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Decibel Hi Fi Newsletter No. 56 September 2017

Dear Brian

My article last month about vinyl records quality produced some interesting feedback. Firstly it seems you can't necessarily believe everything you read, even in a reputable newspaper like the Australian. And one of our more experienced collectors advises some of the brands you can rely on.

So Hi Fi is an abbreviation for high fidelity, what's Wi Fi? - see below.

I mentioned last month I would review the Elipson Saturn S speakers. That hasn't happened yet but I came across some very affordable bookshelf speakers from a Chinese manufacturer.

If you want to save \$770 off the price of a Moth RCM2 record cleaning machine see below - but there's a catch - hint:DIY.

Musical regards

Brian Maddern

Decibel Hi Fi & Soundring



Vinyl Record quality - what is the truth?

The Weekend Australian article quoted that record sales in USA had increased by 38% in the first half of 2015 to 5.6million, but only increased 12% in the first half of 2016, and just 2% in 2017. These figures were plucked from a Wall Street Journal article by Neil Shah. Michael Fremer of Stereophile has

said they are rubbish as from his industry sources he estimates sales of vinyl records to exceed 20 million. Also, in the article Fremer was quoted as saying that although the manufacturers had the original analog master tapes they were using inferior digital files and CDs to speed up the process of producing vinyl records.

In an article on AnalogPlanet Fremer strongly criticizes Shah and claims that in general if digital files are used to produce vinyl records they are very high resolution not CD quality. [The article, and the following comments](#) make interesting reading.

Recommended Vinyl Record Brands

From my own experience I can vouch for the quality of the following brands.

- MA Recordings
- Mobile Fidelity Labs
- Linn Records
- Stockfisch Records
- Opus 3 Records
- Reference Recordings

and one of my customers who is a very experienced collector has recommended ...

- Bear Family
- Sundazed
- Speakers Corner
- Music on Vinyl
- Vanguard
- Japanese pressings from the 70s - any label

Wi Fi - wireless fidelity?

When the trade association formed to licence wireless local area networks were looking for a catchier name than "IEEE 802.11b Direct Sequence" they contracted a brand development company called Interbrand, who came up with the suggestion wi-fi as a play on hi-fi. They registered it as a brand name, and it stuck. So the wi means wireless, but the fi doesn't really mean anything. The organisation assumed the name Wi-Fi Alliance.



Small loudspeakers

The traditional view regarding loudspeakers is that you need large ones to get good bass. That has been challenged in the last decade or so by the proliferation of powered sub-woofers, many of which are not all that large. When you have a subwoofer the main speakers can be much smaller because they don't have to reproduce the lower frequencies. However, what if you don't want or don't have the space for a subwoofer. Then it becomes much more of a challenge to achieve an acceptable low frequency response from a small cabinet.

DARED is a Chinese brand that make a range of quite innovative and reasonably priced valve based amplifiers. They also make the [SP-02 bookshelf speakers](#). These are quite small, just 245mm high, and finished in high gloss black enamel. I would categorise them as traditionally and conservatively styled, but finished to a high standard. They have high quality terminal posts which accept banana plugs, spades, or bare wire. They are rated for amplifiers from 10 to 50 WRMS.



I hooked them up initially to our family room TV system, which has a SMSL Q5 digital amplifier/DAC which produces up to 40Watts per channel. As our usual speakers are the omnidirectional Ohm 1000s the initial observation was that the sound was far less spacious, however the voices from TV programs were very natural and when sitting in front of the TV the stereo image is well defined. We also listened at length to Spotify sessions and their performance on a variety of music styles is quite satisfactory. In particular listening to the latest Paul Kelly LP there was no obvious lack of bass. Changing back to our usual speakers increased the volume, spread, and bass weight of the music but the SP-02 weren't embarrassed in terms of their tonal accuracy, particularly with vocals. If you are in to heavy rock music or large orchestral recordings at realistic levels these aren't suitable. These are good speakers for small rooms and moderate volumes. And at only [\\$350 a pair](#) we can thoroughly recommend them.

How to save \$770 on the price of a Moth RCM2 (record cleaning machine).

The [MOTH RCM2](#) sells for \$1870. That's a lot of money, but this is a heavy duty machine, suitable for a record store or someone with a huge collection of records as it can be used continuously all day.



How do you save \$770? You assemble it yourself. The Moth Group make the parts available as a kit, and some years ago we produced an enclosure kit so that you don't have to have woodworking skills to take advantage of the parts kit. The [mgRCM2K](#) and [dbRCM2EK](#) together cost \$1100. I built one about 10 years ago and it took most of a weekend. It's not particularly difficult but you need to have some basic assembly and electric wiring skills.



But the savings are considerable - so if you'd like to have a heavy duty record cleaning machine and are prepared to put in some effort to save \$770 - here's the way to do it.

On the other hand, if you'd like to have a record cleaning machine, but don't require it to be heavy duty, our [Record Doctor V](#) is only \$365.



Why do you need one? - the best way to clean vinyl records is a wet cleaning system. And the best way to remove the dirty fluid from a record is a vacuum record cleaning machine.



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