

The Oracle ReAnimated

It Doesn't Have to Cost A Fortune to Upgrade Your Turntable

BY DAVID THOMSON

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF MY VINYL is my goal. The better my system gets, more information is revealed or, since my recent Oracle Delphi turntable upgrade, more like unleashed.

Let's start at the source of the analog process.

The cartridge is the record's microphone. Are you gonna hand Sinatra, or Coldplay's Chris Martin, a ten buck mic? Then, what about the components that track the stylus, the turntable configuration?

Technology is not just digital. The evolution occurs in analog, too. You may have read my recent rant on how I'm so relieved to have an Oracle turntable as it can be upgraded to near the latest version for minimum investment.

Well, it happened again. The Oracle Delphi MK VI is in its second generation—The MK VI Gen-2.

Although, the platter is totally redesigned to control resonance and ease belt installation—hint to Santa—my limited budget restricted my upgrade to the power supply and the electronics in the motor circuitry, only. The result? Unwavering vocal harmonics, tighter, rounder bass, cleaner cymbals and deeper drums. Clarity, openness, crispness in delivery, the soundstage expanded—more focused...you know, the usual. Surprisingly, these were qualities that I didn't think could be much improved without a major investment.

We're gonna get a little techie on you for a minute yet, hang in there. Some of you might learn a thing or two, I did!

May 2015, welcomed the Delphi MK VI Gen-2, an upgrade covering three distinct elements:

1. The Turbo Power adaptor. By significantly reducing the DC ripple from about 35mv to less than 1mv, the signal feeding the drive electronics is significantly cleaner. This has tremendous impact on the harmonic structure and bass definition.



2. The motor drive electronics. The net result is a torque increase of, approximately, 15%. Although, this may sound small, it is over and above what is already acceptable for the motor drive system to maintain a constant speed.

Oracle set-up maestro Jay Nakamura explains, "Then, the music is reproduced with a greater sense of ease and relaxation. It also contributes to a more defined feeling of the recording venue and, adds depth and separation to the instruments."

3. The platter design is now a two-piece, inner and outer platter. This offers two major advantages: The first being that the drive belt installation is simplified because you now have direct access to the area where the drive belt is riding for easy placement around the motor pulley. The second advantage is that by creating a mechanical coupling of the two-piece platter, there is a significant gain in platter resonance control.

Oracle's Jacques Riendeau summarized, "The global sonic improvement of the Mk VI Gen-2 has a vastly refined harmonic structure. Dealing with micro information opens the door to possible drifts in music reproduction. This is true of all record players and it occurs with your other audio components, too. The closer you get to perfect alignment with the harmonic structure of the sound, the more significant the improvements. It impacts all aspects; imaging, bass, transients, soundstage, etc."

Where the upgrade really impacted my experience was when I delved deep into the vaults and dug out some oldie-but-groovies that resonated with my evolution into audiophilia.

Remember Windham Hill Records? Around the 80s, they introduced a new level of quality in production. One of my fave raves was this 1:31 solo guitar piece, called *Hot Type*, by Michael Hedges on his *Aerial Boundaries*

release. Michael took the kick-ass Leo Kottke influence to a whole new level.

I hadn't listened to *Hot Type* in over 5 years. So, now, I'm experiencing the generations of improvement to my stock Delphi MK III. The reproduction was so clean and "uncolored," Michael's finger-plucking and string-slapping were so crisp and uncluttered, my jaw dropped.

Without knowing it, I'd been accustomed to the strings having a serious halo effect surrounding the notes. On reflection, they had been so muffled, so puffy that it seemed that they had been dipped in molasses then swabbed with cotton wool.

The soundstage was no longer a "Wall of Sound," This was just a guitar with its pulsating harmonics resonating in my ears.

And, until that time, I was showing off this track as one of my system "reference recordings." My apologies to all of you who were subjected to this misinformation. Also, to Windham Hill and, you Michael, for such a blatant misrepresentation of your artistry! (Yet, let's be honest, it did sound pretty good for the times)

"...more information was unleashed
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The dynamic Billy Cobham's *Spectrum* is another example of more information being unleashed to reveal a soundstage so real, so mobile, it's like watching a movie.

What's important to note here is that the only components that have created these incredible revelations are the upgrades to the original MK III turntable. The arm, cartridge, interconnects, are the same—as are the source material, the records.

That's the beauty of vinyl, it doesn't age; the information is always there. It's just that the technology to reproduce it is so much more efficient and affordable, today.

Did you get to T.H.E. Show Newport Beach this year? The Oracle MK VI Gen-2 was the reference turntable married to, I'm guessing, a \$200,000 system in one of the ballrooms.

The sweet surprise was when Anne Bisson, who was included in T.H.E. Show's LIVE entertainment line-up, wooed the crowd by scatting along as her latest album demonstrated Oracle's exemplary abilities in the background.

"*Tales from the Treetops*," stated Anne, "is a true follow-up to my '08 vinyl release *Blue Mind*. That was so well received, by so many, that it inspired me to keep its mood evolving." *Blue Mind* was so well received by Oracle that their logo now adorns the *Tales from the Treetops* jacket: High praise indeed.

Jacques concluded, "What motivates us to go further with innovation is our open-minded attitude towards turntable performance and the true replication of voices and instruments. This means that we always have to invent new tricks to test and hear how they impact the overall Oracle Delphi performance."

The good news is that we vinyl freaks are the ones to benefit from it.

For your personalized SoCal, Oracle MK VI Gen-2 audition, call Randy at Optimal Enchantment: 310.393.4434.

For all Audio/Video set ups: Jay at Audio Universe: 310.478.8453.

Oracle worldwide: Call Jacques; 819.864.0480 or, visit oracle-audio.com

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