with even more powerful components. The *MPS-8* Player's DAC uses many of the same algorithms that have made previous **Playback Designs** products so successful worldwide. All *PCM* files that are presented to the inputs

of the *MPS-8* Player are processed by in-house algorithms at a higher sampling rate and then converted to *DSD* files before being transformed into an analog signal. The apodizing filter of the *MPS-8* Player has a particularly beneficial effect on *CD* and *PCM* file playback. *SACD* and *DSD* files are read natively.

In the past, **Playback Designs** devices were not equipped with a volume control. The *Dream* series now incorporates this function through an analog potentiometer that has been refined over the years. The output gain of the *MPS-8* is variable using the volume control on the remote control or the *mconnect HD* or *ROON* applications. For the

fixed gain output option, it is possible to adjust it according to the sensitivity of the preamplifier or amplifier to which it will be connected. Therefore, values of -6 dB, -3 dB, 0 dB, +3 dB and +6 dB can be expected. The power supply of the analog circuit has been treated with care with a total separation between the two channels and the use of ten of the best linear regulators per channel.

Installation and context of use

The *MPS-8* Player was connected to my usual integrated amplifier using the balanced *XLR* connection. It was also connected to my wired *Ethernet* network, which allowed me to access the music content of



MPS-8 PLAYBACK DESIGNS CD/SACD PLAYER



my **CeolBOX** server. I was able to listen to *PCM* files up to a resolution of 24 bits / 192 kHz and *DSD 256*. Some *SACDs* were also used. All digital inputs were tried with success, but I preferred the *Ethernet* connection to continue listening from my *Roon* software.

Quiet on the set!

I started my listening by spinning some *CD* and *SACD* albums that were lying around in my music library. In both cases, the sound was impeccable and the smoothness of the drawer mechanism was incredible. It was with the high-resolution *PCM* and *DSD* files stored on my music server that I was able, for the first time, to really hear the difference between these two formats. Even if the *MPS-8* Player does wonders with *PCM* files, the *DSD* playback seemed to me to be smoother and with a slight advance in the naturalness of the timbres. On an album called *Blue Coast Collection 3*, that I downloaded in *DSF DSD 256* version, we find different pieces of artists who are part of the **Blue Coast** catalog. All these pieces are instrumental solos or they include a single voice accompanied by a guitar or a piano. With the *MPS-8* Player, I can experience a private concert where each instrument and voice is reproduced with a naturalness that is as if they were present in my listening room. Instruments, such as the guitar and piano, literally float through the stereo space with a three-dimensionality that I had not previously experienced from my amplifier and speakers. This presence of the

musicians and performers is sublimated despite the fact that the *MPS-8* alone is worth 3.5 times more than my entire amplifier and speakers.

I continue with an album downloaded in *PCM 24 bits / 96 kHz* version. It is the beautiful African singer **Somi**, who resides in New York. In her album entitled *Zenzile: The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba*, she pays tribute to the musical work of this South African artist and activist who left us in 2008. For this album, **Somi** has surrounded herself with various well-known African artists and musicians. As with all his albums, the recording of this one is superbly done and from the first notes, I am totally invaded by a virtual African music festival. Thanks to the *MPS-8* Player, the drums all spread out in front of me and go way beyond the speakers. I can feel the space between the musicians while the singer **Somi**, who has a wide range, is presented to me without ambiguity as to her position in the stereophonic image. Her voice is powerful and well supported by the dynamics of the *MPS-8* player, which always keeps her in control without her sibilant consonants becoming a high-pitched hiss. Digital audio and streaming naysayers will have to reconsider, because with the **Playback Designs MPS-8 CD/SACD** player, you're not listening to a battle between analog and digital or vinyl and *CD*, you're just listening to the music – period. Given the space allotted to me, I will not go any further in the description of the music I listened to, but just know that my experience with this player is a true faultless and one of the

best experiences in high fidelity. Even if my amplifier and speakers allowed me to understand the potential of the *MPS-8 Streamer*, I hardly dare to imagine what could have been the result with an amplifier and speakers three times more expensive.

I Have a Dream

This is the title of the famous public speech that **Martin Luther King Jr.** gave in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963. In this speech, he says among other things *I dream that one day every valley will be exalted, every hill and mountain will be lowered, the rough places will be made clear, the crooked places will be made straight...* That's kind of what the *MPS-8 Player* from **Playback Designs'** *Dream* series does. It makes the many steps of the response curve of digital files smoother, making them more organic, more natural, clearer, even easier to listen to. In short, it materializes analogically the dematerialized music in order to make it more human. As a *CD/SACD* player or even as an external *DAC* that I could get my hands on, the *MPS-8 Player* is, in my opinion, among the best in the world. The design of the solid case is uniquely original. Its curved sides and front visually remind me of the waveform of a sinusoidal signal. Its user interface is very user-friendly and as a bonus, it offers a proven *CD/SACD* playback mechanism. Considering all of its features and streamer performance in relation to its price, I wouldn't go so far as to say that the *MPS-8* is a bargain, but it is certainly hyper competitive in its price range. Recently, I have been particularly spoiled having had the opportunity to test several exceptional devices. The **Playback Designs** *MPS-8 Player* has touched me and fulfilled everything I want from music as a comfort or as a therapy against gloom. This device is one of the very few that made me rediscover my amplifier and speakers.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price : \$37,500 including Stream-X-2 option

Warranty: 1 year on the playback unit and 3 years for other components, parts and labor

Distribution: Tri-Cell Entreprises, T.: 905.265.7870, www.tri-cell.com

Mediagraphy

Somi, Zenzile: The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba, FLAC, 24 bits / 96 kHz, Blue Coast Collection 3, Songs We Love, DSF, DSD256

Anna Gréta, Nightjar in the Northern Sky, FLAC, 24 bits / 48 kHz, Woodkid, S16, FLAC, 24 bits / 44.1 kHz

Valérie Milot/Stéphane Tétréault, Transfiguration, FLAC, 24 bits / 96 kHz

Acknowledgements

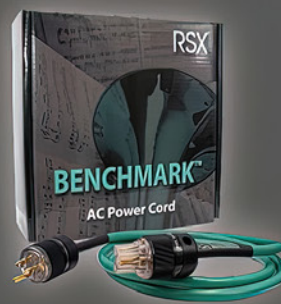
The editors would like to thank Tri-Cell Entreprises for the loan of the device.



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

Hello David,

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



Roger

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

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

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

All the best,

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



RSX Technologies | Rancho Cucamonga, USA
1-909-870-9292 | See rsxtech.com. For info, info@rsxtech.com

What's New?

Wattson Audio Products Distributed in North America

By MICHEL DALLAIRE

Wattson Audio is the result of a collaboration with Swiss company **Engineered SA** which is specialized in the manufacturing of high-fidelity equipment for over 20 years. Located in Yverdon-les-Bains in the heart of French-speaking Switzerland, **Wattson Audio** products meet the highest standards of Swiss manufacturing. For some time, we have been aware of these streaming and digital-to-analog conversion products. Distribution in Canada is now assured thanks to an agreement between local manufacturer **Phonographe.ca** and **Wattson Audio**.

Wattson Audio's product catalog consists of three devices including the *Emerson ANALOG* which is a streamer with a DAC and RCA outputs that can be connected to any integrated amplifier or preamplifier.



The *Emerson DIGITAL* is a streamer with only AES/EBU and S/PDIF coaxial digital outputs that can be connected to a DAC or any other device with these digital inputs. They are compatible with the *Airplay* and *ROON* playback platforms. The **Quobuz**, **Tidal** and

Airable streaming services, for Internet radio, are also compatible.

The third device, the *Madison*, is an ultra-compact streamer / DAC with a variable gain output on RCA and XLR connectors, combined with a *LEEDH* volume control. It can therefore be connected directly to an amplifier or active speakers. Its digital inputs are more complete with, in addition to the *Ethernet* input, an optical input, and a coaxial RCA.

The *Madison* also incorporates a new oversampling process of its own, followed by a dual mono DAC in differential mode. All of these **Wattson Audio** streamers use two high-precision timing clocks, one for 44.1 kHz PCM files and one for 48 kHz PCM files.

Retail availability in Canada is being finalized, and prices are \$1,950 for each of the two *Emerson* models and \$3,850 for the *Madison*.

phonographe.ca
www.wattson.audio



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A PRESTIGIOUS BRAND

—A NEW PLEASURE

By ADRIEN ROUAH

Even if a new generation of audiophiles is emerging and lends itself to the use of highly materialized playback, one must still be surprised by such success and enthusiasm! Vinyl turntables are everywhere, with the resurrection of famous brands and others, unknown, which deserve to be listened to carefully. But why so many renewed passions?

First of all, I would say that playing a vinyl record has less mysteries than digital playback and even less than invisible playback – I like this new logical name, because we are present during the playback, we see what is happening, what is being played. Then, I would add that there is this *living quality* that we don't really explain to ourselves with regard to analog playback, a bit like we don't really explain to ourselves, either, the purely musical superiority of electronic tubes. As I have owned a **Thorens** turntable for more than 30 years, I am very happy to present you this *403 DD* that I have been entrusted with.

I'll start by telling you that I've only changed my belt once in over thirty years, and that was by virtue of spinning accuracy, because I had put away my turntable for two years. Otherwise nothing, apart from the change of cartridge over the years, nothing happened for several decades with my **Thorens**. I like to emphasize this fact, because I eliminate concerns right away, especially for those who are not familiar with reading a mechanical assembly.

Technique and presentation

It is a purely manual turntable which is proposed to us, with a *2M Blue* cartridge by **Ortofon**, already installed in a standard **SME** type shell. And with this *403 DD* by **Thorens**, we won't even have to worry about changing our belt, since the letters *DD* (for **D**irect **D**rive) indicate a direct drive of the plate. This platter, weighing 1.4 kg, is driven by an electronically controlled

24 V motor. The *TP150* tonearm is *J*-shaped, i.e., with a tubular structure in the shape of a *J*. The balancing is classic, except for the traction control, which is more technical. It is, in fact, a wire that directs the arm outwards (to compensate for the centrifugal force of the rotation) with a counterweight placed under the arm support and cleverly high tech. This will be the only visible technical part of this arm, which nevertheless includes advanced technology in its rotation axes. As for the controls, there is the speed selection, 33 and 45 rpm, the start of the rotation, which are the buttons specific to **Thorens**.

The *403 DD* vinyl turntable is delivered with its wall transformer which will supply the electronic circuits. Note that these circuits can be disconnected thanks to a small push button on the back of the turntable base. On this back side, you will find the classic **RCA** connectors and the screw for the traditional ground wire. From the electronic circuit to the realization of the arm, including the cosmetic configuration, everything is perfectly taken care of. We are in the presence of a rigorous work as regards the integral manufacture of this **Thorens 403 DD** turntable. The presentation is really beautiful although rather classic. It features a beautifully lacquered black wood frame base with a large brushed aluminum surface that highlights the top and the imposing arm. There is a very good balance between the aluminum and black lacquered parts which, the current fashion proves it, accentuate the very chic side of the object. The feet have also benefited from a metallic contribution, which highlights them well. It is undoubtedly beautiful work.

The *2M Blue* cartridge by **Ortofon**

It's a brand that I know well, as I have been using a *2M Bronze* by **Ortofon** for several years. To reach a more accessible price, **Thorens** has chosen to equip its *403 DD* with a *2M Blue* moving magnet cartridge by **Ortofon**, which is provided with the *403 DD*, the goal being to offer a device ready to be used. We unpack the device, install it, make a few additional adjustments according to the instructions written in several languages in a nicely presented manual, and we are ready for a quick listening... But in fact, here speed here is not necessary, because the installation of a turntable requires some precautions.

« On *Fall from Paradise*, with hints of *Porgy and Bess* in the intro, I am seduced by the mix of voice and orchestra that does not seem juxtaposed but rather, well mixed to create a whole. The **Thorens 403 DD** turntable makes no mistake about it and makes us feel this perfect musical cohesion. This turntable can therefore distinguish the perfectly mastered work of a quality *live* sound recording. »



Precisions before listening

And the first precaution to take will be to install the 403 DD on a serious support - meaning rigid and solid - in order to ensure the least transmission of harmful vibrations. Then, this support will have to be level, the four feet of the 403 DD of **Thorens** not being adjustable. Rest assured, on my venerable **Thorens**, they were not either! On the other hand, the feet proposed here are already insulating thanks to their manufacture on flexible axis. The RCA cable proposed in the box was not used, because I usually use cables of the same origin and length, to connect the proposed turntable to my phono preamp and the phono preamp to my integrated amplifier. The protective cover has been installed, but all the playing and listening described was done with the cover open.

The preamble to listening

As a tribute to the revered **Thorens** brand, I have chosen, as far as my memory goes, a few records that are among my first vinyl purchases, *Trapeze*, *Little River Band* and **Verdi's Rigoletto**. Of course, other choices preceded these three and were also followed by other choices, the goal being to ensure a serious diversity of genres. It is also important to know that if some people discover this materialized medium, the black disc, I must say that for my part - and for many of you I am sure - it will be the rediscovery of our discs and the three chosen here are a good example.

THORENS 403 DD TURNTABLE AND ORTOFON 2M BLUE CARTRIDGE

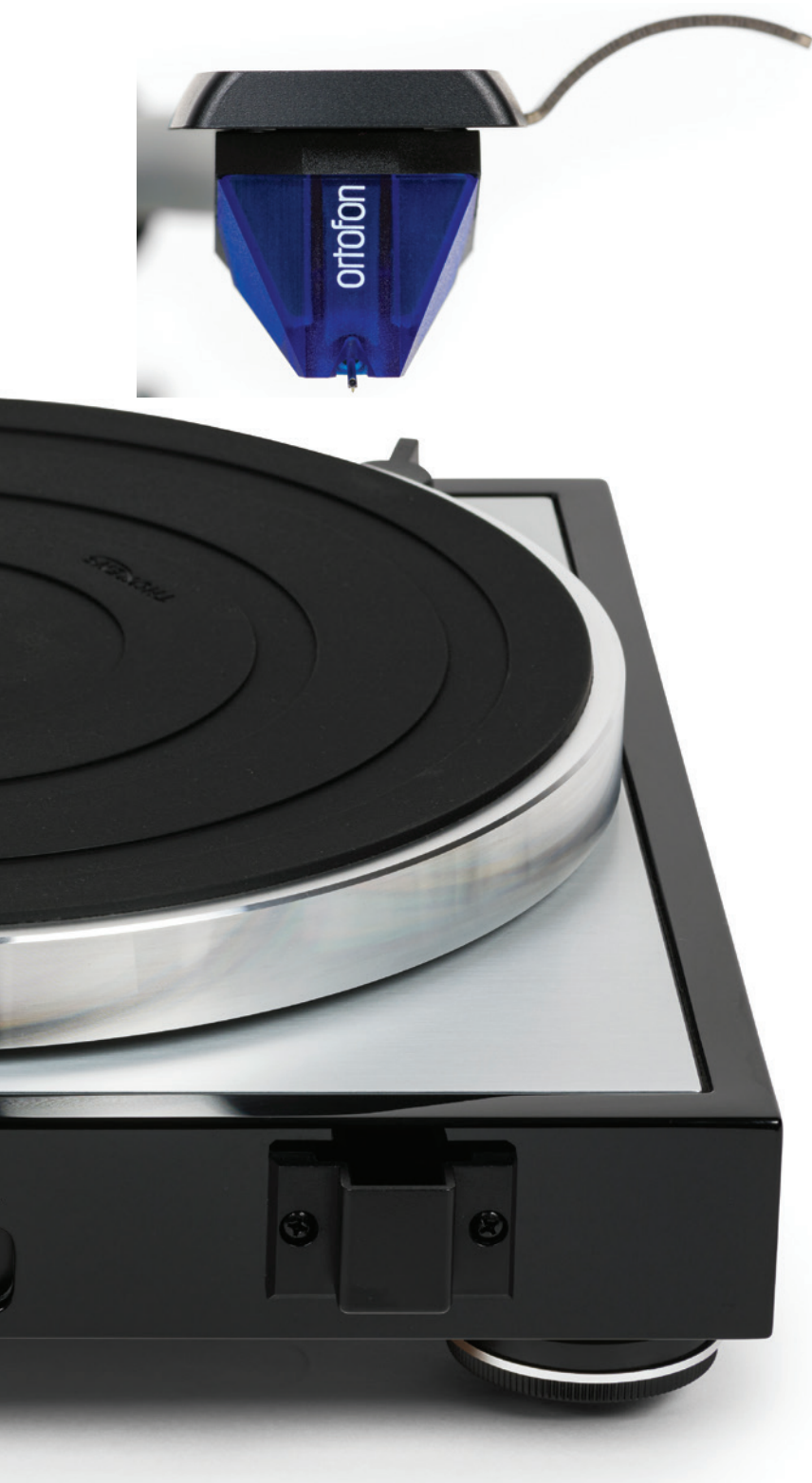
Listening

Trapeze starts this review with some very well recorded music. The black disk weighs a lot (we would qualify it today as an audiophile production!), with its 165 g. Having listened again to this record a few months ago, I am still surprised by the quality of the sound recording, yet we are in 1970. Apart from the too obvious channel separation, this is how it was intended at the time. The playback is excellent and the 403 DD + TP150 tonearm + 2M Blue cartridge set is perfectly harmonized with pop music. *Black Cloud* has an impressive clarity, the drums especially seem to be installed in your home if you allow yourself a little realism. From the very first bars of **Verdi's Rigoletto**, the tone is set on the musical diversity and one suspects the delicacy of the test

for an audio system of reading. With our **Thorens** set, the voices are beautiful, a characteristic that I appreciate in **Ortofon** cartridges, and we enter the heart of the matter rather quickly. Our attention is captured. Male voice first, then female, everything is pleasant and melodious, everything is well transcribed. The soundstage is wide and one follows the protagonists quite easily. I say here quite easily, because the notion of space is so great that one regrets not to see the scene in real, not to be on the spot. The dynamics are not lacking and **Thorens' 403 DD** ensemble fulfills its role very well, with great ease. The last vinyl described, *Little River Band*, takes into account three points. It is very sung, the orchestration is generous, since it is recorded with the **Adelaide Symphony Orchestra**, and



it is a public recording. It's not often that you can combine all three of these criteria on a single record. On *Fall from Paradise*, with hints of *Porgy and Bess* in the intro, I am seduced by the mix of voice and orchestra that does not seem juxtaposed but rather, well mixed to create a whole. The **Thorens 403 DD** turntable makes no mistake about it and makes us feel this perfect



musical cohesion. This turntable can therefore distinguish the perfectly mastered work of a quality live sound recording.

Conclusion

I then made other musical choices which I will not talk about here, but the main point is that this set, proposed by **Thorens**, allows a good musical versatility. If the *403 DD* has what it takes to satisfy the audiophiles already in love with this brand, I thought I would address the new listeners, the newcomers in the world of LPs and who will want to embark with confidence with the certainty of making an informed choice. Since I have been enjoying my vinyls thanks to **Thorens**, I can easily say that I am a satisfied music lover. Here is a beautiful success that this *403 DD*, which, as proposed, has what is needed to seduce. Of course, everyone has their own tastes and knowledge, not to mention the recommendations of audio specialists who can also guide you later on to other, even more powerful cartridges. I am thinking of moving coil cartridges (*MC*) of which the prices have adjusted well to the market and which the *TP 150* tonearm will accommodate with ease. In these times and in the forest of vinyl turntables available on the market today, we can entrust the reading task to this **Thorens 403 DD** set and have the assurance of uncompromising musical performances, with a prestigious brand that will guide you towards a new pleasure.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Thorens 403 DD Turntable with Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge

Price : \$2,699

Distributor: Erikson Consumer, T.: 514.457.6674,
<https://www.eriksonconsumer.com> ; <https://www.thorens.com>

Mediagraphy

Trapeze, Medusa, Decca Threshold, THS4

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

Little River Band, Backstage Pass, Capitol Records, EMI, SWBK-12061

JAZZ

BY CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ



LAURA ANGLADE & SAM KIRMAYER

Venez donc chez moi
Justin Time

Born in France, then having lived in Connecticut, young singer **Laura Anglade**, whom we discovered at the **Festival International de Jazz de Montréal (FIJM)** as well as at **Upstairs** over the past two years, cultivates jazz in French. This delightful novelty that you will be able to hear as of July 8th 2022, outdoors at the FIJM, will undoubtedly rally everyone. In the spirit of *Double-Six*, but without the heart aspect, *Blossom Dearie* or *Christiane Legrand*, *Venez donc chez moi* is frankly tasty. In tandem, with fine Montreal guitarist **Sam Kirmayer** and on a beach, accordionist **Benjamin Roseblum** (*J'aime Paris au mois de mai*), French chanson matched with jazz is offered like a summer bouquet of flowers. Far from being a commercial operation, this record swings from start to finish and I'm sure that the great **Charles Aznavour** would have given his approval. With a martini or alone, tap your foot or let yourself be lulled by *Venez donc chez moi*, *Vous qui passez sans me voir* and the unforgettable *Valse des lilas*. A nice nod to the late **Michel Legrand**.

CLAUDE BOLLING
YO-YO MA

Suite for cello & jazz piano trio
Frémeaux & associés / Naxos
In the 1980s, jazz pianist / conductor / composer **Claude Bolling** brought classical music and jazz together. Under the theme of *Cross over*, he called upon flutist **Jean-Pierre Rampal** (*Suite for Flute*), violinist **Pinkas Zukerman**, guitarist **Alexandre Lagoya**, trumpet player **Maurice André** (legendary record) as well as very young cellist **Yo-Yo Ma**. In 1984 at **Studio Davout**, unfortunately demolished today, he found bassist **Marc-Michel Lebevilion**, drummer **Jean-Luc Dayan** and the cellist. Without ever yielding to the trumpets of fame, **Claude Bolling** offered us a heady, brilliant record where swing was really in tune with the classical universe. This issue, which has not aged one iota, is still a joy to listen to. We are of course thinking of *Baroque in Rhythm*, *Concertante* and *Cello Fan*. Of the ardor, of the smoothness with these unspeakable moments of happiness and, of course, with a touch of nostalgia of the time when it was still possible to dare.

ANNE RACICOT

Envolée
Believe / MCM
A student of pianist **Lorraine Desmarais**, young performer **Anne Racicot** jumps into the jazz arena in a brilliant way. As it is our duty to encourage the future art that is bubbling in the pot as **Boris Vian** wrote so well, let's go there happily. She draws, of course, from her teacher's style as well as from the **Chick Corea** period of the 1960s (*Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*) as much as from modernity, and *Envolée* is a consistent and dynamic record, avoiding academic work. As for the tracks offered, which are all personal compositions, the young pianist is part of a modernist trend. Considering all the available resources, **Anne Racicot** shows an uncommon vivacity, as much by her rhythmic conceptions (*Vertige*, *Bicycle Ride* *Coffee and Gigarette*) as by the intensity she gives off with her trio. Through its dense and sometimes complex climates, which does not mean unlistenable, far from it, we say bravo! And will follow closely this young interpreter's journey.

CATHERINE GENEST

La princesse du rythme
Boréal, 317 p
Your columnist has read a lot about the *Montreal nights*, dear to the late **Jacques Normand**. From **Café Saint-Jacques** to **Casa Loma**, passing by the **Faisan doré**, the **Esquire Show bar**, *Montreal by night* was the envy of our American friends. **Guylaine Guy** was missing from the panoply of these stars. After six years of research, writer / radio personality **Catherine Genest** paints a portrait, in the form of a novel, of a singer who frequented the jazz gotha as well as the French chanson. She was cherished by **Charles Trenet**, admired by **Louis Armstrong** (she was in the 1961 *recital* at the **Olympia**). She rubbed shoulders with **Marlene Dietrich** or **Edith Piaf**, without forgetting the *bebop* kings of Saint-Germain-des-Près. The fascinating life of a woman with a strong character who dedicated herself body and soul to the recognition of the status of artist. More than a biography, a pleasure to read!



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