

The monthly news for stereo types.

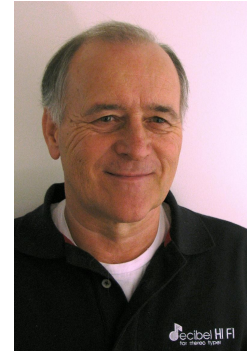


No. 45, September 2016

Hello Brian

We are pleased to advise that for the next few weeks we have a pair of the Whatmough Signature 15 loudspeakers available for demonstrations in Brisbane. More info below.

My son queried my statement last month in the article on the C Major turntable that it wouldn't make much difference which cartridge was fitted. What I was trying to get across was that the construction of the turntable and the tonearm is more important than the cartridge. Many people buy a relatively modest turntable and then think that by buying an expensive cartridge they will get good results. The opposite is the case, a really good turntable with an inexpensive cartridge will outperform a modest turntable with an expensive cartridge. This has been demonstrated many times over the years by Linn and others. For that reason there is a limit to what should be spent upgrading a turntable compared with trading it in and buying a whole new rig.



I started getting close to a digital set up that I could enjoy as much as my vinyl last month when I was auditioning the Intona USB Isolator. With high resolution DSD and FLAC files from my MacBook through an ADL GT40a DAC I achieved some impressive sound, and it got better with a particular USB cable - see below.

One type of cable that often gets overlooked is the power cable and yet the first input into any audio or AV system is electricity. So anything that helps the provision of sufficient clean power should be considered. Isotek have released a new lower priced power cable for audio equipment - see below.

Finally for this month, there's some dirty talk.

Musical regards

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Whatmough Signature 15 loudspeakers

Briefed to stop at nothing in the pursuit for an uncompromised, medium size, stand mounted loudspeaker, Colin Whatmough arrived at a configuration of cabinet, drivers,



crossovers and connections that has proven to be a winning combination.



In 2013 the editor of the Australian Hi Fi magazine stated that the Whatmough Signature P15-SE stand mount speakers *"... are superb transducers. For their size there are few - if any - other loudspeakers that can even approach their level of performance, and if we're talking midrange and treble, there are few that come close irrespective of their size and price."* The [full review](#) is well worth reading.

The model designation has now been simplified to S15, but the speakers are exactly the same as what was reviewed. We have been listening to them for about a week now on a wide variety of types of music from both digital and analog sources and have been delighted with their performance. If you are in the market for speakers in the \$5000 price range please make an appointment to audition them.

They are available in [Bubinga timber](#) finish or [piano Graphite](#).

More Digital Investigations

I'm curious. If a music signal gets converted to packets of digits then there shouldn't be any loss of information and cables shouldn't make any difference to resulting sound quality. You can expect there to be differences between DACs, but digital cables? I tested a few to see if

I could hear any difference, using [Graham Slee's Bitzie DAC](#) as the input to my main demo system (Icon Audio valve preamp and mono blocks, and Whatmough Signature P15 speakers). By the way the Bitzie is a neat little unit than can be connected directly to power amps, or powered speakers, or drive headphones.



The first was the standard, inexpensive USB cable supplied with many devices. Then I tried the 1 metre and 3 metre versions of [Graham Slee's Lautus USB cables](#). Then the [Curious cable 0.8m](#), finally the combination of Curious cable and [Intona Isolator](#). These alternatives range in price from a couple of dollars to nearly \$1,000.

I have to say that the differences are not great, not night and day, more like full sunlight and when a cloud comes over. If you listen to digital music mainly as a background to what you are doing I don't think the expenditure on fancy USB cables is worth the money. But if you like to really concentrate on the sound and can appreciate subtle changes in the quality, then no doubt you'll think any improvement is worthwhile. I noticed two differences. One, the music seems to emerge from a quieter background. Second, there is a greater sense of space around each of the elements of the music and a wider stereo image with more depth. I finished up using a combination of a [3m Lautus cable](#) to the [Isolator](#) and then a [Curious 0.8m](#) to the DAC. This enables me to sit in my main listening position and use my MacBook while streaming from Spotify or playing FLAC files stored on the computer. I'm really happy with the sound I am getting from that combination.

There are lots of high priced USB cables on the market, but recently an Australian developed moderately priced one, the Curious Cable, has been getting excellent reviews compared to any of them. It's worthwhile having a look at [their website](#) to see the story behind its development.



We have added the the [Curious USB cables](#) to our product range and offer them on a money-back trial basis and free postage.

IsoTek Initium power leads

IsoTek's EVO3 Initium power cable was born of a desire to create an exceptional audiophile-grade power cable at an affordable price point.

The ordinary black power cords supplied free with audio components are of the lowest quality. Performance is compromised by conductor thickness, poor quality copper and cheap PVC insulation (dielectric). No consideration is given to suitability for audio reproduction and the production cost is less than \$2.00 per cable.

You take the decision to invest in high-quality audio equipment because you appreciate great sound quality. So why compromise audio performance with substandard power cables?

The [Initium power cables](#) are priced at \$99.00 each, with free postage and a money-back trial guarantee. They are available with a high quality Australian 240V AC plug and the standard IEC plug at the device end, and are 1.5 metres long. So if you just have the cheap power leads on your equipment they are worth trying out.



Keep it clean

The left photo shows a stylus that is covered in debris (bits of vinyl, dust, threads etc) such that you can't even see the tip of the diamond.



The right photo shows it after being cleaned. I

often see styli this bad on old turntables I am servicing.

What I use to clean them is a [Disc Doctor stylus brush](#), which has very dense bristles that sweep the debris off the stylus and cantilever. Brushes that have bristles like toothbrushes are pretty useless. If the debris is difficult to remove I put a drop of [Disc Doctor Stylus Cleaner](#) fluid on the brush, and repeat until



it is clean. It is important to only stroke the tip from the rear of the cartridge to avoid the possibility of breaking the cantilever. It is also important to use the fluid sparingly, because it can migrate up the cantilever and affect the rubber suspension. That is such an issue that the Garrott Lab, who repair and retip valuable cartridges, state that the use of fluids to clean a stylus will void the warranty on their work.

A more gentle approach, suitable if your stylus has not become that dirty, is to dip the tip into a gel such as with the [Vinyl Passion Dust Buster](#).

Whichever method you use, do it regularly, at least at the end of each record playing session. You will be rewarded with better sound from your records, and less wear to both the records and the stylus.



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