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EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner

By Alan Sircom

Designed by Reiner Gläss, the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner is a fully automated vertical record cleaning machine. You fill it with cleaning solution (supplied in concentrate form, enough for five litres of liquid), insert the record in the slot at the top of the machine and press the red button. A traffic light arrangement follows – yellow for ‘I’m working on it’ and five minutes or so later green lights up for ‘This disc is clean’. Inside is a set of counter-rotating microfibre cleaning barrels, and the fluid sump works in a way not too dissimilar from a jeweller’s ultrasonic cleaning bath, only on a larger, more LP-shaped scale. The fluid is also constantly filtered, to prevent any stray crud from being moved around a record instead of removed from a record. There’s also a pair of motors specifically for ‘quiet’ drying of the LP.

To test this initially, I chose two discs; one a charity shop abomination of a 1970s copy of Jim Reeves *12 Songs of Christmas* [Pickwick], the other a brand new copy of John Hiatt’s *Terms of My Surrender* LP [New West]. The former was poor quality ‘oil crisis’ vinyl you could almost see through, all scratched and worn, and sounding like someone was frying bacon in the studio. The second was an 180g vinyl version that only the first track had been played, and was good to check how the release agents fare under the washful eyes of the Vinyl Cleaner.

I won’t say the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner got rid of the bacon-background noise altogether in the dire

Pickwick album, and I won’t say it transformed the 300th generation from the master tape recording that made poor ol’ Jim Reeves sound like an incontinent howler monkey, but it did help a lot. I mean really A LOT! The noise floor improved considerably and the cold chisel the previous owner of the LP had used in place of a stylus seemed to have lost its murderous intent. It didn’t make Jim Reeves listenable, but it made him tolerable. I could also play the LP louder, creating a zombie army of little old ladies shuffle toward my front door in the ▶



► process. Fortunately, I'd been warned of Reeves' power, and set traps of Cadbury's Dairy Milk chocolate bars and custard cream biscuits, so I managed to escape un-Zimmered.

The really interesting one was the new John Hiatt album. Apart from being a fantastic album that you should hang your head in shame if you don't already own, the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner did the same thing it did to Jim Reeves; it lowered the noise floor and made the music more listenable. When the noise floor of practically unplayed vinyl improves considerably and when an album you actually want to listen to becomes all the more listenable, you are on to a real good thing. The difference was so marked here, it was time to reach for more albums to confirm the improvement was consistent, and yes, damn it, it was.

The downsides are few. You can recycle the fluid up to a point, but there will come a point when there is a build-up of crud in the fluid filter, so be mindful of this. Fortunately, however, the machine is easy to clean and drain. Also, the

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Cleaning cycle: 5mins

Water capacity: 4.5 litres

Cleaning concentrate required: 20ml

Dimensions (WxHxD): 33x27x20cm

Weight: 5.5kg (empty)

Price: £2,199

Manufactured by: Audiodesksysteme Gläss

URL: www.audiodesksysteme.de

Distributed by The Audio Consultants

URL: www.audioconsultants.co.uk

Tel: +44(0)118 981 9891

device is noisy in use, but in fairness most record cleaning machines have a tendency to sound like someone trying to jump-start a Boeing, and this one is quieter than most. I'm not sure this is really a downside; it barely makes it to 'gripe'. The Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner isn't much louder than a vacuum cleaner in truth even when it's in drying mode, but it's not the kind of thing you can use while playing records.

The biggest downside is it will create a new obsession in your life. You'll find yourself setting aside time after shopping for LPs to put them through the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner, you'll view your record collection as a cleaning project, and if you get it really bad, any album you play will get a little tick mark, counting down the plays until it gets its next ultrasonic clean. Hence the 'damn it' comment earlier; some of us are already pretty OCD with our vinyl, and the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner panders to that part of our psyche extremely effectively. If you don't believe me, try the two-LP challenge, and see how long it takes you to start looking at your records with an eye cool and unsympathetic to a social life.

The thing about the Audiodesksysteme Vinyl Cleaner is it takes longer to say its name out loud than it does to understand what it does in demonstration. It helps an LP become the vinyl it always wanted to be, it does that consistently, and I'd struggle to think how unresolving a system you'd need to throw together to not be able to hear the improvement on most records. I'd give it the strongest recommendation I could come up with, but I need to go and clean some records first. +

