

# The Audio Beat

## Shunyata Research • Everest 8000 Power Conditioner

*"The Everest is a no-holds-barred reference component that delivers a clear view of the audiophile promised land . . ."*

by Vance Hiner | September 11, 2020



Great audio systems are time machines. They can bring us surprisingly close to the original coordinates of a musical performance. The wooden resonance of a Martin guitar at a bluegrass festival or the poignant catch in a singer's voice as she leans into the microphone of a cozy recording studio can trick the brain's limbic system and temporarily convince us that what we are hearing is the real thing. Truly exceptional gear reveals so much depth, dimension and detail that we find ourselves reacting emotionally to the sonic rendition of a moment in time. This aural equivalent of the Star Trek Holodeck is our hobby's holy grail, and any audio product that brings me dramatically closer to that sacred ground has my undivided attention.

And so it is with the new Everest 8000 power distributor from Shunyata Research. I've never heard a single component elevate so many aspects of an audio system's sonic performance in quite the way as the Everest 8000 does. It also happens to be a product Shunyata's founder and chief engineer Caelin Gabriel says is the culmination of his 25-year career in the field of AC purification and management.

I was first attracted to Gabriel's work in the mid-2000s, when my interest in high-end audio was beginning to wane. Despite constant equipment upgrades, my system lacked the vitality and excitement that had initially drawn me to the music in the first place. In response to these complaints, a friend recommended one of Shunyata's early Hydra 4 power conditioners along with the company's first-generation Diamondback power cord. As skeptical as I initially was, the effect this little metal box and fat power cord had on my audio journey was profound and immediate. They kept me up until the wee hours that night, marveling at how much more authentic and natural my favorite music sounded. Because I'd slowly grown accustomed to the ever-increasing noise generated by my components, as well as the electrical grid itself, it took the Hydra 4's reduction of that interference to demonstrate how much actual distance this sonic pollution was putting between me and the music. Over the intervening years, my experience with an even wider and far more expensive range of products and systems has strengthened my conviction that high-quality power conditioning is essential to achieving lifelike music reproduction.

This is the fourth time I've written for The Audio Beat about the fruits of Caelin Gabriel's busy testing laboratory in Poulsbo, Washington. But "busy" doesn't quite capture the scope of this inventor's creative energy. In addition to racking up an impressive collection of nine US patents for his scientific discoveries, Gabriel has established Clear Image Scientific, a medical division of his company that provides power-purification equipment for cardiology diagnostic labs throughout the world. It's difficult to overstate how challenging it is to pass the staggeringly rigorous testing and measurement standards for acceptance in that field, and it's remarkable that Gabriel's small company has managed this while still introducing a regular stream of new audio-oriented products. Shunyata's medical applications demonstrate how far the company has taken a category of products that not too long ago was regarded as "tweaks," as afterthoughts to sonic performance. Rigorously reviewed case studies, test results and independent measurements in the medical arena serve as an affirmation for Shunyata Research and those audio enthusiasts who heard the results of Gabriel's discoveries from the beginning.



A thorough explanation of Shunyata's past breakthroughs can be found in TAB's previous articles, but it's worth summarizing what it is precisely that sets Shunyata's technology apart. Common approaches to reducing electronic noise in an audio system frequently involve chokes or coils, or full-on AC regeneration. Shunyata contends that while all of those approaches may be effective at reducing or eliminating certain external sources of electronic noise pollution, they fail to adequately address the considerable noise that is produced by every component within an audio system. In contrast to competing engineering schemes, the Everest 8000 is intended to act as a passive sink for the high-frequency noise generated by those components and then to prevent that noise from interfering in any way with an audio system's peak performance.



A common complaint about many power conditioners is that their noise-reduction technology causes unintended compression and restriction of system dynamics, resulting in sluggish, uninvolved sound. That's why Gabriel eschews the active power-conditioning approach and instead engineers power distributors that he says guarantee unimpeded and non-reactive peak current delivery to all system components without altering the sonic character of those components. To accomplish that task, Gabriel has equipped the Everest 8000 with patented QR/BB modules that are three times the size of those found in the first-generation Denali products. Made from expensive ultra-pure copper, the QR/BBs act as electrical charge reservoirs and provide what Gabriel calls Dynamic Transient Current Delivery, or DTCD. Gabriel contends that each QR/BB is a new type of filtering device that improves upon what capacitors and coils do well without introducing their respective drawbacks, which include ringing (in the case of capacitors) and current impedance (in the case of coils). In fact, Gabriel claims that the QR/BB's dynamic transient current delivery capability is far superior to a direct-wall-socket connection to a dedicated 20-amp line.

In addition to its DTCD-oriented design, Everest 8000 also utilizes a breakthrough technology that reduces common-mode noise interference from the power line, dubbed the CMode noise filter. Gabriel says this discovery removes the common-mode noise that robs music of its natural three-dimensionality without compressing the dynamic range that is so vital for lifelike music reproduction. That innovation, along with significant enhancements to Gabriel's patented component-to-component noise isolation chambers (NICs), improved internal and external vibration damping, six discreet isolation zones, a new hydraulic electromagnetic breaker for over-current protection and a chassis grounding system for up to a dozen components combine to make the Everest 8000 Gabriel's all-out assault on power-management design challenges.

The Everest 8000 arrived on my doorstep about a month into the Great Pandemic, when I'd reached the outer boundaries of the known Internet and was just plain bored. Naturally, I was thrilled to get some new gear and started texting details to my friend Jason, a young, budding audiophile. Among our circle of fanatics here in St. Louis, Jason has developed a reputation for being Mr. Musicality because of his penchant for vintage gear and all things vinyl. Jason's response to my spec-centric texts about the Everest 8000 was, "That's nice. But will all this technological necromancy make you want to play records?" In addition to being a supreme smart ass, Jason is also part of our family's quarantine bubble, so I rewarded his snark with an invitation to witness the Everest 8000's unboxing.



After positioning the eight-outlet, 43-pound Everest tower behind my equipment rack and re-dressing multiple power cords and interconnects, Jason and I played a Tidal stream of Perfume Genius's stellar Set My Life on Fire Immediately and were startled by the propulsive rhythms of the Blake Mills-produced track "On the Floor." We were engulfed by a swirling array of instruments, each of their notes clearly defined and hitting our eardrums at dizzyingly fast contrapuntal intervals. Our collective reaction to this barrage of tones and textures was "Wow." I realize that's not a scientific observation, but it's the

best our lizard brains could manage at the time. It was reminiscent of a scene from Ford v Ferrari, when Carroll Shelby takes Henry Ford II on a no-holds-barred test drive of the newly built GT40 Mk II. By the time Shelby hits the breaks, Ford has been reduced to incoherent laughing and sobbing, and then he gasps, "I had no idea."

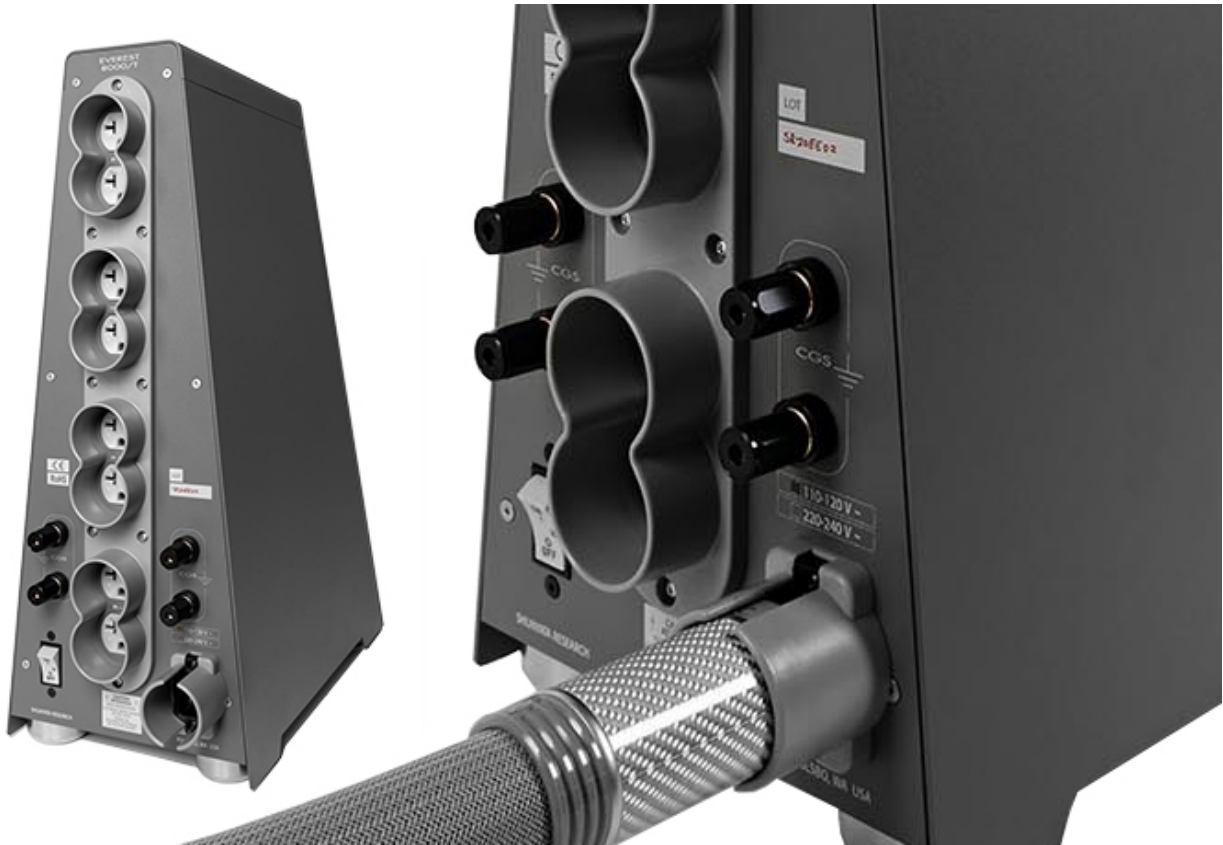
Okay, so no tears were shed during our audition, but the scene does capture our collective surprise when we heard the expansive headroom and growling low-end torque the Everest 8000 brought to my system. During our two-hour session, Jason continued to throw around hopelessly imprecise phrases like "delicious" and "This is crazy" when the punch of Paul McCartney's nimble bass lines on a 1976 Los Angeles pressing of Wings' At The Speed of Sound [SW-11525] got his head bobbing. Or his repeated instruction to "Turn that sucker up" during a Tidal MQA stream of "Rehab" from Amy Winehouse's decidedly non-audiophile Back to Black. Clearly, the Everest technology was affecting Jason's limbic system, and he left considerably less sarcastic than when he'd arrived. Walking out the door, he shook his said and said, "That was amazing."

According to those who share my listening space, the weakest link in the system I've assembled, aside from the room itself, is the digital playback. Even though my Audio Research DAC9 DAC and AURALiC Aries LE streamer work well together, digital fatigue eventually takes its toll with less-than-perfect recordings, forcing me to turn the volume down, even when the music itself inspires the opposite. I'd come to accept this fatigue as a part of digital sound -- until I installed the Everest. Immediately, the glare, grain and artificiality I often hear were replaced with a more fluid, natural presentation. In a recent interview, I asked Caelin Gabriel whether this sonic effect is a direct result of Everest 8000's more than 60dBs of noise reduction, component-to-component isolation or better timing due to improved DTCD performance. His response was characteristically pointed and detailed: "There's no magic bullet in the Everest. It's everything working together. If we failed to consider every aspect of current delivery and noise, even one part missing could destroy the whole. Audiophiles tend to look at components as additive. 'If I take this one thing and add it to my system, it will have this golden glow effect and all of a sudden it fixes all the ills of my system.' The problem is that systems don't work that way."

Instead, Gabriel's approach to improving music reproduction is often subtractive. First, he identifies what aspect of electrical distribution is creating noise or reducing DTCD and then he works to reduce the effect of that offending element. This subtractive strategy manifested itself in my digital system by eliminating many of the processed and homogenized qualities that used to get on my nerves after marathon listening sessions. Now my digital components had moved a few steps closer to the relaxed, organically integrated sound of my analog playback. Hearing what the Everest 8000 can do has strengthened my belief that both efficient power delivery and noise reduction are essential if you want digital files to sound like real music and not a synthetic substitute.

Perhaps of even greater utility for me, the Everest 8000 proved to be a supreme reviewer's tool. In a highly resolving system, it laid qualitative differences between various components bare. For example, I knew that my AURALiC streamer did not fully compete with the sonic performance of my PS Audio PerfectWave Transport. With the Everest 8000 handling power distribution, I'm now able to hear how much meatier and more natural instruments sound on my CDs when compared to numerous files played back through the streamer. The Aries is a respectable digital device, but it's no match for the sense of weight and tonal accuracy I hear when physical media are played back through the sturdier and more

expensive PerfectWave. The Everest 8000 demonstrated that there's even more musical fun to be squeezed from my collection of shiny discs than I'd realized.



Before describing the impact of Everest's technology on the playback of specific recordings, it's worth mentioning that users will be faced with choosing a suitable power cord for the unit's all-important connection to the electrical grid. Using a cheap, entry-level cord would be tantamount to slapping a set of stock tires on a Bugatti Chiron -- they'll get you out of the driveway, but you'll never discover what zero to 60 in 2.5 seconds feels like. The Everest 8000 arrived with Shunyata's recommended Sigma XC power cord, and it delivered whiplash-inducing transients and textured mid-to-low bass frequencies that made even a two-year-old Sigma NR sound a bit rolled off and sluggish by comparison. Gabriel told me that the Sigma XC's performance, which I identify as an acute balance of speed and tonal accuracy, is due to a unique VTX-Ag 6-gauge geometry, comprising a pure-silver conductor surrounded by a concentric OFE copper conductor. The Sigma XC's ability to draw massive current on demand introduced room-pressurizing low frequencies. Additionally, the Sigma XC's carbon-fiber barrels at both ends of the cable are said to significantly reduce micro-vibrations, which Gabriel says partly explains the better timing and holographic imaging I heard when I added the XC to my system.

After I was finished with the lion's share of critical listening for this review, Shunyata sent me the company's heavier, but surprisingly flexible 4-gauge Omega XC power cord. At \$7000, the Omega XC provides accurate tonality identical to that of the Sigma XC, but, as Nigel Tufnel of Spinal Tap would say, "These go to eleven." Or to use an automotive analogy, the Omega is a turbo charger for those who want the extra 20 to 25 percent thrust that only a bruising 4-gauge cable can provide. When asked why that extra gauge matters, Gabriel explained that much like his QR/BBs act as a charge reservoir, power cords also store energy. "The cross-sectional circumference of the wire acts as a reserve for the charge. It's a principle called self-capacitance. An obvious example of this current storage principle can be witnessed

when power from a remote generator is cut off. Wires that are connected far from that generator are still capable of generating wicked amounts of voltage for a considerable time after no power has been fed to them." Did the Omega XC's enhanced charge capacity result in the significant boost in dynamics I heard? Makes sense to me.

No matter how many technological marvels an audio product contains, they're all for nothing if there's not a considerable sonic payoff. In the case of the Everest 8000, the cumulative impact of Gabriel's innovations is dramatic. Whenever I want to test an audio component's ability to convey complex music realistically, I turn to Norman Granz's 1984 production of Count Basie & His Orchestra's 88 Basie Street [Pablo 23110-901]. Engineered by Allen Sides at Hollywood's legendary Oceanway Studios, this album is one of the very best recordings of a large jazz ensemble I've heard. The wide range of instruments, from tenor, baritone and alto saxes to flugelhorn, piano, and guitar, shows off that there isn't a timbral or tonal nuance the Everest 8000 fails to influence -- and even more believably than its Denali predecessor. When I think back to the big-band concerts I've attended, I'm struck by how the Everest 8000 makes this record resemble a live performance. I now realize how the ultra-tight synchronization and effortless dexterity of this ensemble contributed to Basie's legendary, signature swing. The Everest 8000 delivered the bubbling energy and thrilling dynamics of this classic session with a vividness and realism I'd never experienced before.

The Everest 8000 also unearthed surprises on smaller group recordings. Alison Krauss and Union Station's *Lonely Runs Both Ways* CD [Rounder 11661 0525-2] is a well-known acoustic tour de force whose solos and vocal inflections are utterly baked into my subconscious after repeatedly using it as a reference recording. So, it's no exaggeration to say that I was dumbfounded when the Everest revealed how much Krauss's fiddle work is an essential thread in so many of the instrumental tapestries her band weaves. How had I missed that important element over the many, many years I've listened to this album? Somehow the Everest 8000 did not spotlight or enhance this element of the recording. Instead, it unlocked musical micro-details that had been previously trapped, giving them room to breathe and naturally appear in the aural space. I could now appreciate the soaring tone of Krauss's bow work on cuts like "Wouldn't Be So Bad" as it hovers above Jerry Douglas's shimmering Dobro lines and circles in and out of the sparkling syncopation of Dan Tyminski's guitar fills. It's a rich sonic landscape and one I never expected to hear from a humble compact disc.

For those who enjoy taking in the full measure of a recording, the Everest 8000 helps provide a clear view. The streaming version of George Jones' wonderful *Tear Your Playhouse Down* [Bandit Records 79842-2] sent me to find the album's liner notes, where I discovered that it is a compilation of duets that had been recorded at a variety of venues under the direction of several different recording engineers. The Everest 8000 helped reveal studio changes, microphone placements, and the alternating presence and absence of reverb effects on several of the cuts. For a music nerd like me, such revelations served as aural Easter eggs that popped up on just about every recording I reached for when the Everest was in use, giving credence to its noise-elimination -- and thus signal-enhancing -- capabilities.

When I reviewed Shunyata's first Denali back in 2016, one of the recordings I highlighted was Jackson Browne's 1993 CD *I'm Alive* [Elektra 9 61524-2]. Four years later, with the Everest in place, Browne's voice was imbued with the fulsome presence I hear when listening to the very best vinyl pressings of his early work. The vocalist, which sounds like a baritone or bass, in the background chorus on track 2, "My Problem is You," came through with a rough-hewn resonance that simply wasn't present during

playback with the Denali 6000T. Kick drums exploded from my Wilson speakers with more authority because they possessed all of that instrument's characteristics: skin, mallet and the movement of air. Nowhere was this timbral accuracy more apparent than on "Too Many Angels." Drummer Jim Keltner, bassist Jim "Hutch" Hutchison and percussionist Lenny Castro create a stunning intro that I was now able to more fully appreciate as a combination of instruments working in concert to create a sonic thunderhead that set the song's mournful mood. That was in stark contrast to the distant rumble I'd previously perceived. This cut is also adorned with an array of backup singers who trade solo passages. With the Everest 8000 handling power distribution, I was struck by each singer's phrasing, his or her movements around the microphone, and I wondered whether the producers may have used doubling effects to make those six background singers sound like a much larger choral group. I could also hear precisely where Jennifer Warnes' distinctive voice is spot lit toward the end of the cut. Individually, none of these elements may be critically important. Taken collectively, they were evidence of a significant elevation of my system's resolving powers and resulted in a substantial increase in the already considerable joy I experience while listening to music.

The Everest 8000's impact on the sound of my audio system reminds me of the kick I get out of listening to well-executed remasters -- analog or digital. It provides the clearest view into recordings I've been able to attain. Because the Everest 8000 banishes so much extraneous, distracting noise from playback, I find myself appreciating changes in the sonic character of vocals from track to track on a single album or being in awe of the height and depth of some recording venues as well as the warmth and intimacy of another studio. My brain is not fighting to process the audible noise pollution from the electrical grid or the noise generated by my components. The Wilson Sasha 2's in my system still sound like the balanced, neutral speakers they are, but the Everest 8000 has enabled my front-end components to feed them more of the bass energy, instrumental bloom, timbral fidelity and lifelike transients that were always present on even modest recordings.

The only thing left to address here is the Everest 8000's price. In a world of five-figure electronics and six-figure speakers, one could argue that \$8000 is relatively fair value for a product that affects every component plugged into it. But who in his right mind takes financial advice from an equipment reviewer? All I can do is share the calculations that are going on in my head after hearing the Everest 8000 in my system. For less than a tenth the price of my current audio system, Shunyata Research's Everest 8000 has dramatically improved every aspect of music reproduction. Many of my records now sound as though they've been remastered, even some mediocre ones. I can listen to CDs for far longer, luxuriating in that medium's linearity without much of the listening fatigue commonly associated with digital playback. Streaming services now sound disarmingly natural and are more addictive than ever before. My speakers are conveying musical complexity with an effortlessness and that I've previously only noticed when I've heard them driven with far more expensive amplification. The Everest 8000 is a no-holds-barred reference component that delivers a clear view of the audiophile promised land -- stunning transparency, lifelike dynamics and the sort of nuance and detail that can turn merely listening to a musical performance into an emotional experience. After hearing what the Everest 8000 can do, I find it difficult to imagine settling for music playback without it.



# Because it's there: Another view of Everest

Within a short time of naming products after mountains, Shunyata Research climbed right to the top with the Everest 8000, an eight-outlet power distributor/conditioner that makes full use of the company's many proprietary and patented AC-purifying and noise-reduction techniques, this time in a tower form that isn't going to find its way onto many (or any) equipment racks, given it's 28" height. While I love the integral cradles for power cords, which grip and support round plugs, keeping them tightly in each outlet, the tower form is not easy to place behind an equipment rack, unless you have a great deal of room available.

This represents my only quibble with the Everest 8000; not even its \$8000 price gives me pause, because of the readily obvious, wide-ranging improvement it brings to an audio system, eliminating noise external to the system as well as the noise each component itself spreads. Connect your system, amps and all, to the Everest 8000 and you will hear it at its best, without excuse or reservation.

Everest 8000's sonic enhancements fall into the broad categories of increased clarity, sharper focus and improved dynamics, all of which touch every sonic region and attribute. The music I played once the Everest 8000 was in my system and run in (it improves over time) sounded more vivid and immediate, more natural from the treble to the very lowest bass. Images were more substantial and physical, with greater relief from the air of the soundstage. All of this led to more top-line traits -- colorful treble and mids, deep and powerful bass, crackling transients -- all of which brought the music into the listening room while at the same time better preserving the ambience of the recording venue.

I've mentioned more than a few times that I find listening to different versions of the same recording, whether analog or digital, to be especially revealing of what audio components are doing sonically. Revealing or obscuring differences gives an idea of a product's abilities and limitations, helping to establish its sonic character. With the Everest 8000, the black space on Kind of Blue was clearly at its greatest effect on the Sony MasterSound gold CD [Columbia Legacy CK 52861], as was the bass weight and grunt. The various SACDs I have of Kind of Blue, including those from Sony [Columbia/Sony Legacy CS 64935] and Mobile Fidelity [Mobile Fidelity UDSACD 2085], sounded lighter and less atmospheric, a film noir with some of the "noir" diminished. This may seem like an amusical difference, but it's not. Anyone who has heard Kind of Blue knows that the music's inherent cool depends so much on presence and atmosphere, the music helped along by the elements of the recording, as well as demonstrating, at least in this case, that a CD can sound better than an SACD. The Everest 8000 made this even more plain, helping the system unearth a new level of meaning from this very meaningful music.

And so it was with every recording I played: whatever defined it became more apparent with the Everest 8000 in the system. Power conditioning plays a central role in an audio system, literally affecting every electronic component and its performance. For this reason, as well as its outsized effect on those components, including power amplifiers, the Everest 8000 becomes easily and universally recommendable. It gets my vote as one of the best audio values here and now.

**-Marc Mickelson**



### Associated Equipment

- Analog: EAT C-Major turntable, Koetsu Black Goldline and Denon DL-103R cartridges, Shunyata Research Sigma phono cables and ground wire.
- Digital: Audio Research DAC9 digital-to-analog converter, PS Audio PerfectWave transport, Auralic Aries Streamer Bridge with Purer-Power linear power supply, Roon Labs data-management service and MacBook Pro running Core music-library software and Channel D Pure Music software, AudioQuest JitterBug USB filters.
- Preamplifier: Convergent Audio Technology SL1 Renaissance (Black Path Edition).
- Power amplifier: Conrad-Johnson Premier 350SA.
- Loudspeakers: Wilson Audio Sasha W/P Series 2.
- Interconnects: Shunyata Research Sigma.
- Speaker cables: Shunyata Research Sigma.
- Digital cables: AudioQuest Carbon USB, Shunyata Research Venom USB, Shunyata Research Sigma AES/EBU and S/PDIF.
- Power conditioners: Shunyata Research Denali 6000/S, 6000/T and 2000/T; Shunyata Research Defender used in associated wall outlet.
- Power cords: Shunyata Research Sigma NR, Sigma XC and Omega XC.
- Equipment rack and supports: Solidsteel S3 Series and S4 Series equipment racks, Shunyata Research Dark Field Suspension System, IKEA Aptitlig chopping blocks, Stillpoints Ultra SS speaker risers and Ultra 5 isolators.
- Accessories: Nitty Gritty Mini-Pro 1 and Disc Doctor V record-cleaning machines, Spin Clean Mk II record washer, Acoustic Revive RD-3 disc demagnetizer, UltraBit Diamond-Plus Digital Systems Enhancer.