

Interstellar

Space cadet Rafael Todes flies to the moon with Nottingham Analogue's Hyperspace turntable...

Whilst at a good friend's house for dinner recently, he announced that he wanted to play me some of his 78s he had retrieved from storage, on his 1936 E.M.G. model 10B Acoustic electrically-driven gramophone. He took out some specially made scissors, and cut a stylus out of a fibre needle, whose life-span was to last the 4 minute duration of the recording of the Griller Quartet made in 1947, playing the Mozart G major Quartet which he put on. What came out of the paper-mâché horn surprised me, being the turntable snob that I am: it was like listening to music delivered from a heavenly cloud, the sound perfectly-formed in mono, floating through the air. A

create a minimum of interference with the music it is playing, rather like that vintage E.M.G. but writ on an altogether larger scale...

The deck itself is an evolution of the *Hi-Fi World* Award winning Spacedeck, effectively taking its basic design and removing any cost-based compromises that were present, to let the purity of the design shine forth. The high mass platter sits on three legs, one housing the armboard, and the other two adjustable in height, a task made easier by the inclusion of a handy spirit level. The turntable is supplied with a vial of oil and a pipette, which you squirt into the main bearing, which is said to be the result of many years of research and

have two arms running concurrently for comparison. The whole outfit has an air of Art Deco and looks like a statement piece in its own right.

Nottingham Analogue make their own range of arms, the Ace Space arm, and the

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beautifully light airy sound with real presence, albeit with an obviously limited bandwidth...

The Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace is one of a series of turntables made by the team at Nottingham Analogue Studio. NAS seemed to have built up a cult following producing a deck with a simple philosophy. A turntable should be simple to set up and use, and

development, and sports a conical tip. Also supplied, are three rubber rings, which circumnavigate the platter to provide damping.

The material used for the platter, split into two, is alloy for the bottom half, and painted graphite for the top half. The motor is a separate unit, which drives a rubber belt which could be taken for one of the dampening rings. Speed change is manual, and perhaps the most eccentric feature of the deck is a lack of any on and off switch. To start the platter spinning, you give it a push, and you brake it gently with your hand to stop it. A slight annoyance comes when you lift off a record to change it, and this triggers the motor to stop – still I suppose minimalism has its price! The turntable and motor sit on a free-standing plinth elegantly finished in a black lacquer. There is the scope to fit two armboards and therefore to

Ace Anna, but for this review I used predominantly Len Gregory's Conductor arm, an air-bearing parallel tracker, and of course the ubiquitous SME V. When ordering, you need to specify which arm you intend to use, as the armboard needs to be dedicated to the type of arm used. The two columns that support the mounting unscrew easily, and may be swapped for pillars of a different height. The arm change took around fifteen minutes to effect. Overall, this Hyperspace is not a conspicuously complex deck, which makes it a pleasure to set up and use - unlike some altogether more fussy designs.

SOUND QUALITY

The essence of the Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace is its sense of ease and naturalness; rather than stamping its authority on everything it touches, branding its character on the music, it leaves no *imprimatur*. Rather, it lets the original recording breathe, and assume a life of its own. Some won't like its lack of forcefulness; especially those who love the vice-like grip of the Garrard 401 for example, but the Hyperspace





is a conspicuously different listening experience that's more effusive, spacious and less commanding; it simply lets the music flow...

For example, the opening of the last movement of Mahler 6 begins with a powerful other-worldly orchestral flourish, an effect that Hollywood was to copy several decades later. Listening to Haitink's Philips recording, the Hyperspace is in its element creating the fantasy world, the light, almost dream-like sound. Listening on the Bastinised Garrard 401, whilst the bass has an RSJ quality to it, the treble fails to transport you to this other Mahlerian world. The soundstage of the Hyperspace seems almost infinite, the sound is light and elastic, involving but not heavy. A bird-like experience, to the Garrard's barking bulldog!

Listening to the Amadeus Quartet and Cecil Aronowitz playing the opening of Mozart's last String Quintet, the Garrard provides the cello grunt with steel-like tautness, but the treble register of Norbert Brainin's Strad sounds more like he is playing on metal strings than gut. The Hyperspace restores gut strings to the Strad, and fills in the complexity of the violin sound, there seems to be a centre to it, a core like a great wine, not just the structural outline that the Garrard sports.

An optional upgrade designed by Martin Bastin is the so-called Wave Mechanic, which provides a regenerated signal for the motor of

the Hyperspace, and costs £500. With this piece of kit installed, I listened to the difference it made on Beethoven's 2nd Symphony, a 1972 recording with Karl Bohm and the Vienna Philharmonic.

The sound stage widened by about 20 degrees, the depth of the orchestra increased, it was suddenly possible to get more of a feeling of the depth and presence of the violin section. I could hear the composition of the unison orchestral chords in the slow introduction, and the texture of the instruments playing more clearly, even to the point of pinpointing which instruments in the





REFERENCE SYSTEM
 Garrard 401 (Bastin modifications)
 Len Gregory The Conductor tonearm
 Ortofon Kontapunkt A MC cartridge
 Icon PS3 Signature phono stage
 Audio Research SP9 mk2 preamplifier
 VAC Auricle Musicbloc power amplifier
 B&W 802D loudspeakers
 Isotek G2 Vision mains conditioner

chord were out of tune. It's not a night and day difference, but adds to the enjoyment and realism of the recording.

I often find that large choirs present turntables with their greatest challenges. The volume of sound generated by hundreds of shrieking over-enthusiastic singers creates transients that can sound harsh and distorted and sometimes painful to listen to, particularly on CD. With Haydn's late work, 'The Creation', the Hyperspace dealt with these problems with aplomb. With the vast soundstage that it generated, it managed to resolve the details thrown up by the choir without pain. The beginning of the work, the moment of creation shows off beautifully the deck's ability to keep different textures and spaces separate, making for gripping listening.

Listening to the great violinist Heifetz on a rather dry recording of Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto, you really have a feeling of the violinist's presence in the room, the detail extracted is phenomenal. It is even possible from the microtonal variations in his tone colour to discern which fingers he is using on which string, to create the famous trademark sound. You can even hear when the great man brings his bow slightly too close to the bridge for comfort, pushing his Guarnerius violin to its limits!

Rubenstein was a pianist from a previous era, and I have never much been a fan of the RCA recordings which represent his legacy. His album taken from the film 'L'Amour de Vie' on the Hyperspace with the Wave Mechanic PSU, provides the rock-like speed stability, which seems to catapult his playing into a more modern era. The slightly honky-tonk wow-ridden sound that colours my earliest memories of hearing the piano on record seemed to disappear. His playing is light and charming, imperfect, but never heavy. His subtle

rubati are beautifully showcased by the confidence of the deck's own timing.

Swapping arms to the venerable SME V, the last movement of Mahler 6 seemed to ooze with detail. The arm really seemed to keep order in the orchestra and have superb grip on the wide range of textures Mahler uses. Particularly in the climaxes, the arm never lost control of the sound. Tonally, the smoothness of the Conductor was replaced by a more gutsy, metallic sound, more Garrard-like, less Hyperspace. It's a striking, gripping, enthralling sound alright, but I am not sure it was necessarily an improvement.

CONCLUSION

As a performer, I have noticed two distinct types of audience member who come to concerts. There are those who like music to be presented in a slightly detached way, leaving them to make sense of what they hear on their own terms. There is however a second category, those who want to be served the music in their face, and for the music to affect

them and almost tell them what to think. I have noticed that a group who plays music in category one will not be appreciated by category two and the converse. In some cases they could leave the concert with violent feelings towards the performers! I think the same distinction applies to the Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace and the Garrard 401.

The Hyperspace deck, then, has the best qualities of the EMG Model 10, the beautifully airy quality along with a laid-back, calm, highly detailed charming presentation, which contrasts greatly with the Garrard 401's thrusting, aggressive but highly electric style. If you like your music on the edge, the Hyperspace is probably not for you, but if you enjoy listening to music, then it is well worth an extensive audition. It's a fine, delicate, open and lyrical device that beguiles more than it impresses, and for this reviewer that makes it a truly excellent turntable.



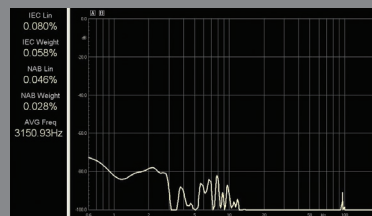
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The small variable speed control worked smoothly to alter speed and was better than many in this respect. Speed variation was minimal, our IEC unweighted measurement showing just 0.08% in the analysis – a very low figure. Not surprisingly, weighted wow was also very low, measuring 0.046% and the Hyperspace was almost unbelievably free from higher rates of wow that affect this measurement, offering one of the best performances we have measured.

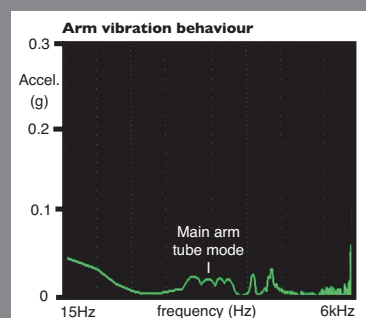
The SME V arm fitted to the review sample is equally free from vibrational effects, measurement with an accelerometer shows. This is attributable both to the tapered magnesium arm tube and also to a headshell webbed on both sides, a feature that dramatically reduces higher frequency modes, making this the most rigid arm available by a large margin.

This is a fine combination, our measurements show. NK

WOW & FLUTTER



ARM VIBRATION



VERDICT

Expansive, spacious, lyrical and beguiling high end turntable that's an essential audition for those who like their music delicately delivered.

NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE HYPERSPACE £2,390
 Nottingham Analogue Studio
 +44 (0)1773 762947
 www.nottinghamanaloguestudio.com/

- FOR**
- subtle, organic delivery
 - expansive soundstaging
 - mellifluous midband
 - tonal richness
 - airy treble

- AGAINST**
- gentle sound not for all