

HIGH FIDELITY

RC's guide to the gear that will get the best out of your records. By Paul Rigby



POWER TRIP

Isotek Aquarius power conditioner £795

One of the ruling tenets of creating any sort of reasonable hi-fi system is to build from the source onwards. Purchase the most expensive source, be it a CD player or turntable, that you can afford, then 'make do' with the other, cheaper, bits of your hi-fi chain until you can upgrade at a later stage. The idea being that you want to extract as much information out of your records as possible.

If, on the other hand, you buy a great pair of speakers but a cheap and nasty CD player then you may affect the tone of the hi-fi but the poor quality CD player will ensure that you only get to hear a fraction of the information available on the disc.

But, is the CD player or turntable the source? Isn't there something that sits even higher up the chain? How about the electricity supply? Before you even play your CD player or turntable, you're going to have lots of mains electricity swimming around it. Believe it or not, your mains supply can affect the sound.

The mains can be a source of intrusive spikes, distortion, noise and contamination, either directly from the mains or from one component to the other. Once distorting noise enters your hi-fi from the mains then your hi-fi is up against it from the off. The Isotek Aquarius power conditioner provides your hi-fi with the best start possible, by giving your electricity supply a bit of a wash and brush up.

The new Aquarius arrives with six sockets (two 16 Amp, high current, for power-amps and the like, plus four 5 Amp, medium current, sockets for CD players, tuners, etc). Each socket is isolated from each other and features its own filtering system. The company also supplies individual, high-quality, power cables to the same standard.

While playing various genres of music, the Aquarius presents a sense of calmness over the whole performance. There was an extra focus to the stereo image while extended listening alerted me to new details and information. Bass remained tight but more relaxed, lower frequencies seemed to have to make less of an effort to be heard.

Probably the most notable effect of the Aquarius was heard on the original Nancy Wilson LP pressing, *Who Can I Turn To* (Capitol). Whenever Wilson extended a note by utilising her vibrato, the Aquarius was able to more easily follow the voice as it moved up and down the frequencies during the vibrato sequence. The greater clarity and enhanced, quiet background of the Aquarius allowed the voice to be properly tracked for the first time.

The Aquarius isn't a miracle worker. If you have a budget system, it won't turn it into a £50,000 monster. See the Aquarius as a method of enhancing what's already there. As such, it does so brilliantly.

www.soundfoundations.co.uk 01276 501 392



LORD OF THE RINGS

Retro style 7" Ring Binder £13.50

The 7" single shares an unfortunate affinity with the 78 – it loses its lustre, as an overall package, very quickly. Generally, this is because it tends to arrive in the filmsiest of containers and sleeves: Items that appear to degrade faster than a bowl of fruit on a hot summer's day. Replacing sleeves is generally seen as a short-term solution in lieu of the correct storage facility. For those in need, this tidy option may just be the ticket.

OK, it may not have the snappiest of titles but this compact and useful 7" storage option may just be the answer to your long-term archive problems or as part of a transport package.

The binder arrives with 10 PVC pockets and has a total capacity of 20-30 pockets, depending on the sleeve type or if you store picture discs only. Spanning 25.5cm x 21cm x 5cm, the binder is compact enough to combine storage strength with space efficiency. covers33.co.uk 01422 822679

GIZMO of the month

CD EZ-Opener £5

The secret to life is to remove all of its irritations and one of those includes removing the cellophane from a new CD. This stuff can be tough to shift, resulting in stubbed fingers, bent nails, wounds where carelessly positioned scissors have slipped, tried patience where only tiny pieces of the cellophane is removed at any one time, frustration, stress, arguments, failed marriages and future appearances at the Old Bailey.



The solution is this small, simple but highly effective gizmo that sits neatly in the hand and will open both CD and DVD cases – there's a slot for each, in fact. There are no moving parts, no flaps, switches or buttons. You just position the side of the disc in the appropriate slot, run the EZ along it and, behold, the cellophane is neatly opened via a hidden blade. One tip, don't run it down the top or bottom of a CD case, it will score the ridged area. Fit it along the right-hand side, opposite the hinge – the side you open.

www.russandrews.com 0845 345 1550