

Vinyl & Sound

IS THE PURIST BACK?



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Recently an acquaintance challenged me on why he should spend "X" amount of dollars on a pair of speakers. The word he used was "ridiculous." As a "live and let live" kind of guy and an aficionado in this field I asked myself whether it was worth educating him or letting it fly. After all, there's a level at which the sound and cost make sense (cents to the budget). I think this is about the experience of listening and feeling sound, the emotions felt, the chill you get from a beautiful inspirational sonata or the chest pounding sensation from a track that takes you back to a simpler time. Shouldn't this be true for everything in life?

In my teenage years, I burned up plenty of my father's speakers listening to vinyl records. I have fond memories of playing those records at a very loud level. Sorry Dad, Love ya, but your speakers wouldn't go to "11"! We all know history repeats itself, and I find myself, knee deep, in the resurgence of that old vinyl. I have recently made a rediscovery. My wife and I frequent record stores and conventions picking through the old and new vinyl that moves us musically. It's the same old medium with today's playback technology advanced to a level where the audio quality is an incredible experience on its own.

A new movement is in play today. The younger generations have discovered our old ways aren't so bad. While rubbing elbows with Millennials at the record conventions the conversation turns to music that moves us, the gear we're using to listen, and, the most important part, how it makes us feel. In fact, a number of today's recording artists are releasing vinyl. We carry a sense of pride in our choices of turn table, plinth, stylus, tone arm, amplifiers and speakers. Don't get me wrong. You don't have to know all this information to enjoy good quality sound and you can get back into it with the purchase of a moderately priced system and a \$2 used record without knowing about any of the aforementioned gadgets. It's quite the generational bridge amongst those of us that appreciate the medium.

Some basics: the plinth is the base on which your platter sits. The platter is the part that is spun by the motor. Your record sits on top of the platter. The tone arm swings back and forth and gently drops the stylus, which reads the content a your record. This process is usually done with either a moving magnet or coil technology.



Sending the sounds to your ears requires three more choices. A pre-amplifier sends the signal from the turntable to the amplifier which in turn sends the sound to the speakers. Some record players have a built-in pre-amplifier which means you can plug it into any amplifier with the need to purchase a pre-amp. Typically, the higher end record players will require that pre-amp, which gives an added quality selection.

Similar choices are available on all the components I just mentioned as you can spend "ridiculous" amounts of money on tone arms, and styluses. And for those of you self-proclaimed aficionados of great audio, yes, I use a CD player as well and love both mediums equally. Stop judging.

If you want to welcome some pleasurable nostalgia into your life, come on in the water's fine. I often get in my time machine and travel to those years where it was just fun. I find it pleasurable that something simpler can make its way through this complicated world of wires and wireless we live in today.

