

Vinyl-Turbo



Reviewer: Frank Hakopians

Analogue: TW-Acoustic Raven AC with Analog Tools and Pyon Sound Iris SE arms and Dynavector XV-1S, Steinmusic Aventurin6, LyraTitan I and Denon DL 103R cartridges, platter mats by Dereneville und Steinmusic

Digital: Abbingdon Music Research DP-777, Ensemble Dirondo transport, Innuos Zenith Mk.II server

Integrated: Devialet D-Premier

Preamps: Accustic Arts Tube Preamp II Mk.2 linestage, Einstein The Turntable's Choice phono

Power amps: Tenor Audio 75 Wi monos, Audionet Amp IV2

Loudspeakers: Acapella La Campanella, Clockwork Event Horizon

Cables: Analog Tools Reference Serie loom, Steinmusic Highline

Power delivery: Nordost QRT QB4 und QB8

Other: Steinmusic and Moll Audio isolation transformers, Furutech wall sockets, AHP Klangmodule, Steinmusic Harmonizer, racks by Copulare and Audio Lignum, platforms by Symposium Acoustics and Acapella

Listening room: 23.4 m² with 2.64 m ceiling

Review component retail: € 279

Suck that! Dust. During vinyl replay, it's probably public enemy number one. Aside from regularly dusting off the mechanical contraption that is the record player, it's the dust particles on the actual black discs which most go on our nerves. They not only work against sonic calm. Because they can eventually bond with the pickup's needle which drags them along, they will eventually undermine its proper functioning and possibly even shorten the diamond's life expectancy. How to reliably remove these sticky customers when





static attraction keeps inviting them back onto our carousel?

For starters, it's key to clean your records with one of the now more affordable record washers. They dig deep into gunky grooves not just of second-hand vinyl. They will also remove any remnants of the pressing plant's mould release on virgin copies. Sadly the procedure tends to be more involved than attractive to do before each and every sonic spin. Even if you're religious, it only takes *moments* to watch new dust settle rebelliously onto your studiously cleaned sound carrier.

It's why part of the serious user's ritual is the brush-off, traditionally with carbon fibres, micro composite bristles or goat hairs which carefully guide the spinning culprits from the inner to the outer grooves to there fall off the edge of their black world or get captured. Depending on make and quality of the brush, a few dusties will actually be put out of action. But the rest simply get nicely distributed across the surface like marmalade on toast. Honestly, who hasn't dreamt of just sucking the lot off with a proper vacuum cleaner?



Clearly the analogue experts at Flux Hifi did more than just dream. Our Pforzheim specialists quite recently introduced a savvy concept: a powered record cleaner which combines the traditional record brush with a miniaturized Miehle vacuum. This process runs entirely dry not wet and in use is very similar to a standard brush. But if the maker is to be believed, it's magnitudes more effective. We're not just promised noticeably lower tracking noise and longer life for vinyl and pickup alike. Even the sound per se is supposed to improve.



Typical for the firm, the Vinyl-Turbo arrives in a stout carton. Three included AA batteries and an air filter are quickly installed and presto, the device which looks like an oversized electrical shaver is ready for action. Instead of a cutting head we find an intake slot buffered by u-shaped soft rails to protect the grooves. Behind them hides a carbon-hair brush whose primary function is to transfer static charge to the user's body. The common ground connection is a metal plate at the rear of the device. For improved contact, one touches here with the finger tips whilst the thumb presses the frontal start button to kick off the suction process. Now the Vinyl-Turbo is gently lowered onto the spinning



disc, the silky protectors make contact and two or three revolutions later, it is gently pulled off the record's edge which concludes the cleaning.

If used as intended, the maker promises 4 hours of battery life which, at ten seconds per record, should process a solid 1'400 licorice slices. Admittedly I didn't sign up for such a sucky marathon but still managed a few hundred discs spread across my three-month loaner period during which I replaced no batteries. The air filter is advertised for roughly 100 sessions, the protective edging for 50 more. I view these figures as conservative. My air filter showed just marginal dirt and would stay busy for a few more months. My protective rails showed some signs of light use but they too would last longer before requiring replacement. At that time, Flux-Hifi offer new protectors and twin-pack air filters for €19.90 and €29.90 respectively.



That's peanuts compared to the Vinyl-Turbo itself which hits your wallet with €279. We're told this reflects ground-up tooling since nothing was available for ready-made incorporation. And must-haves included compact dimensions and minimal weight. Otherwise the hand-held vacuum would have been difficult to use, possibly even risky on valuable records. Actual suction power was critical. Too forceful a suck and users would struggle with hard stiction. Also, cleaning efficacy only tracked so far before heightened noise and energy consumption took over. As such, a pile of prototype rejects built up before optimal parameters were locked and loaded – and all proudly made in Germany. Nice that acquisition of this gizmo keeps domestic workers employed. Of course our real motive is



far more personal. Could this electrically powered little helper truly displace traditional record brushes and deliver on its maker's numerous promises?

I didn't conduct a scientific trial but for a few weeks, vinyl did become my primary medium – not much different from normal to be fair. But for the duration, I only spun records which, following Flux Hifi's instructions, had first been cleaned with the Vinyl-Turbo. First I performed a visual check. No listening room is a laboratory clean room so even post treatment, a few dust grains remained. But compared to my traditional carbon fibre brush, I estimated about *half* the pesky remnants. A competing brush with stylish wood handle and soft goat hair did no better. But would this be audible? With the right music, quite. Curious about a sample?

Take "California Dreaming" from Diana Krall's *Wallflower* twofer. It's the type record where even a few dusty stragglers can ruin the intro. Here Flux-Hifi's suction champ clearly paid dividends. Except for the Lyra Titan i's minimal groove noise, I essentially heard nothing from my speakers; no typical pops but heavenly calm until Krall's husky voice emanated from the Clockwork Event Horizons. Her articulation and diction felt a tad clearer and more urgent as though a thin veil had parted. For confirmation, I spun up Benedicte Torget's "Sleep awhile" from the Accoustic Arts sampler *Audiophile Female Voices* from their *Uncompressed World* range. Similar results. The Norwegian songstress virtually vibrated with tension and intensity. Like with Diana Krall, I enjoyed slightly better speech intelligibility. Obviously deeper bass or higher highs were domains the Vinyl-Turbo couldn't breach.


Facts.
Category: Record brush with electrical suction

Dimensions and weight: 125 x 122 x 64 mm

HxWxD, 265g with batteries

Trim: Black

Other: Includes batteries

Warranty: 3 years

That said, I should mention that with bigger ensembles and escalating SPL, say grand symphonica or Heavy Metal, any sonic benefits fell below the audible event horizon. That seemed par for the course. As playback gets denser and louder, sonic side effects from dust are more and more masked. So just a tool for committed hifi whisperers? Not. Instead, this is a cleverly executed tool to maintain valuable hence costly records. That doesn't replace deep wet cleaning. Flux-Hifi's Turbo enters the dry post treatment of record care just prior to needle drops. Here it offers two advantages over traditional brushes. First, I really can't conceive of one that'd do better at removing remaining dust. Here that micro dirt ends up in a replaceable filter rather than, with more or less success, having to be extricated from a brush's fibres.

Two, gains in lower playback noise and concomitant precision seem beyond imaginary even if the hifi world's axis won't wobble or tilt. But so often it's true that small improvements add up incrementally to become one decisive step forward. More importantly, actual use posed no issues whatsoever and the running costs of air filter, protective edging and battery replacement are modest. True, the initial investment of what might seem little more than a 'fancier brush' could undermine an impulse buy. Then you best ask your dealer for a weekend loaner. A good dealer should happily comply. Simply figure that despite your best-groomed skepticism, you'll not want to part with the Flux-Hifi Vinyl-Turbo thereafter.

– Frank Hakopians