

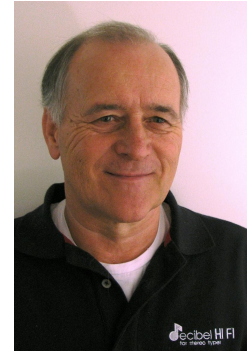
The monthly news for stereo types.



No. 44, August 2016

Hello Brian

I wrote last month about the Brexit leading to price reductions on products coming from the UK. That is still the case, and we have just revised the Loricraft Audio record cleaning machine prices down by more than 16%. But a couple of UK manufacturers have announced price rises due to the fact that any of the components that they purchase from outside of the UK are now costing them more. So it is highly likely that prices will rise over the next few months, and therefore now is a good time to buy. And, yes, we do sell on layby, so you can lock in a low price and get delivery in up to three months time.



I am constantly looking for products to introduce to my customers particularly when I don't already have a product in a particularly performance and price range. We have been selling Origin Live turntables for over a decade now and I believe that they offer excellent performance for their price compared to many other brands. But at a starting price of over \$3000 I realise there are lots of vinyl enthusiasts not able or willing to spend that much on just one component of their hi fi system. This week one of my suppliers brought around a new E.A.T. (European Audio Team) turntable that sells for under that \$3000 threshold. And it ticks a lot of boxes - see the article below.

I know I said we were getting out of selling LPs a few months ago, but I still like to promote ones that I feel are a bit out of the box sound quality wise, particularly if they are from local artists. So that's why the Umbrella's Nino Rota LP is still on our website, and I have just added another one. From a local artist, Hayden Hack, this is exciting, modern South African jazz music that I am happy to promote. A description is below, with links to his website where you can audition his work.

Although a predominantly vinyl oriented business I am still interested in digital music, and searching for that combination of components and media that sounds as good as vinyl. There seems to be a lot of experimentation going on into USB cables, isolators and other devices as well as the DACs. We've come across a couple in the last month and I reveal some of the findings below. Next month I'll continue my digital investigations with comparisons of USB cables.

musical regards

Brian Maddern

enquiry@decibelhifi.com.au

07 3344 5756

Feast on your vinyl with this EAT C-Major turntable

Much as I would like to say you don't need to spend a lot on a turntable to get absolutely top class performance, it isn't true. Whereas with amplifiers a little inexpensive T-amp can provide outstanding performance for a fraction of the price of a truly great one, with vinyl it's just not possible to overcome the physical characteristics of the medium cheaply. To extract the information contained in a wiggly groove in a vinyl disc to its maximum requires a well engineered vinyl retrieval system. That involves the turntable, tonearm, and cartridge and the record itself. It's a well known fact that there is a difference in the quality of vinyl record pressings. Back in the 70s there was a market for high quality LPs from Japan and Germany in preference to the run-of-the-mill pressings churned out by the local distributors, which often used recycled vinyl and worn masters. That's not a problem now that pretty much everything being released is pressed into virgin vinyl and 180g or thicker. Although there is still a difference between the sources being used to produce the new pressings. Most seem to be re-mastered from original analogue master tapes but we have heard that there are some that have used CD standard files to produce LPs in the hope that consumers won't notice the difference (they do).



The essential element of a vinyl recording is that it is an analogue signal impressed into a plastic disc where the dimensions of the movement required to retrieve the signal accurately are miniscule. At 5000Hz the wavelength is just 1/100ths of a millimetre. This is why most people who listen to vinyl have never really heard what the medium is capable of. Cheap turntables scoot over most of the information damaging the grooves in the process because although vinyl is a tough material the pressures generated while a diamond stylus tries to follow the undulations are considerable. So vinyl record replay systems vary from \$69 to about \$200,000. And the difference is the engineering and the volumes being manufactured. Not many of us can afford the high high end, but because there is a diminishing return on investment there are price points where the performance available for the price is in "the sweet spot". With vinyl record replay systems (turntable, tonearm, phono cartridge, phono preamp) I think that's probably \$3000 - \$6000.

So what's this [E.A.T. C-Major turntable](#) all about? European Audio Team is a company associated with Pro-Ject Audio, the world's major manufacturer of turntables, but whereas Pro-Ject have concentrated on the entry levels and upwards for turntables, EAT have targeted the high end and then allowed their discoveries and designs to trickle down to more affordable models. And that's where the C-Major comes into the story. Some of the EAT turntables are many \$000s but as a result of their development components, materials, and designs have been incorporated into models that can be produced at much lower prices.

So we now have a turntable from a hi-end manufacturer that arrives onto the Australian market at less than \$3000 and provides performance that competes with offerings from Rega, Thorens, Pro-Ject, Clearaudio, VPI.

So what does it have going for it?

Some of the offerings from several manufacturers are a bit "out there" in their design, which is fine if they perform well, but a standard shape with a lid is more practical and has a higher WAF score (wife acceptance factor). The C-Major is a beautifully finished rectangular turntable with a friction hinged lid. The DC motor is not sensitive to mains voltage or frequency fluctuations. The base has 3 vibration absorbing adjustable feet,

the sub-chassis is isolated from the base by vibration absorbing pads. The tonearm is a very advanced design with a carbon fibre tube, and a hybrid pivot arrangement with uni-pivot viscous damping, so suitable for a wide range of cartridges.

So how does it sound? It may seem counter-intuitive, but the choice of cartridge won't make a huge difference. This tonearm will allow even a cheap cartridge to work as well as it can, and although a better cartridge will provide an improvement, most of the sound quality you hear is a characteristic of the quality of engineering of the turntable.

We have a [C-Major](#) available for demonstrations now. It is priced at \$2799, but we are bundling it with the [Audio Technica AT440MLb](#) cartridge (\$330) for \$2999. Highly recommended, and we take trade-ins.

Hayden Hack Infusion

I was up at the Eumundi Markets a few months ago and was attracted by the infectious sound of this bearded performer so bought his LP and CD. We have a limited number of the [LPs for sale](#) at \$35.00. If you like modern South African jazz music this is an impressive recording.

His website is <http://www.haydenhackinfusion.com> where you can find out about his recordings and gigs and see videos of some of his performances.



Digital Investigations

The promise of digital music is that there will be no crackles, pops, just pure music and there shouldn't be any difference between players because of the digital nature of the recordings. But as we have found with CDs, there are major differences in sound quality between units, and even the best still do not sound as nice as vinyl records on a good turntable.

We now have access to high resolution digital files which promise the ultimate in sound quality, yet still many people prefer vinyl. Why can't we achieve the superior sound that the specifications promise. Recently I have read articles about the search for the ultimate USB cable. The initial thought is that there shouldn't be a difference "because it's digital" but in listening trials there obviously is a difference.

Another possible source of signal deterioration is from the computer that is playing the file. This has led to Intona, a German company, producing a USB Isolator and they have approached us to distribute it in Australia. Our initial testing has confirmed that it does make a difference. A very comprehensive testing and [review](#) has been conducted by Steven Plaskin of the Audiostream.com group.

His comments ...

Listening Impressions

The High-Speed Isolator's effect on the sound quality of my MSB Technology Analog DAC was not difficult to identify. I immediately recognized a drop in the noise floor with a deeper black background. Voices and instruments emerged more clearly with superior



definition from top to bottom. The music appeared to be slightly more dynamic and engaging with the High-Speed Isolator. There was improvement in the ultimate focus of voices and instruments in the soundstage. And speaking of soundstage, the High-Speed Isolator made a major improvement in the perceived depth and width of the soundstage when playing well-recorded acoustic music. The bass was tighter and better defined with more impact and palpability to the sound. Music played through the High-Speed Isolator just seemed to be more alive and less veiled sounding.

Read more at <http://www.audiostream.com/content/intona-technology-usb-20-high-speed-isolator#GO8IYE6vClzAGosK.99>

The [Intona USB 2.0 Hi-Speed Isolator](#) goes between your computer or file server and your DAC and is priced at \$550.00 with free postage and a money-back trial guarantee.

Decibel Hi Fi | 07 3344 5756 | enquiry@decibelhifi.com.au | www.decibelhifi.com.au

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