

REVIEW

Massive and Precise

The Acoustic Signature Analog One Mk. III

By Jeff Dorgay



These days, most turntables fall into a few basic categories: suspended or not and high or low mass. Granted, there are a number of sub variations on these themes with some using different kinds of bearings, tonearm mounts, platter materials, etc., etc., but this is how I see the major lines drawn in the sand. The Acoustic Signature Analog One is a prime example of the non-suspended, high-mass school of design, but with a few interesting twists on the theme to make it a very interesting record-playing machine.



The plinth of the Analog One is machined from high-grade aluminum and the platter is made from a softer aluminum alloy to control resonance. The underside of the platter reveals another layer of damping material embedded in the platter that weighs about 34 pounds (15kg). On the top face of the table, even further attention to resonance control is provided by the 20 machined brass silencers imbedded into the platter. According to Acoustic Signature, these silencer discs are decoupled from the platter and have been evaluated over extended listening sessions. They damp the platters resonant characteristics yet leave the high-mass platter sounding lively and giving the musical presentation an energy not often heard from composite and acrylic platters.

Using an inverted bearing design, which needs no lubrication, the platter is set into the bearing sleeve and the whole assembly is *solid*, requiring barely any energy to keep it moving. The standard setup arrives with one motor, but you can increase this to two or even three motors. Though incredibly quiet in the single-motor configuration, the additional motors will further reduce the tables wow and flutter spec, for the obsessive user.

The rest of the table is very straightforward, with the motor

having its own module, disconnected from the chassis, and a tonearm module that is also machined from aluminum and attached to the bottom of the plinth with three large hex screws. For those wanting multiple tonearms, the Analog One will accommodate up to three tonearms simply by adding additional modules. The best part of the equation for true analog lovers: the modules are adjustable, so 10- and 12-inch tonearms will work without problem.

The standard one-motor, one-tonearm module Analog One Mk. III has an MSRP of \$9,995 in the U.S. and 7,000 Euros in the rest of the world. Additional tonearm modules that are drilled for the arm of your choice cost \$800 US or 650 EURO. Extra motor modules carry the same price and the Alpha power supply that comes packaged with the table can accommodate three motors.

Playing Records Almost Instantly

The initial setup for the Analog One only takes about 15 minutes to install the platter and tonearm module. The review sample came with a standard SME armboard, so the review proceeded with the SME i.Vi tonearm that usually resides on my TW Acoustic Raven TWO. This made for an interesting comparison, as I could

lift a tonearm and cartridge with which I was very familiar and just move it to the review sample, reset VTA and proceed. In this case, I had been listening extensively to the very resolving Clearaudio DaVinci MC cartridge (MSRP: \$5,500). Throughout the course of the review, I managed to try the Lyra Dorian and Skala cartridges as well as the Grado Statement, all with excellent luck.

My full suite of tools from Acoustic Sounds and Clearaudio had the SME set correctly and back in business quickly. Enjoying the ability to use two tonearms on the Raven, I can see where those with an extensive record collection would want to use one or perhaps even two more tonearms on the Analog One. Worth noting is that if you are using an SME, or other arm with the five-pin DIN plug, you will need a tonearm cable with a 90-degree plug to go into the tonearm. You should also assemble the tonearm onto the top plate, string the cable and then attach the plate into the module. My only complaint with this turntable (as it is with most high-end tables, so no extra demerits for Acoustic Signature here) is that an instruction manual with a few pictures would help tremendously, even if it was a PDF that I could download from their website. *(continued)*



As mentioned earlier, the Alpha power supply will control up to three motors, and if speed adjustments are needed, the cover must be removed. Again, pictures! Fortunately, both the 33 and 45 rpm speeds were perfect, so no adjustment was needed throughout the duration of the review.

Dynamic!

From the first record played, in this case Dave Grusin's *Discovered Again* (an original Sheffield Direct to Disc recording), the dynamic punch of this turntable was revealed. Having used the DaVinci lately on quite a few different turntables, I was instantly impressed with the extra bass control of the DaVinci/SME combination. Those complaining about the SME arms having wooly, slow bass usually have put too much damping fluid in the trough, but the results here were spectacular. Hopefully, on our next Acoustic Signature turntable review, we'll investigate the Rega and Tri-Planar arms as well.

Continuing on the jazz groove, I went through a fairly large stack of recent Blue Note remasters, again marveling about the fine detail present on instrument attack and the extra gradation on the decay. Because the DaVinci is capable of so much resolution, it's easy to blur the dynamic range of which it is capable. The trick is to get the perfect balance of weight, damping and speed, much like tuning your room. Too much damping and things start to sound dead and lifeless. Too little and things sound harsh and brittle. I came away from each listening session with this table highly impressed and keying in on this aspect. *(continued)*

Power Cord Measurements!

REVOLUTIONARY **DTCD** ANALYSIS

For years, the debate has raged on-line and off regarding the perceived value of after-market power cords within professional and consumer audio-video systems.

Though there are many sound and visual professionals who report experiencing dramatic differences when replacing stock power cords, there are still skeptics who point to a lack of measurements as proof that no real difference can exist.

Shunyata Research scientist, Caelin Gabriel, has put an end to the debate by revealing not only one — but three dramatic measured differences between stock power cords and an inexpensive audio-grade power cord.

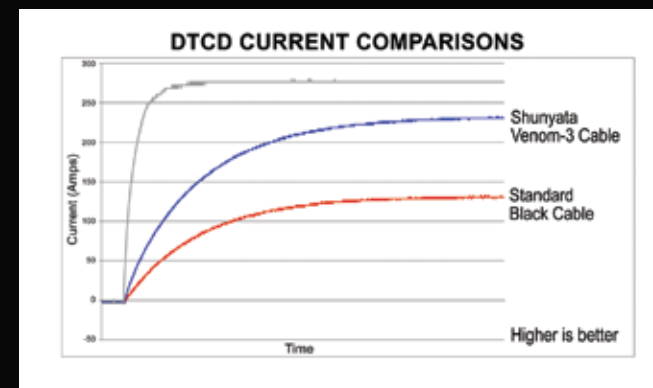
The measurements represent three critical performance criteria:

- 1 The quantity of instantaneous current available through a specified power device or circuit. Measured in amperes.
- 2 The amount of voltage drop across the device during the conduction period.
- 3 The stored residual noise component rate of dissipation after the current conduction period (displayed on web-site).

DTCD (DYNAMIC TRANSIENT CURRENT DELIVERY) ANALYZER

DTCD is a method of current analysis that measures instantaneous current delivery in the context of a pulsed current draw. In layman's terms, it is a way of measuring current performance into typical electronic component power supplies.

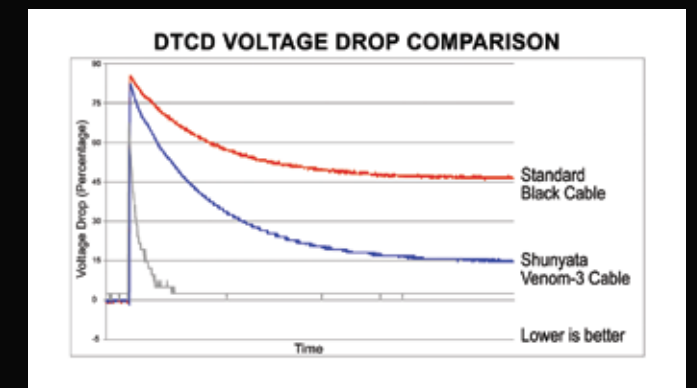
The DTCD Analyzer allows the measurement of pulsed transient current through a variety of AC power products, including power cords.



DTCD CURRENT MEASUREMENT:

This measurement depicts the difference in available impulse current between *Shunyata's* Venom-3 power cord (\$99 retail) and a standard black component power cord. Note the enormous difference in the quantity of current available compared to the stock power cord. The stock power cord delivers only 47% of available current compared to 84% with a Venom-3 power cord. By any standard of measure, this is statistically significant.

See more measurements and complete info at shunyata.com/Content/dtcd.html



VOLTAGE DROP COMPARISON:

The voltage drop depicted for the stock power cord was so profound that several models were tested to validate the standardized measurement. A 53% drop in voltage during the conduction period compared to only a 17% drop with a *Shunyata* Venom-3 power cord represents a night to day objective difference. This magnitude of difference is certainly significant in a high performance entertainment system.

NOTE: Many standard cords were tested. This cord is representative of the average measurement.



And I've rarely heard a high-mass table possess this kind of agility. While on this subject, the Analog One came packed with a very thin felt mat, which was used with mixed results. Some records definitely sounded more live without it, but of course, your preference may vary.

The dynamic contrast and weight possessed by the Analog One brought with it a high degree of timbral accuracy. Listening to The Jung Trio's current 45 rpm recording of *Dvorak's Trio in F Minor, Op. 65* was indeed a spectacle. Violin and piano are my two favorite instruments to listen to for tonal accuracy, and the two not only sounded incredibly realistic, both were able to coexist in their own space together very well. I've noticed that to get the proper amount of ease on this recording is really tough, yet another test that the Analog One passed easily.

Of course, this table was just what the doctor ordered for large-scale orchestral music or heavy rock. One of my favorite classical warhorses is Mussorgsky's *Pictures at An Exhibition*. I have an old mid '70s pressing of the Chicago Symphony on DG, and while it may not be the go version for all classical lovers, I've heard this record a million times. The Analog One captured the necessary amount of force to make it sound more than convincing. Staying in the warhorse vein, playing through the four Peter Gabriel solo albums on Classic Records was a treat for the same reason; this table just has a way of really gripping the deep

bass passages in whatever you listen to.

On many levels, the Analog One took me by surprise in a good way. Having really settled into the sound of the Raven Two, I've been very happy with a similar sound, one possessing a more than average helping of weight without sacrificing tonal contrast or low-level detail. But the Analog One had a much bigger helping of both. Playing the same records back to back with identical SME arms and Lyra Skala phono cartridges, it's as if the room's walls were pushed out a few feet in all directions.

The Verdict

The Acoustic Signature Analog One is an incredibly solid contender in the \$10k turntable range, and the versatility of being able to add two more tonearms makes it tough to beat for the serious analog lover with a large and varied music collection. You could have two of your favorite flavors of phono cartridge as well as a third setup for mono! If this isn't analog bliss in a compact package, I don't know what is. For all but those craving a turntable that costs as much as a new Porsche, the Analog One could easily be the "final destination" for 98 percent of the analog fanatics out there.

The build quality is top shelf, and this turntable is the perfect example of basic engineering principles executed to perfection. Watch for this one again next year in our Recommended Components issue. It's a winner. ●



The Acoustic Signature Analog One Mk. III

MSRP: \$9,995
(with one motor and armboard)

Contact information:
www.as-distribution.de

PERIPHERALS

Preamplifier Burmester 011

Phono Preamplifier Nagra VPS w/VFS isolation platform

Power Amplifier Burmester 911 mk. 3

Speakers GamuT S-9

Cartridges Clearaudio DaVinci, Lyra Skala, Lyra Dorian, Dynavector XV-1s

Tonearm SME iv.Vi and 309

Tonearm Cables Furutech Silver Arrows, Furutech AG-12, Audioquest LeoPard

Interconnect Shunyata Aurora

Speaker Cables Shunyata Stratos SP

Accessories Running Springs Dmitri and Maxim power conditioners, SRA Ohio XL Plus Isolation platforms, Furutech DeMag