

TRENDS

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HiFi Magazine

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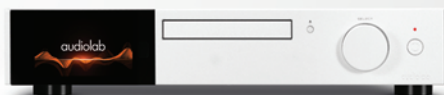
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450 436-1777

Publisher and Publication Manager
Franco Moggia

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

Writing Team Contributors

Lucie Beauchamp, Anthony Alias, Yves Bérubé,
Michel Dallaire, George de Sa, Jean-Denis Doyle,
Claude Lalonde, Roger McCuaig, Richard Schneider
and Anthony Signorotti.

Writing Contributors

Rhythm & Music Section
Richard Guay Christophe Huss,
Pierre Jobin and Christopher Rodriguez.

Translation & Text Revision
Lucie Beauchamp

Infography
Editions Mizka Inc.



Photography
Franco Moggia

Advertising Sales Representative
Lucie Beauchamp
lucieb@quebecaudio.com
450.436.1777

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Buon gusto – while wines

28 The house of William Fèvre – Wines with the
Kimméridgien character of de Chablis



Product Reviews

THE TRANSPORT-STREAMER-AMPLIFIER SET FROM

6 AUDIOLAB'S 9000 SERIES
When a Manufacturer Excels

SUBWOOFERS

16 MONITOR AUDIO ANTHRA W12 SUBWOOFER
Get More Than What You Paid For

22 REL ACOUSTICS T/5X SUBWOOFER
An Easy-to-Live-With Subwoofer

Product Reviews

LOUSPEAKERS

40 HARBETH P3ESR XD
Buying Tickets for Eternity

TURNTABLES

44 AVID HIFI VOLVERE TURNTABLE,
ALTUS TONEARM AND
IONIC MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE
High-tech Engineering at the Service of Music

60 MICHELL ENGINEERING
GYRO SE TURNTABLE
An Otherworldly Vinyl Experience

ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM

66 RUAK AUDIO R410
The Music Box That Brings Happiness

What's New? 72

Rhythm & Music

50 Classical Music

12 Blues

26 Jazz

20 Progressive Rock



The Glass Half Full or Half Empty...

Here we are now in 2024, a brand new, fresh year, full of possibilities, is here and open to us. Don't be disheartened; I'm not wearing pink-tinted glasses, and I am fully aware that many social and economic challenges await us as well. However, it is essential to appreciate the positive things that life offers us. Just pay closer attention to the good, the well-being, and the beautiful – the equivalent of seeing the glass half full. Let's cultivate gratitude for what we already have and change our filters towards our perception. There is so much to learn from the dark periods we go through. Just look for what we can take from such situations. Each of us deserves happiness. It just takes awareness and a decision to have a positive outlook on oneself, situations, and human beings. This decision belongs to oneself and can only be our decision. No one can impose it on us. Courage!

For the January-February 2024 edition of **Magazine Trends, Electronics & Design**, we have two articles on subwoofers (**Monitor Audio** and **Rel Acoustics**), two articles on turntables (**AVID HIFI** and **Michell Engineering**), an article on bookshelf loudspeakers (**Harbeth**), an

article on a successful and affordable trio of electronic devices (**Audiolab**), and an article on a comprehensive all-in-one device that can still meet the demands of the discerning audiophile (**Ruark**). I invite you to carefully read all these reviews, as one of these devices might catch your interest. Naturally, after reading, a visit to the store will allow you to make your own evaluation by listening carefully.

Our columnist in the *Buon Gusto* section introduces us to the wines of **Maison William Fèvre**, crystal-clear wines from *Chablis*. A small glass of wine while listening to your favorite music is also a little happiness. For your musical choices, head to the reviews in the *Rhythm & Music* section, where you will discover or re-discover albums and musicians who will bring you joy through the beauty of their performances. Another little happiness that is available to us and makes a world of difference in our daily lives.

With that, I leave you to read and enjoy music and wines. Take care of yourself, because you deserve it. All in moderation, of course. Looking forward to seeing you again for the March-April 2024 edition of **Magazine Trends, Electronics & Design**, just in time for the arrival of spring.


Lucie Beauchamp
Co-Publisher & Public Relations Manager

When a manu

BY YVES BÉRUBÉ

In our ongoing quest for the best musical reproduction, we seek the best combinations of components and cables to achieve the ultimate goal. This search is greatly simplified when the manufacturer offers us a family of products designed to work together. There's no need to search for the perfect match; it already exists. Some manufacturers already provide this solution, such as **Naim** and **Nagra**, often mentioned in these pages. **Daniel Hertz**, created by **Mark Levinson**, goes so far as to offer cables and connectors to use with its devices. Here, we present the *9000 Series* family from **Audiolab**, featuring three devices: the *9000N* streamer, the *9000CDT* CD transport, and the *9000A* amplifier. Let's explore them together.

The English company **Audiolab** was founded in 1983 by **Philip Swift** and **Derek Scotland** when they were both students, sharing an interest in creating high-fidelity components at reasonable prices with user-friendly simplicity. **Audiolab** introduced its first products with the *8000* series, starting with an integrated amplifier (A) and later adding an amplifier (S), a tuner (T), a phono preamplifier (PPA), and eventually the best monoblocks (M) available at that time. **TAG McLaren** acquired **Audiolab** in 1997, and it was later transferred to **IAG** in 2004 (alongside **Luxman**, **Wharfedale**, and **Quad**, to name a few). Today, **Audiolab** continues its mission to offer well-designed components that provide high-performance sound coupled with exceptional value. **Audiolab**

offers the *6000*, *7000*, *8000*, and *9000* series. Here, we evaluate the flagship products of the brand.

Technical Description

The **Audiolab 9000A** amplifier is the central component of the trio, capable of functioning as an integrated amplifier, preamplifier, or amplifier depending on your configuration. Launched a few months ago, the *9000* series represents the highest quality level offered by the manufacturer. The *9000A* delivers 100 W of power per channel at 8 ohms. The *9000A* is responsible for the DAC function of the *9000CDT* CD transport, simplifying the setup and avoiding duplication. The **ESS 9038Pro** (32-bit) processor handles the digital-to-analog conversion. The amplifier features a 4.3-inch, 4-color LCD screen



Manufacturer excels

for configuration adjustments using the device's buttons or the remote control. This screen is also present on the other two devices evaluated here.

The 9000A also has a device *MODE* selection button (pre-amplifier, amplifier, or integrated). At the back, the 9000A is equipped with *XLR* and *RCA* inputs, a phono input (*MM*), as well as *Coax* and *Optical* digital inputs and *USB*. It supports *PCM* formats (max. 32/768) and *DSD* (max. *DSD512*, exclusively on *USB*).

The 9000N streamer is built on an **ARM Cortex-A53** processor running *Linux*. The internal *DAC* is also the **ESS 9030PRO**. It supports most streaming platforms on the market and *MQA*. This streamer handles *PCM* formats (max. 32/768) and *DSD* (max. *DSD512*). In addition to the *LCD* screen, there is a volume button that can be disengaged if you choose to control the volume only on the 9000A amplifier, as well as an input selection button. At the back, the 9000N has *Ethernet* and *USB-B* input connectors, as well as *RCA*, *XLR*, optical, and coaxial output connectors. An interesting new feature on this **Audiolab** streamer is *Gapless Playback*, allowing continuous playback between tracks. Many classical or progressive rock albums have pieces that seamlessly transition, and this is a new feature introduced by **Audiolab** in recent months.

The 9000CDT *CD* transport allows for playing *CDs* or digitizing them to a *USB* drive. It can also read *HDD* formats under different *FAT* on the *USB* port. The 9000CDT has coaxial and optical output ports. It can read *PCM* 48 kHz formats but will convert them to 44.1 kHz. The device is well-built, and no mechanical

noise was noted during its use. The 9000CDT pre-reads the next track several times, if necessary, to avoid playback interruption if the disc is damaged.

Unboxing and Installation

The devices were delivered to me in three large boxes, one for each of the components analyzed. Following **Audiolab's** recommendations, I connected the 9000N streamer via *XLR* and the 9000CDT *CD* transport via coaxial to the 9000A amplifier. All devices come with the same comprehensive remote control, in addition to the free **Audiolab 9000N** app for **Apple** and **Google** devices. Once everything was connected, I left the devices untouched for several days. The *burn-in* time took longer than usual, as I wanted to achieve the best musical result from this set. Satisfactory results were obtained after more than two weeks of *burn-in*. Be aware of this if you ever have the chance to listen to these devices.

The **Audiolab 9000A** amplifier also functions as a headphone amplifier with a dedicated amplification circuit for this purpose. I briefly used this feature, which provided excellent results.

The 9000N streamer can connect to most streaming platforms available. I used **Qobuz** for this product review and created a playlist in the 9000N app on my tablet. The **Audiolab** streamer is **Room Ready**, but certification was not available during this test. The **Audiolab 9000CDT** *CD* transport allows for digitizing *CDs* in addition to listening to them. It uses the *DAC* of the 9000A because it is solely a *CD* transport.



THE TRANSPORT-STREAMER-AMPLIFIER SET FROM **AUDIOLAB'S 9000** SERIES



Listening Impressions

I allowed myself the pleasure of rediscovering the **Festival du Son et de l'Image (FSI)** 1999 album in its physical version. This official **FSI CD** was distributed for free to the early visitors, thanks to the generosity of the salon and **Quebec Audio** (or **TED Magazine** nowadays) magazine. It is a selection of musical tracks from the early recordings of the **Fidelio Audio** company. I will always remember the recording sessions we conducted with my partner **René Laflamme**. I even appear on the album as an artist because the **Anciens Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal** are among the first musicians recorded by **Fidelio Audio** (now **Fidelio Music**). In my humble opinion, the masterpiece is *Tallulah*, recorded live at the **L'Air du Temps** jazz bar in Old Montreal, unfortunately now closed. The bass clarinet solo in this piece is surprising due to its unique timbre produced by the metal and wood of the instrument and its wide range. The **Audiolab 9000CDT** and the **DAC** of the **9000A** faithfully reveal, without any coloration, all the subtleties of the instrument and the audience reactions during this performance. The imaging is precise, and no instrument is pushed to the forefront, as some devices tend to do, unfortunately. In the album *Officium* under the **ECM** label, the saxophone and the **Hilliard Ensemble's** male voice quartet blend their harmonies, enchanting us with selected pieces from the polyphonic repertoire of early and *Renaissance* music. I recall attending the concert this ensemble gave at the **Notre-Dame Basilica** in Old Montreal as part of the **Montreal International Jazz Festival**. The **Hilliard Ensemble** singers and saxophonist **Jan Garbarek** walked around the church during their

performance to offer interpretations under different reverberations, which almost become the ensemble's sixth musician. The musical track *Parce Mihi Domine* is an excellent introduction to the album. We immediately know the harmonic ranges we will be immersed in during the listening session. The piece is also presented in two other versions in the album, as is often the case in many jazz albums. The musical track *Beata Viscera* showcases the talent of the singers using harmonic or overtone singing, allowing a singer to produce two notes simultaneously. I was able to compare the **9000CDT** with the **9000N** since the digital version is also available in streaming. I noted a very slight difference in favor of the **CD** version, but it could be due to the streaming version's quality. The difference is truly minuscule. I would have liked to compare it with my digitized version, but **Roon** was not available on the streamer at the time of writing this review.

The album of the **Israel Chamber Orchestra** under the baton of **Yoav Talmi** from the **Chandos** label presents primarily chamber music pieces for strings. The opening musical track, **Bloch's Concerto Grosso No. 1**, is exceptionally accompanied by a piano. **Barber's Adagio** is probably the most well-known piece on the album, and the interpretation is well-executed. Being performed here by a smaller ensemble allows the nuances of the score to be revealed. **Audiolab** allows us to appreciate the gems of the score and the overall result of the orchestra.

The album *After Hours* by the trio **Previn/Pass/Brown** is truly delightful. The fame of **Joe Pass** and **Ray Brown** is well-established, while we already knew that conductor **André Previn** is



an excellent pianist, even though he had not made a jazz recording in 27 years! Surprisingly, most of the pieces presented on this **Telarc** album are first takes. The album is intimate with slower tempos than usual. The musical track *All the Things You Are* begins with **Joe Pass's** solo guitar. **Ray Brown** supports him, and then **André Previn** joins them on the piano. We

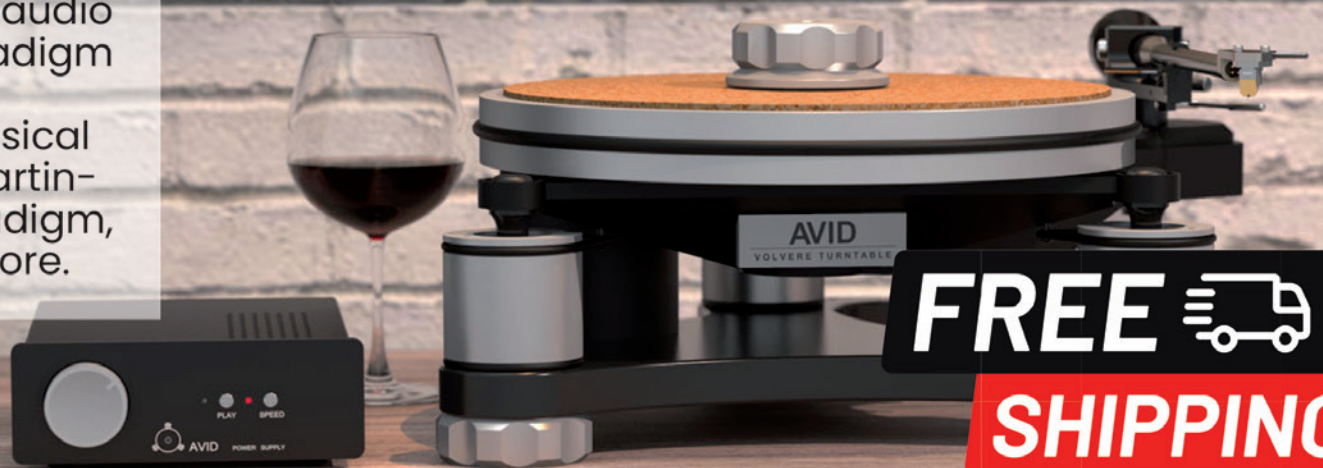
are simply enchanted by the harmonies delivered by these legendary musicians who seem to have played together their entire lives. **Audiolab** simply and faithfully delivers the music played here brilliantly. The musical track *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* also deserves careful listening, as well as the piece Laura with an absolutely fantastic solo by **Joe Pass**. The *9000N*



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THE TRANSPORT-STREAMER-AMPLIFIER SET FROM **AUDIOLAB'S 9000** SERIES

streamer and the *DAC* of the *9000A* do not add any color to the instrument timbres. The recording quality would need to match the interpretation's caliber, and **Audiolab** does not alter the result, presenting an honest image of what **Telarc** intended to produce here. I appreciate seeing that quality devices can also make music with recordings that are not of impeccable quality.

« The musical track *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* also deserves careful listening, as well as the piece *Laura* with an absolutely fantastic solo by **Joe Pass**. The *9000N* streamer and the *DAC* of the *9000A* do not add any color to the instrument timbres. The recording quality would need to match the interpretation's caliber, and **Audiolab** does not alter the result, presenting an honest image of what **Telarc** intended to produce here. I appreciate seeing that quality devices can also make music with recordings that are not of impeccable quality. »

Conclusion

The trio from **Audiolab's 9000** series, featuring the transport-streamer-amplifier set launched last spring, stands at the top of the products offered by this manufacturer. These are attractive, well-built components, and the sound lives up to our expectations. If you want to buy your equipment from a single manufacturer, **Audiolab** delivers with an easy-to-use and install set that will provide you with years of enjoyment. You can also enjoy available upgrades without having to replace

all your components. The *DAC* function is found in the *9000A* amplifier and the *9000N* streamer, and you can connect an external *DAC* if desired. These three **Audiolab** devices connected to a good pair of speakers will offer superior performance at an affordable price.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Audiolab - Amplifier 9000A

Price: \$3,499

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

Audiolab - CD Transport 9000CDT

Price: \$1,749

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

Audiolab - Streamer 9000N

Price: \$4,499

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

Distributor: Erikson Home, Tel: 1-800-567-3275

Mediagraphy

Official Festival du Son et de l'Image 1999 Album, Fidelio Audio, FACD901, CD ADD 16 / 44

André Previn, Joe Pass, and Ray Brown, After Hours, Telarc Jazz, 0888072508705, FLAC 16 / 44

Jan Garbarek/The Hilliard Ensemble, Officium, ECM, 78118-21525-2, CD DDD and FLAC 16 / 44

Yoav Talmi/Israel Chamber Orchestra, Bloch, Barber, Grieg, and Puccini, Chandos, 5014682859325, CD DDD 16 / 44





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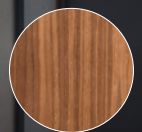
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Blues

BY PIERRE JOBIN



MEMPHIS & THE MISFITS

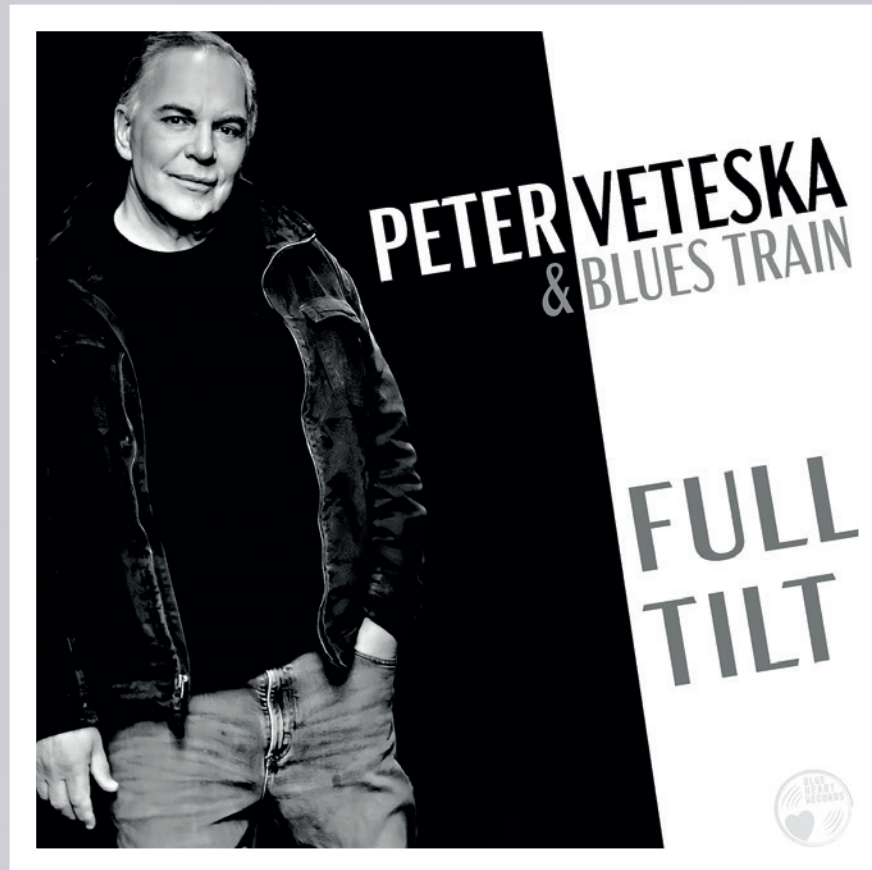
Halfway To Number Nine
Autoproduction

When **Gary Davis**, the singer and bassist of the band **Memphis & The Misfits**, contacted me to review his album, I agreed. Then, I listened to this *CD*, and as I enjoyed what I heard - the style, freshness, the diversity of blues content with hints of roots and even bayou - I couldn't help but talk about it. I didn't want to pass by, especially since all eight pieces were original and well-performed. Reading the *CD* cover, one understands the direct link to the blues

experience that inspires this opus: *Every song on this album is based on real-life events or inspiration and much of that comes from my years in the rural communities in Arkansas where I grew up.* Musical tracks like *Walk That Line* and *Good Love* incorporate familiar riffs and forms, adding a personal and creative touch. The band sounds professional and comfortable, and **Davis's** voice, the sole singer of the group, unfolds effortlessly, lending itself well to storytelling. The other members of the band are **Ryan Sise** on electric, slide, and acoustic guitar, as well as production, and **Dave Halstead** on drums. **Chris Voorhees** handles the other guitars. This album just makes you want to hop into a big convertible and drive on the backroads, the country roads of Mississippi, listening to the music of this band and the distinctive stories playing on the radio!

Blues

BY PIERRE JOBIN



PETER VETESKA & BLUES TRAIN

Full Tilt

Blue Heart Records, BHR/056

Full Tilt is a title that fits like a glove to this seventh album in eight years from **Peter Veteska & Blues Train**. Indeed, he and his accomplices are still, and once again, brimming with energy. Well-served by his powerful voice and dynamic, catchy guitar licks, the singer and guitarist from New Jersey is solidly supported by his musician friends who give him their best, as always. The album starts with a bang with *Go Find Another Man*, where blazing guitar, fiery *B3*, and full-throttle harmonica *challenge*, call out, and relaunch in a rolling fire that sets the energetic tone for the record. **Jen Barnes**, the fiery and incisive singer who is no stranger to contributing to the band, follows

with *I Wasn't Wrong*, a funky, passionate piece! She easily meets the challenge of her prominent place on this album, also singing two strong duets with the band leader. *Sad and Blue*, a slow, introspective blues with **Veteska's** expressive vocals, is beautifully accompanied by **Jeff Levine's** *B3*, where his blues guitar expresses deep feeling! The album includes eight original tracks by **Veteska** and four covers, including **Albert King's** classic *I Get Evil*, **Lennon McCartney's** *One After 909*, **James Cox's** *Nobody Knows You (When You're Down and Out)*, popularized by **Bessie Smith**, and *Merry Christmas Baby*, an R&B classic written by **Johnny Duddley Moore**. True to their good habits, **Peter Veteska** and his associate producer, **Joseph De Maio** of **New Jersey's Shorefire Recording Studio**, spare no effort in producing a quality album in all aspects: choosing highly skilled musicians, selecting quality tracks, and maintaining a rigorous and uncompromising work ethic! *Full Tilt* results once again in a well-deserved success for **Peter Veteska & Blues Train!**

Blues

BY PIERRE JOBIN

René Huard Project



Featuring
René Huard, Rick Taylor, Louie DeFrancesco, Jeff Muir

RENÉ HUARD PROJECT

Blues Calling Self-production

Blues Had A Baby And They Named it Rock N'Roll, these words of **Muddy Waters**, *The Godfather of Chicago Blues And of Rock n'Roll*, did not fall on deaf ears, especially for **René Huard**. With roots in French-Canadian Quebec, and an English speaker due to his living environment and experiences, he resides in southern Ontario. *Blues Calling* is his first album. I heard about it from **Jack de Keyser**, who takes on the entire production of this opus from start to finish. He also plays guitars, percussion, and provides harmonies. Knowing the talent and reputation of **de Keyser** as one of the best Canadian guitarists and bluesmen, I felt intrigued by this recording, which could only be of a very high

standard. The listening experience only confirmed my favorable impression from the beginning. *Blues Calling* kicks off with an energetic rock n' roll, *Hard Times*. Right from the start, you understand that there will be unrestrained guitar and that you won't be bored. The following track, *Child's Play*, does not let up, and we are taken on a rollercoaster of energetic music. **René Huard's** voice is strong and expressive, displaying nuances in the slower pieces. He also plays harmonicas as well as rhythm and slide guitar. **Alec Fraser Jr.** handles bass and bass drum, **Al Cross** on drums and percussion, **Eric Lambier** on keyboards and vocals, and **Richard Thornton** completes the lineup on percussion and vocals. The lyrics and music of the twelve original tracks are all by **René Huard**, and the entire delivery wonderfully holds its own. **René Huard** was ready! Are you ready for him? His blues rock, shuffles, and rolling stone music... at various tempos, well-written and well-delivered are all present! *Blues Calling* represents a convincing and well-executed project!

Blues

BY PIERRE JOBIN



THE SUGAR DARLINGS

Thirsty For Your Love
Self-production

The Sugar Darlings, a band from the Montreal scene, was officially formed in 2020. *Thirsty For Your Love* is their first album and includes twelve original musical tracks weaving their fabric around rhythm n' blues, *funk*, blues, ballads with gospel or soul accents. These are collaboratively written by the five members of the band: **Miche Love Dennery** on vocals, **Danick Tardif** on drums, **Paul Lucyk** on guitar and vocals, **Neil Robinson** on bass, and **Kaven Jalbert** on tenor and baritone saxophone. *Thirsty For Your Love*, the title track, is a medium-tempo shuffle that flows like honey and naturally pulls us in! The cohesion of the band creates synergy, and the result blends into a complementary relationship among the members. If you really love *R&B/funk*, you'll have ants in your legs and an irresistible urge to dance! The funky music of **The Sugar Darlings** is dynamite at times! *Grow Up, Funky*

Darling, Freaky Feat, Love Is All I Need, and Oh Lord are examples of groovy tracks. The dynamic *Freaky Feat* is intense and well-executed. Everything is there! The rhythm section and the singer supporting each other and ensuring locomotion, **Lucyk's** sharp electric slide guitar, and **Jalbert's** tenor saxophone joining and challenging each other in sparks. It's no wonder that **The Sugar Darlings** are nominated for the *Maple Blues Awards* in the *New Artist / Group Of The Year* category, and **Kaven Jalbert** is nominated in the *Horn Player Of The Year* category for the second time in his career, the first time being in 2019. **Miche Love**, this strong and consistent singer, can present a voice that is both sweet and melodic as well as *funky* and energetic. Her interpretations are substantial, consistent, and flexible. Featured guests on this album, **Janet Lucyk** and **Clerel Djamen** on vocals, **Michel Medrano Brindis** on percussion, and **John Sadowy** on organ and keyboards, bring essential rhythmic touches and melodic colors, especially on the Latin-infused *Crying Out*, which is also one of my favorites. **The Sugar Darlings** seem tailor-made for the *live* stage. I hope to enjoy their performance in 2024!

Get More Than What You Paid For

BY DAVID SUSILO

Thirty five years ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I purchased my first subwoofer. It was a **JVC** subwoofer designed, manufactured and marketed only for the Indonesia market. That thing has travelled with me and survived more than 10 moves across 3 countries and multiple cities. Surprisingly enough I still use it today even after half a dozen fuse changes. It adds so much depth and dimensionality to recordings and movie viewing starting from a simple (then) two-channel tracks to (now) multi-channel immersive spatial audio recordings. Subwoofers can improve sound so much I'm surprised not more people take subwoofers more seriously. Well, actually not that surprising because too many subwoofers out there that can only produce a lot of *boom* yet unable to reproduce anything of subtleties.

Good subwoofers tend to be big, bulky, ugly, and expensive. Plus when they are not setup properly, they can sound horrible and distracting. Those are the reasons many people hate subwoofer.

Because of my long-time familiarity with the **Monitor Audio** brand, when they announced a new series of sealed subwoofer named *Anthra*, I

immediately requested a unit to borrow for review. I chose the *Anthra W12* with its 12 inches long throw sub driver although they are also available in 10 inches and 15 inches. The reasoning behind it is that it's not too big for most applications and still be able to hit 20 Hz with no roll off in a relatively small enclosure for a 12 incher and with the more impressive measured in my reference room with 16 Hz reach with only -6 dB roll off. Something that's not usually you can get with a 12 inch subwoofer.

I was surprised on how heavy this sub is (32 Kg) albeit the tiny 374 mm x 374 mm x 374 mm dimensions. Looks can definitely be deceiving. As for fit and finish, it looks as what a **Monitor Audio** product should look like. A perfect cube with what I can hear from knocking, as about 1-inch wood material which reminds me of the **JL Audio**'s rigidity with piano finish that to my eyes (I used to own an actual **Yamaha** baby grand) actually look like a piano. This is literally the first time in my *A/V* career that I can say the piano-finish actually look like a piano. Mirror like, glossy, completely flat surface with zero imperfections. I love it.

The *Anthra* Subwoofer Series offers a range of connectivity options which include *RCA* with *LFE* for daisy chaining up to four subwoofers, as well as *XLR* inputs for balanced audio installation options, which I highly recommend if you're using more than one subwoofer as the balanced cable protects the low-level signal best against *EMI* and *RFI*.

A full-colour display and a rotary dial on the back panel allow users to access the setup selection menu, simplifying the setup procedure and integration of the subwoofers into a home theatre system. So, the *MaestroUnite* app is not really necessary although it does more than what you can do with the back panel controls alone.

All three models in this series can be used individually or in combination. The flagship model, the *Anthra W15*, features a 15-inch *RST II C-CAM* high-excursion driver powered by a Class-D 1,400 W amplifier. The *Anthra W12* uses a 12-inch driver and a Class-D 900 W amplifier, while the very compact *Anthra W10* utilizes a 10-inch cone driven by a 425 W amplifier.

Note: for those who are not well versed in **Monitor Audio** technologies, the *C-CAM* cones. These cones offer a higher resistance to bending stress, resulting in improved fidelity across the entire operating range and a more precise, dynamic, fast and lifelike sonic presentation. In a first for **Monitor Audio** set of subwoofer, the series also incorporates *Rigid Surface Technology II (RST II)* on its subwoofer cones. This innovative technology significantly enhances cone rigidity, preventing distortion by resisting mechanical bending forces that can distort conventional driver cones.

Setting it up

Monitor Audio's proprietary *MaestroUnite* setup app further enhances the user experience by enabling a more advanced and deeper-menu configuration of the *Anthra* subwoofers according to personal tastes and system requirements. For systems utilizing multiple subwoofers, the app allows the same settings to be delivered across all units simultaneously. Which while not necessary, any time saved is always a welcome in the world of installation.

I then connect the subwoofer to the *MaestroUnite* app using its internal *Bluetooth* transceiver and did some manual calibration in the custom *EQ* setting (there are three slots for custom *EQ*). Or if you just want to plug and play, you can choose *Movie* mode for bigger bass sound (but not to the point of being bloated) or *Music* mode for more impactful bass without the bloat. Being a snob, I use my own calibration based on the reading on my *Studio Six Digital Real Time Analyzer* app captured using my US \$1,200 calibrated microphone connected to my *iPhone 13 Pro Max*, applied *SMPTE* curve, and saved it to one of the *Custom* modes. Too bad, however, there is no auto *EQ* for self calibration, something that's been demonstrated by companies such as **Sonos**, **MartinLogan**, and **MK Sound**,



«The soundtrack is **THAT** dynamic and deep that most subwoofers will be having problem reproducing it. But not this sub. It kicks quickly and deeply. Even subtleties between one explosion to the next were reproduced distinctly with great details as opposed being simply loud loud loud when heard in the commercial cinemas. »

MONITOR AUDIO ANTHRA W12 SUBWOOFER

amongst others, to be highly effective, even at the crudest point. No fret, however, I'm simply being nit-picky.

Let's Get to It

For this product review, I opted for the 4K UHD physical media version of *Oppenheimer* with its superlative non-Atmos soundtrack and more specifically I watched the explosion scenes. The soundtrack is **THAT** dynamic and deep that most subwoofers will be having problem reproducing it. But not this sub. It kicks quickly and deeply. Even subtleties between one explosion to the next were reproduced distinctly with great details as opposed being simply loud loud loud when heard in the commercial cinemas. The same can be said with my usual **Netflix 6 Underground** bombastic bass during its first 20-minute opening scene, or the opening scene of *Evil Dead Rise* from **Kaleidescape**. The bass were loud enough yet very detailed; something that most people don't realize that sub bass region can have a lot of textures and details.

Last but not least, I watched the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*. For the opening sequence, the low-end action started from the very beginning as the marine boats approached the beach and the German artillery shells were exploding on the water surface with the *Anthra W12* offering a small glimpse of what is about to come. When the Allied soldiers reach the beach, the real barrage of sonic fun begins. There is so much low-end action in the whole sequence that it is very hard to distinguish specific moments but it is amazing how the sonic assault of a subwoofer made me smile. And I'm not even a bass-head.

The subwoofer didn't lose a single moment and reproduced the terrifying rumble of the tanks with great authority. The shaking felt real as if a tank was right outside my theatre. Tank fire had the necessary weight while ordnance explosions and weapons fire had a very naturalistic tone to them.

Of course, no review is done until I tried multiple scenes from *Star Wars The Phantom Menace*, the pod race scene thumped in an impactful way but with subtleties intact. Of course, the vibration created by the *Anthra W12* is not as big as what a 18-inches or 21-inches subwoofer can do, but then again, I prefer clean bass over the rumblings of uncontrolled bass. And the *Anthra W12* sounded like most 15-inches subwoofers albeit the 12-inches size.

Conclusion

Scene after scene, movie after movie, song after song, this subwoofer never disappoints. It's powerful, big sound, and dynamic all at the same time makes this sub a perfect companion even for something as mission-critical as a mastering studio. No, it won't be waking up the neighbour, but then again that is not the type of crowd the *Anthra W12* is geared towards anyway.

All in all, I have nothing negative to say about the *W12*. If anything, I wish **Monitor Audio** adds a bass auto-cal even at the cost of adding a bit more to the price. This will make an already





studio-grade performance subwoofer to have even better value. The adage *you get what you pay for* is not valid where the W12 stands. With the W12, you get a lot more than what you paid for.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$3,799

Warranty period: 5 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Kevro International Inc., T. 905.428.2800, <https://www.kevro.ca>; <https://www.monitoraudio.com>

Review Equipments

Panasonic, UB9000 THX Certified UHD Disc Player

Kaleidescape

Pioneer, Elite SC-LX704

Marantz, MA-500 THX Certified monoblocks x5

MK Sound, S150, V12+ and IC95 THX Certified Speaker System

JVC, RS3100 THX Calibrated 8K Projector

PixelGen, THX Certified HDMI cables

Stewart, Studiotek 130 G4 THX Certified screen

Vermouth Audio, Speaker Wires and Interconnects

Progressive Rock

BY RICHARD GUAY



PALLAS The Messenger

<https://pallasofficial.bandcamp.com/album/the-messenger>

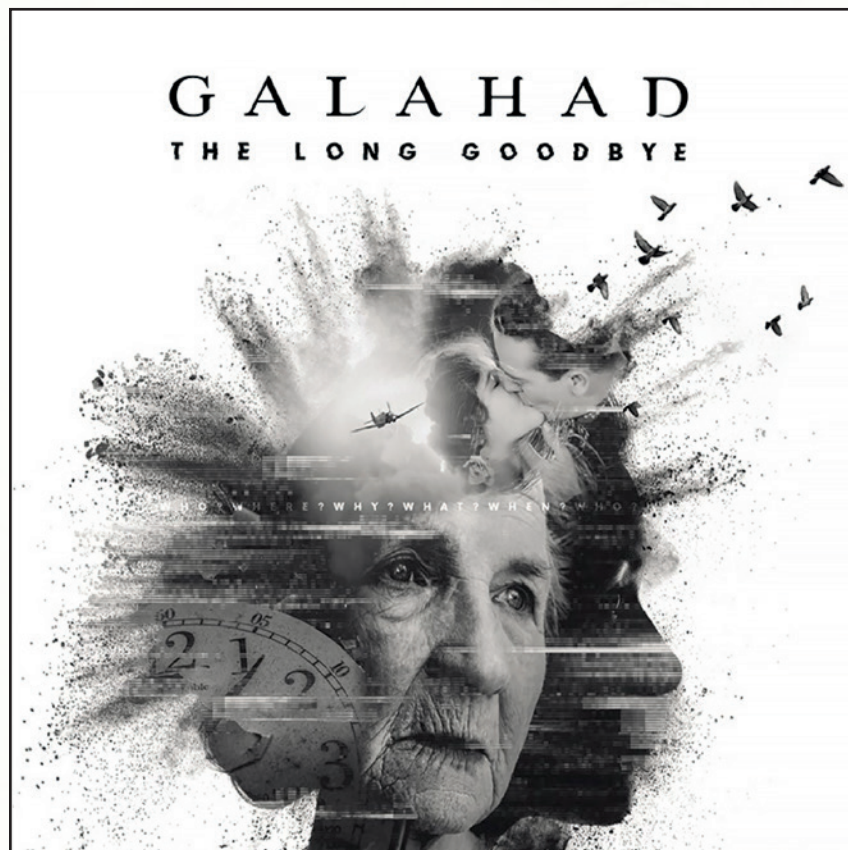
We know that the British neo-prog group **Pallas** is not a model of productivity: only eight studio albums in almost 40 years of existence, including the brand new one, as well as many absences, two of which lasted for ten years. Recall that the last album, *Wearewhowere*, dates back to 2014. Considering the sporadic release of albums by this band, let's hope that this eighth album is the first of a new series of two, three, or perhaps four albums! That being said, there was great interest in this unexpected release that no one was expecting. We are delighted to find the classic lineup composed of **Niall Mathewson** (guitars, percussion, vocals), **Graeme Murray** (bass, guitars, vocals), and **Ronnie**

Brown (keyboards, percussion, vocals), who have been present on all previous albums. In addition to this, there is a major surprise: **Alan Reed** (lead vocals), who joined the band for the album *The Wedge* (1986) and left after *The Dreams of Men* (2005). He makes a strong comeback after nearly 20 years! It's fantastic to reconnect with this wonderful soloist who injected a good dose of adrenaline into a band that really needed it. And what about *The Messenger*? Well, buckle up! This album is so well crafted and enjoyable that I don't hesitate to place it at the very top of the all-too-short list of releases by this band. The amount of work during its conception must have been colossal. **Reed's** lyrics are, as tradition dictates, dark and rather cynical. While *The Sentinel* (1984) was concerned with the Cold War and the threats it

posed to us, *The Messenger* reacts to the existential challenges weighing on the world we find ourselves in. Capturing the sadness that many of us feel about this new environment, it nevertheless contains an optimistic message. A message, a light in the darkness, that revives hope and shows us the way forward. However, the solution to all our ills lies within each of us. We will have to find the solutions ourselves to get through this. Tracks like *Sign Of The Time*, *The Nine*, and *The Messenger* take us back to the blessed time of the beginnings of British neo-prog with frenetic variations, enchanting choruses, introspective and rather ethereal moments, oversized symphonic structures, and several psychedelic spaces. **Reed's** celestial voice, full of nuances and assurance, takes us by the hand throughout this journey and responds well to all the emotions evoked by his lyrics. His contribution is providential and strongly contributes to the harmonization of the whole. As highlighted earlier, **The Messenger** is by far the best **Pallas** ever produced. What more can be added?

Progressive Rock

BY RICHARD GUAY



GALAHAD

The Long Goodbye

<https://galahad1.bandcamp.com/album/the-long-goodbye>

For the past five years, the **Galahad** group has been in production mode. Albums succeed each other at a surprising pace. The previous one, *The Last Great Adventurer* (2022), not yet digested, here comes *The Long Goodbye* (2023), which is a continuation. **Stu Nicholson** (vocals) continues to speak about his father but in a much sadder way. Always surrounded by his faithful collaborators, some of whom have been with him for a very long time, namely **Dean Baker** (keyboards), **Spencer Luckman** (founding member, drums), **Lee Abraham** (guitars), and **Mark Spencer** (bass guitar), **Nicholson** offers much darker lyrics here that refer to his father's long slide into dementia with all the negative

consequences it had on him and his family members. It is understood that this is a topic that directly affects the band members, justifying the highly exacerbated emotional content of this album depicting feelings as raw as love, loss of autonomy, confusion, compassion, and the helplessness of loved ones. Musically, a little less accomplished than its predecessor but still very successful, *The Long Goodbye* offers everything that fans of the band appreciate: stretched-out and atmospheric pieces, omnipresent keyboards, playful and easily accessible content, catchy choruses, and insane guitar solos. **Nicholson's** voice is particularly remarkable. So, we haven't had to wait long for a new **Galahad** album, and given the quality of the product in question, who will complain?

An Easy-to-Live-With Subwoofer

BY MICHEL DALLAIRE

REL Acoustics is based in Bridgend, Wales. It was founded by **Richard Edmund Lord** in 1990. Disappointed with the subwoofers available on the market at the time, he decided to build a higher-quality subwoofer himself. A new era for the brand began in 2005 when it was acquired by **John Hunter** and **Donald Brody**. They continued the development of **REL Acoustics** products while maintaining the founder's philosophy. Since then, all aspects of the design have been improved to ensure performance that adapts to any loudspeaker on the market. Let's see if the **REL Acoustics T/5x** subwoofer can truly enhance the sound of my beloved **Proac Response D20R** loudspeakers, which have lost some bass frequencies since I moved to a larger space.

REL's New Era Subwoofers

Since 1990, all **REL** subwoofers have used a specific high-level input circuit. They adopt a **Speakon** connector from the professional audio industry and come with a dedicated cable. This type of connector is appreciated for its robustness, ease of use, and anti-pull locking system. By consistently using high-level connection, **REL Acoustics** stands out in terms of compatibility with all types of amplifiers. This high-level connection utilizes and exploits the signal from the amplifier's final output stage. As the subwoofer is directly connected to the amplifier terminals, it ensures a very homogeneous overall sound signature with the loudspeakers, regardless of the type of amplifier used.

Another major advantage of **REL Acoustics** subwoofers lies in their high-current amplification. It is the current (intensity) that moves the speakers, not the voltage. Since 1998, Welsh engineers have ensured that the built-in amplification modules in **REL Acoustics** subwoofers produce a significant amount of current. This is a guarantee that the subwoofer can

reproduce not only the body and attack of a note but also the decay when the sound fades. Thus, the **REL T/5x** subwoofer is equipped with a 125 W amplifier operating in class *A/B*. Its power supply circuit is linear and features a sufficiently large toroidal transformer.

Since the 2005 acquisition by **Hunter** and **Brody**, mechanical construction, electronic circuits, and speaker quality have been greatly improved compared to previous generations.

REL Acoustics subwoofers are now more powerful, faster, and cheaper to produce. In 2007, the *NaturalSound* filtering was introduced to these subwoofers, ensuring a perfectly transparent integration of the main speakers with the subwoofer. This filtering is designed to eliminate bumps and discontinuities that may appear in the signal transition between the main speakers and the subwoofer. These filters are fast and ensure excellent subwoofer responsiveness. Since 2010, the cabinets have also been improved by adopting very sturdy bracing instead of simple reinforcements that could generate noise and turbulence, sometimes causing a blurred sensation on musical details.

The REL Acoustics Family

Today, **REL Acoustics** is globally recognized as a leading brand in the high-end audiophile subwoofer market. The manufacturer offers several series targeting various budgets and applications. However, one series is specifically designed for home theater, and that is the *HT* series. In descending order of price, there is the *Reference* series, the *S* series, and the entry-level *T/x* series, which can be used for both music and home theater listening. This series includes four models: *T/9x*, *T/7x*, *T/5x*, and *Tzero MKIII*, designed for use with a desktop computer and two mini-monitors. I chose to test the *T/5x* due to its compact dimensions and power, which can fit well into my high-fidelity setup focused on stereo music listening.

The T/5x Itself

This model is very easy to install, measuring about a cubic foot, with a single 20 cm woofer projecting beneath the subwoofer. Therefore, its placement is not limited by one, two, or even three sides containing a speaker. Four square-shaped feet provide approximately 4 cm spacing under the subwoofer, necessary for the 360-degree propagation of low frequencies. The manufacturer even suggests placing it in a corner of the room to enhance its effect. This small cube has a beautiful glossy black finish, reminiscent of a grand piano. At the back, there is a metal plate containing the cooling fins necessary for the internal amplifier. The usual control buttons on a powered subwoofer are also present.

For the high-level input, there is a volume control button, a button to adjust the crossover frequency, and another to specify the phase from 0 to 180 degrees. For this input, the provided 10 m specialized cable with a **Speakon** professional connector is used. At one end of this cable is the **Speakon** connector that plugs into the subwoofer.

This shielded cable includes three wires (red, yellow, and black) with stripped ends.



These must be connected directly to the amplifier's output. The red and yellow wires go to each of the positive terminals of the right and left channels, while the black is connected to one of the negative terminals. There are also two low-level inputs on *RCA* connectors for connecting the subwoofer to a preamplifier output. The other is for an *LFE* signal from a home theater receiver. These two low-level inputs have their own volume control. The whole setup is completed with a general switch and an *IEC* receptacle for the power cord.

Installation and Recommendations

For 2.1-channel music listening, the manufacturer recommends using the high-level input with the **Speakon** connection, and that's what I did. With the use of a single

subwoofer, it also recommends placing the *T/5x* in a corner of the room. So, I started my listening this way.

I gradually played with the volume control and crossover frequency until I felt the low frequencies rather than just hearing them from the subwoofer. Then, I experimented with different positions in my living room with more or less conclusive results. I moved to different locations while playing a track with very deep bass frequencies. I placed the *T/5x* where the low frequencies seemed most pronounced, against the rear wall and about a meter from the side wall.

From there, I had found the ideal location to fully enjoy its performance. The low frequencies became deep without any booming or exaggeration.

REL ACOUSTICS T/5X SUBWOOFER

Music Listening

I mainly listened to albums that I know have strong bass frequencies. So, I started my listening with an album titled *Quiet Letters* by the Danish group **Bliss**. They specialize in electronic ambient music and film music. I once saw on the Internet that the album was recorded and mastered in a studio with huge monitors, each sporting two 18-inch woofers. On the track *Song of Olabi*, the bass frequencies are particularly deep, and most of the time, they are concealed by the hi-fi systems on which I have listened to it. One or two times at hi-fi shows, I heard these ultra-deep basses, but in a very large room pressurized by large speakers with 15-inch woofers. At home, these deep basses never materialized for me, but since I installed and properly adjusted the **REL T/5x**, I have reconnected with a real and sustained low end. Even though this

subwoofer's woofer is only 8 inches, it is solid, rigid, powerful, and very quick in its frequency response. As mentioned earlier, once properly adjusted, you feel the low frequencies throughout the room rather than just hearing them as if they were coming directly from the subwoofer.

I continue with **Elisapie's** latest album titled *Inuktitut*, which is her native language and that of the Inuits. On this album, she interprets in her own way songs from **Leonard Cohen**, **Cynthia Lauper**, as well as pieces from bands like **Led Zeppelin**, **Queen**, **Pink Floyd**, **Rolling Stones**, and **Blondie**. All the lyrics are translated and performed in Inuktitut. Her warm voice is well surrounded by excellent musicians and an exceptional guitarist. Surprisingly, the **REL T/5x** not only improves the low frequencies but also, curiously, provides an opening in the midrange, resulting in an expansion of the



« Sur la pièce *Song of Olabi*, les basses fréquences sont particulièrement profondes et la plupart du temps, elles sont escamotées par les chaînes haute-fidélité sur lesquelles j'ai pu l'écouter. [...] Chez moi, ces basses profondes ne se sont jamais réalisées, mais depuis que j'ai installé et bien ajusté le T/5x de REL, j'ai pu renouer avec un bas du spectre bien réel et soutenu. Même si le woofer de ce caisson n'est que de 8 po, il est solide, rigide, puissant et très rapide dans sa réponse en fréquences. »

stereo image. It's as if the recording venue or studio becomes more perceptible in terms of volume and space?

I move on to the excellent jazz guitarist **Pat Metheny**. On his solo album *What's It All About* from 2011, he also covers songs that have been favorites for him. We're talking about songwriters like **Paul Simon, John Lennon, Henry Mancini, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Carly Simon, Paul Williams, and Paul McCartney**. His *Pikasso* guitar has 42 strings that intertwine and play in both the low frequencies and the entire sonic spectrum. With the **REL T/5x** in action, I better perceive the instrument's resonance box, the harmonics between the different strings, and notice a better presence in my listening room. Indeed, a well-adjusted subwoofer can be a valid solution for speakers that are a bit lacking in the low end.

Conclusion

Since 2017, I have moved to a condominium where the living room is more spacious and open. At that time, my beloved

Proac Response D20R loudspeakers lost some low frequencies. Since then, I have had the opportunity to test other loudspeakers from different manufacturers. These were more massive, three-way speakers with two woofers. As I couldn't achieve satisfactory results, I hastily concluded that, to hear a noticeable improvement, I would need to invest 2 to 3 times the price of my **Proac Response D20R**. These loudspeakers are still in **Proac's** catalog, priced at over \$7,500 per pair. Although I have always been a bit skeptical about using a subwoofer with my speakers, could a \$940 subwoofer be an economical solution to my low-frequency problem? The answer was a resounding **YES**, so I kept the **REL T/5x** for my own needs. Its compactness allows me to position it easily or even conceal it behind a sofa or a large plant. It is relatively easy to adjust with a bit of effort, but once the ideal location is found, I have rediscovered my loudspeakers. When an audio reviewer decides to keep equipment for themselves, it is generally a good sign and undoubtedly a recommendation.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$940

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

Distributor: REL Acoustics America,
T.: 1 510.990.6005, <https://rel.net/>

Mediagraphy

Bliss, Quiet Letters, Music for Dreams,
ZZZCD0006

Elisapie, Inuktitut, FLAC, 24 bits / 44.1 kHz

Pat Metheny, What's It All About, FLAC,
24 bits / 96 kHz

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

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

Acknowledgments

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Jazz

BY CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ



ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

13 mai 1961
Live in Paris

Frémeaux & Associés, 3 CD

First and foremost, a very happy 2024 to all of you, dear readers. As winter knocks at our door, it's best to stay warm, which

CARL MAYOTTE

Carnaval
Tune core

To continue, one must dare. The young bassist **Carl Mayotte**, undoubtedly the standard-bearer of jazz here, multiplies projects like this ambitious *Carnival*. With masters like **Stanley Clarke** and **Jaco Pastorius**, mixed with a jazz fusion that is his trademark, our friend **Carl** ventures a little further off the beaten path. In twelve musical tracks as rich as they are dynamic—*Point du jour*, *Parade*, *Texas Nova*, or *Vasija de Barro*—we find him with his quintet, joined by a Brazilian percussion ensemble and a classical wind quintet. Surprising, yes, but everything holds together admirably. The singing bass ties this rather unusual fusion with a joy that makes us say that this young man has very beautiful days ahead. Co-opting his curiosity with sometimes world music and atypical compositions, *Carnival* will make you have a beautiful winter.

doesn't mean avoiding a breath of fresh air from time to time. Remaining faithful to our habits, we begin this review with the legendary drummer **Art Blakey** and his **Jazz Messengers** in Paris in 1961. A breeding ground of talents, musicians more than solid propelled by the master himself, Mr. **Art Blakey**, and an audience that couldn't get enough. Far from the prevailing racism that plagued America, the quintet was warmly welcomed for three nights at the **Olympia** in Paris, and it's fortunate for us and the history of jazz that microphones were present. More than 60 years later, nothing has become outdated. What magic and what sound these craftsmen of the blue note offer us. We find trumpeter **Lee Morgan**, recently departed tenor saxophonist **Wayne Shorter** at a venerable age, pianist **Bobby Timmons**, bassist **Jymie Merritt**, and, of course, drummer **Art Blakey**. As we listen to the records several times, how can one not tap their foot to the masterpiece *Moanin'* written by pianist **Bobby Timmons** or the very long version of *Night In Tunisia* (11 minutes and some) featuring the saxophonist and trumpeter. We also fell for *Blues March* (**Benny Golson**), the theme of this formation, as well as *Dat Dere* by the duo **John Hendricks / Bonny Timmons**. An immense, blowing, and historical gift. Jazz as it is no longer made, inevitably etched in history!



Jazz

BY CHRISTOPHE RODRIGUEZ

STACEY KENT

Summer Me
Winter Me
Token / Naïve

As we have a theme in mind, why not propose a novelty that juxtaposes summer and winter scents. With her gentle voice that whispers lovely melodies, the British singer **Stacey Kent**, well-known in our lands, revisits some classics, sometimes accompanied by her string ensemble. Like for **Clifford Brown**, **Coleman Hawkins**, or **Ella Fitzgerald**, the journey is well worth it. Opening with a lesser-known composition by **Michel Legrand**, *Summer Me*, *Winter Me*, she continues with the unforgettable *Valse des lilas* as well as *Sous le ciel de Paris*. On a text by the award-winning novelist **Kazuo Ishiguro** (*The Remains of the Day*), how much poetry in *Postcard Lovers*! We will conclude under much sunnier skies with the very suave *Corcovado*. A voice that will make you forget all the little daily troubles.



MICHEL MAGNE

Le Monde instrumental
Jazz et musique de films
1955-1962
Frémeaux & Associés, 3 CD

Taken too soon, **Michel Magne** was a great film music composer and producer (*Les Tontons Flingueurs*, *Fantômas*, *Un singe en hiver*), who also produced an astonishing soundtrack on the life of writer **Françoise Sagan**. Jazz, oh yes, with orchestras that make you dream. The third disc invites us to discover his particular musical universe, with an extra treat - a concert at the **Alhambra** in Paris. A real delight and what a find! As always, the booklet written by **Olivier Julien** is packed to the brim. For the music historian or the curious one within you!



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE

The House of Wines With the Character of



I had the opportunity to taste the crystal-clear wines of Chablis from the renowned house of **William Fevre**. I was with **Didier Séguier**, director of **William Fevre** and extraordinary winemaker who, in 2018, received the prestigious title of *White Winemaker of the Year* at the 34th **International Wine Challenge** in London. A big thank you to the **Sylvestre** agency for the invitation.

WILLIAM FEVRE
GRANDS VINS DE CHABLIS

*William Fevre
Kimmeridgien
of Chablis*



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE



The year 1959 marked the beginning of the domain when **William Fèvre** declared his first harvest from the 7 hectares owned by the family, present in Chablis for 250 years. Over the years, driven by the vision of **William Fèvre**, the estate enriched itself with new plots, always staying on historical terroirs. It became one of the largest vineyard owners in Chablis with a prestigious vineyard of 78 hectares and 90 distinct plots, of which 15.9 are classified as *Premier Cru* and 15.2 as *Grand Cru*. With 40 full-time employees, the vineyards are cultivated with respect for the diverse climates and according to the principles of organic agriculture. To preserve the identity of the wines and especially the old vines, mass selection is carried out. Harvesting is done manually, in small crates, and the grapes are sorted upon arrival at the cellar.

The **William Fèvre Estate** is now part of the **Pinault** family's holding (luxury group **Kering: Balenciaga, Boucheron, Gucci, Saint Laurent...**), which acquired the brands of the **Henriot** family group on September 30, 2022.

The Tasting

As **Didier Séguier** puts it: *At William Fèvre, we don't drink Chablis, but Kimméridgien!*

It's important to know that the terroir of Chablis is unique. It consists of a limestone soil formed in the *Kimméridgien* (about 150 million years ago) when a warm and shallow sea covered Chablis. It contains fossils of small oysters called *Exogyra virgula*. In this environment, limestone soil, semi-continental climate, the maturity of the *Chardonnay* (the only authorized grape) reaches a unique and fragile

balance without overripeness. It produces elegant and mineral wines with crystalline purity. In fact, the *Kimméridgien* style gives wines with elegant notes and crystalline purity of undergrowth, iodized, mineral, and truffle notes, which are certainly not a flaw! This style is quite different from *Chardonnays* with honeyed and beeswax notes.

And with over half of its vineyard in *Premier* and *Grand Crus*, all the subtlety of **William Fèvre** wines is expressed in the glass – under the white gold robe, a bouquet of energy: fresh fruits, white flowers, citrus, vibrant mineral notes, and incredible purity.

On the palate, it's a true explosion of aromas, perfect balance, and a unique expression of freshness and elegance.



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE



Côte Bouguerots Slpe



Barrel Cellar



Barrel Rolling



Frost control by spraying

Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE

William Fèvre, Chablis Champs Royaux, 2020

Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally. Musts are placed in small stainless steel tanks. 5 % of the blend is vinified in French oak barrels (average age of 6 years). Aging lasts for 10 to 12 months in small stainless steel tanks to preserve freshness. 5 % of the harvest is aged in French oak barrels for 5 to 6 months.

Tasting Notes

This *Champs Royaux* reveals aromas of pears, citrus, floral notes, and a hint of wet stones.

On the palate, the dominant sensation is minerality, giving it a chiseled and straight aspect. Amazing sapidity and a long finish with notes of white fruits and minerality.

It pairs beautifully with scallop carpaccio.

William Fèvre, Chablis

Champs Royaux, 2020

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5 %

Price: \$36.75

SAQ Code: 276436

This wine will be available in spring 2024.



PREMIERS CRUS

William Fèvre, Chablis Premier Cru Montée de Tonnerre

With a geological structure similar to the *Grand Crus* and a beautiful exposure, this terroir ranks among the greatest *Premier Crus*.

The *Montée de Tonnerre* appellation consists of 43 hectares on the right bank of the Serein, in the extension of the *Grand Crus Les Clos* and *Blanchot*. More specifically, the plots from which this wine originates cover an area of 2.24 hectares in the locations known as Pied d'Aloue, Chapelot, and Côte de Bréchain. Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling is done to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally. Aging lasts for 13 to 14 months, of which 5 to 6 months are spent on fine lees in French oak barrels for 40 to 50 of the blend. Aging concludes in small stainless steel tanks.

Tasting Notes

This *Montée de Tonnerre* exhibits aromas of white fruits (pears), floral notes, a hint of yellow fruits, and some wet stone notes on the nose.

On the palate, the wine is rich, with a beautiful amplitude and a sensation of minerality that gives it a precise and straight aspect.

It pairs well with seafood, creamy or grilled shellfish, poultry, and creamy or grilled white meats.

William Fèvre Chablis Premier Cru Montée de Tonnerre, 2021

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 12.5 %

Price: \$106.00

SAQ Code: 15135872

This wine will be available in spring-summer 2024.



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE

Domaine William Fèvre, Chablis, Premier Cru Vaurent 2021

This *Premier Cru* is located in the extension of the *Grand Cru* slope and is separated by a simple path. Their influence is felt through powerful and mineral wines. The *Vaurent* appellation consists of 17 hectares on the hill of the *Grand Crus*, located on the right bank of the Serein, in the extension of the *Chablis Grand Cru Les Preuses*. The plots from which this wine originates cover an area of 3.63 hectares, representing 21.35 % of the *Vaurent* appellation.

Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling is done to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally. Musts are placed in French oak barrels (average age of 6 years) for 40 to 50 % of the blend. The remainder is vinified in small stainless steel tanks. Aging lasts for 14 to 16 months, of which 5 to 6 months are spent on fine lees in French oak barrels for 40 to 50 % of the blend. Aging concludes in small stainless steel tanks.

Tasting Notes

This *Vaurent* reveals intense aromas of candied citrus, pears, and a hint of wet stones.

On the palate, it is rich, ample, and quite powerful, with a slightly fatty texture that contrasts with a very fresh acidity and a very present minerality. This wine is surprisingly precise, superbly elegant, and remarkably long.

It pairs well with lobster in white butter sauce.

Domaine William Fèvre Vaurent Chablis Premier Cru, 2021

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 13.5 %

Price: \$103.00

SAQ Code: 15134706

This wine will be available in spring-summer 2024.



THE GRANDS CRUS

Domaine William Fèvre, Chablis Grand Cru Les Preuses 2021

The name of this climat originates from the deformation of the word *perreuse* (stone), given to the ancient Roman road whose path passed at the foot of the current terroir.

The *Les Preuses* appellation covers an area of 11.44 hectares located on the heights of the Côte des *Grands Crus*. The plot is 2.55 hectares, representing 22 % of the total appellation.

Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling is done to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally. Musts are placed in French oak barrels (average age of 6 years) for 50 to 60 % of the blend. The remainder is vinified in small stainless steel tanks. Aging lasts for 14 to 15 months, of which 5 to 6 months are spent on fine lees in French oak barrels for 50 to 60 % of the blend. Aging concludes in small stainless steel tanks.

Tasting Notes

One of my favorites! The aromas of this wine are vibrant. Intense floral notes harmonize with mineral nuances (wet stones) and freshly candied citrus.

The palate is rich with a slightly fatty texture contrasting with persistent and vibrant mineral sensations and citrus flavors. Superb amplitude and joyful length.

It pairs well with fish, creamy or grilled shellfish, grilled or creamy sauce seafood, poultry, and grilled or creamy sauce white meats.

Domaine William Fèvre Chablis Grand Cru Les Preuses, 2021

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 13.5 %

Price: \$159.00

SAQ Code: 15193124

This wine will be available in spring-summer 2024.



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE

Domaine William Fèvre, Grand Cru Bougros Côte Bouguerots, 2021

This *Bougros* appellation consists of a very steep terrain with a slope exceeding 30 %

It covers an area of 12.62 hectares on the western/southwestern tip of the Côte des *Grands Crus*, on a steep slope (over 30 %) maximizing sun exposure. The plot from which this wine comes is 6.23 hectares, representing 49 % of the total appellation, including 2.11 hectares in *Côte Bouguerots* with a south-facing exposure at the foot of the hill.

Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling is done to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally.

Musts are placed in French oak barrels (average age of 6 years) for 50 to 60 % of the blend. The remainder is vinified in small stainless steel tanks. Aging lasts for 14 to 15 months, of which 5 to 6 months are spent on fine lees in French oak barrels for 50 to 60 % of the blend. Aging concludes in small stainless steel tanks.

Tasting Notes

This *Grand Cru* displays vibrant notes of white fruits, some wet stone notes, and a hint of truffle, reflecting the quality of this *Grand Cru*.

On the palate, the texture is rich, and the structure is quite powerful and round. A superb mineral sensation harmonizes with a fresh acidity and some truffle notes.

It pairs well with fish, creamy or grilled shellfish, grilled or creamy sauce seafood, poultry, and grilled or creamy sauce white meats. The perfect pairing: roasted turbot, creamy sauce, and truffle-infused vegetables.

Domaine William Fèvre Chablis Grand Cru Bougros, Côte Bouguerots, 2021

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Sugar: 2.0 g/l

Alcohol: 13.5 %

Price: \$176.75

SAQ Code: 15135830

This wine will be available in spring-summer 2024.



Buon gusto

BY CLAUDE LALONDE

William Fèvre, Chablis Grand Cru Les Clos 2021

The largest and most famous of the *Grand Crus*, it is the historical cradle of the Chablis vineyard. The terroir, facing south, with a soil composed of very white, dense, and deep clays, rests on a limestone compression located at 80 cm, bringing typical spicy notes.

This appellation covers an area of 26.04 hectares located south of the Côte des *Grands Crus*. *Les Clos* is literally the cradle of the *Chablisian* vineyard. The plot from which this wine originates covers an area of 4.11 hectares, representing 16 % of the total appellation, with a south-facing exposure, full sun, and located on the heights of the appellation.

Following manual harvesting, the grapes undergo pneumatic pressing for a short duration (1.5 to 2 hours) to delicately separate the solid and liquid parts of the grapes. Very light static settling is done to retain enough fine lees for alcoholic and malolactic fermentations to proceed naturally.

Musts are placed in French oak barrels (average age of 6 years) for 50 to 60 % of the blend. The remainder is vinified in small stainless steel tanks. Aging lasts for 14 to 15 months, of which 5 to 6 months are spent on fine lees in French oak barrels for 60 % to 70 % of the blend. Aging concludes in small stainless steel tanks.

Tasting Notes

This wine stands out from the others tasted. What is surprising is the intensity and depth of its aromas and flavors. It has superb tension and presents a certain power that comes, among other things, from the old vines. It is perfectly chiseled and tense and has a certain austerity, a testament to its aging potential.

It pairs well with fish, creamy or grilled shellfish, grilled or creamy sauce seafood, poultry, and grilled or creamy sauce white meats. The perfect pairing: roasted turbot, creamy sauce, and truffle-infused vegetables.

William Fèvre Chablis Grand Cru Les Clos, 2021

Grape variety: 100 % Chardonnay

Alcohol: 13 %

Price: \$200.25

SAQ Code: 15135821

This wine will be available in spring-summer 2024.

* Retail prices are indicative and may vary slightly before the release.



Buying Tickets for Eternity

Photo: Jean-Denis Doyle

BY JEAN-DENIS DOYLE

Here is a pair of small loudspeakers that, for many audiophiles, needs no introduction: the **Harbeth P3ESR XD**. Distant descendants of the **BBC LS3/5A** studio monitors, they are now in their fifth version with the *XD* for *eXtended Definition* edition. Over the years, the *P3ESR XD* has become a timeless classic. Everyone has had the opportunity to form an opinion on their sound. Misunderstood by some and adored by others, the *P3ESR XD* leaves no one indifferent. But what makes thousands of audiophiles worldwide swear by the *P3ESR XD*? Does the *XD* edition really stand out from previous versions? These are questions I will attempt to answer. This product review aims to rediscover the *P3ESR XD* and provide technical insights to better understand the renowned Harbeth sound.

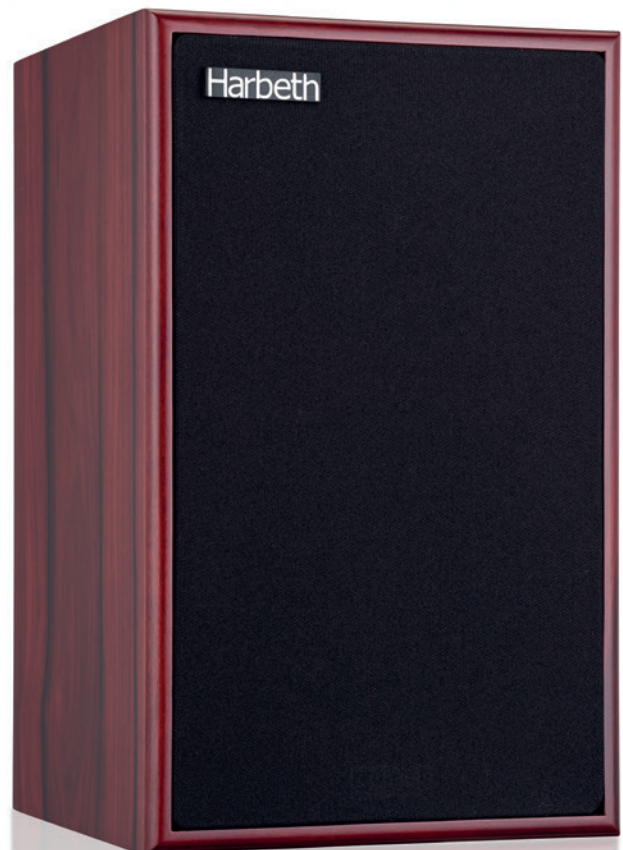
There is hardly a product more British than a pair of **Harbeth** acoustic loudspeakers. The legendary manufacturer in Linfield, located in the heart of Sussex, is the epitome of classic and timeless English loudspeakers. Originally founded by **Dudley Hardwood**, the company has long been acquired and is now led by **Alan Shaw**. **Harbeth** has roots dating back to the time when the **BBC** was involved in designing various loudspeakers for its own needs. The products offered today by **Harbeth** have evolved significantly, and the company likely has one of the most loyal customer bases globally. This small manufacturer has managed, over the years, to maintain a consistent increase in sales while keeping a sonic signature that is virtually unique. The manufacturing of **Harbeth** products takes place locally in England. One of **Alan Shaw's** great prides is the longevity and unparalleled expertise of his staff. As he rightly points out, this ensures consistency in product quality.

The five models offered in the catalog have been there for many years, and each of them has progressed skillfully through various generations. However, the basic formula and recipe for each model have never really changed. To the surprise of many, Harbeth recently introduced an all-new active subwoofer model, designed to support the **Harbeth P3ESR XD**, the subject of this review. It will be called *Nelson* and promises to elevate the performance of the *P3ESR XD* to an unsuspected level. We will have the opportunity to revisit this in an upcoming review in early 2024, hopefully.

A few years ago, **Harbeth** celebrated its forty years of existence. For the occasion, all current models were offered in a special 40th-anniversary edition that was well-received. The filter for all models was completely revised, including better capacitors and **WBT** terminals. The 40th-anniversary series came with finishes in exceptionally high-quality wood. However, for a small company like **Harbeth**, it became impossible to manage the production of two different series of speakers. The

XD series, therefore, cleaned up this situation while attempting to retain the best of the traditional series and the 40th-anniversary series. For the *XD* series, precious wood finishes obviously disappeared, as did the expensive **WBT** terminals. However, the fundamental work done on the filters, bringing an entirely new clarity to the sound of Harbeth products, was preserved. Let's now see how the legendary manufacturer goes about delivering so much magic.

« **Patricia Barber's** voice on the *Nightclub* album is very familiar to me. Having heard it a thousand times, I know it perfectly. However, when reproduced by the *P3ESR XD*, I discover new textures, a new breath, and a presence that borders on perfection. The piano is impeccably controlled and detailed, with a color that leaves a convincingly realistic impression. The bass performance is genuinely surprising. »



HARBETH P3ESR XD ACOUSTIC LOUDSPEAKERS

Technical Description

Harbeth is a manufacturer of acoustic loudspeakers that employs unique manufacturing methods directly correlated with the brand's sonic signature. All **Harbeth** loudspeakers, including the *P3ESR XD*, are manufactured in batches of a single model. This means that for a few days, the factory produces only *P3ESR XD* and no other model. This allows for meticulous care and quality control that is unparalleled in the industry. As Harbeth manufactures its own bass-midrange drivers, they are paired in sets and then coupled with their corresponding tweeter. This task is performed using an in-house measurement system that compares each transducer with the original standard. But that's not all; even the frequency crossover filters are paired and measured in comparison with the reference circuit. The cabinets then undergo the same treatment and are assembled as identical twins.

When your pair of **Harbeth P3ESR XD** is finished, you can be absolutely certain that they are identical. Each one carries an identical serial number with the *Left* and *Right* designation. All data regarding your pair of speakers is then carefully archived for potential repairs. **Harbeth** can provide the exact replacement part for your acoustic loudspeaker.



This almost manic level of quality control ensures that your pair of loudspeakers will perform as intended, and the stereo image will be exemplary. In my opinion, such meticulous care in the manufacture of a pair of speakers is unique and largely explains the asking price.

The **Harbeth P3ESR XD** as such is a small two-way sealed-box loudspeaker. They are equipped with a 110 mm bass-midrange driver with a very rigid injection-molded plastic cone. This injection-molded material, named *Radial2*, is unique to **Harbeth**. It is a source of pride and the foundation of the brand's sound. According to **Alan Shaw**, the quality of the material that makes up a speaker cone will most determine the sound quality of a loudspeaker. For this reason, **Harbeth** has invested significantly in injection molding technology, which is difficult to master but highly rewarding in terms of sound quality. The *tweeter* is a 19 mm **Seas** metal model, ferrofluid-cooled. The frequency crossover filter of the *P3ESR XD* is quite complex, with numerous components and very steep fourth-order cut-off slopes. This ensures that the *P3ESR XD* maintains absolutely perfect phase alignment and a frequency response that approaches perfection.

The cabinets are assembled in the pure tradition of British cabinet making, with an absolutely impeccable level of finish. They are neither too dense nor too thick. They have been designed to resonate in a controlled manner towards frequencies that will have no adverse effect on the midrange performance.

Unpacking and Installation

This is a very easy product to connect since there is only one pair of terminals. With a relatively low efficiency of only 83 dB for 1 W, you will need a sufficiently powerful and high-quality amplifier. However, these small loudspeakers are very transparent, and it is not uncommon to find them paired with equipment worth tens of thousands of dollars. Of course, you can use them for near-field listening on a desk. For this purpose, I recommend decoupling them with **IsoAcoustics** stands like those from the *Aperta* series. These stands work wonders with the *Harbeth P3ESR XD* for close listening on a desk.

In a traditional hi-fi setup, and to extract their quintessence, the *P3ESR XD* need to be placed at least 12 inches away from the walls on stands at least 24 inches high. Two approaches are possible here. Firstly, the German manufacturer **Tontrager** offers *custom-made* stands, made of relatively light wood, designed to dissipate vibrations so that they do not return to the loudspeaker cabinets. These stands provide excellent results, especially with larger models from **Harbeth**. The other approach is to try to extract the maximum bass and information from the *P3ESR XD* by placing them on a very rigid and immobile support. This is the approach I chose by installing them on **Solidsteel SS-6** stands. At this level of loudspeaker and stand quality, you are free to experiment at your leisure

with the assistance of your dealer. The same goes for positioning, as practically anything is possible.

The **Harbeth P3ESR XD** loudspeakers are so capable that they may well function effectively in several different positions, each yielding interesting musical results. These loudspeakers have been designed to be used with the grilles in place. Again, a good deal of experimentation awaits you. However, to remove the grilles without damaging anything, you will need a powerful little magnet. The frames are quite deeply recessed and somewhat difficult to remove from their locations. Be patient; the *P3ESR XD* needs a good 400 hours to deliver their full musical potential.

Dreamy Voices and Timbres

The **Harbeth P3ESR XD** loudspeakers have an unbelievable tonal accuracy. Simply listening to a female vocalist reveals how special these loudspeakers truly are. The tone of **Patricia Barber's** voice on the *Nightclub* album is very familiar to me. Having heard it a thousand times, I know it perfectly. However, when reproduced by the *P3ESR XD*, I discover new textures, a new breath, and a presence that borders on perfection. The piano is impeccably controlled and detailed, with a color that leaves a convincingly realistic impression. The bass performance is genuinely surprising.

Of course, you won't be shaking the walls with these small loudspeakers. But beware! What you get in terms of bass will quickly become addictive. For example, with a double bass, the **Harbeth P3ESR XD** never overstates its presence. There's never any parasitic resonance or tiring bloating of low frequencies. Only music with suppleness and a solid foundation that never ceases to amaze. This is the advantage of a sealed-box loudspeaker, offering clean bass without the unwanted noises that can come from a port. There is,

however, a small voice telling me that the cone material, *Radial2*, has a lot to do with achieving high-quality bass. Not so much in terms of quantity but rather quality. On the treble side, despite the *XD* suffix, we are still in a very British tonality, with just enough brightness and perfectly balanced without any aggression.

When Your Vocation is Stereo Imaging

If, like me, you have an audiophile friend who repeatedly extols the virtues of the stereo imaging of their loudspeakers, and you play the *P3ESR XD* for them, their reaction will be priceless. It's not complicated; concerning three-dimensional sound imaging, the *P3ESR XD* is in a league of its own. With *The Six Brandenburg Concertos* performed by **Le Concert des Nations**, under the direction of **Jordi Savall**, the music fills the space in front, besides, and behind the loudspeakers. A holographic wall of music is created, making it easy to listen to. It is at this precise moment that one understands why so many people swear by these little **Harbeth** loudspeakers. All the rigor applied during manufacturing, all the care taken in component matching and measurements, eventually pays off. The *P3ESR XD* then delivers a magic that is truly priceless. The real value of the *P3ESR XD* is being an object manufactured with scientific rigor that ultimately serves art and emotions. Hearing this baroque music floating in your living room on a Sunday morning is an experience that simply brings happiness. Once again, the timbres of these small speakers are stunningly natural, like that flute we wish to hear for eternity.

And Compared to the Old Version?

Having been well acquainted, sold, tested, and even hosted the classic version of the **Harbeth P3ESR**, my auditory memory could easily find its bearings. Firstly, the dynamic capabilities of the *XD* version have significantly improved. This version compresses the audio signal much less. Without necessarily turning them into **Klipsch Lasca** models, **Alan Shaw** has

managed to free the **Harbeth P3ESR** and give them new light, better dynamics, and a hint of magnificent airiness. Everything has been perfectly balanced, preserving the tonality that defines the brand.

Conclusion

Here is an ultra-classic product that has been impeccably updated. With much taste and skill, **Alan Shaw** has managed to offer an even more substantial dose of magic and auditory happiness. This result is not the result of chance but rather of rigorous scientific work, masterfully conducted by an outstanding team. The **Harbeth P3ESR XD** is certainly not cheap. They have a value that cannot be quantified but rather experienced and felt daily. Go ahead and, like me, treat yourself to genuine concert tickets for eternity.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: \$4,250


Warranty: 1 year, parts and labor. When you register the purchased loudspeakers with an authorized Harbeth dealer, the warranty is extended to 3 years.

Distributor: Tri-Cell Enterprises Inc.,
T.: 905.265.7868, <https://tricellenterprises.com>

stereopublications.com January-February 2024 **43**

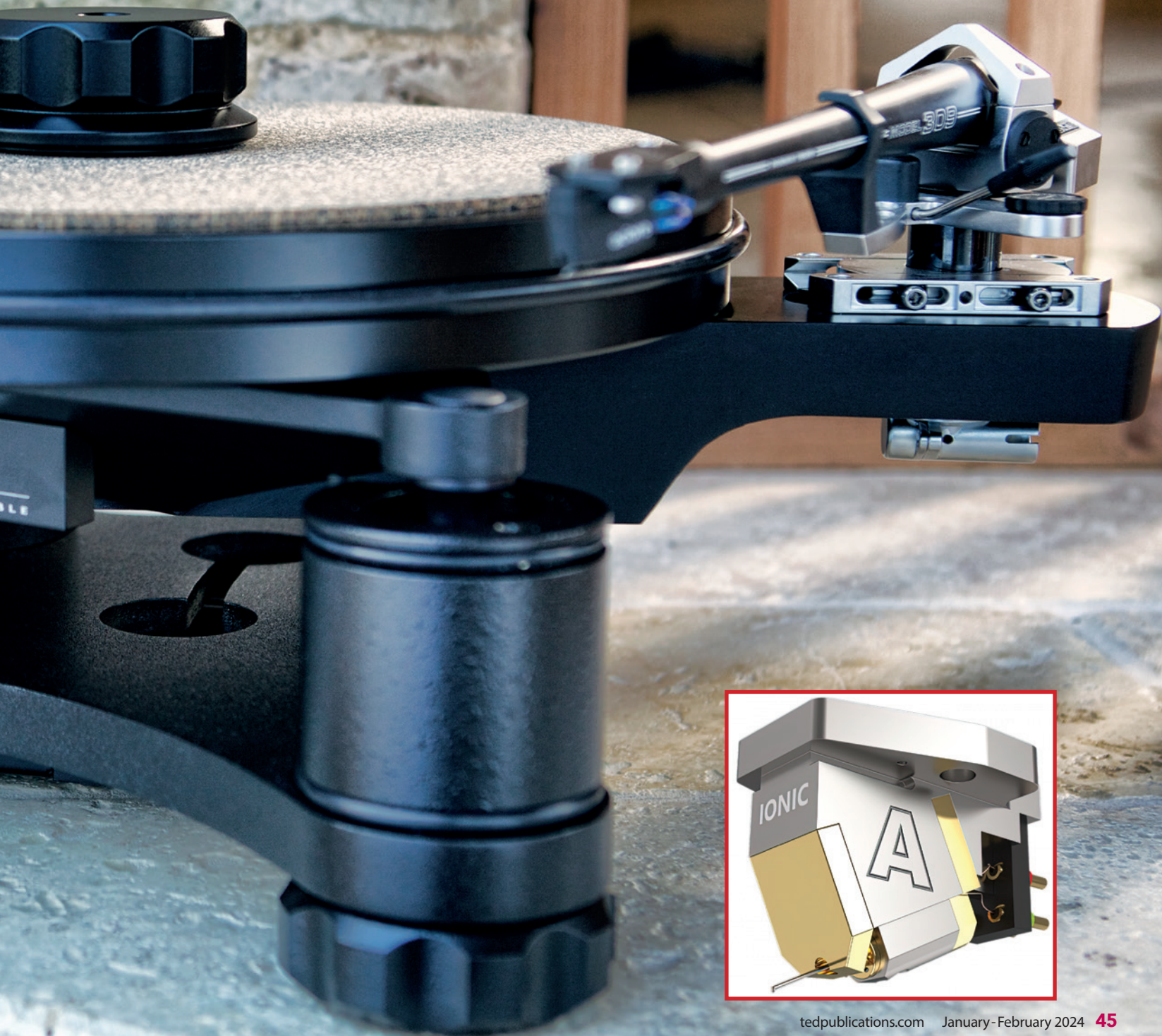
AVID HIFI VOLVERE TURNTABLE, ALTUS TONEARM
AND IONIC MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE

High-Tech Engineering



The **AVID Volvere / Altus / Ionic** trio is a high-end turntable rig for the well-heeled vinyl enthusiast. Although **AVID HIFI** has been designing turntables for nearly 25 years now, the company has only recently developed its own tonearms and cartridges. The relationship between these three components is critical in order to maximize the performance of each element. But the equilibrium is easy to screw up. For example, the full potential of a high-end cartridge will not be realized when used in a mid-level tonearm where design compromises were made to allow it to hit a price point. The same holds true for a high-end tonearm on a mid-level deck. So having a manufacturer design all three components usually ensures optimal performance, which, in turn, makes for happy customers. As **AVID** is relatively new at designing tonearms and cartridges, it will be interesting to see how well it's done.

at the Service of Music



AVID HIFI VOLVERE TURNTABLE, ALTUS TONEARM AND IONIC MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE

BY ANTHONY ALIAS

About the company

Conrad Mas founded **AVID HIFI** in 1995 and launched his first turntable design four years later. The *Acutus* was a big success and helped establish **AVID** as a premier turntable manufacturer. Today, the company operates two factories in England and produces eight models of turntables, two tonearms, and three cartridges, as well as a full range of high-end electronics and loudspeakers. **AVID** has invested heavily in leading-edge technology and high-precision production engineering, even extending their expertise to designing and manufacturing products for the automotive, medical, and military industries, among others.

The Turntable & its Components

All three elements of this combo are neatly packaged in a single large box. Although the tonearm comes already pre-mounted on the sub-chassis, the rest of the components that make up the *Volvere* need to be assembled, the cartridge needs to be installed and aligned, and the suspension needs to be fine-tuned. It's worth noting that the *Volvere's* floating sub-chassis is sensitive to footfalls, so if your listening room has a suspended floor, I would suggest placing the turntable on a solidly mounted wall bracket.

Description

A turntable is a device that converts minute mechanical vibrations into electrical signals. Ideally, the only thing we want vibrating on a turntable is the stylus in the groove. Any other resonance reaching the platter or tonearm will be picked up by the cartridge and cause a loss of accuracy.

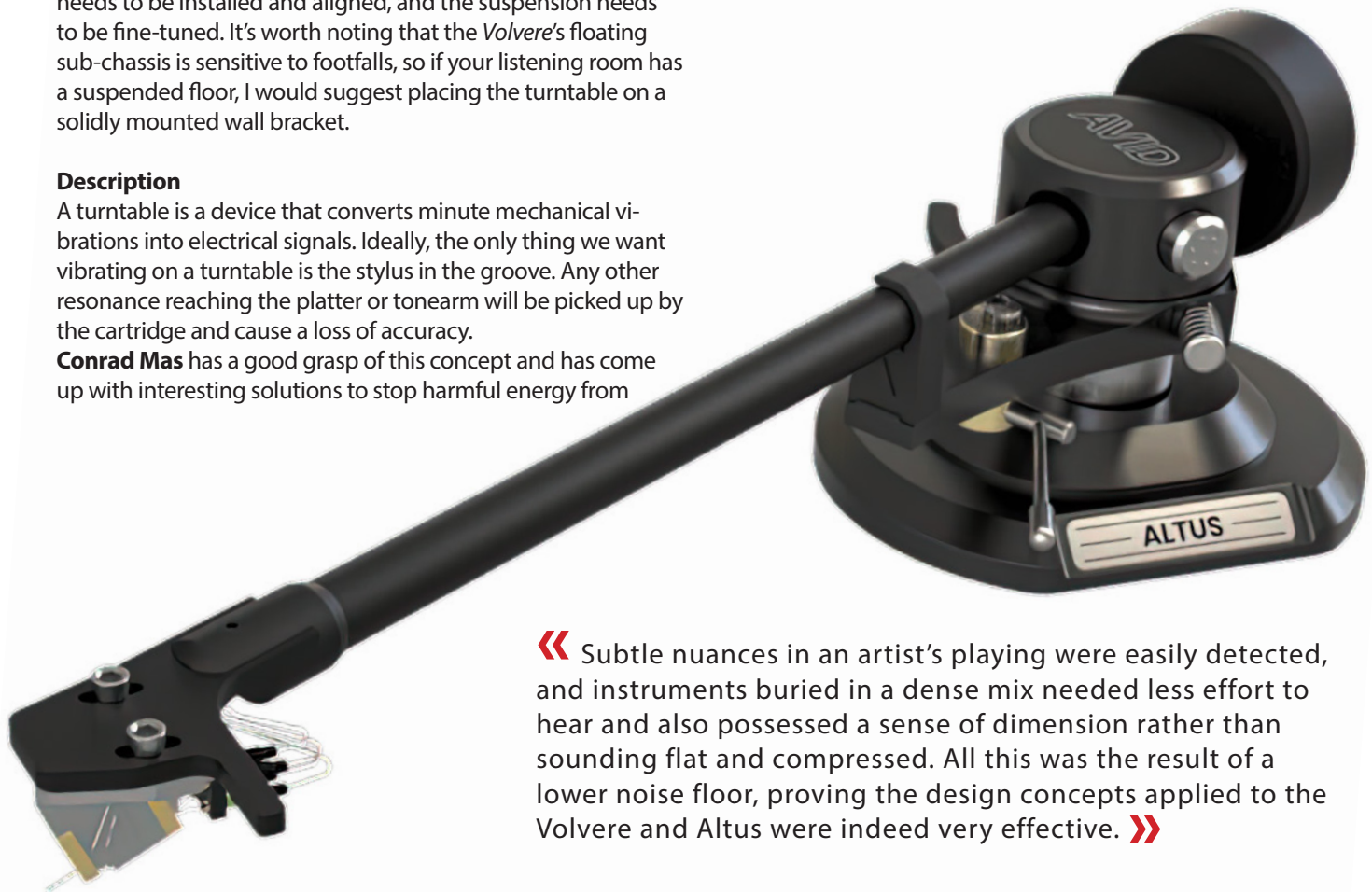
Conrad Mas has a good grasp of this concept and has come up with interesting solutions to stop harmful energy from

entering the cartridge. The *Volvere* is a dual-belt drive, three-point spring suspension design. The sub-chassis is a lightweight one-piece multi-fold cast aluminum. Its unique design provides great rigidity and strength in the crucial area between the tonearm and main bearing to prevent any loss of musical information. In addition, a special coating is applied to the cast to effectively dissipate high-frequency resonances.

The platter is precision machined from a solid billet of aluminum and mass-loaded at its perimeter. A cork mat is bonded directly to the platter, and a high-density rubber ring is fitted around the outside edge to absorb unwanted energy.

The *Volvere* utilizes **AVID's** high-precision, self-lubricating inverted bearing design, where the tapered bearing housing slightly protrudes from the top of the platter. Thus, when a record is placed on the platter, it will first contact the bearing housing and will actually rock back and forth as it's not making proper contact with the mat.

A solid aluminum record clamp then flattens the record and couples it to the platter. When the stylus rides the groove, the friction creates resonances in the vinyl. The cork mat was chosen because it's a mechanical impedance mismatch with



« Subtle nuances in an artist's playing were easily detected, and instruments buried in a dense mix needed less effort to hear and also possessed a sense of dimension rather than sounding flat and compressed. All this was the result of a lower noise floor, proving the design concepts applied to the *Volvere* and *Altus* were indeed very effective. »



the vinyl and keeps the resonances in the record and forces them out through the mechanical grounding point provided by the main bearing housing, transmitting the energy away from the stylus and into the sub-chassis.

Located on the top of the *Volvere's* MDF base are the motor and the three pillars that contain the suspension springs. Special *O-rings* on the pillars attach to the sub-chassis to provide lateral damping. Three large, height-adjustable feet support the base.

A sophisticated *DSP*-controlled power supply drives the modified *AC*-synchronous high-torque motor. The *PSU* has a large on / off button, controls for play and speed selection, as well as the capability to fine-tune the speeds. Each power supply is hand-calibrated to the turntable's drive motor to eliminate vibration and maximize torque.

The new *Altus* tonearm features an aluminum arm tube with a 2 mm wall thickness, high-precision bearings machined to micron limits, and an adjustable progressive anti-skate mechanism. The headshell is a solid piece of laser-cut aluminum that is seamlessly joined to the arm tube. Each tonearm is carefully hand-built and thoroughly tested to extremely tight tolerances.

AVID's Ionic cartridge is a low-output moving coil that employs the same magnet and coil structure as their more expensive models but is fitted with an aluminum cantilever and elliptical diamond stylus. The generator system is housed in a

machined, solid aluminum body, which allows quick evacuation of vibration away from the stylus and into the tonearm. A smartly designed stylus guard protects the cantilever assembly when needed.

Now, What About the Sound Quality?

From the moment the stylus hit the lead-in groove, there was an eerie silence, and then the first notes popped out of a pure black background. Voices and instruments had great presence and clarity to them. The soundstage was impressive, with holographic imaging that digital audio can only aspire to. Subtle nuances in an artist's playing were easily detected, and instruments buried in a dense mix needed less effort to hear and also possessed a sense of dimension rather than sounding flat and compressed. All this was the result of a lower noise floor, proving the design concepts applied to the *Volvere* and *Altus* were indeed very effective. Vibrations from the motor, the loudspeakers, and the vinyl record itself were being dissipated efficiently, allowing the stylus to transmit more accurate information from the grooves.

The music had a superb sense of dynamics and transient speed, in addition to great timing and rhythmic drive. Bass was solid and articulate, with no overhang whatsoever. The combo also scored high marks with regards to tonal accuracy and transparency. The strings of the **Quartetto Esterhazy** had a beautiful texture and vividness to them.



CSNY's *Teach Your Children* from their album *Déjà Vu* was presented with incredible realism, as if the band were in my living room. The acoustic guitars and harmonies were simply glorious. The *Volvere* seemed to dig out more excitement from performances, with recordings having more of a live feel to them. I was constantly engaged in the music. The overall tonal balance of this **AVID** combo was excellent. In the past, I've heard the *Volvere SP* on a few occasions and found it to be a bit analytical and a tad sterile. This current **AVID** rig still resolved a lot of detail from within the grooves but always presented it in a musically captivating way. I'm sure the *Altus* and *Ionic* have a lot to do with this more natural presentation.

Conclusion

Turntable designs vary immensely, from the very basic to the artisanal to the over-the-top, insanely expensive behemoths. The **AVID** *Volvere/Altus/Ionic* turntable unit is a seriously well-engineered, precision-built package that provides thrilling performance. **Conrad Mas'** new tonearm and cartridge are a wonderful complement to the *Volvere*, and I wouldn't even be tempted to try another arm at the risk of messing up the wonderful synergy. Well done!

GENERAL INFORMATION

The *Volvere* turntable trio

(includes the *Altus* tonearm and the *Ionic* cartridge)

Price: \$16,899

Warranty: 5 years for the turntable, 2 years for the tonearm and 2 years for the cartridge and 3 years for the remaining electronic section, parts and labour

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

Mediagraphy

Duke Ellington, *Blues in Orbit*

Paul Desmond & Gerry Mulligan, *Two of a Mind*

Chick Corea, *The Griffith Park Collection*

Nik Bärtsch's *Ronin*, *Llyria*

Rickie Lee Jones, *Pirates*

Joe Walsh, *The Smoker You Drink, The Player You Get*

Crosby Stills Nash and Young, *Déjà Vu*

Ray Lamontagne, *Trouble*

Jacqueline Du Pré, *Schumann Cello Concerto in A Minor*

Quartetto Esterhazy, *Boccherini Streichquintette*



Classical Music

BY CHRISTOPHE HUSS



MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER AND HENRI DESMAREST. ENSEMBLE LES SURPRISES, LOUIS-NOËL BESTION DE CAMBOULAS.

Te Deum

Alpha, 1018

Interpretation . *****

Technique . *****

We have known *Charpentier's Te Deum* with a more directly spectacular impact. Still, there is something major here: an absolute symbiosis between the interpretation and the environment, achieved through controlled and mastered musical

reverberation. The sonic framework, although created under full control at the **Arsenal** de Metz, precisely captures the ambiance one could imagine in a 17th-century Versailles chapel. There is a magical quality in this sonic setting that uplifts the work without sacrificing precision. The acoustic phenomenon is incredibly deep between soloists, choirs, and the brass and timpani ensemble. All of this is perfectly balanced, just like the instrumental colors and every solo intervention.

A significant surprise is the coupling with the world premiere recording of **Henry Desmarest's** (1661-1741) *Te Deum of Lyon*, revealing a sumptuous work in the vein of **Charpentier**. The album lasts only 51 minutes, but it is intense.



**FRANCESCO CORBETTA
I BASSIFONDI,
SIMONE VALLEROTONDA.
AVEC BOR ZULJAN (luth).
La Guitarre Royale**

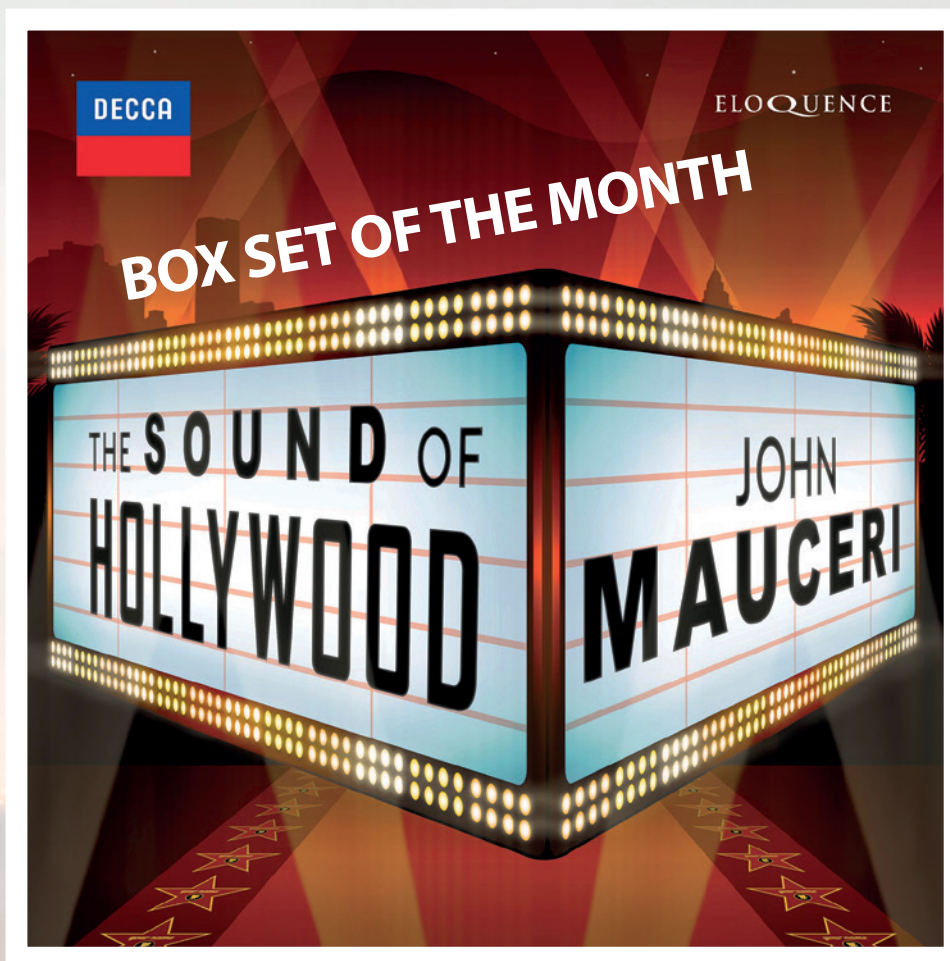
Arcana, A556
Interpretation : *****
Technique : *****

While we covered the most important guitar albums of 2023 in the last issue, this January release covers a different realm. **Francesco Corbetta** is the most famous

Baroque guitarist of 17th-century Europe. His epitaph rightly states, *He won the hearts of princes and kings with his harmony because he introduced the guitar to England as well as the court of Louis XIV in France.* **Corbetta** began publishing works in 1639 and embarked on his travels a few years later. He died in France in 1681. This album features *Baroque* music with a guitar, involving a trio (guitar, theorbo, percussion) led by **Simone Vallerotonda**, with **Bor Zuljan** joining in several character pieces for two guitars. Voices are occasionally intertwined. This jewel of musical refinement and sonic subtleties is captured in Brescia by **Canio Giuseppe Famularo** with magical presence and very balanced proportions.

Classical Music

BY CHRISTOPHE HUSS



HOLLYWOOD BOWL ORCHESTRA, JOHN MAUCERI.

The Sound of Hollywood

Eloquence, 16 CD, 484 5233.

Interpretation: ****

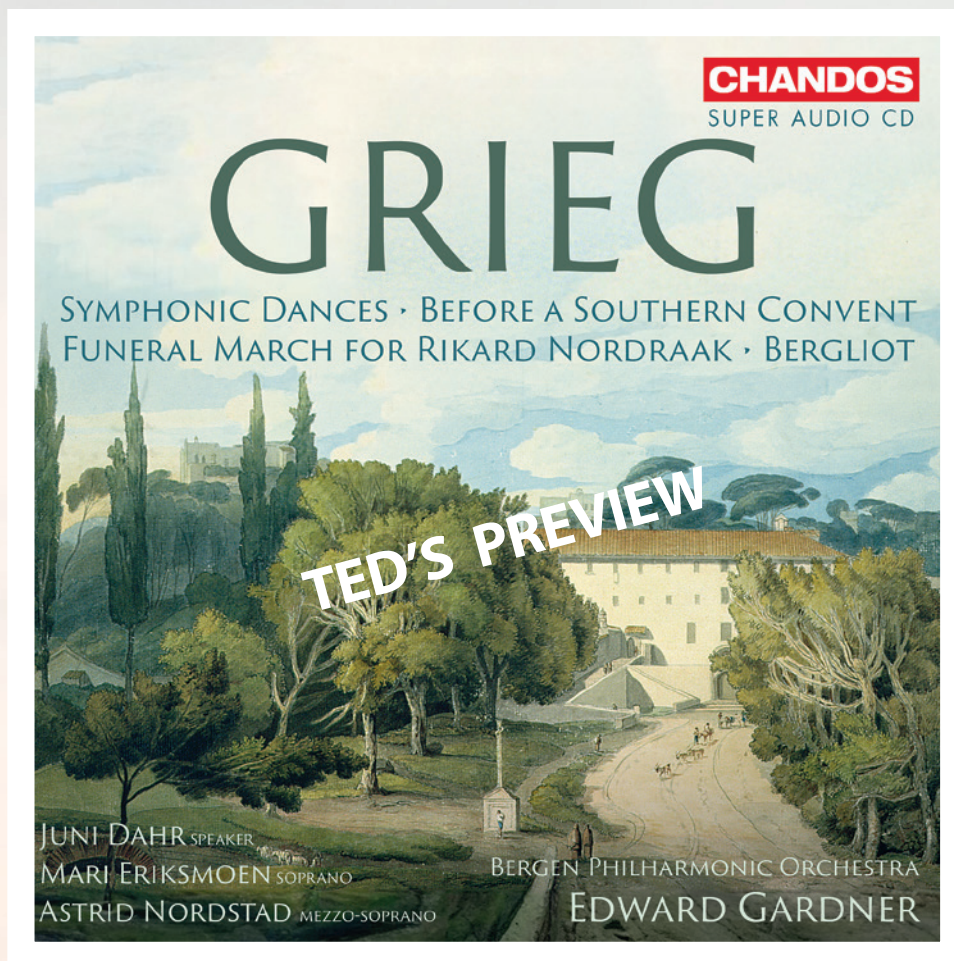
Technique: ****

A small exception here, as this box set is released by **Universal Australia**. It is internationally distributed by major online retailers, but it's worth exploring the web with some international openness, for example, on the UK side, to find it at the best price. That being said, the item is precious and unique, as these very useful CDs had disappeared for a long time. **John Mauceri**, who was a musical advisor for the film *Tár*, was, in the early 1990s, the conductor of the **Hollywood Bowl Orchestra**. He genuinely delves into the history of music by exiles (**Steiner**, **Korngold**,

etc.), who had to flee Nazi Germany and shaped the sound of Hollywood.

These meticulously crafted discs, in a way, modernized the *Boston Pops*-type projects but in a more structured manner. Over the 16 CDs, we find complete overtures by **Rodgers and Hammerstein**, *The Gershwin at Hollywood*, an *Irving Berlin CD* with **Patti LuPone**, a *Duke Ellington CD* with **Dee Dee Bridgewater**, *My Fair Lady* and *The King and I*, as well as various thematic programs related to the world of great film music such as *The Great Waltz*, *Sound of Hollywood*, *Hollywood Dreams*, etc.

It's not the economic deal of the century, but there is no real equivalent, except in the **Telarc** catalog, which is not reissued.



EDVARD GRIEG
MARI ERIKSMOEN (soprano),
ASTRID NORDSTAD (mezzo),
JUNI DAHR (narrator),
BERGEN PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA,
EDWARD GARDNER.

Symphonic Dances Bergliot, Funeral March for Rikard Nordraak, Foran sydens kloster.

Chandos, CHSA 5301

Interpretation: *****

Technique: *****

Don't rush to your record store yet, but be forewarned or place a pre-order. This **Grieg** program, set to be released on

February 2nd, deserves all your attention. We do not recall a better orchestral album dedicated to the Norwegian composer since **Blonstedt's** *Peer Gynt* on **Decca** in 1990; that's how vibrant, precise, and feverish **Edward Gardner's** baton is. **Gardner** makes this recording a true showcase of his collaboration with the magnificent **Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra**, which has given us such beautiful **Prokofiev, Stravinsky,** and **Rachmaninov** recordings under **Andrew Litton** at **Bis**. The *Symphonic Dances*, one of the most neglected gems in music history, find their reference version here. The program also allows for a deeper exploration of Norwegian poetics with the musicalization of texts by **Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson**, *Nobel Prize in Literature* 1903, in *Bergliot* and *Devant un couvent du sud*. This jewel is recorded in multichannel. Published in **SACD** hybrid, it will be available in **Dolby Atmos** on platforms promoting this listening mode (such as **Apple** classical, for example).

Classical Music

BY CHRISTOPHE HUSS

DVD's OF THE MONTH



LAKMÉ

Opéra by Léo Delibes.

WITH SABINE DEVIEILLE, FRÉDÉRIC ANTOUN, STÉPHANE DEGOUT, AMBROISINE BRÉ, PYGMALION, CONDUCTOR: RAPHAËL PICHON. OPÉRA COMIQUE DE PARIS, 2022. DIRECTED BY: LAURENT PELLY.

Naxos, Blu ray, NBD 0177V.

Interpretation : *****

Technique : *****

We don't comment on DVD releases very often because those that constitute a real addition to the existing catalog are rare. The interest in a new *Tosca* with **Anna Netrebko** or *Traviata* with **Nadine Sierra** is very relative. It is different for this Parisian production of *Lakmé* in October 2022 in Paris. The

Pichon-Devieille couple is at work, he in the pit, and she in a role that seems destined for her and that she had to immortalize. How to summarize this? **Sabine Devieille** is *Lakmé* as, once, **Maria Callas** was *Tosca*: the voice and incarnation that impose themselves and are not up for discussion. A source of great pride, the Quebecois **Frédéric Antoun** was chosen to play opposite her as *Gérald*, and a source of happiness, the magician **Laurent Pelly** directs. **Raphaël Pichon** reveals, with loving tenderness, the colors and spells of the score. This reference version is firmly established in the landscape for good and for a long time.



DER SCHATZGRÄBER

Opéra by Franz Schreker.

WITH DANIEL JOHANSSON, ELISABET STRID,
MICHAEL LAURENZ,

CONDUCTOR: MARC ALBRECHT.

DEUTSCHE OPER DE BERLIN, 2022.

DIRECTED BY: CHRISTOF LOY.

Naxos, Blu ray ,NBD 0173V.

Interprétation : ****

Technique : *****

The same situation as for *Lakmé*: a rather rare opera in a reference version. **Franz Schreker** (1878-1934) is the major composer of the 1910s and 1920s in Vienna and Berlin. Director of the **Berlin Conservatory** from 1920-1932, he paved the way for a 20th-century musical aesthetic that is not that of **Berg**, **Schoenberg**, and **Webern's** dodecaphony. However, being

Jewish, he was considered degenerate by the Nazis. Unfortunately, instead of restoring the status of these unfortunate creators after the war, they fell into oblivion. The revival and recognition of **Schreker** (in which **Kent Nagano** participated) date back to the last 25 years. This Berlin production presents *Der Schatzgräber*, created in 1920, which earned its author his greatest success. Later, the progressive rise of Nazism would have an impact on the dissemination of his operas. *Der Schatzgräber*, a medieval tale of stolen jewels, a minstrel, and a king's fool, is based on music that is both late romantic, post-*Wagnerian*, chromatic, and vaguely impressionistic. The staging by **Christof Loy**, set in a 20th-century palace, lacks the elements of the fairy tale. However, through this stripped-down chamber drama, **Loy** emphasizes the psychological drama more. The musical part is excellent, and the technical rendition is top-notch.

Classical Music

NEW CD RELEASES



**ANTON BRUCKNER
VIENNA RADIO
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA,
MARKUS POSCHNER.
Symphony No. 5**

Capriccio, C8090.
Interpretation: *****
Technique: ***

You haven't finished hearing about **Bruckner**. The year 2024 will be the **Bruckner** year, the bicentenary of his birth, and releases and complete works are already piling up. One of the biggest surprises is the *5th Symphony*, the current peak of an ongoing and uneven cycle by the German conductor **Markus Poschner**,

52. As the conductor of the **Swiss Italian Radio Orchestra**, the **Bruckner Orchestra Linz**, and the future musical director of the **Basel Symphony Orchestra**, **Poschner** divides his complete *Bruckner* works between his **Linz** ensemble and the **Austrian Radio Orchestra**. In the *5th Symphony*, **Bruckner's** most complex (often compared to an immense cathedral), **Poschner** succeeds because, without being ponderous, he maintains a wonderful cohesion through rare tempo consistency, a beautifully fluid second movement, and achieves a truly exhilarating end to the fourth movement. This recording does not replace the **Jochum-Amsterdam-Tahra** and **Abbado-Vienna-DG** references because the orchestra here is more subdued. Still, it offers a **Bruckner** interpretation that is not often heard.



**MAURICE RAVEL
ALEXANDRE THARAUD,
NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
OF FRANCE,
LOUIS LANGRÉE.**

Piano Concertos.

De Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain.

Erato, 5054197660719

Interpretation : **

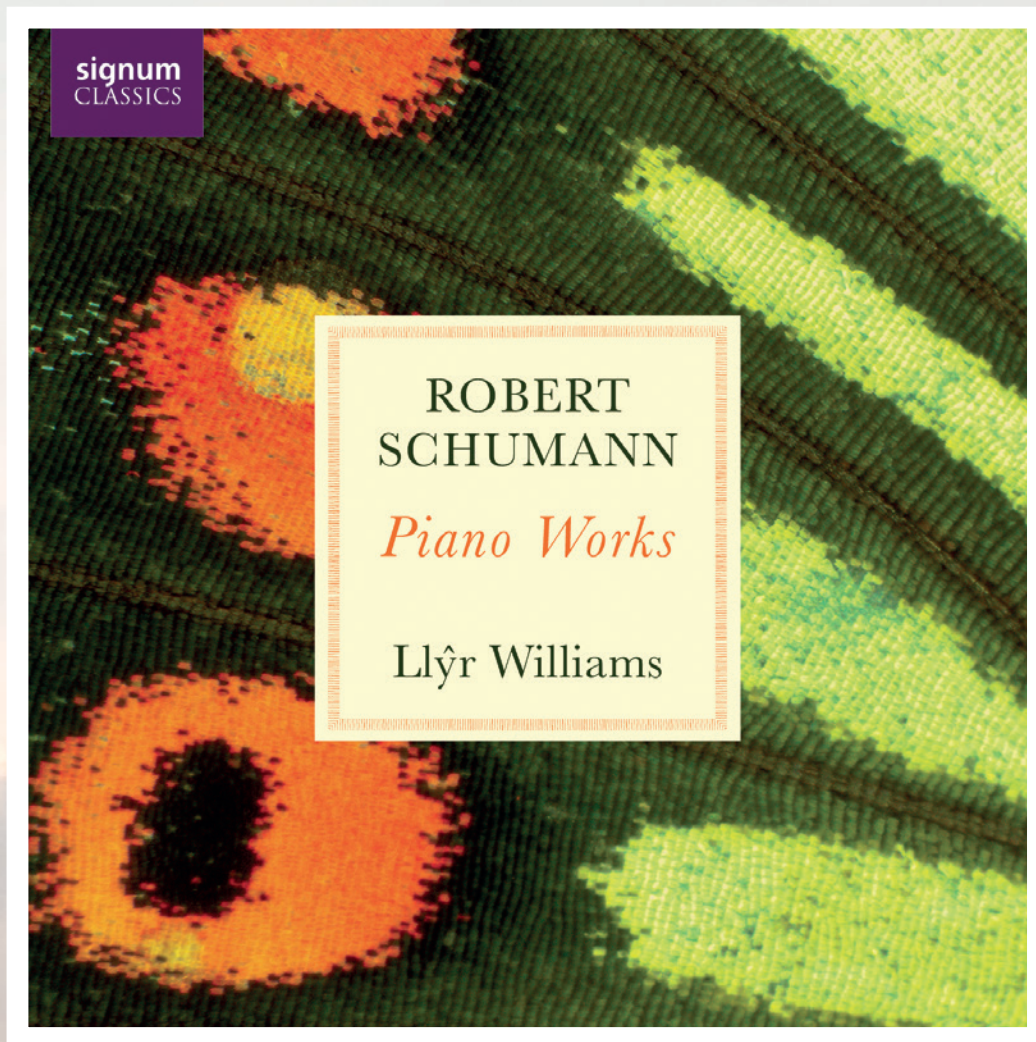
Technique : **

The **Ravel** *Concerto in G* and the *Concerto for the Left Hand* by **Alexandre Tharaud** were highly anticipated. However, while the

pianist seems to have thought carefully about his accents, the jazz-infused elements he wants to highlight in the 1st movement or the excesses of sentimentality he wants to avoid (slow movement), one remains quite perplexed by the insipid accompaniment from what is called the **National Orchestra of France** in such French musical treasures. Not that **Louis Langrée** is a bad accompanist, but the orchestra's colors (with a few exceptions in the woodwinds, notably the English horn) are painfully commonplace, and the attacks exhibit a detachment bordering on disengagement (*Finale of the Concerto in G*). The sonic gruel is scarcely less laborious in *De Falla*. **Pierre Monteil's** recording does not help. Disappointment with a mayonnaise that never thickens.

Classical Music

NEW CD RELEASES ...suite



ROBERT SCHUMANN LLŶR WILLIAMS (piano).

**Fantasy, Papillons, Humoreske,
Davidsbündlertänze, Nachtstücke,
Viennese Carnival.**

Signum, 2 CD, SIGCD 756.

Interpretation: ****

Technique: *****

Welsh pianist **Llŷr Williams** records his 15th project with **Signum**, the English label for which he has recorded complete sets of **Beethoven** and **Schubert** *Sonatas*. This double **Schumann** album encompasses works from youth (*Papillons*, opus 2)

to maturity, such as the *Viennese Carnival* of 1841. The main characteristic of these two discs is the successful attempt to combine the surges and receding waves that characterize **Schumann's** music with great precision and polyphonic clarity in piano playing. **Llŷr Williams** seems keen to make everything heard, even those phrases, complementary to the main melody, which, with most pianists, get lost in the grand interpretative gesture. Williams thus comes close to the risk of dissecting **Schumann** (2nd movement of the *Fantasy*) but avoids falling into it. It's more intellectual than sensually skin-deep, but it's quite fascinating due to the strong eloquence of this clarity.



**IGOR STRAVINSKY
JAMES EHNES,
BBC PHILHARMONIC,
ANDREW DAVIS.**

**Violon Concerto. Scherzo à la russe.
Suites for Small Orchestra.
Apollon Musagete (ballet).**

Chandos, CHSA, 5340.

Interpretation : ****

Technique : ****

Every album by Canadian violinist **James Ehnes** is highly anticipated. This one allows us to realize that he had never

recorded **Stravinsky's Concerto**. Far from the fury of *The Rite of Spring*, the *Violin Concerto* is a work from the so-called neoclassical period, where **Stravinsky** copied ancient models and languages. Very pleasant to listen to, this work is played without any mannerism by **Ehnes**, in contrast to **Isabelle Faust's** recent version, which attacks each note to the point of becoming tedious. **Ehnes**, on the other hand, joins the reference signed **Perlman-Ozawa**. The major part of the rich coupling is occupied by the ballet *Apollo Musagete*, of the same musical trend, which **Andrew Davis** gives a perfectly consensual reading, without the hedonistic excesses of **Karajan** but also lacking the sharpness of **Ozawa**.

MICHELL ENGINEERING – GYRO SE TURNTABLE

An Otherworldly

BY GEORGE de SA



Experience Vinyl



The films: *2001 – A Space Odyssey*; *A Clockwork Orange*, and *Star Wars* are unforgettable to every science fiction buff but given their historical impact are known to so many more. Why these three films? Besides all three being trendsetting and iconic science fiction films of the 20th century – all have a common connection to the turntable industry. Does the name **John A. Michell** ring a bell? No. Well, let me tell you about this engineer that came out of the mid-60's. Along with establishing his own engineering firm, **John** built scale models, which fortuitously led to his crossing paths with the American film director/producer, **Stanley Kubrick**. The outcome was **John** eventually building an essential scale model for **Kubrick's** transformative film, *2001 – A Space Odyssey*. The model, none other than the seminal spacecraft *Discovery*. By 1969, **Michell** was involved in building turntable parts for Transcriptors, a British turntable manufacturer.

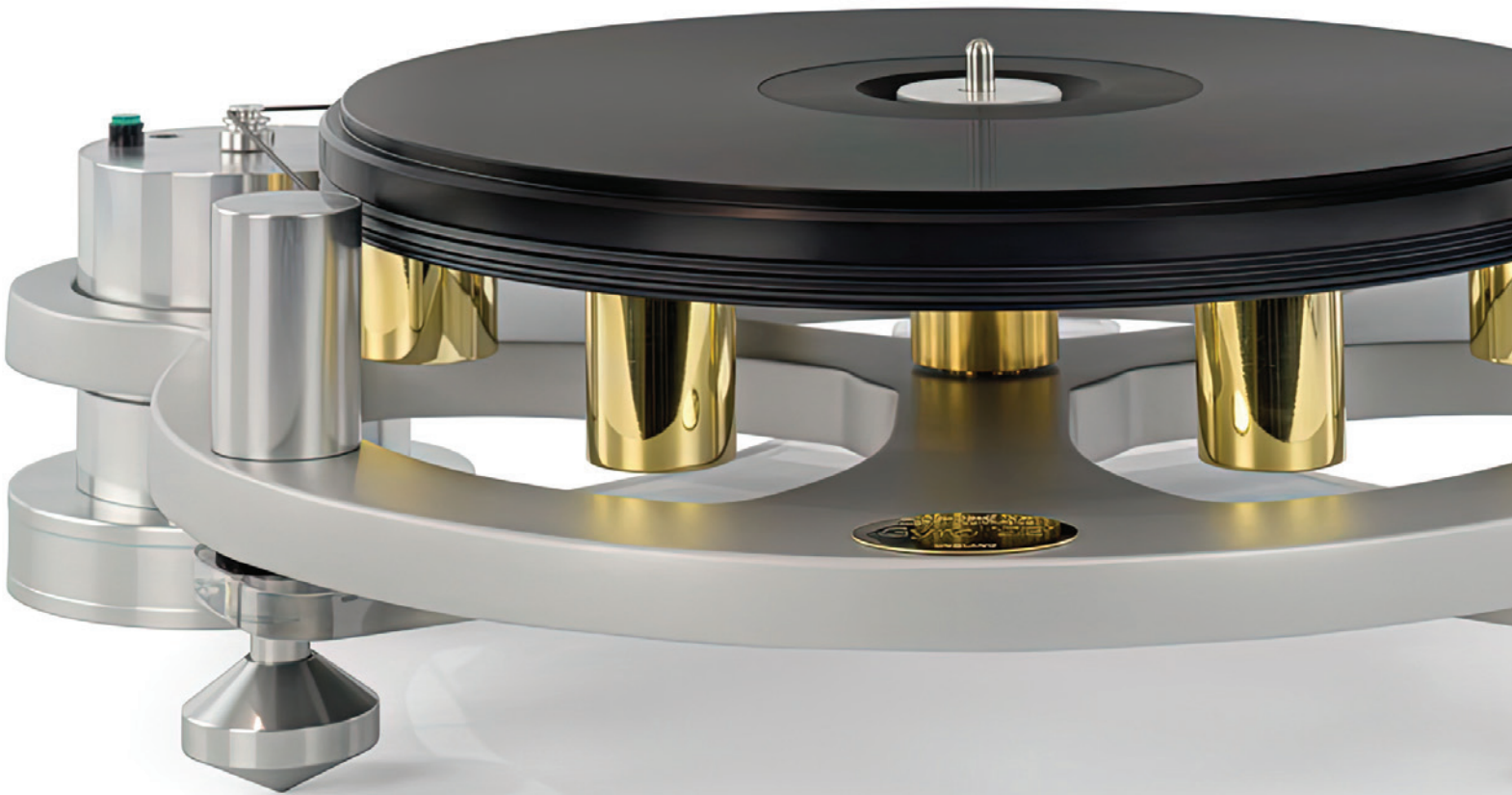
Transcriptors relocated to Ireland in 1973, at which time **J. A. Michell** took on the full manufacturing of their turntables, under the name **J. A. Michell Engineering Limited (MICHELL)**. It was about this time that **Stanley Kubrick** featured a **Transcriptors Hydraulic Reference Turntable** in his film *A Clockwork Orange – second connection*. I'd guess that **John's** connection to **Transcriptors** and to **Kubrick** let to the turntable becoming part of film history.

Now, the third spoke in this wheel around **John**, involves the film *Star Wars*. On *Star Wars*, **John Michell** contributed his talent to the building of set models us in George Lucas' ground-breaking film.

One man, three iconic movies...but wait...we're just getting started. It was in 1977 that the first true **MICHELL** turntable was born – the **Michell Reference Electronic**. Look it up and you will see its undeniable likeness to the **Transcriptors Hydraulic Reference**. **John** soon followed up this new turntable with his invention of the record clamp...yeah, **J. A. Michell** is the man we give credit to for making those warped albums playable. By the early 1980, **John** had introduced new turntable models; unfortunately, he passed away in 2003.

Missed yes, but **John A. Michell** put his company, **MICHELL**, in the capable hands of his two daughters, **Julie** and **Beverley**, and his son-in-law **Stephen. MICHELL** continues to this day as a family owned and operated company, out of Stevenage, near London, England.

MICHELL ENGINEERING – GYRO SE TURNTABLE



MICHELL's manufactures five turntable models presently. Listed from top down, they are the: *ORBE*, *ORBE SE*, the *GyroDec*, then the *Gyro SE*, and finally, **MICHELL's** entry-level *TecnoDec*. To complement their turntables, **MICHELL** produces three tonearm models, listed in ascending order, they are the: *T2*, (new) *T8* (replacing the *T3*) and their top *TecnoArm 2*. **MICHELL** also produces a line of *MC*

cartridges, in ascending order, they are the: *Cusis E*, *Cusis E/H*, *Cusis S* and *Cusis M*. Several accessories and upgrade parts are also produced by **MICHELL**, including right to this day...the **MICHELL** record clamp.

This review is on **MICHELL's** mid-level and mentioned *Gyro SE* turntable. The **MICHELL** *Gyro SE* was first introduced in 1999, as a smaller, compact footprint variation of the *GyroDec*; however, with near matching performance. Rather than the full-sized acrylic plinth of the *GyroDec*, the *Gyro SE* employs a rigid / inert compact acrylic spyder that supports the turntable chassis above and onto which the feet are mounted below. The *Gyro SE* is **MICHELL's** best-selling turntable.

Gyro SE Feature-set

A handful of significant and unique features of the *Gyro SE* must be mentioned – they are:

Three-point Spring Suspension System:

The *Gyro SE* aluminum frame hangs on three pillar spring suspended tower mounts, each employing a rubber-coated metal spring that sits atop a tube sleeve, which slides over a post on the acrylic spyder base. Each tube sleeve contains an isolation ball bearing within. Three corresponding isolation feet are mounted to the bottom-side of the acrylic spyder. The springs





allows some height adjustment for leveling and optimizing their isolation effect.

Impedance-matched Platter with Solid Brass Weights:

The turntable platter of the *Gyro SE* is constructed of Delrin, given its vibration dampening effect as well as its near perfect resonance match to vinyl for sonic neutrality. Six solid and polished brass weights are affixed to the underside of the Delrin platter that provide mass and a flywheel effect that ensures consistent spin momentum, while also minimizing motor effort. This lends to greatly improved speed stability with the lowest wow and flutter.

Free Standing Motor Unit:

The motor assembly is a complete separate self-contained pod, with a precise 24V DC motor and separate power supply. The motor pod sits within an opening in the frame, having not contact with the table other than via the belt.

Inverted Oil Circulating Main Bearing:

The main bearing is a unique inverted bearing design with the point of rotation at the top, rather than the typical bottom, giving the centre of gravity up. Machined into the inside bore of the bearing is a modified Archimedean screw, that draws oil up from the reservoir to the thrust ball at the top, returning via a hole within the bearing spindle. This design ensures that friction and vibration are minimized.

Low Contact Area Feet:

The solid aluminium feet are designed to have a minimal contact patch, thus

to absorb spurious vibration, while possessing rigidity to yield both detail and tonal neutrality.

Though older descriptions and setup videos online gave me the impression that the *Gyro SE* might not be a simple setup, I was surprised to discover that this delivery would be MICHELL's new shipping pack that offers the *Gyro SE* substantially pre-assembled. Unpacking and assembly, was relatively simple and I was done in under 30 minutes – pay no attention to pre-2023 setups. Once I mounted and aligned the Cusis E MC, I was ready to play. On upstart, I did notice a low-level

« *Morning Phase* by **Beck** and the track *Cycle* was a most memorable listening session with the *Gyro SE*. The opening orchestral strings stretched immensely wide; the sound open with sultry definition calling out the individual instruments. Into the next track *Morning*, **Beck's** haunting vocals were presented with reverb and decay that enwrapped me, possessing height and bountiful width that drew up around to my sides - seemingly knocking down the walls of my room and sitting me within a sonic vista. »

minimizing vibrations of the support surface transferring into the turntable.

Unpacking / Setup

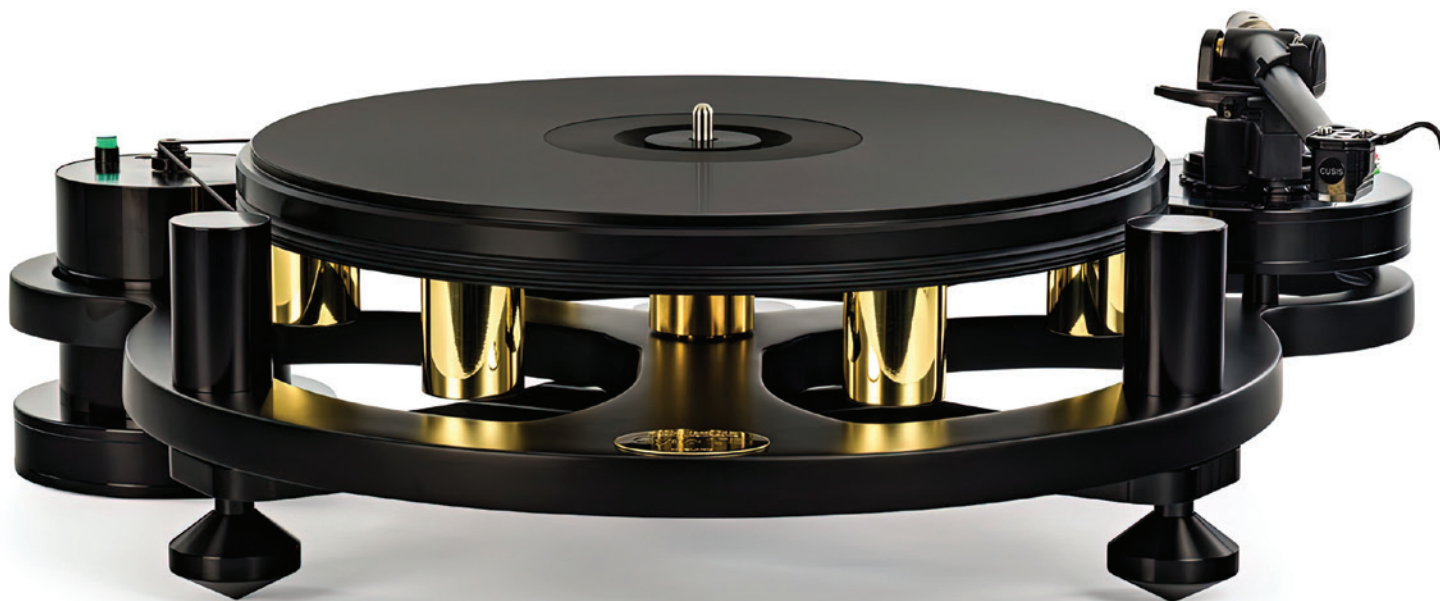
The *Gyro SE* that I received for this review was equipped with the **MICHELL T3** Tonearm, a **Rega** built that has just been replaced by **MICHELL's** new *T8* arm. To my eyes, the *T3* appears to be a derivation of **Rega's** *RB330* arm, whereas the *T2* aligns to a **Rega** *RB220*, and the new *T8* likens to a **Rega** *RB880*. **MICHELL** provides their own specific requirements to **Rega**, so though manufactured by **Rega** – these are **MICHELL** specific tonearms. The *Gyro SE* review sample was fitted with **MICHELL's** *Cusis E MC* cartridge, their most affordable model, which uses a samarium-cobalt magnet combined with pure iron to provide a very stable magnetic field. The cartridge coils are precision wound with 30µ pure copper wire. The *Cusis E MC* chassis is aluminum, designed

upper-mid whizz from the motor, which I was told was just the motor bearing settling in. Sure enough, after the 72 hours of play I gave to settle the cartridge in, that motor whizz had declined to soft whisper inaudible from 18" away. I also took note that the *Gyro SE* was impressively quiet, its suspension and separate isolated motor pillar transferring no perceivable noise into vinyl.

Construction / Build / Esthetic:

The construction of the **MICHELL** *Gyro SE* was splendid, from its Delrin platter with underhung solid brass flywheel weights, to its silver finished aluminum chassis with inlaid **MICHELL Engineering** *Gyro SE* England brass badge, acrylic spyder, spring assembly and low-contact isolation feet. The motor too was very solidly built, with superb fit and finish. If you know **Rega** tonearms, the **MICHELL T3** kept to my expectation of very high precision

MICHELL ENGINEERING – GYRO SE TURNTABLE



Rega manufacturing. Yet, all this doesn't tell the experience... for that, I have to say that the **MICHELL Gyro SE** is a spectacular looking table – whether sitting still or flying. Its design is undeniably classic and iconic, just as those three films that are linked to its creator. So gorgeous is the *Gyro SE* that its movements alone deliver a musical experience, in the absence of the vinyl. Videos do some justice to the *Gyro SE*'s beauty but for me, with her spinning, I was smitten. It was time to find out if beauty was just skin deep.

Ancillary System

I set the *Gyro SE* atop my **Quadraspire SV3T** rack connected to my **Gold Note PH10/PSU10** phono stage. I used my **Bryston BR20** preamplifier with 7B³ monoblocks, into my **Dynaudio Confidence C2 Signature** loudspeakers, for all my critical listening. I also used my resident **VPI Scout 1.1** with **Dynavector 10x5 HOMC** for comparative assessment, which my **Gold Note PH10** well aided, given its ability to connect two tables and switch with the simple push of a knob.

Listening / Evaluation

One of the albums that stood out with the *Gyro SE* was the album *Red*. No, not **Taylor Swift**'s album nor the one from **The Beatles**, but *Red* by **Diana Panton**, the Juno award winning Canadian jazz vocalist. Listening to *Say It* I was immediately taken by the delicious and devilishly beautiful vocal portrayal. The tone was naturally saturated, yet there was no smoothing over of detail; rather, fine detail abounded within all **Diana's** breaths and inflections. The *Gyro SE* with the *Cusis E* also expressed the romantic acoustic glow within the recording – nothing added & nothing left. The opening saxophone

possessed a caramel like sweetness. Bass notes were tight and textured too, with instrument resonance excellently preserved. The soundstage was wide, the edges laid out by the strings and piano keys. On the track *That's All*, I took note how impeccably quiet the *Gyro SE* was – a black background from which the elements popped out with dimension. I couldn't ignore the honeyed violin strings, as presented by the *Gyro SE*, their intrinsic feel laid bare for my indulgence.

Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section and the track *Jazz Me Blues* showed the capability of the *Gyro SE* with *Cusis E* with the top end. Here the cymbal play was delightfully airy, open, and finessed - the splash decays very extended, combined with an excellent metallic timbre. The ivory keys of the piano not only possessed their characteristic tone but within it came the fully dynamic energy of the hammer hits on the soundboard, giving a well enhanced sense of presence and realism. The upright bass tone was spot on, warm with the cavity resonance clear and complete. Dynamics in the percussion were top notch, with visceral snare strikes also possessing apparent perfect pitch. Listening to the sax, I was swooned by its smooth and burnished tone that conveyed the emotion of the music. Within all these details, richness was also a most apparent sense of speed - pace, rhythm, and timing clearly a proficiency of the *Gyro SE*.

Morning Phase by **Beck** and the track *Cycle* was a most memorable listening session with the *Gyro SE*. The opening orchestral strings stretched immensely wide; the sound open with sultry definition calling out the individual instruments. Into the next track *Morning*, **Beck's** haunting vocals were presented with

reverb and decay that enwrapped me, possessing height and bountiful width that drew up around to my sides - seemingly knocking down the walls of my room and sitting me within a sonic vista. The vibrant strings of the guitar possessed physicality, and dynamic presence with abundant string detail. Deep bass tones were delivered with immense control – the grip and spring of the notes most apparent.

Conversations, the album from **Belanger & Bisson**, a **Bernie Grundman** mastered album is an impeccable recording and most suitable for evaluating table like the *Gyro SE*. On the musical track *Wake Up*, **Anne**'s voice was nothing less than surreal. I've heard **Anne** many times live and unamplified, and the *Gyro SE* brought me closer to hearing her in the flesh than I recall. The sound was unforced and holistically detailed, refined, and uncompromising. On *Sutton Place Chorinho*, the cello strings and piano were revealed with magnificent truthfulness – compelling me to feel I was in the room with the instruments. *Rupture* is one of my favourite cello tracks and through the *Gyro SE* with *Cusis E*, there was tremendous texture, tone, and unwavering tenacity in **Vincent Belanger**'s methodical movements of the strings.

A go to album for me is **Sting**'s *Nothing Like the Sun*, it's an album I feel in love with in the late 80's and have always come back to. It's truly a masterpiece of jazz-pop fusion and musically never fails to please. The *Gyro SE* playing *The Lazarus Heart* rendered the cymbal splashes masterfully, their salt & pepper tone combined with airy pristine clarity. This pristine clarity and authentic tone carried through to the luster of the chimes. Drums were tight and impactful, without overhang and demonstrating great speed and exactness. Instruments were well separated within a generous soundstage. **Sting**'s vocals sounded amazingly authentic, the verve and passion in his voice coming through. With *Be Still My Beating Heart*, the rhythmic percussion was mesmerizing, while the sustain and trail of the bass notes were perfectly juxtaposed against the slow and massive sounding piano keys. At the last quarter of *Englishman In New York*, there is a drum attack that follows a sensual sax intro. Through the *Gyro SE* the pound of the drums was just monstrous, the concussive quality wallowing me with its dynamic swing and precision.

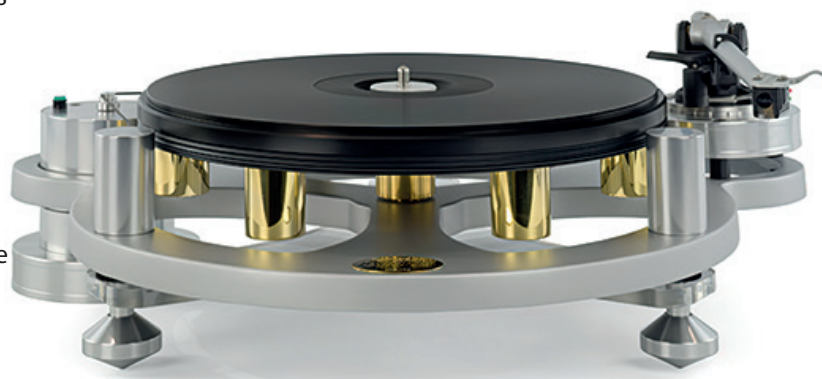
In 2023, the **Talking Heads**' *Stop Making Sense* album was re-released; however, I have the wonderful sounding original 1984 pressing of this live from the **Pantages Theatre**, Hollywood event. From the opening sounds of the audience on *Psycho Killer*, the *Gyro SE* seemed to immediately transport me to the concert by delivering the sound with lucid clarity. The punchy guitar strums played vividly, tight, and tenacious, expounding the string harmonic, while the quick repeating drumbeats possessed density and remarkable impact.

Comparison

In comparison to my **VPI/Dynavector** setup, the **MICHELL** was clearly the more sophisticated, revealing, nuanced and neutral in sound. The soundstage of the *Gyro SE* was noticeably blacker, with a greater sense of speed, definition, top end extension and air, as well as a complexity of tone. The **VPI** is musical, dynamic, and prolific, with heavier handed bass; however, in comparison it could not match the *Gyro SE*'s level of articulation, timbral accuracy, speed, finesse and downright clarity of the **MICHELL** *Gyro SE/Cusis E*. I well appreciated this insight but now I find the **VPI** setup wanting.

Conclusion

The **MICHELL** *Gyro SE*, T3 arm with *Cusis E* cartridge ensemble is nothing other than an incredible turntable kit. Remarkably neutral, quick, and nimble in its presentation, combined with a low noise suspended design that allows the music on the vinyl to emerge from the black. There is a dynamism to its sound, given its ability to liberate both micro and macro dynamics from the pressing with appreciable weight. Soundstages are generous in width, depth, and height, with images well organized and insightfully clear. The top end is delightful - airy, open, delicate, and elegant. With the mids, the *Gyro SE* is impressive - it's liquid and sultry, with fully developed harmonics and all the while authentic. Listening to the **MICHELL** *Gyro SE* has been an otherworldly vinyl experience...unforgettable.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Pricing (Canadian \$):

Gyro SE (table only): \$6,499

Gyro SE with T3 arm (as tested, without cartridge): \$6,999

Gyro SE Complete with (T8 + Cusis E): \$8,999

T8 tonearm: \$1,699

Cusis E MC cartridge: \$1,699

Canadian Distributor: AUDIONATION, T.: 1.613.566.7005,
<https://audionation.ca>; <https://www.michellaudio.com>

RUARK AUDIO R410 ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM

THE MUSIC BOX THAT BRINGS HAPPINESS

BY JEAN-DENIS DOYLE



Photo : Oliver Perrott



What many people exactly need is a beautiful, all-encompassing device that broadcasts quality music and is connected to the latest technologies. And by all-encompassing, I mean a single box equipped with speakers, emitting music without any other device to complement it. An optional turntable could, however, be a nice addition. For a long time, the *all-in-one* market has been dominated by **Naim's** *Mu-so*, the very

instigator of this type of device for the discerning audiophile. However, this market is expanding, and *Mu-so* is no longer the sole ruler of the game. Indeed, the manufacturer **Ruark** now offers us the splendid and highly interesting *R410*. A surprising device, different from its counterparts in many ways. Let's take the time to discover it together and explore its amazing features.

It is quite possible that the name **Ruark** doesn't mean much to you. However, this English family-owned company, which manufactures high-fidelity products, was founded in the early 1980s by **Brian O'Rourke** and his son **Alan O'Rourke**. Initially, **Ruark** was a manufacturer of loudspeakers, with the first successful model being the small two-way *Sabre*. In the following years, it introduced many original loudspeaker models, always with a beautiful English sound signature, distinguishing itself from competitors with its tonal color. In 2004, the company took a decisive turn towards the production of small all-in-one products, including uniquely styled table radios. As craftsmanship in quality woodworking is a true tradition at **Ruark**, it found its way into the new product range. It's worth noting that the company, now led by **Alan O'Rourke**, has developed exceptional expertise in loudspeakers over the years. This heritage is audible in current products and easily recognizable to those familiar with the brand.

Ruark's products are now divided into two main ranges. First, the *R* series, including several interesting and complete small products. Then, the ambitious *100* series, which includes the fabulous *R810* and the *R410* model under review. The *R410* is a device that perfectly fits **Ruark's** philosophy, offering very nice devices with refined designs that blend seamlessly into your decor. As it is **Ruark**, the sound must be impeccable. Let's now see how it manages to achieve this little miracle.

Technical Description

The **Ruark** *R410* is an *all-in-one* device in the purest sense of the term. It is an ultra-complete and ultra-modern version of your grandparents' table radio. The speakers, amplifiers, and everything needed to enjoy online music are integrated into the *R410*. It has a line input that allows you to connect an external *CD* player or any other device with a two-volt output. A *USB* input is available and properly formatted. An *HDMI Arc* input allows you to connect your TV easily and use the

R410 as a superb soundbar. The *R410* even has a phono input in *MM* format, allowing you to connect a turntable. It also has an output for a subwoofer, which will be more than optional since it is capable of reaching very low frequencies, down to about 35 Hz. To achieve this, it has two 100 mm bass drivers equipped with substantial magnets. The speakers use a ported design, and the two ports exit under the device, allowing for wide dispersion of low frequencies. To reproduce the highs with a gentle touch, they are handled by two 20 mm silk tweeters. The amplification is provided by high-quality 120 W Class *D* modules.

The device is controlled by a well-designed multifunction knob located on the top of the device, which **Ruark** calls *Rotodial*. The remote control is an exact replica of the *Rotodial*. So, you won't have to learn a new routine for operating your device. This year, if I had to award a trophy for the coolest and most functional remote control, I've had the opportunity to try, this one would win. With its rotary

RUARK AUDIO R410 ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM

volume control, it's a pure joy to use. A small screen resembling a smartphone completes the front face. It is functional but may be a bit challenging to read from two meters away.

The **Ruark R410** incorporates a genuine *FM* tuner, and a telescopic antenna is even provided. The inclusion of a quality radio in the *R410* is a significant advantage that will be appreciated daily. Often, consumers don't think about it, but upon reflection, could you do without a radio in your car?

Considering what **Ruark** offers, and for its price, the *R410* seems like a good deal. It is a well-built device, with very nice quality circuits and splendid finishing quality. It's what you call getting your money's worth.

Unboxing and Installation

The **Ruark R410** installs quite well, provided you watch the tutorials and read the manual carefully. As it is equipped with **Google Chromecast**, you will need a **Google Home** account.

« With the *R410*, music is on point regardless of the resolution level. In my view, this quality is fundamental for this type of device intended for daily use by the whole family. And while we're on the subject of everyday happiness, I would like to make a special mention of the *FM* radio section included in the device. It is efficient, with a low noise level and excellent reception quality, especially with my favorite station **CBC 93.5**. »

Nothing too complicated! Once connected to **Google Home**, the rest will happen automatically. Surprisingly, the **Ruark R410** does not have a specific application and doesn't really need one to function. Indeed, the multifunction knob on the device allows you to access all its settings and adjust them from the scrollable screen. As the **Ruark R410** is compatible with **Google, Chromecast, Apple Air Play2, Tidal Connect**, and **Spotify Connect**, you only need to use the application of your choice to play your music. This approach, of not using a specific application, is quite innovative and has the advantage of simplifying things. The downside is that it can be more limiting when it comes to selecting or searching for Internet radio stations. Like any technological device, don't hesitate to ask your dealer questions about it and its operation. Take the time to handle it and see if you feel comfortable with the function layout.

The **Ruark R410** has some interesting features to adjust its sound according to your tastes or its placement in your room.

The device has well-thought-out tone controls and a circuit that creates a more three-dimensional and enveloping stereo effect. Once correctly adjusted, the music played by the *R410* will be beautiful.

A Typically British Tone

It only takes three notes to fall in love with the **Ruark R410** and realize how impeccable its sound is. The balance between low frequencies, midrange, and treble cannot attract any criticism, it's so well done. With the album *We Get Requests* by the **Oscar Peterson Trio**, the piano is perfectly credible, with a lot of body and hammer strikes that are clear and without unpleasant resonance. Obviously, the stereo image is not as wide as with a conventional stereo system, but you get used to it very quickly. Once the stereo image optimization circuit is activated, the illusion is quite stunning, and the music is reproduced effortlessly throughout the room. One of the pleasant aspects of listening to music with this type of *all-in-one* device is that the listening position is less critical since the sound emission area is narrower. An interesting feature of the **Ruark R410** is its unique way of reproducing high frequencies. The cymbals surround the entire device and seem to be suspended with great finesse. It's bright and airy, very soothing and pleasant to listen to.

Splendid Versatility

The **Ruark R410** is the ultimate digital hassle-free device par excellence. I made sure to try it with many different music sources. From **YouTube** to **Spotify**, **Apple Music** to **Tidal** and **Qobuz** at their best resolutions, the *R410* delivers the goods with ease and always with that warm and easy-to-listen-to tone. With the *R410*, music is on point regardless of the resolution level. In my view, this quality is fundamental for this type of device intended for daily use by the whole family. And while we're on the subject of everyday happiness, I would like to make a special mention of the *FM* radio section included in the device. It is efficient, with a low noise level and excellent reception quality, especially with my favorite station **CBC 93.5**.

A Formidable Soundbar

The **Ruark R410** makes an excellent soundbar. As the low frequencies have a nice impact and plenty of extension, you won't need to add a subwoofer. At my place, the stereo image had exactly the same dimension as the TV screen. I love it! It's a welcome change from disproportionately loud home theater effects, where the sound is immense, while the screen is only 55 inches diagonally. Additionally, the voice and dialogue remain perfectly intelligible and centered. There's no need to watch a movie at an infernal volume to hear what the



Photo : Oliver Perrott

RUARK AUDIO R410 ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM



actors have to say. As the sound is fine and detailed, it allows you to appreciate subtle sound effects present in the film you're watching. Pure enjoyment!

Conclusion

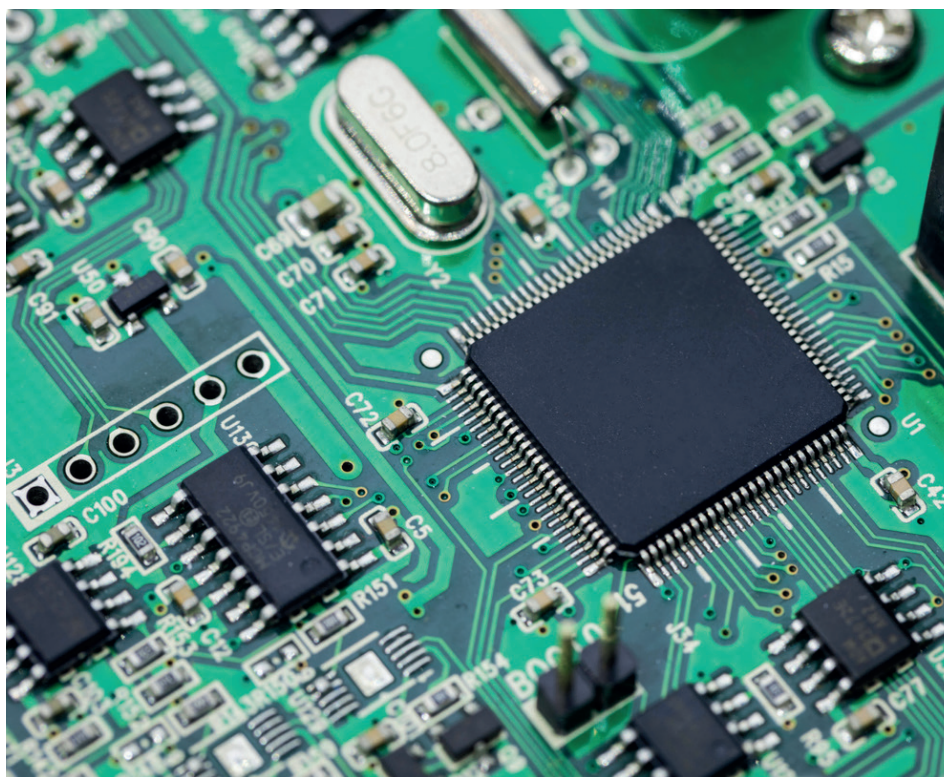
The **Ruark R410** is truly pleasant to live with every day. Easy to use by everyone at home, it stays musical regardless of the content. It is superbly built, and its price is reasonable, considering its versatility and the quality offered. This is a device destined for success, as it perfectly meets the needs of many consumers looking for a simple and elegant solution. For many people, the **Ruark R410** will be a splendid music box that brings them a lot of happiness.

GENERAL INFORMATION

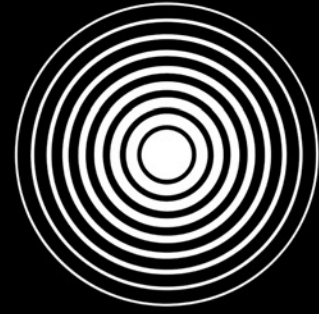
Price: \$2,199

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

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What's New?

MONITOR AUDIO INTRODUCES... THE PLATINUM IN-WALL 3G

BY THE NEWS ROOM

Monitor Audio enhances its 3G speaker offering in the Platinum series with a powerful architectural model designed for in-wall installation.

Monitor Audio is proud to announce the release of the *PL-IW 3G*, an in-wall speaker from the *Platinum 3G* series. This flagship high-performance model is designed for high-end home theater rooms and two-channel stereo systems where precise, clear, and realistic sound is essential. It delivers maximum breadth and sonic impact with minimal intrusion into the room. Moreover, its versatile design allows for placement anywhere in a system, either as a front *LCR* model or as a highly effective surround or rear speaker. The *PL-IW 3G* is a versatile high-fidelity wall speaker, featuring the latest acoustic innovations from the *Platinum G* series, including the *MPD III* high-frequency transducer. It delivers extraordinary performance levels that match the exceptional craftsmanship and highly sought-after design of the freestanding models in the range.

Principales caractéristiques

- Speaker Configuration: two 6.5-inch bass drivers, a 4-inch midrange driver, and an *MPD III* transducer housed in a rotatable enclosure for *LCR* versatility.

- Third-generation *MPD III* high-frequency transducers reduce distortion, flatten frequency response, and produce a wider, clearer, more consistent, and realistic sound.
- The *RDT III* cone provides piston-like control, even under extreme performances, offering more precise and vibrant tonal balance and lower distortion.
- Short-wound voice coils for better speaker efficiency, livelier dynamics, and reduced distortion.
- Patented **Dynamic Coupling Filter (DCF)** mechanism for a more natural sound.

Available for installation now!

Price: *Platinum In-Wall 3G* - \$6,999 each.

<https://www.monitoraudio.com/en/product-ranges/platinum-ci/platinum-in-wall-3g/>



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