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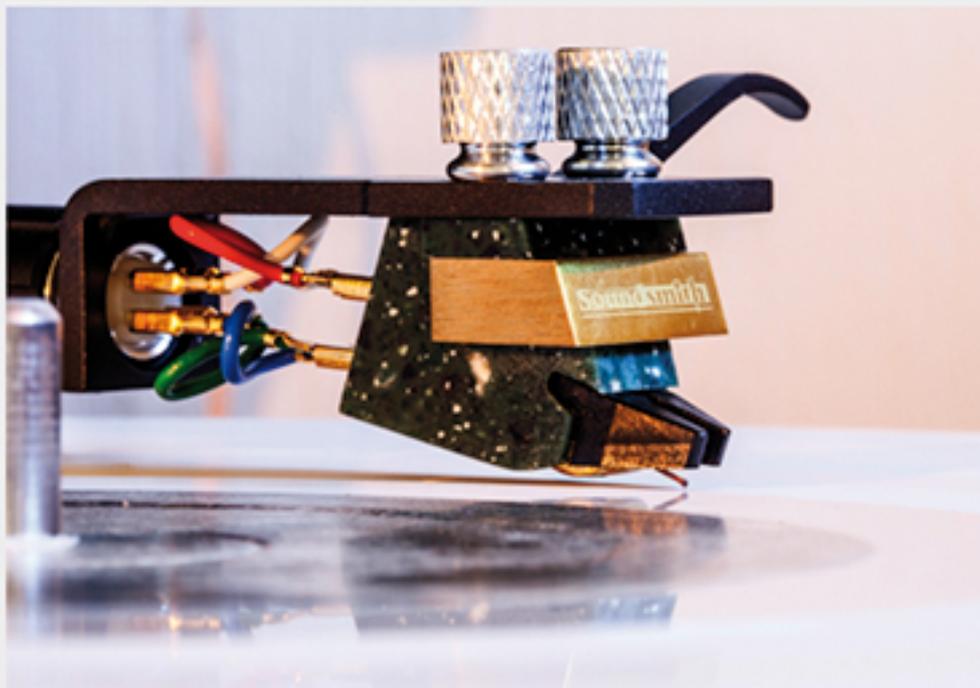
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## Soundsmith Hyperion Featured

Written by [Morten](#)

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The Hyperion is Soundsmith's bid for a high end cartridge, and I did not have to think twice about wanting to reviewing it or not! Hyperion comes in a lovely wooden box which help build expectations.

I am however, jumping the gun, let's start off with a little bit of history. For many years, Soundsmith has been a household name in audio circles, and owner Peter Lederman is THE soundsmith, who in addition to repairing hi-fi equipment, enjoys a good reputation for his cartridge repair and relamping service. Soundsmith started back in 1972, and from repairs there was but a short step for Lederman to evolve his own ideas about cartridge design. Over the years, Soundsmith has offered audiophiles many exciting cartridges, with



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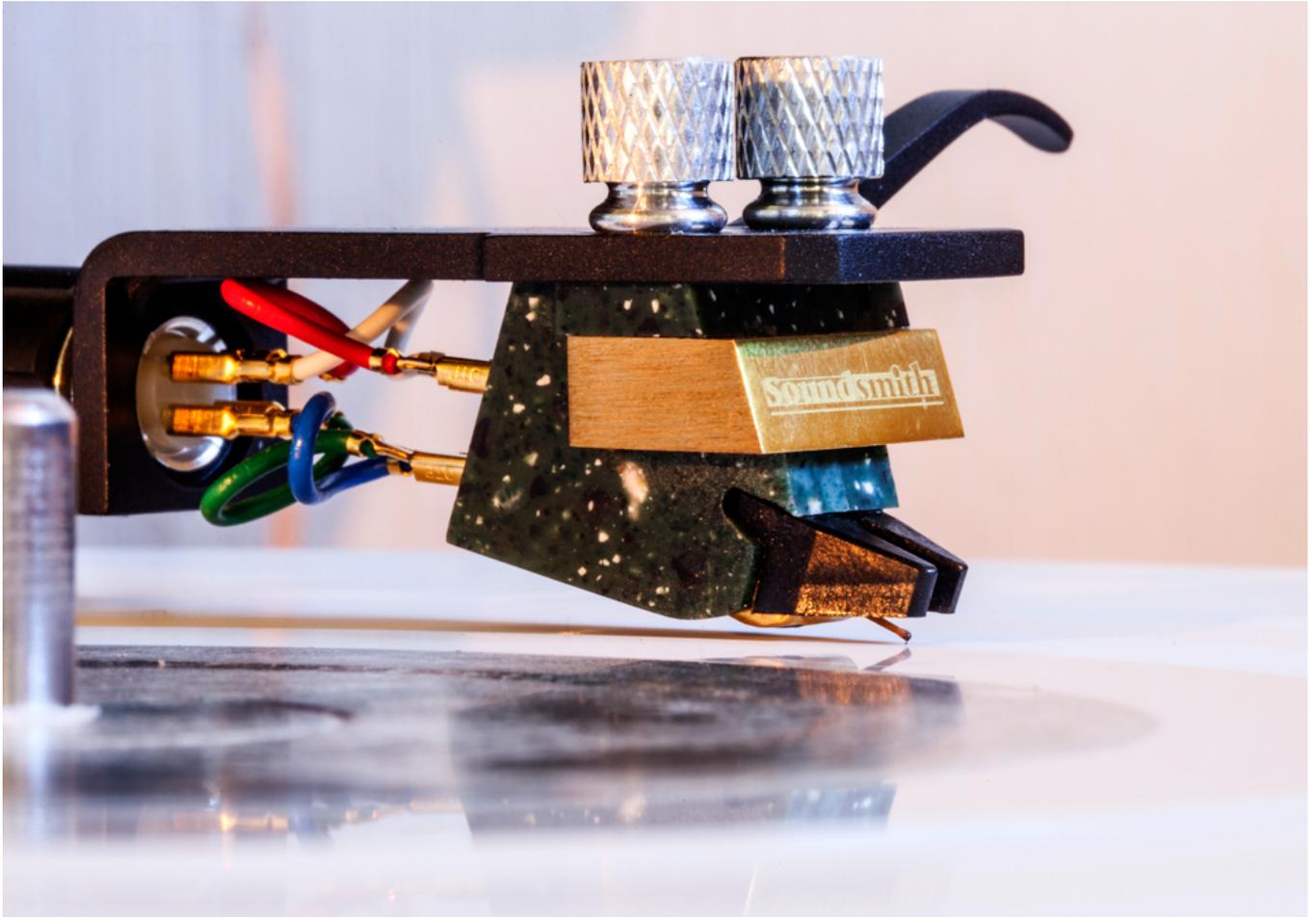
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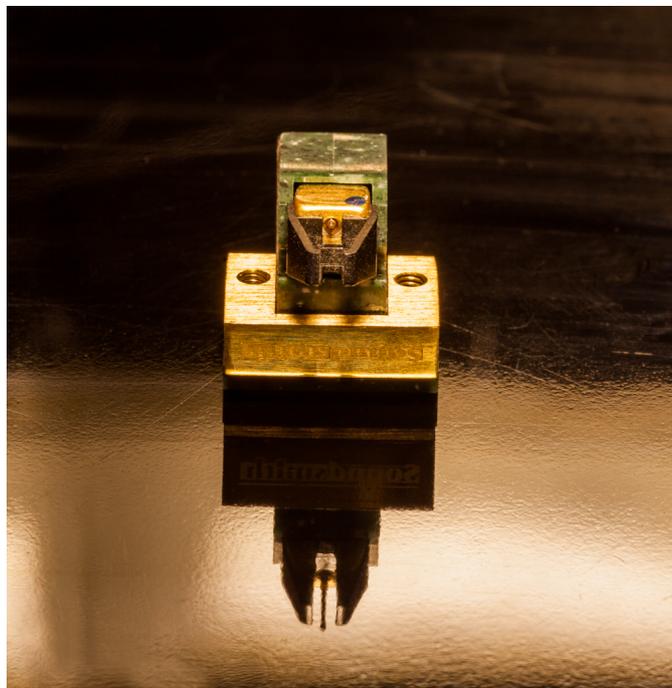
Nyeste tråder

# Soundsmith Hyperion

Morten



**The Hyperion is Soundsmith's bid for a high end cartridge, and I did not have to think twice about wanting to reviewing it or not! Hyperion comes in a lovely wooden box which help build expectations.**



I am however, jumping the gun, let's start off with a little bit of history. For many years, Soundsmith has been a household name in audio circles, and owner Peter Lederman is THE soundsmith, who in addition to repairing hifi equipment, enjoys a good reputation for his cartridge repair and retipping service. Soundsmith started back in 1972, and from repairs there was but a short step for Lederman to evolve his own ideas about cartridge design. Over the years, Soundsmith has offered audiophiles many exiting cartridges, with innovations like moving iron, fixed coil and strain gauge. Lederman now offers the Hyperion; a fixed coil cartridge featuring something as exotic as a cantilever fashioned from cactus. The idea of using cactus was passed to Lederman from Frank Schröder, well known for the tonearms bearing his name , which all feature exotic woods chosen for their stiffness/damping characteristics. According to Lederman, a taper is an ideal shape for a cantilever, this is however difficult and expensive to produce in a satisfactory manner. Cactus needles are naturally tapered, extremely strong with fibres running longitudinally, and with natural resin functioning as a damping material. All this according to Soundsmith, who argue that the perfect cantilevers are provided not by a factory, but by nature itself, and need not be fabricated, but simply harvested.

That said, every cactus needle chosen, must be carefully worked to accept the contact line nude stylus and offering it up to the inner parts of the cantilever assembly.

That Lederman has full confidence in this material is not to be doubted; Hyperion comes with a ten year guarantee and free retipping included.



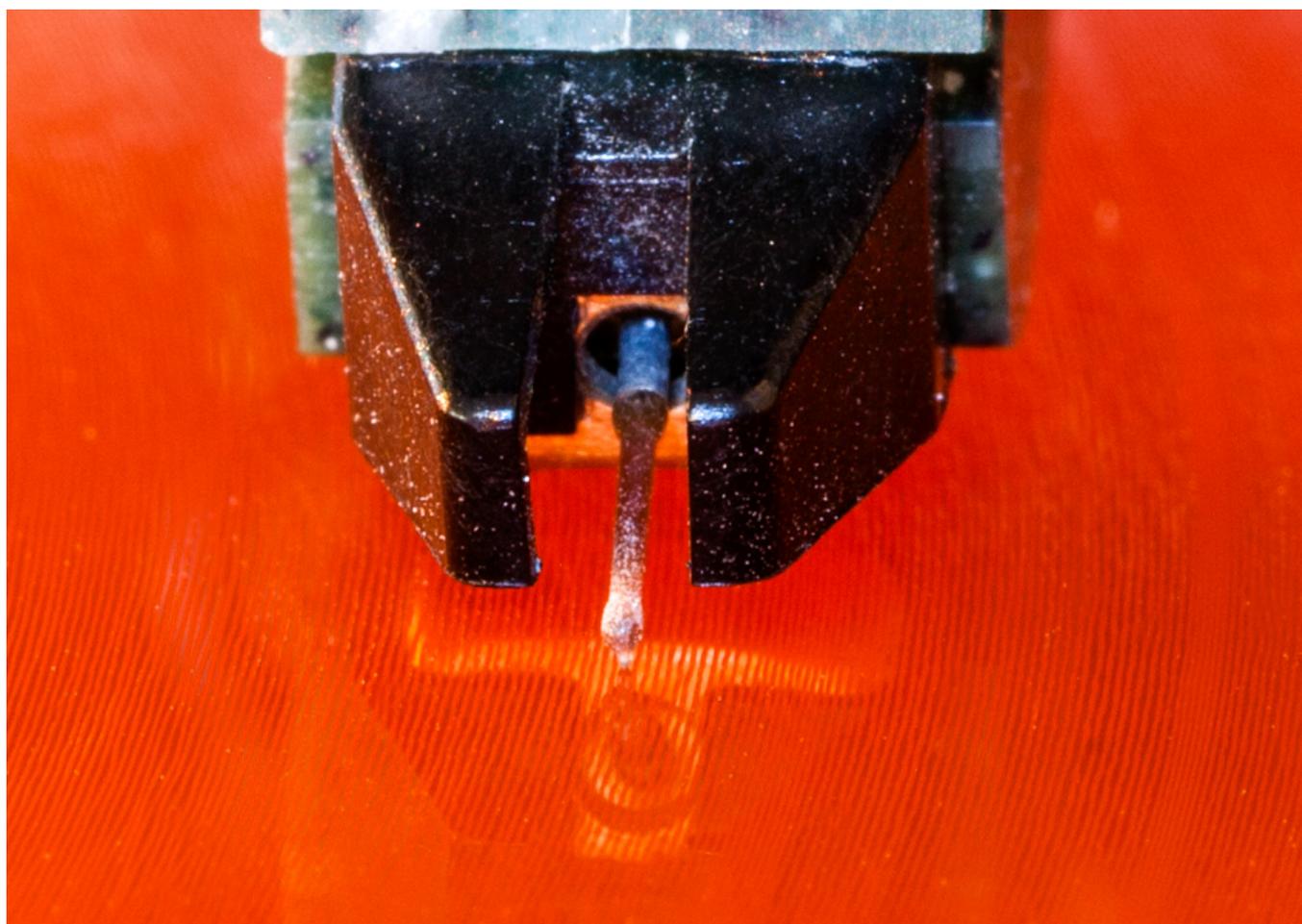
### **Finally, to Hyperion itself:**

Hyperion has an output voltage of 0,4 mV, a recommended load of 470 Ohm or higher, and a recommended tracking force from 1,8 to 2,2 grams. It weighs in at 10,25 grams and comes with four pairs of mounting screws, all in different materials, providing different weights enabling the owner to match the cartridge to the chosen tone arm. The cartridge has a compliance of 10 mN, it is thus fairly stiff and will require a medium to heavy tonearm.

For this review I used the Nottingham Analogue Dais turntable, fitted with a Jelco SA 750 EB 10 inch tonearm. The EAR 324 phonostage fed an Audio Research Ref 3 preamplifier. Power was provided by a Crown K2 for the bass and a Meridian 559 for the mid-range and tweeters. Also a pair of Tannoy ST-200 supertweeters were also in use.

The speakers used were a pair of RS 4W-12 Intuition by Norwegian speaker artisan R. Solhaug.

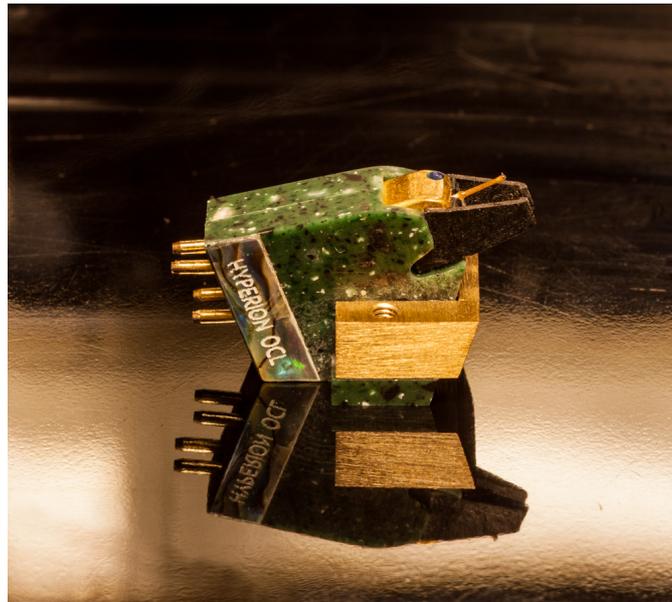
Installing the Hyperion was simplicity itself. The housing has threads eliminating the need for nuts, and is easy to align thanks to its straight sides and square angles, this is further helped by a slit in the guard above the cantilever, making this visible from above, quite simply exemplary.



The cartridge tracked fine with a stylus pressure of 2,1 grams, and 2 g on the anti-skating . After a quick listen, I chose a 40 Ohm load on the EAR. Choices on this phonostage are 4, 15 and 40 Ohms. At first glance this does not look like a match at all, but the EAR is a stage with built in transformers, and thus active amplification. 40 Ohms corresponds to 800

– 1000 Ohms in a "normal" phono stage. (Resistance in signal cables is of course also a variable, regardless of equipment. )

Finally I could unfold my ears in full listening mode, as the stylus on the end of a cactus needle descended in the groove constituting side one of Donald Fagen's "Morph The Cat". The bass is the attention grabber on that cut, this time around however it had more nerve to it, almost as if the bass had had new strings fitted.



Next up was "Tin Pan Alley", on Stevie Ray Vaughn's "Couldn't Stand The Weather". Stevie's guitar sounded elegant and airy, with lots of detail, but after a short while I found myself listening to the bass, a bit odd really. This repeated itself with "Little Blond Plaits" (Chris Rea, "On The Beach"), I sat listening to the drummers technique with the bass drum.

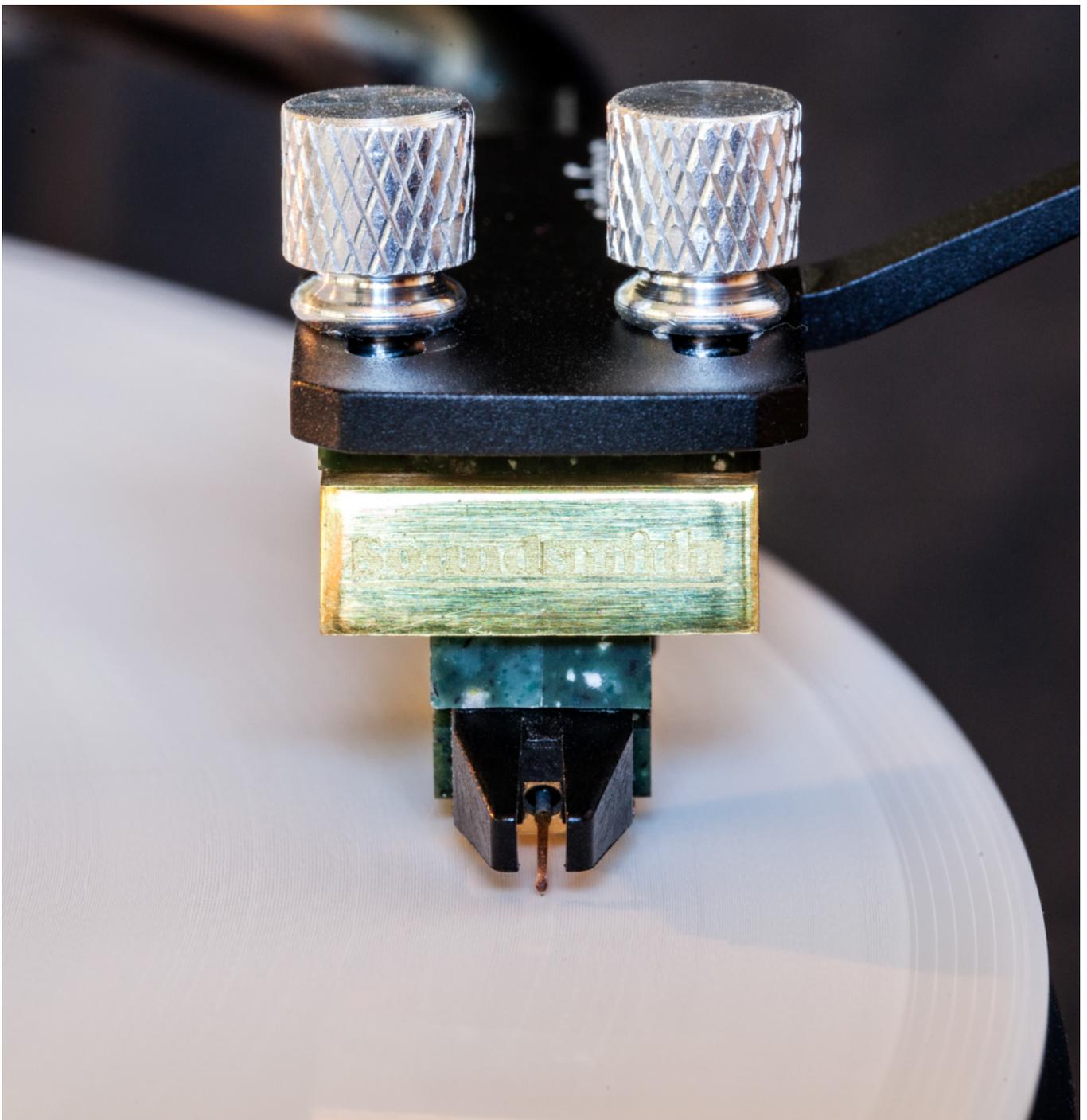
Pretty soon it became evident that the Hyperion is excellent in separating the different elements in a music piece. Sometimes this is expressed as every instrument having its own aura. Well, aura or not, there is very little "confusion" in the music, enabling me to focus on whatever part I wish. Everything and everyone has a clearly defined spot on the stage before me. The only cartridge I have heard do this equally well, is the Air Tight PC-1s.

However nice and charming this sounds, I always have one question I need to get answered; does it rock?

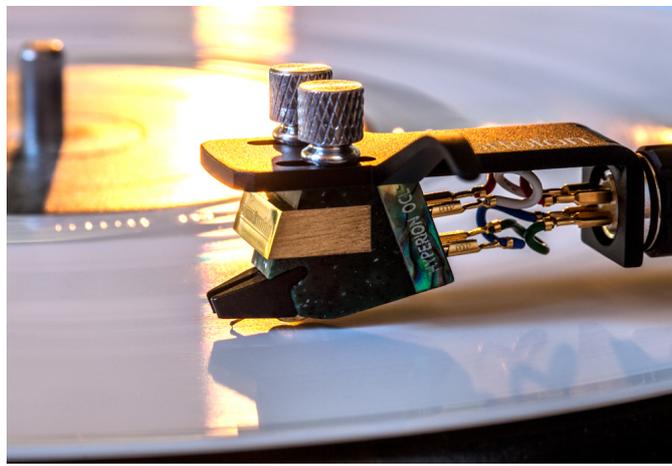
I handed the question to Robin Trower, specifically his masterpiece "Bridge Of Sighs". Trowers fingers, playing his guitar with consummate ease, the band; rock steady in their places, easy to pick out one by one. Hyperion really dishes it out, but thankfully without any harshness, if anything, it leans towards an organic sound. I only planned to have a quick listen, but no way, I enjoyed all of this great album.

I then went for a bonus question; does it entertain? Who better to answer that question, than Harry Belafonte? Playing the stereo version of his first Carnegie Hall albums put paid to any doubts. The backing singers and players in their places, the audience in a good mood, and here comes Harry, strolling across the stage. I only needed to close my eyes, and I joined the audience. His stories about smart women and an elusive father have rarely been more vivid, the concert had depth and lots of little details, and again it was presented with a rich and organic sound. Instead of being the cool and appraising reviewer, I found myself being quite enchanted.

A few more albums got a spin, from Suzanne Vega's classic "Solitude Standing" to Adele's recent "25". Even John Kaada and Mike Pattons new and very exciting partnership project "Bacteria Cult" got to dance with the cactus.



Soundsmith Hyperion plays in a big way, it presents a big stage. It lets the performers have their own space, and play with an organic sound which give voices and instruments substance and presence. However, it does not dissect music. This confused me for a while, high end cartridges seems to almost always arrive at the table, scalpel in hand. After listening to the Hyperion for a while, I felt that I had solved this conundrum, Hyperions "problem", is that it is musically bent...



To illustrate I'll resort to talking in black and white, and coarse exaggerations – so keep that in mind.

I mentioned Air Tight PC-1s earlier, and being a cartridge in the same price bracket as Hyperion, a comparison of the two seems appropriate. Both these cartridges impresses hugely, but they are not the same.

Air Tight PC-1s reveals all, it leaves nothing to imagination, it presents music illuminated by countless spotlights, it gives no pardon. Soundsmith Hyperion reveals all, it leaves nothing to imagination, it presents music illuminated by a thousand candles burning, it is in love.

The hardened Hifi enthusiast will purchase PC-1s, the die hard music lover will choose Hyperion.

Grossly exaggerated, of course....

Cartridges in this end of the scale are not like night and day. There is nuances separating them, obvious nuances yes, but still nuances. Other reviewers will use other, and probably bigger words. We are all different, and we perceive differently, that's the natural way of things. Then there is the matter of interaction between components used for a review, which may yield different conclusions for each and every one of us.

That said, I consider cartridges to be exiting components to change around in my system, to me they provide the most immediate and easily perceived changes and variations.

The Hyperion is very exiting

This review is thanks to Nordic agent Exotic Audio who let me play with the cactus.

Available in Norway at Audioaktøren, NAT and Dacapo Hifi.



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