

NEWSLETTER

No. 17, September 2007

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Dear hi fi enthusiast

It's the 5th anniversary of our website this month, so as well as some hopefully interesting news for you we also have a special offer. We have always tried to make it possible for you to evaluate products in your own environment and give a money-back guarantee that if a product does not perform up to your expectations you can return it for a full refund. This month and to the end of October we go even further – we will also refund the freight/postage BOTH WAYS. So you really have nothing at all to lose in trying out some of our products. There are a few provisos of course. Anything you return must be in the original packaging and unmarked. This offer doesn't apply to all products but includes the most popular ones. So if you have been thinking of trying out the Mat 1, or some Vibrapods, or interconnects or speaker cables, or a new cartridge or phono preamp, here's a completely risk free opportunity. Send me an email if you want to check if the offer applies to some other product you are particularly interested in.

We are also keen to promote some of our exclusive products so will offer 10% discount on all Origin Live turntables, tonearms, DC motor upgrades, Graham Slee Era Gold V and Reflex phono preamps, and the MusicMaker 3 and Classic phono cartridges. And if you are interested in a combination of these we'll do an even better deal. This offer applies until the end of October.

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Bulk eXpress 4 speaker cable
Ortofon 2M (mm) cartridges
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Industry News

The biggest story of the last month or so is that Ted and Denise Jordan have sold the EJ Jordan business to a Swedish company. More details below.

Austin Jackson of Boston Audio has been developing a new product called TunePlates. There's a link to a review on his home page <http://www.boston-audio.com/>. We have had great success with his Mat1, with most purchasers raving about the improvement it has provided to their turntable. Yet he told me recently that his TuneBlocks outsell the Mat1 in the USA. So for all you CD enthusiasts, take advantage of our anniversary offer to try them out with absolutely no risk.

One of the most famous brands in hi fi, Thorens, has a new distributor in Australia. Famous for their turntables and other equipment over many years we are looking forward to reselling this range. A detailed analysis of the model range will appear in the next newsletter, but in the meantime if you want

to have a look at what they currently offer go to www.thorens.com. The Australian retail price list is available also from the new Thorens category page.

We have been approached by the UK Transcriptors turntable company to distribute their turntables in Australia. This is a brand with impeccable credentials and history. To find out about the background of the company and their current product range go to <http://www.transcriptors.net/>. We'll have Australian pricing worked out in the next few weeks and will add the products to the website.



Some of the Pro-Ject turntables have increased in price. The Debut 3 is now \$440 (up from \$396) but still represents very good value for money at the entry level to hi fi turntables. The importers have also advised that more of the Pro-Ject range will be made available to the Australian market (for example the different colours of Debut 3), but this will normally involve a special order and several months wait.

Moth Audio Products have announced the Tube Imp. This is a very specialized bit of kit for valve enthusiasts. The Tube Imp measures the steady state current, gain and transconductance characteristics of any B9A double triode tube with the standard ECC83/ECC88 Footprint. Operating at 12VAC from the included external power supply, the Tube Imp offers matching and parameter testing of a range of commonly used double triode valves at a price that is affordable to individual valve equipment enthusiasts as well as retail outlets small OEM concerns. Price is \$800 plus GST.



Origin Live have lowered the price of their Aurora turntable. It now sells in Australia for \$2420 (previously \$2860). They have renamed their Aurora Gold turntable the Calypso. The specifications and pricing are the same (\$3960). The Resolution and Sovereign turntables have increased to \$5940 and \$9900 respectively. There have also been some minor changes to some of their other prices. The prices on the website have been adjusted accordingly.

Burson Audio is a company run by a group of enthusiasts from Melbourne. They have a number of rather specialized products including an Audio Buffer. They approached us recently about selling their products. I am usually very skeptical about something that puts extra electronics and interconnects into the signal path but agreed to evaluate it. See the article below.

Trends Audio has announced a new version of their UD10 USB Audio DAC device. The only difference is a B type USB socket compared to the A type in the current model. The UD10 plugs into a USB port in your PC or Mac and bypasses the internal sound card, enabling a much higher quality signal to be passed to your hi fi system or amplified speakers. Because of the new model becoming available we have reduced the price of the remaining stock from \$198 to \$165 incl. GST.

The Sydney Morning Herald recently did a story about new vinyl titles being pressed in Australia. If you missed it you can read it here <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/vinyls-cool-as/2007/07/22/1185042950416.html?ssdmh=dm16.270187>

New Products

Ortofon have released a new range of moving magnet phono cartridges. Titled 2M there are four models with different styli – elliptical, nude elliptical, fine line, and Shibata. As a result the OM10 Super, OM20, OM30 and OM40 have been discontinued, although their styli are still available. My initial impression of the Blue version was that it was very good. A detailed review will be done for the next newsletter. A separate site has been set up by Ortofon for the 2M series <http://www.ortofon2m.com/?link=home>



Our record sleeve supplier has advised of two new sleeve types. The first is an outer sleeve that is large enough to hold a boxed set. The second is the Diskeeper Ultimate Audiophile Inner Sleeve. The design is the same as the old Discwasher VRP sleeve, which was sometimes known as "rice paper". Two layers of anti-static high-density poly are sandwiched around an inner paper layer providing maximum protection for your rarest and most valuable LPs at a price that is substantially less than any comparable sleeve on the market.

If you have a need for a strong shelf to support your turntable we can now provide a locally made product. The Decibel Wall Shelves are made from welded steel and then powder coated. The shelf panels are a composite MDF and foam material which is light, strong and non-resonant. Overall size of each is 50cm x 47cm and the finish is satin black, although other colours can be provided. As well as the standard one and two shelf models these can be custom made to suit particular requirements (eg. two turntables wide). Other floor standing designs can also be custom made.



We have added a patio speaker to our products. Our Australian lifestyle allows us to spend lots of time outdoors, and barbecues and dining on the patio are a popular activity. It's nice to be able to listen to good quality music while doing so, but the requirements are different to indoors. In particular the speakers need to be moisture resistant or the drivers and cabinets will quickly deteriorate. Many outdoor speakers use cheap components so that although they look the part the sound quality is mediocre. Most also have cheap spring terminals which preclude decent speaker cables being used. The Dayton IO520W speakers are 25cm high, 19cm wide and 18cm deep and are available in white or black at \$187.00 a pair incl. GST. Warranty is 5 years. They come with U-shape mounting brackets and also have threaded brass inserts for swivel type speaker brackets. The speaker terminals are heavy duty and can accept thick cable or banana plugs. The enclosures are made from weather resistant (not direct water or sun) ABS plastic with painted aluminium grilles. They are a two way system with a 5 1/4" bass/mid driver and dome tweeter and give a very detailed clean sound. When teamed up with a T-amp and AV sender/receiver you can have the same music as on your main system beamed wirelessly to the entertainment area.



I think Audio Technica make phono cartridges which provide outstanding value for money. And we now have the AT150MLX in stock. This is a moving magnet cartridge with similar construction to the acclaimed OC9 moving coil, and sells for \$495 incl. GST.



Our most popular product ever is the Sonic Impact T-Amp. We have sold hundreds of them. The Generation 2 version is now available. It features a classy new slim case, headphone sockets, and comes complete with a power supply. Price is \$132 including GST. Stock is arriving early October.

The Sonic Impact "made for iPod" portable speakers have been very popular, particularly the iFusion 2 model. Just released is the iFusion Model 3 which is similar but includes an FM radio tuner. Price is \$275 including GST.



Have you got your money in the right place?

This article in the last newsletter drew an immediate response from several readers. In particular Chris Heysen had upgraded his Pro-Ject Classic turntable with an Origin Live DC motor kit and reported "a huge difference". He then purchased a Thorens TD850 and found "it to be absolutely worthwhile - much more solid and grounded base, more air and significantly bigger and better soundstaging - fantastic! The rest of my setup remained unchanged."

Felix Scerri thought the 15% allocated to the phono preamp was insufficient, and 30% was a more reasonable. For those interested in building their own high quality phono preamp here's a link to an article he wrote <http://www.arar93.dsl.pipex.com/mds975/Content/vinyl05.html> .

Whatever the breakdown, no one challenged the main message of the article, that improvements in your vinyl front end can yield great results at the speakers.

Wooden tonearm

Occasionally I am offered products to evaluate, and if someone is prepared to send me something I will at least take the time to try it out. Len Johnson of tonearmaudio.com sent me one of his wooden tonearms a few weeks ago. He makes two versions of his cherry wood arm, a 9" and a 12".

When I first unpacked it my first impression was that it was "toy like". It didn't seem to fit in with the high tech materials of the turntables I deal with. It seemed flimsy and the cheap plastic RCA plugs and poor quality cartridge clips attached to the tonearm wires didn't inspire confidence. Nevertheless I went through the exercise of mounting on a Pro-Ject Debut 3 turntable and setting it up with a Garrott P77 cartridge.

Once I started playing LPs with it I was pleasantly surprised. It sounded good. Not clinically good, but musically very nice. The bass was lacking, but the overall sound was pleasant. But to be honest, it is not a product I could recommend to my customers. I sent an email to Len with my observations and criticisms and posted the arm back to him. A short time later I received an email to say that he has improved the tonearm – with better clips and RCA terminals, and a better pivot arrangement.

This is a product which might suit the DIY enthusiasts amongst you, and anyone interested can purchase direct from Len's website at www.tonearmaudio.com .



The Jordan Story

For those of you who don't know Ted Jordan has been an industry figure for over 50 years. He is regarded as "the father of the full-range driver". His JX92S is widely acknowledged as one of the best drivers for single driver loudspeakers and he has a huge following in the DIY community. Here's the announcement –

E.J.Jordan Designs has achieved world recognition over the past 25 years for it's wide band metal foil loudspeaker drivers.

The Founders, Ted and Denise Jordan, have now reached a stage in their lives where the continuity of the brand needs to be assured. Accordingly they are now combining their skills with those of Transmission Audio, based in Sweden, who are at the forefront of ribbon driver design. Transmission Audio will handle all future production and sales including the JX92S and the forthcoming reintroduction of the JXr6HD and the Jordan bass units.

Ted Jordan will remain as Senior Technical Advisor.

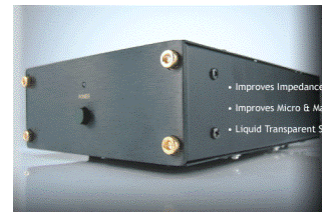
So although there may be an interruption in the supplies of the drivers it seems that they will still be available. We are awaiting correspondence from the new distributors. We have only just run out of stock of the JX92S so will get a new shipment as soon as possible.

There's another side to this story. Over the last few years Mark Fenlon of Mark Image in Hong Kong has been working with Ted on the manufacturing side of things. He was negotiating with Ted to take over the Jordan business but there was a falling out between them. Mark claims several of the components of the JXr6HD are his design, and has produced a similar version which was to be called a JXr6T. It has now been renamed the Mark Audio J6T. We have them in stock NOW and have added them to the website. The J6T has a frequency range of 120Hz to 30KHz so is not as wide range as the JXr6HD but is less expensive than the JXr6HD at \$210 per pair plus GST.



Burson Audio Buffer

I'm not an electronics engineer, so discussion about input and output impedances goes right over my head. I can, however, hear differences between components. I have a modest Pioneer SACD player and have previously written about the major improvement that SACD offers compared to normal CDs. I consider normal CDs to be a poor cousin to what can be achieved from vinyl records. I am also aware that there are some very expensive CD players out there that claim wonderful results from CDs. So, while skeptical I am willing to try something that makes sense.



In this case the Burson people claim that most CD players are mismatched to the amplifiers they are played through. And by inserting their buffer unit, the signal from a CD player can reveal a great deal more musical information that is usually realized. I agreed to try one out and connected it between my Pioneer SACD player and Metaxas preamp using short Belden 89259 interconnects.

I could hear immediately that something sounded different, although it wasn't necessarily better. After a few CDs I started hearing more bass, better dynamics, and a whole lot bigger and deeper sound stage than I have ever heard from my CDs previously. I started going through my CD collection, and sure enough every one sounded better than I have ever heard it before.

So this thing works. At \$495 incl. GST it transforms a modest CD player into something far better. I haven't had the opportunity yet to compare it to a much more expensive player, or tried it on a vinyl front end, but I won't be disconnecting from my system.

As with most of our products, it is sold with a money-back guarantee. And the price includes a pair of Belden 89259 50cm interconnects. Until the end of October there is the additional bonus that if you try out one of these units and are not satisfied with the improvement it provides we will not only refund the purchase price but also the postage both ways.

For further information go here http://www.bursonaudio.com/Burson_Audio_Buffer.htm .

New Micro Monitor Speaker Kit

While the Jordan drivers make wonderful speaker systems, I have long wanted to have a small reasonably priced speaker system that can be used on a PC and would provide excellent quality sound albeit on a small scale. What I had in mind was some tiny enclosures that would stand on a desk alongside a computer monitor.

I scoured the large selection of wide range drivers available from TangBand and selected a 3" driver which has a bamboo paper cone. I particularly was looking for a nice flat frequency response through the entire frequency range. The description is "a blend of paper and Bamboo fibers provides a perfect combination of light weight and self-damping. A neodymium motor with a copper ring reduces distortion even further. The result of these features is a smooth frequency response with a very natural, open sound." Power handling is 12 watts so a T-Amp is ideal to drive them. I also used a Trends Audio UD-10 USB Audio DAC to retrieve the signal from my notebook PC.



I installed the drivers in some little cabinets I happened to have available from a previous project. The cabinets are only about 1 litre in volume, sealed, and filled with acoustic "wool". I was hoping they would be nice and clear, uncoloured, but I was not expecting much bass. I started off listening to the radio and was immediately impressed with the very natural sound of the voices of the announcer and her guest. When music was played I was further impressed with the sound quality. Certainly as little speakers sitting on either side of my PCs screen they serve the purpose admirably. They create a miniature sound stage where the depth and positioning of the musical elements is precise – a bit like headphones without the claustrophobia. What they don't do is fill a room with sound, when you move away the sound is obviously coming from a compact location. So if your requirement is similar to mine they are worth considering. They possibly could be used in a small home theatre setup but I have not yet tried them in that role.



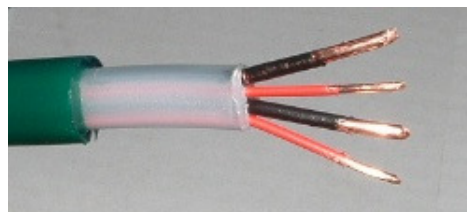
The drivers are available by themselves for \$99.00 per pair including GST. Enclosure kits should be available in a couple of weeks at \$77.00 per pair including GST. There is also a 4" version of the

driver that we will be selling for \$176.00 a pair. They have better power handling and the bass extends further – could be ideal for a budget home theatre system.

Speaker Cable Special

Eichmann Technologies International enjoy a wide following for their products, including many well known manufacturers like Origin Live who use their bullet plugs on the leads of their top model turntables.

Their speaker cables are simple, and effective. I have long promoted the use of heavy duty single copper wires for speaker cables. And the Eichmann ratio of differing cross sectional areas for the signal and earth conductors adds a performance advantage.



We have been selling their eXpress 2 speaker cable for quite a while, and at \$17.60 per metre I think it is great value. But a few weeks ago they offered us the eXpress 4 cable (twice as much copper) for a price which enables us to sell it to you for just \$19.80 per metre. This is a very heavy duty cable suitable for long runs and at this price is highly recommended. If you have been skeptical about whether speaker cables really make a difference here's a chance to take advantage of our 5th anniversary trial offer.

Super Special on Digital Stylus Pressure Gauge

The Canrong CRB5 digital stylus pressure gauge has been quite a popular item over the last 12 months, and at \$132 incl. GST is quite good value. However, we have successfully negotiated a bulk deal which lets us now reduce the retail price to just \$93.50. Even better as a special offer to our newsletter readers we have units available for just \$71.50 incl. GST. That's nearly 50% OFF the previous retail price! Limit 2 per customer.



SUPER SPECIAL PRICE \$71.50. Express Post to anywhere in Australia is \$7.40.

The website shows the new retail price as \$93.50, so please mention in the Customer Instructions section of the order that you are eligible for the special reader's price of \$71.50.

THIS IS THE LAST TIME WE WILL BE MAKING THIS OFFER AS WE HAVE NEARLY SOLD ALL UNITS THAT WERE PURCHASED UNDER A SPECIAL DEAL. OFFER EXPIRES OCTOBER 31st.

That's it for this time. I'm looking forward to the next five years.

Yours mellifluously

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