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Notwithstanding what is now often referred to as 'the current situation', the HIFICRITIC team has been busy seizing the opportunity to get ideas and discoveries down on paper, including the vital sharing of listening experiences. And it's that sharing Andrew Everard acknowledges in his *SoundStage* piece at the end of this issue, relating his experience of rediscovering the sheer fun of music in an unlikely situation – but then the enjoyment of music, however it occurs, is really what this hobby is all about.

For this issue a long promised update on the Linn LP12 vinyl disc player has been accomplished, which project required certain machinations – not least a visit to an acclaimed Sondek-fettler – and achieved surprising results. It enabled me to audition a version of the turntable fitted with the current design of main platter bearing, the Karousel, in comparison with on with the previous Cirkus fitment, which led to me adopting the new assembly for my own LP12 for extended listening at home, where it has stayed.

During this upgrade project it was suggested that my Radikal outboard electronics for the LP12's motor power and control – which can also power a head amp/equaliser if fitted – should be brought up to date. The long-established power supply board is improved by the fitting of Linn's Dynamik option, which enjoys a higher switching rate, plus frequency-agile design intended to reduce EMC noise and improve regulation for greater speed stability. Thus I've been able to report on both these developments, noting that the LP12 is approaching its half century anniversary of serial production, the span of a many of our audio careers, and bring my own record-playing system fully up to date.

Also updated is my passive line control unit: Max Townshend's almost obsessive restless energy has led him to again re-engineer some aspects of the award-winning Allegri Reference, which extensive improvements are also available as a return to base retrofit for existing owners. We obtained an up-to-date sample of the Reference just in time to meet our editorial deadline for this issue and it was well worth the effort to find time to audition it, so great are the improvements to what I already considered a 'near perfect' device. I make no excuses for our extensive coverage of the Wilson Audio Chronosonic XVX tower loudspeaker, all the way from Provo, Utah. In a once-in-a-decade opportunity, we gained exclusive access to this impressive design, requiring the shipment of the necessary test equipment – plus music software in several formats – to a private calibrated demonstration location, where I was able to measure and listen for several days. Sources comprised master tape and multiple digital sources and of course, top quality vinyl recordings, and the results speak for themselves. The total cost for the entire review system including cables, stands, platforms, sources analogue and digital, not forgetting room treatment, amounted to roughly \$1M – hence our ambitious headline.

Our industry personality interview is with Heinz Lichtenegger, audio stalwart and founder of Pro-Ject, the Vienna-based brand best-known for its turntables, of which it has a remarkably diverse range. He tells Chris Frankland the secret of his success is having the in-house capacity to make so diverse a range, and offer it to customers worldwide, covering all the bases.

Stan Curtis offers another insight into the world of the designer, explaining how the changing demands of music playback formats influence the way amplifiers develop, while Keith Howard investigates one of the major headphone trends of the moment – active noise cancellation, designed to keep the world out while we're listening – and debates the pros and cons of the technology.

Andrew Everard examines the Cambridge Audio Evo 150, a very slickly designed all-in-one 'just add speakers' network audio system. It may be a relatively late arrival in this fast-growing market sector, but Andrew reckons it was well worth the wait.

On the subject of new arrivals, Kevin Fiske has a wild, extended and ultimately satisfying encounter with the advanced Denafrips Terminator Plus, a purist DAC from China: it's impressive, he says, but you need to be patient. He's less convinced by the DAC in CEC's CD-only two-box digital player, but finds much to admire in the transport.

Also flying the flag for disc is the unusual-looking McIntosh MCD85 machine: it's assessed by Chris Kelly, who also enjoys his time with the Edwards Audio TT 4, a very cost-effective record player package complete with fitted unipivot arm of in-house design, and cartridge.

*Martin Colloms*  
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