

NEWSLETTER

No. 18, March 2008

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Dear hi fi enthusiast

This edition of the newsletter has been a long time coming, so it's quite a bit larger than usual. The regular two monthly publishing of the last couple of years was interrupted by the sale of our old premises and the completion and move into our new one. Now that the dust has settled and some major projects are complete I intend to resume sending out a newsletter every two or three months.

Setting up home entertainment systems has been a priority and one of the stories below describes what we have done. I hope that the way we achieved a satisfactory solution in our living and home theatre rooms may be of interest to some of our readers.

As well as having more room to operate this business one benefit of our move is that we can now demonstrate some of our products (by appointment only). So if you live in or near Brisbane or intend to visit we will be pleased to arrange to demonstrate the Jordan speakers, our own Decibel Omni speakers, and various turntables and ancillary equipment. There are still many products that are better trialed in your own system, but as you can't really do that with speaker kits this may help some people who would like to hear the finished item before committing the time and money to assembling a kit.

The current high flying Australian dollar means that many products are now cheaper than ever before. As we get new stock in we will adjust many of the prices on the website but if you are interested in something that hasn't changed send me an email and I'll work out our best price based on the current exchange rates. In particular the record sleeves and Disc Doctor products have been re-priced. There is also now a 15% discount for quantities of 100 or more sleeves of the one type (excludes Nagaoka 102 which are already discounted by 10%).

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Recent Additions to the Website

Decibel LP12 base
Decibel Universal Turntable Cover
MOTH RCM MkII enclosure kit
Boston Audio TunePlates
Pro-Ject RPM1 turntable
Pro-Ject Expression Mk3 turntable
Diamond Cut 7 software
Magix Audiolab Version 12
Knosti Record Cleaning Kit

Industry News

Graham Slee continues to receive praise for his phono pre-amps.

October 2007 Graham Slee Era Gold Reflex - Class A Recommended Component

Graham Slee Elevator EXP - Class A Recommended Component

Graham Slee Era Gold MK.V - Class A Recommended Component *Stereophile* Vol.30 No.10

Graham Slee Gram Amp 2 SE - 2007 Editors Choice Award *The Absolute Sound* Issue 175

David Price has reviewed the Graham Slee Voyager headphone amplifier in the April 2008 edition of HI-FI WORLD. His conclusion "the best sounding portable headphone amp I've heard to date". If you

would like to read the review here's a link to the GSP category page

http://www.decibelhifi.com.au/category48_1.htm. The introductory price of the Voyager is \$396, a 20% saving on the normal retail.

Australian Hi Fi magazine has reviewed the Thorens TD160HD turntable with TP250 tonearm and Ortofon Rondo Bronze moving coil cartridge in their Jan/Feb 2008 issue. The reviewer was not surprisingly "hugely impressed" with both. Personally I think a better tonearm is warranted as the TP250 is similar to the basic Rega RB250 which as everyone knows can be substantially improved with several modifications. There's also a review of the MJ Acoustics Pro50 Mk2 subwoofer which we have previously mentioned as suitable to match up with Jordan JXr6HD drivers.

SLATE, is a daily magazine on the web. On Dec 4, 2007 they posted this article by Fred Kaplan. "In Defense of Audiophiles - The iPod hasn't made great sound obsolete." I found it interesting, though I suspect "it will be preaching to the converted" for most of my readers.

Here's the link <http://www.slate.com/id/2179093/>

Product News

Pro-Ject Audio Systems have released a new entry level turntable onto the Australian market, The RPM1. It features a decoupled motor and new curved tonearm and sells for just \$396 with an Ortofon OM3E cartridge. They have also upgraded the 1Xpression to the Mark 3 version, and at \$770 it now includes an acrylic platter, carbon fibre tonearm, and Audio Technica AT95E cartridge.



Eichmann Technologies International (ETI) have added several new connectors to their range. Their popular RCA bullet connectors are now available with anodized aluminium covers as well as the plastic ones. They have also introduced PhonoPods – high quality RCA sockets for panel mounting. Made of gold plated tellurium copper instead of brass they have 320% better conductivity than most high quality RCA sockets on the market. They have also added a range of spade connectors, popular for speaker cable terminations because of the large contact surface area they provide at the speaker and amplifier binding posts. These also provide the 320% improvement in conductivity over the normal brass ones.



Diamond Cut Productions make possibly the most capable software available for recording from LPs, tapes and other analog sources. Their DC6 has been an industry standard for several years. They have now released Diamond Cut 7, with as you would expect even more facilities. Price is the same (\$299)

Whilst talking software, our most popular program for transferring LPs to computer (then to CD) is Magix AudioLab – just released is Version 12 – it's in the PC Products category.

Many people have turntables that work OK, but they look awful because the perspex lid is scratched or damaged. We can now supply replacement lids for almost any model for \$132. We are also producing a universal cover (like the Pro-Ject Cover-It) for \$187 and a universal dust cover (like the JA Michel Unicover) for \$82.50. All are in the Turntable Parts category.

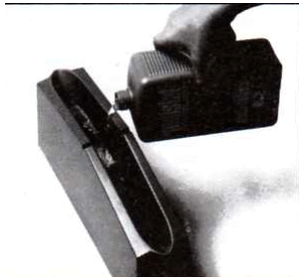


The Sonic Impact Super T-Amp has been a popular product for the last couple of years, but unfortunately it has now been discontinued. The main reason is the success of the Gen 2 T-amp which now replaces both the original T-Amp and the Super T-Amp.

We have added a little booklet entitled "How to set up and tune your turntable and tonearm" into our Vinyl Tools category. It provides a quite comprehensive explanation of the terms and techniques involved with hi fi record players and is priced at \$16.50.

Record Cleaning Machines

The Moth RCM MkII and the Loricraft PRCs are excellent products but their prices are difficult to justify unless you have a truly extensive record collection. One of the reasons the Disc Doctor cleaning products are so popular is that they do enable you to clean your records thoroughly at a reasonable price, albeit rather slowly.



The Knosti manual record cleaning system is very popular in Europe and we are now a reseller in Australia. The kit includes a plastic trough which has two brushes installed. There is a spindle and clamp to protect the LP label, a rack to allow the records to dry, and a 1 litre bottle of anti-static cleaning mixture.



After rotating the record in the fluid between the brushes you simply allow it to dry in the rack. The record gets coated with the fluid and it is claimed that it evaporates without leaving a residue. I tried that procedure and found the record took a lot longer to dry off than the 7 minutes specified. When played it was certainly quite clean and quiet, with just an occasional click. When you've finished the cleaning session you pour the fluid back into the bottle via a filtered funnel. Any material removed off the record gets caught in the filter and therefore the fluid can be re-used.



I also tried the device using Disc Doctor QuickWash. After cleaning, the record is wiped down with a cloth or tissue before being allowed to dry in the rack. If you wish to use the Disc Doctor Miracle Record Cleaner a rinse phase is required. In that instance I used a second tray with distilled water in it to rinse the record before wiping off the excess water and allowing it to air dry in the rack. The difference is that the Disc Doctor fluids do not cling to the record like the Knosti fluid does. Overall I thought the Disc Doctor fluid did a better job of cleaning.



The complete Knosti kit is \$132, and an extra trough is \$59.40. My recommendation is to use the kit with the Disc Doctor fluids rather than the Knosti mixture.

For those DIYers out there, the Moth RCM MkII is available as a kit, and you can save \$550 by building one yourself. However that involves constructing the enclosure, which is quite a lot of work. To make it easier we now are providing a kit for the enclosure, for just \$110. So you won't save quite as much money, but will save a whole lot of time and not require woodworking machinery.

Living Room System

We have a long rectangular living area incorporating kitchen, dining and sitting area. We wanted to set up a system that would give us television, radio, CD and DVD player, and internet access. Previously we used a desktop PC, but this time we did not want to include a computer desk in the living room as we have our work computers set up in our office. So I finished up housing a media centre PC in some Ikea "Billy" bookcases.

The screen is on a wall bracket so can be swiveled towards the kitchen, dining or seating areas. The speakers are the Decibel Omni floorstanders, which create a spacious sound field which fills the whole room and has no "hot spots". These speakers really suit an open plan layout. More information is in the Loudspeaker Kits category on the website. They are driven by a T-amp. When you are in front of the unit the sound seems to emerge from the screen, so if watching TV the voice location is very natural.

The PC is a normal desktop unit running Windows Vista Media Centre Edition. It has a digital TV tuner and external UD10 audio converter. With the



computer powered up we can watch TV, listen to DIG radio, play CDs or DVDs, stream radio or video from the internet, play music recorded on the computer, and browse the internet for information, recipes, emails etc. The TV can be paused if there's a phone call in the middle of a program, and we can record shows to watch later. When the computer isn't being used actively the screen saver cuts in with a huge collection of family photos set to display as a random slide show.

As we often just want to listen to FM Radio I have included a separate AM/FM tuner connected to the amp via a switch so we don't need to turn the computer on. We don't use an mp3 player but that could also be easily incorporated via the switchbox.

The computer gets a bit warm inside the cabinet, so I removed the lower part of the rear panel to improve air flow and accommodate the power leads, speaker cables, interconnects and TV antenna cable. The keyboard and mouse are wireless, and get put out of sight when not being used. To operate as a TV only we use a Media Centre remote control.

The system has been working reliably for several months now and gives us all the facilities we were wanting but in an attractive cabinet that doesn't look like a computer system. Next issue I'll describe what we have done in our home theatre room.



LINN LP12 Upgrades

The LP12 sub-chassis is made of pressed steel, with the tonearm mounting board made out of hardboard and fastened by small wood screws. The Cirkus upgrade improves the rigidity of the subassembly and includes a better main bearing and subplatter. Even then, further improvement is possible, and last year Linn introduced their solid aluminium Keel subassembly, however at a price that makes it unattractive. Now there's a carbon fibre subassembly available from an Australian manufacturer. Cost is just \$1100 compared to \$5500 for the Keel. We can install it for you for \$198. One enthusiast who installed it reported "it is a sonic revelation and quite a bargain also". See more information in the Turntable Upgrades category.



Another simpler upgrade is to replace the flimsy hardboard baseboard and hard rubber feet with a 10mm acrylic baseboard and Vibrapods. The whole LP12 plinth becomes sturdier and the Vibrapods absorb any vibration from the supporting furniture. This enables the floating suspension of the turntable to work better. An additional benefit is that the suspension nuts can be adjusted without having to remove the base. This type of mod has been around for some time and the SRMTech version sells for about \$290 in Australia. We are now getting these made locally and the price is just \$198, including the 4 Model 2 Vibrapods.

In-Line Attenuators and Filters

A common problem with many stereo systems, particularly those which are made up of separate components, is a mismatch between the output levels of pre-amp and power amp. Sometimes this is caused by the source unit, eg. a CD player, putting out too high a signal. The result is that the volume control is only able to be used in a very narrow range, and by the time it is turned to the 9 o'clock position the system is at full volume.



The way to solve this is simple. By putting attenuators on the inputs to the power amp you can improve the situation markedly. You not only get more control over the volume level but the background noise is reduced as well. An arrangement which I find works well is to have 12dB attenuators on the power amp inputs and 6dB on the pre-amp input from the CD deck also.

We have been selling the excellent Rothwell attenuators for several years, and their site has a full technical description of how and why they work.

http://www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk/html/how_attenuators_work.html

We now also have an alternative source, with a greater range, and lower pricing. Harrison Laboratory is a U.S. manufacturer with a wide range of products particularly aimed at the automotive sound industry. But their attenuators and some of their filters are of interest to hi fi enthusiasts as well. The attenuators are available in 3dB, 6dB, and 12dB, but can also be stacked for larger values. Price is \$49.50 per pair.

Although the attenuators will be of interest to practically everyone, their in-line filters are particularly for enthusiasts who wish to run multiple amplifiers with speaker systems ie. Bi-amping or Tri-amping (or more). They call them FMODs, and describe them as an active crossover simulator.

For example, if you wish to add a subwoofer to an existing speaker system, you really want to send the low frequencies to the subwoofer, and everything above (say) 150Hz to the current speakers. By using a 150Hz high pass FMOD on the inputs to the power amplifier driving the small speakers you will prevent them from receiving the low frequencies, allowing the overall sound level to go higher without straining either the amp or the small speakers. As most amplified subwoofers have a low pass filter included you won't need an FMOD there. You could use this technique with Jordan JXr6HDs or J6Ts to protect them from being overdriven by an amp that is capable of putting out a lot more power than what they are rated at.



If you wanted to go further and bi-amp the small speakers, you could use a (say) 2500Hz high pass FMOD on the amplifier driving the tweeters and a 2500Hz low pass filter on the amp driving the bass/mid driver (in conjunction with the 150Hz high pass). For this to work the speaker system needs to have separate terminals for each driver so that the passive crossover can be bypassed.

These filter modules provide a simple solution to setting up active speaker systems, and at just \$49.50 per pair, a cost effective one as well. There are a wide range of values from 50Hz to 6500Hz and are all 12dB/octave slope. Their sub-sonic filters are available in 20Hz and 30Hz.

We have created a new category on the website for Harrison Labs http://www.decibelhifi.com.au/category59_1.htm . Other products in the Harrison Laboratory range are also available through us – their website is www.hlabs.com .

Secondhand Items

I'm a great believer in secondhand hi fi equipment, because the good brands just seem to last for ever. But many people are wary about buying via eBay or Trading Post. We offer a warranty on all items we sell – 3 months on most; we also give a 1 month guarantee on items that are sold on consignment.

Upgraded LINN LP12. There are lots of LP12s out there. Many are 25 years old and have never been upgraded, so they sell for \$1000 or so. At the other end of the scale a new Linn Sondek LP12 with Lingo power supply and top of the line Ekos tonearm is over \$12,000. So I was pretty excited when a customer asked me to sell his up-to-date LP12 for him. This one started out as a stock standard LP12 in the early 80s. But since then it has been consistently upgraded to now include the Cirkus kit, Trampolin, Lingo, Ekos, and a recently Garrott retipped Troika moving coil cartridge (plus a second Troika as a spare). At about \$15000 replacement value this has got to be one of our best bargains at \$5210 which includes the original Linn packaging so that it will travel safely.

GARROTT Optim FGS phono cartridge. With less than 100 hours playing time this unit is perfect. The owner has upgraded his system and now finds a moving coil cartridge suits him better. \$660.

METAXAS Audio Systems (M.A.S.) Iraklis power amplifier and Marquis pre-amplifier (without phono circuitry). These products are legendary Australian esoterica and have a great following in Europe . These particular units are only about 5 years old and are available for \$2420 the pair.

LUXMAN direct drive turntables were a very popular component in the 70s and 80s. We have a PD290 in excellent condition. It has a new Perspex lid and includes a reputable Stanton 500 cartridge. \$275

REGA Planar 2 turntable with **GRACE** G707 tonearm and **ORTOFON** OM5E cartridge. Rega have a deservedly good reputation for no nonsense turntables that give great sound for their money. This is an early model with glass platter (current models are MDF) and unusually a Grace tonearm

rather than the more usual Rega models. An excellent buy at \$495 - current model is \$799 plus a cartridge.

PRO-JECT RPM4 with Ortofon OM5E cartridge. Pro-Ject have really made huge inroads into the turntable market over the last few years with a continuously changing range of innovative and great performing turntables. The owner of this RPM4 has recently upgraded to an RPM9 so we have this excellent unit at a bargain price of \$550.

All the items listed above can be purchased via the website in the Secondhand category. Please email if more information is required.

Clearance Items

Pricing on the website has not been changed so when you place an order please mention the special pricing in the Customer Instructions section.

Cakewalk Pyro 5 software - 1 copy only at half price.

Neophone wide range drivers – a few pairs available at half price.

Diskeeper 2 record sleeves – somehow we over ordered these excellent sleeves so now have thousands in stock. For a limited time you can buy these at just \$44 per 100.

Atlas BT606 speaker stands in black. 1 pair only available at 25% discount.

Sonic Impact T24 iPod digital audio system. Better than the Apple or Bose sound docks. 1 only demo unit at 25% discount.

Solid Tasmanian Oak 8 litre enclosure kits for Jordan JX92S drivers – 1 set only – 25% off

Vinyl wrap – 10 and 18 ft rolls – various colours – 25% off.

ETI eXpress 4 speaker cables with bayonet plugs – 1 only demo 2.5m pair – 25% off

AR interconnects – 20% off all items in stock

That's about it for this issue. Happy listening.

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