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The VPI Classic

Spend A Little Time With The VPI

30th Anniversary Classic Turntable

And You'll Be Celebrating

By Bob Herman

A 30th anniversary is something only a select few high end audio companies have survived long enough to celebrate. Fewer still have commemorated their longevity by unveiling products as exceptional as the VPI Classic.



After introducing in quick succession three popular high performance turntables — Scout, Scoutmaster and Super Scoutmaster — all of which offer excellent value in their respective price categories, VPI Industries has now bowed a unit that represents radical rethink. The Classic, company principal and turntable guru Harry Weisfeld is quick to note, is all new and his simplest model ever.

Veteran listeners who have heard it, including another industry luminary named Harry, *The Absolute Sound's* founding editor Harry Pearson, agree that the Classic takes turntables at its modest price point to a level of performance that threatens much more expensive units, some from VPI itself. HP put the Classic on his personal 2009 Editor's Choice list, which appears in the September issue of *TAS* and comprises "reference equipment I use that I consider good enough to be a reference in anyone's system." (The only other turntable on HP's list, by the way, costs \$150,000. Yes, that's one-five-oh thousand!)

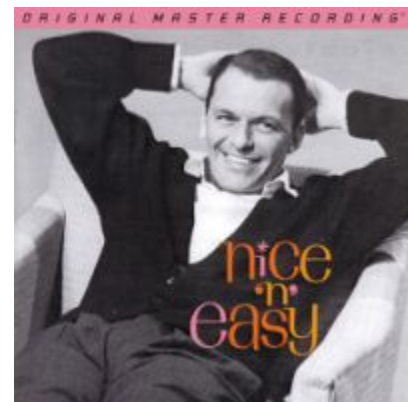
Gone are the acrylic platter and plinth that characterized VPI's older designs. And the separately mounted motors meant to isolate vibration. Instead we get a solid, 30 pound, one-piece laminate chassis and a rigidly-mounted motor that's set into the plinth itself.

Trickle Down Technology

A new cast aluminum platter rides on an inverted bearing, and the unit comes with a specially-designed tonearm that embodies trickle-down technology. It's a version of VPI's famed JMW 10.5i known as 10.5i SE — for Special Edition — and it's also fitted in rigid-mount mode.

In fact, if he hadn't adopted the name Classic, Harry Weisfeld could have designated this unit Rigidity. There's nothing squishy, spongy or suspensiony about it.

A couple of other details that don't take a degree in mechanical engineering to appreciate are the VPI pure copper wire that the Classic employs and the quartet of newly developed isolator feet



it stands on. The latter were derived from the feet used on the company's flagship HR-X turntable. More trickle-down technology

The audible result of all this is a component every analog fan can justly celebrate. It combines sonic neutrality, speed stability, noise rejection and pure musicality to deliver performance that rivals not only that of turntables costing two or three times more but some exotic models with prices that, even when the Dow Jones industrial average was above 1400 and starting to hyperventilate, would have seemed absurdly expensive.

WOW!

No other turntable at anywhere near the its price can make me react to a good recording the way the VPI Classic can — with a spontaneous and audible WOW! This unit makes the sounds of both instruments and voices natural, tactile, and solidly three-dimensional to an degree usually limited to master tapes. Listening to contemporary vinyl reissues of just a couple of my old favorite albums illuminated these qualities the way light does the facets of a well-cut precious stone.



Sonny Rollins' saxophone solo on "I'm An Old Cowhand" on Analogue Productions' 180-gram vinyl pressing of *Way Out West* instantly became more focused, as real and reed-driven as I've ever heard it. Cats Stevens' voice on "Where do the Children Play," from the 180-gram Island pressing of *Tea for the Tillerman*, pulled especially hard on the heartstrings and yanked this old gold nugget freshly into the moment.

The VPI Classic has the ability to retrieve detail and emotion you may never have otherwise known were present in the music recorded on so many LPs. With all but the very best turntables, these subtleties are lost in translation.

No wonder Harry Pearson, writing in issue 193 of *The Absolute Sound*, conferred a 2009 Golden Ear Award on the Classic and gave it a definitive nod. "If ever there were a best buy in 'tables, this is it," he enthused.

I heartily second HP's emotion. The more I listen to Harry Weisfeld's magnificent VPI Classic, the more strongly I feel it's the turntable bargain of the 21st century's first decade. At a time when we need such components more than ever, HW has come up with a rare, buy-one-and-keep-it-forever product.