

Something old is new again ...at least to me

by Richard S. Foster

Right after the great Rocky Mountain Audio Fest last fall, I drove over the mountains with a friend. I was going to spend a few days with Mike Malone in Hotchkiss, Colorado.

Malone is as nuts about all things audio as any of us and since he just moved to Colorado a few months earlier, there was still some elbow room left to move components around and try and tweak a little more from his already great system. Mike is a hard core vinyl addict - like yours truly - but he will listen to those silver/gold discs when there is music he can't obtain on a righteous format. One afternoon we were listening to a CD and Malone said, "...wait a minute, this one's not treated." My response, not surprisingly was, "What do you mean by 'not treated'?"

He took me into his back room and there, sitting surrounded by slivers of plastic swarf, was the Audio Desk Systeme Gläss CD Sound Improver. Now I have seen this device at a number of shows and thought it was an interesting idea but, with my predilection for those big black discs, I never got beyond that initial glance. Now I got to hear the before and after results for myself: I was totally floored with what I heard! Being the cynic that I am, I said to myself, "Nah, this can't be real." Well, after a half dozen playbacks, I arrived at the belated conclusion that this machine is phenomenally good and proceeded to 'Improve' all the CDs

and SACDs I had brought with me to use at RMAF.

When I returned to Toronto, I contacted the manufacturer, Reiner Gläss in Germany, intent on obtaining a machine for myself, and reviewing it for the magazine. Jody Hickson of



Globe Audio Marketing, the Canadian distributor duly obliged and I'm now the proud owner of my own CD Sound Improver, paid for (note) from my own paltry funds.

Quite simply the CD Improver is a lathe. It shaves the edge of a disc (anything 12cm and optical) creating a 36° bevelled angle. This involves a manual swingarm with a tungsten carbide blade. You then 'seal' the disc

with a black felt (magic marker type) pen. There is one supplied with the CD Improver, along with a couple of plain clear plastic discs to practice with and a spare belt for the turntable. Once you've removed the packaging the machine is basically plug and play. You open the top lid of the Improver and this gives you access to a large knurled screw. Turn the screw counter clockwise and you lift a round plate. The plate sits on a 'turntable' - both the plate and

the turntable are narrower in diameter than your standard CD. You place the CD on the turntable, label facing down. Then place the plate on the CD and screw the knurled knob hand tight. You do not have to go overboard and finger tight is just fine.

Turn the switch on the lathe (it's a combination on/off switch and speed control) and then you simply pull the handle slowly until it stops cutting the disc. The arm is adjusted at the factory and comprehensive instructions come with the Improver should you want to adjust this further or ever need to change the blade. The edge should easily trim 2000 CDs so it's not something you're going to need right away. Of course, this action generates a spiral of hair fine plastic scrim. The Improver comes with a brush to use to keep things somewhat neat and tidy, but for me, the easiest way of keeping all the slivered bits in tow, was the hole in the rear of the Improver. This is there for you to connect a ▶

▶ vacuum cleaner hose. Just hook it up and, turn your vacuum on before activating the lathe. As soon as the disc is trimmed, shut your vacuum cleaner off. While the lathe is still spinning – and you can reduce the speed – take the felt pen and ‘seal’ the edge of the disc. While you wait a couple of minutes for the disc to dry, you can remove the knurled knob and the plate. If you’ve done this properly, you’ll barely be able to see a minute black line around your CD. The edge of the CD has lost only 0.2mm!

Now, as I’ve said, the treated discs sound audibly superior, but what on earth is going on? Well, there may be several things. First and foremost I believe that most CDs and SACDs are NOT round. Clearly this means the laser, laser mechanism, vibrational jitter and error correction are all working overtime to deliver the music through your SACD/CD player. This is picked up in playback. By making the disc round as well as beveling the 36° angle, you are minimizing dramatically the movement of the laser while reducing error correcting as well as the absorption of extraneous laser light because of the black marker.

Yes, it all sounds like Voodoo... but that’s the real joy of what this accessory does. It makes your CDs sound more like real music with sound stages that all of a sudden become deep and wide. Focus and control of instruments improve greatly and the solidity of images is tremendously enhanced. All of a sudden, so many artifacts we attribute to the digital format seem to vanish. Let me also make this clear: whilst a poorly recorded CD/SACD will sound better, but this product cannot make a silk purse from a sow’s ear.

I’ve tried this with SACDs as well as CDs and none have suffered any damage. Recorded material which I though was a little bit too sibilant for my tastes all of a sudden became

wonderfully crystal clear and clean. On a copy of one of my favorite SACDs, the RCA Living Stereo of the St. Sæens *Symphony No. 3*, particularly the *4th movement*, I could, as never before, plainly hear the piano accompanying the organ – the piano in its own space – where before, when I heard the piano, it was buried somewhere in the middle left of the stage. Now it stood alone. I also found, that this particular SACD, when placed on the improver as it started to spin, was about the shape of an egg!



non-improved counterpart. I have also found that I definitely prefer ‘Improving’ a blank CD-R before I use it to copy some of my personal

selections for playback at home or away. I’ve experimented with copying tracks first on an improved blank disc and also on a regular disc that was then improved. I opt now, to treat my blank discs prior to storing information on them, another indicator that the concentricity of discs is an issue.

This is a “must have” product for anyone really interested in maximizing the potential of their CD/SACD collection.

The price is reasonable and the construction and presentation of the product is outstanding. The results are simply quite staggering. ➤+

There is no doubt this product does

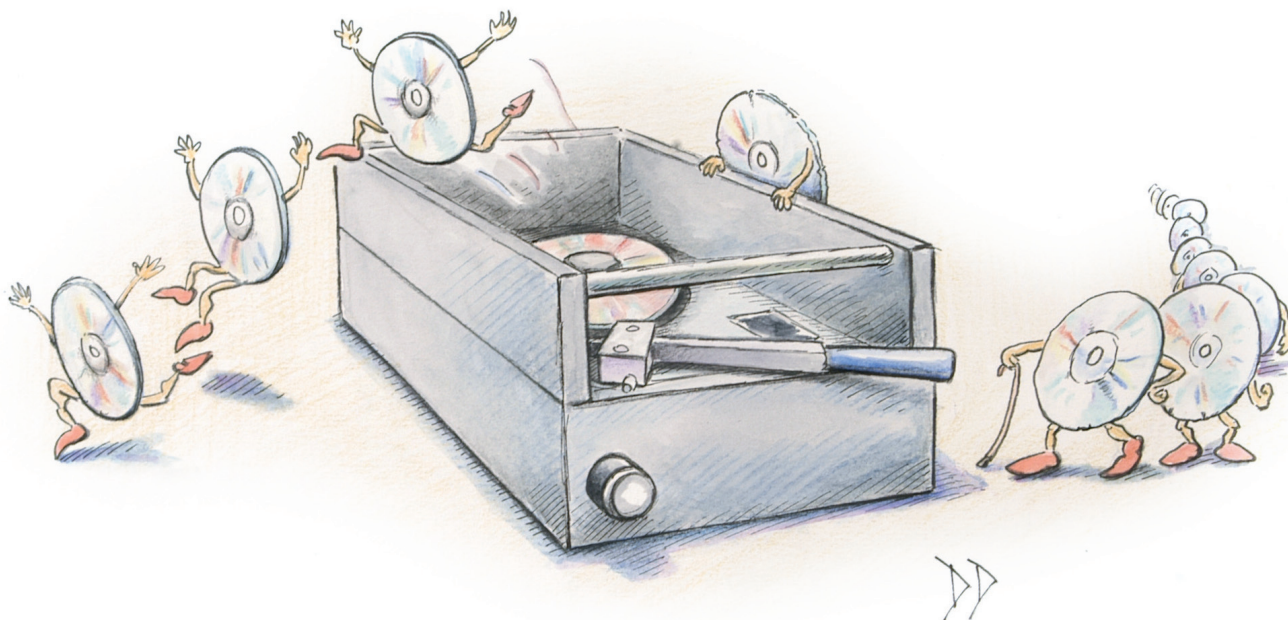
what it claims to do and while it may not be new to many of you, it was to me; if, like me you were unaware of its benefits then you need to get acquainted – it really is that good.

I took several CDs and SACDs to CES. For fun in a variety of rooms, I asked people to tell me which one sounded ‘better.’ Having done this comparison for at least 100 different people in well over a dozen various rooms, the opinions were unanimous: All the listeners in all the rooms, with all the varying setups and different components, always picked the ‘Improved’ SACD or CD over the

Audio Desk Systeme Gläss CD Sound Improve
Net: <http://www.audiodeskssysteme.de/>

UK Distributor:
Lyngdorf Audio UK
Tel. (44)(0)8709 100100
Price. \$320

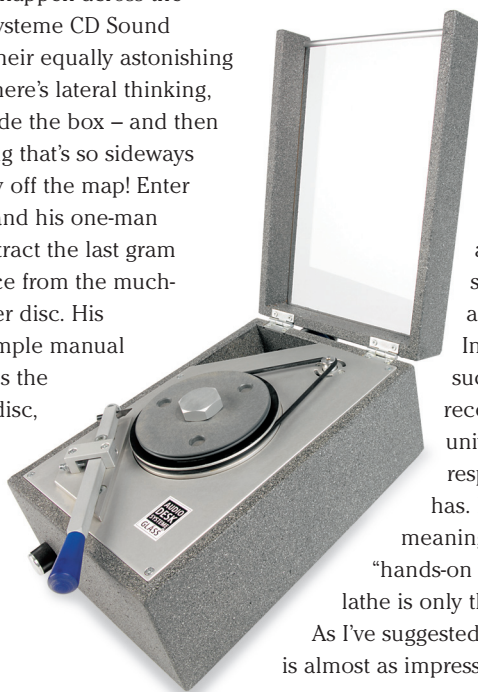
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Audio Desk Systeme CD Improver

Reviewed by Richard S. Foster in Issue 44

Sometimes it seems as though there's nothing new under the hi-fi sun – and then you happen across the Audio Desk Systeme CD Sound Improver, or their equally astonishing CD Washer. There's lateral thinking, thinking outside the box – and then there's thinking that's so sideways it's completely off the map! Enter Reiner Glass and his one-man crusade to extract the last gram of performance from the much-maligned silver disc. His answer is a simple manual lathe that trims the edge of your disc, delivering the preferred 36 degree angle and perfect concentricity in a single operation.



The effects are far from subtle, as readily and repeatedly demonstrated by RSF to anyone who'll listen. Music becomes cleaner, clearer and better focussed, with greater separation of instruments and a greater sense of the space around them. Indeed, few if any such tweaks have received the almost universally positive response that this has. Bringing new meaning to the term "hands-on hi-fi", Glass's lathe is only the first step. As I've suggested, his CD Washer is almost as impressive, but the

really good news is that he has applied his fertile imagination to that old chestnut, cleaning the LP record. I just can't wait... ➤+



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