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World Wide First Review!

Testing the New VYGER Indian Signature Turntable With the VISION Tonearm

Review by Vangelis Lazarou

Since last year when I came across that turntable (actually the right word is a system turntable...) in Milan-Italy, I have had a strange feeling: I knew by instinct the VYGER's sound might be something different. Well, its extraordinary look was vested for certain, but I also noticed the really good sound, despite the bad room acoustics. Next, I felt perplexed. In front of me, well, yes it was a turntable but, there were many other strange things about it. A big compressor unit, many pipe fittings, an also big cylindrical air filter, a rectilinear tone arm with a pressure gauge for VTA adjustment and so on...

The Fear Of...

Actually, there's not anything I'm afraid of, yet an audio pirate. I had to try find a way for a test. Testing that damned big, strange VYGER was a great challenge for me, in any way. Let me put it in another way. Having had the Verdier La Platine turntable at the front end (with many upgrades from me) for some years, and having tested many, really many other turntables, I thought the war was over. The Verdier La Platine, was (and still is) a great pick-up machine. What else might threaten Verdier's throne? The answer might only be extracted from my democratic way of thinking: Let the people decide about the King. And since there are no Kings in a democratic society (thanks to ancient Polis of Athens), the King's throne was not secure. After the revolution, one thing induce the other and who knows, we're gonna have the dethronement...or have we already had that dethronement? Please, read the story...

What does VYGER really mean? I asked Pino Viola in Rome, Italy about the word, eating spaghetti and drinking a lot of wine with him. " It came from the word

VOYAGER eliminating the letters O and A. Nice name, indeed. Should we consider VYGER as an audio spacecraft driving us to the audio nirvana? The guy named Pino Viola is virtually the VYGER brand and vice versa. Pino is the man next door and at the same time a restless manufacturer with some great ideas, which no one has ever tried or even thought of before. Don't take him as an intellectual person. No way! Pino is this rare, unique man whose hands are dirty from the lathes and the burr drills he uses and whose fingerprints are burnt from soldering irons. No fingerprints I said? That's why it is so difficult to find him around. The Audio Police has no file on him, although he has done a lot of work for many years. It seems that Pino has committed the perfect audio crime ever, the VYGER crime!

When Pino got the idea to make VYGER turntables, he didn't want to be Onasis! Angelo, VYGER is my whole life, without it I will die... I just want to earn some money to go on." As a side note, Angelo is the Italian version of my nick name. Pino told me many things in Rome and we continued our conversation in Athens when we met for further details while I was setting up the Indian Signature in my studio (finally). As a Physicist I can tell you that this man, has the ability to prove his theory in real terms. On VYGER turntables, mother nature's laws have found their best implementation and speaking in this case, what is simpler than air. Yes, magnet rings (like those in Verdier) in platter suspension and in helping the whole bearing is enough. I know it you know it. But air bearing is the total solution, no doubt. Why is that? By nature, air, is compressible and more homogenous when it is compressed or de-compressed than other stuff. Magnets, even if you choose the best in quality among them, create a non-perfect field between them. Imaging now, how a shaft or a theoretical shaft behaves when it turns around while supported by a magnetic field to lessen the friction as much as possible. Yes, we know it works and works well... most of the time. Far superior than the conventional shafting. Of course there are some great exceptions here (on the conventional side), like the super shafting from Well Tempered turntables which is, to my ears, the least noisy "normal" turntable.

Going back now, having in mind that the magnet field has many anomalies, our proud shaft (or the hanged heavy platter, when the shaft is stable at the bottom of the base) sometimes or ...all the times, doesn't turn around perfectly (according to a perfect circle) but with some eccentricity. You may ask here? But why when we listen to a turntable based on magnets, we listen to a very good sound. Yes, you are right my friends, I've also noticed that. But just move away the magnetic field and insert some fresh air and the sound will be far better! I've noticed that, my friends, after having the VYGER turning. And till now, I haven't counted the tone arm (with air supporting) in the results....

So, air is nearly perfect and much better than the magnetic system. I call it "nearly" perfect, since there is not any perfect motion in Mother Nature. When you also need to have zero friction at the time of that motion, you can't have them both. There is a battle there, all time since the Genesis start. Finally we must state that while air is not perfect, it still remains our best choice... So, why all the turntables don't use that magic air? I'll give you two main reasons why they don't. Firstly it's

the high cost of the total system and the other reason is the great difficulties of the whole design. Just have a look at a VYGER and get what I'm saying! VYGERs are like a small factory. And the designer of that kind of system must have a complete knowledge of what he is doing otherwise the air will bring us rain.

For instance, Pino uses lathes from Germany, the best around the Globe. But this wasn't enough for him. He wanted extraordinary tolerances for the VYGERs and this "ungodly" Italian upgraded the lathes up to the desirable level! When you examine the main thick spindle, which carries nine blowpipes, you might guess that the material is ceramic or something like this. Not to mention it's perfectly polished surface like that of the best diamond. The same feeling, the same exhaustive ratiocination from Pino's side also applied to the Vision arm working parts. All of the above, are completely handmade, it couldn't have been different.

As I told you in a VYGER system there are four main parts that must be joined to approach the correct working point. As we mostly talk about compressed air, I must begin from the heart of the system: that big compressor. Let's be clearly defined just from the start, to avoid the upcoming questions. The big compressor, yes, it makes *no* noise, it is a completely silent device. You can feel the compressor working only if you are SO close to the device, actually only if you touch it. If there's anything to be mentioned here, it is only the compressor's temperature, although not dangerous, is still high. But, my friends, this is not a faulty point. Is it likely that big Class A tube amp won't generate a lot of heat? To be honest, even a kid can touch the compressor without any injuries, so no worries, indeed.

Why Pino is using such a large compressor unit while feeding air pressure after the big filter never reaches the 1.8 bars (actually it isn't necessary to pass the 1.5 bars)? This is a good question. Inertia, my friends, inertia. The whole design follows all the time the metagalaxean laws of Inertia. Let the compressor generate a massive air pressure and finally you'll get a stable pressure system, even if your requirements remain low. Thus, if something unsettle the system's rhythm divine then will come the compressor's Inertia to get full control of the situation. That's why we must use *big* items, when we can't control the A the O and the... It's not a good time for the audio-ecologists indeed.

After the big square compressor unit the air goes to the cylindrical filter, not a conventional air filter but a special one. Since there is always some oil leakage from the compressor unit (don't forget the pump is a full body covered with some special cooling oil) to the next stages, must have a very good oil filter next and at the same time a kind of filter which can manage the air flow without disturbing the above Inertia principles! Thus, again a macho filter is a must there. After the filter the air flow is sundered to feed the spindle's nozzles and also to support the Vision arm. The tone arm itself, must have an extra treatment in oil requirements. Much fresher air, since its small nozzles located at the stable tube which guides the main extra light arm body, must be free of dust, oil etc., all the time. Before the air enters the tone arm system, there is a special press regulator with an extra microscopic filter from the well known SMC brand. As you can see VYGER has made study air

pressure regulators as well, just out of the well known trim found in audio electronics. Who said that audio gear is now swamped? Me? No....

Let's see now, what happens next when the air reaches the desirable pressure of 1.3-1.6 bars. Well, the stacked two parts of the turntable (when there is no air in the system's vanes, the platter touches the base. Therefore if you turn on the down in the dumps AC motor nothing happens! They are separated from each other after about three seconds. The upper unit goes up and stays afloat on a thin film of air. This separation can only be understood by seeing the platter turning around, since the generated gap is too small for the eye.

Cleverly, VYGER's creator put the main switch at the motor's body to avoid stressing the motor when there is no air flow. Thus, if you get no air you get no turning at all. The main body of the turntable is really too heavy. I didn't measure the weight, but keep in mind that when the system is sealed into its wooden coffins it measures a healthy 160 Kilos (355 lbs.).

Round and Round

Talking about the motor unit, it is an AC synchronous type and not a really a down in the dumps one. I was kidding my friends! By the way it also stays afloat with the help of many elastic "O" rings around it. The motor is made in Switzerland by the way. The motor has a separate column base while the main turntable seats to one of the three long columns. Despite the fact that those columns play a vital role as part of the whole suspension, we could extract an extra bonus here: VYGER Indian Signature doesn't need to have any supporting rack to seat on. It must be alone, apart from the other system in the middle or on one or the other side. Since the Verdier in my system seats on a special base (how about a 1000 lbs.), I leave the VYGER in front of the Verdier on the left side of the system. Those columns, made from aluminum, have a special base with many O-rings. When the turntable is set on the three columns (with a little help from my friends), it technically seats on these O-rings. Using my own designed vibration meter, I found an amazingly low suspension resonance of 1.8 Hz! This is most useful, considering that Aetna, Vezouvious and Santorini volcanoes are in our local area here in Greece. California also rock and rolls the way mother earth dictates sometimes!

When the platter begins to "fly", you feel the power, you feel the strength coming straight from the big mass and the shocking track ability of the Vision arm. The latest -forgot to mention- is maybe the best and lightweight arm in the world. You

need evidence, right? Total mass: 35 grams. Material: all Magnesium, from its shell to its body. Friction? non measurable, compared only to the friction compressed air creates. Finally, I mean such a device that meets the lowest tolerance certifications around. The Vision arm, is a killer tone arm. Leaves alone the cartridge to play the music. Well, must have something to grumble about, mustn't we? 'Cause of these low, almost zero tolerances of the tone arm, its adjustment is like trying to catch your shadow! VTA adj. is an easy thing, given the big bronze regulator dedicated to this adj. But, the bias adjustment is almost a nightmare. Is not the point that there aren't any screws for this purpose, but the "problem" comes from the tone-arm's nature. Moreover, you need to wait some days (or a month) to get the suspension stabilized, 'cause a slight difference away from the right level, creates a slight bias force on the tone arm's side. Keep in mind, linear-tracking tone arms need no compensation in bias force, actually need zero bias force and to get things worse they shift their whole arm mass during play. Clearly, low mass sub-chassis turntables are not a good match. Look fellows, must be so crafty to adjust that crazy thing. But when you reach the sky, you'll be a totally free man, no earth duties, just you and the audio heaven.

Let's Rock!

So, I had to put the VYGER Indian Signature at the front end instead of Verdier La Platine. What a moment! I chose two cartridges for the test, my lovely Lyra Parnassus and the Dynavector Karat 17D2 that damned fast transducer. Phono stage was always the Perfect Audio Match (Balanced Reference model), line-level pre-amp again from Perfect Audio Match (Audio Silence model) and power amp was the Atma-sphere S-30. Most of the time I used the Avantgarde Uno loudspeakers. But when Mr. Albert Von Schweikert sent me a pair of the new VR4 Gen. 3 and after the burned in period, I also use the amazing new VR4s while keep feeding them with the MA-1s from Atma-sphere. As you see VYGER has a top audio ambience, to deal with. I knew the sound of the above combos, like my back of my hand so, if it sounds better than Verdier it will undoubtedly be better. If it sounds worse, it will undoubtedly be worse than Verdier. Finally, I took my sword out of the carriage, gripped the rope (don't forget Steven called me a pirate) trying to forestall the enemy's corvette, I just needed a lot of audio swag here...

Landing on the Board

A lot of swag my friends, a lot! My Parnassus cartridge *never* sounded as it did with VYGER/VISION combination. I had the feeling just before the test, that Parnassus was ready to die in one's boot, considering the mileage which it had covered (maybe 3,000 hours or more). Having hanged the Parnassus on the Vision arm, I was surprised to find that Parnassus had *more life* than I had ever thought.

Moreover, the power amps (S-30, MA-1) seemed speedier, more accurate than before and of course, according to my opinion, Atma-spheres were already damned fast and accurate. The Unos and the VR4s showed their best reflex action accordingly. The sound of the VYGER is totally subversive. Till now, we have loved turntables, cartridges etc., for their tonal richness. But we were always anxious if that sound was the real one. Ok, that was already a great sound, but we continued having our doubts. Living with the VYGER you are forced to forget those fears, those doubts. VYGER is always there to remind you: " Hey body, don't fear the ripper, leave it up to me, I'm here, trust me..." and finally: " I'm the one, man".

VYGER has the rare ability to control the music and at the same time to have the deepest bass, the greatest highs, the most neutral middles. But the most amazing thing about this turntable is the Dynamics! We all know, we say "volume control" for the known attenuator, right? The "volume control" when you deal with the VYGER has another meaning, it is like a turbo-charged non-variable S/N! When the control shows low indication, you take *all* the low level detail. When you turn it up the macrodynamics and all the a fortiori does not cover or mask the low level detail. I'm talking about a continued sense of transmitted power, yet super analytical all the time. Especially in the bass region! What a fantastic kick bass my friends. I've never found such a fast and tremendous controlled bass! I strongly believe that this is due to the top synergistic behavior of the moving parts which response with no losses, with no adding effects to the end of the episode. They just do their job in real time. Although the whole combo shows this tremendous co-operation (turntable, tone arm, transducer), I must warn you to show some more attention to that damned Vision tone arm. Its tracking ability is entirely unknown, but remember here you must show the proper zeal in its adjustment process. And of course I have much evidence. I used to live with a strange sub-tone (maybe something went wrong with the recording process) in some tracks of a very good record such as Nick Xidakis *Diary*. This sub-tone (somewhere between 13-15 Hz) actually appeared, when the sound was at low level or if the groove was un-modulated. With all the other tone arms while using the same cartridge the sub tone was always there. By accident with a good friend of mine who had also noticed the same "problem" in his system, we suddenly realized the sub-tone did not exist, or to be precise the unwanted tone was down by five or more dB. So this episode forced me to say: Unbelievable! And this episode was a real testament. On the other hand, it is easy to connect an oscilloscope and a spectrum analyzer to see the perfect geometric accuracy and the tone arm structural resonances, if you are staying at the techno-freak side.

In *The View From Roland's head* LP from The Family Dogg (Buddha Records, No. 5100) and in the first track "I Wonder", there is a very good co-operation between the Drums set and electric bass. The extracted sound with the VYGER was gorgeous, indeed. Just in the middle of this track, there is a chorus recorded in a really high level, being at the same time really tough luck for all the turntables/tone arms around. In most cases, the tone arms goes fishing as it were. But VYGER stays within the groove to play the drama.

One of my lovely records is the Roger Waters' , *Amused to Death* known for the

applied QSound recording process still remains a very good record (BTW, I've always wondered why we don't have hundreds of this QSound records to listen to?) If someone wants to give me more info about other records with the QSound system, please feel free to contact me. It will be my great pleasure. If you own the record, you know what I mean when referring to the dogs at the beginning. Normally, the sound of the dogs, seems to appear 180 degrees in front of you (the rest 180 degrees are behind us), an amazing effect indeed. While Unos and VR 4 loudspeakers surely helped the effect a lot. I can tell you fellows, with VYGER I found the dog sounds coming also from my back! Yes, such a big difference.

Monophonic recordings are a good method to find some other goodies (or baddies of course) when you test an item in audio gear. Stereo sometimes confuses the ear, you might pay attention to other points rather to the "real" ones.

A good record to find how your system - and especially your turntable - behaves in low level detail is the *Countdown, Time in Outer Space* from The Dave Brubeck Quartet (Columbia CL 1775). Especially the track "Castilian Drums". What a lovely recording era! No multichannel, no overdubs, maybe only one or two big ribbon microphones. Thus, the VYGER found another chance to show its aristocratic behavior. In that track after a point the drum set going deeply down in the volume level, almost comparable to the hiss noise of the mastering tape. Putting down the Parnassus in these special grooves the hiss noise was clear, far clearer than other times, separated from the interesting sound.

Imaging and focusing are, as you might think after all, at their very best in VYGER. Recorded in the Cathedral of ULM, *The Music of Stones* LP from Stephan Micus (ECM, No 1384) is exactly what it states. Actually the main musical instruments are made of several stones, most of them from granite. The choice of a stone edifice such as the cathedral of ULM to perform a concert and make recordings provides a further dimension: the unique acoustics of this sacred building with an echo of eight seconds. The overlapping sheets of sound suggest an all-embracing, vibrating oscillation of pulsating intensity, a sound that seems to surpass our ability to perceive it with our ears. And with its bells the cathedral added yet another element to the music: the aleatoric moment when the chimes of its steeple clock announce the time and yet also seem cut loose from all time." With VYGER on the playback, this special moment makes you feel the "real" illusion as if you were there, too. As far as the cathedral bells are concerned, they sound just like you were IN the cathedral and the bells OUT of the cathedral. Not just a sound coming from the unknown chaos.

Moreover in Part Six of the LP, there is also a voice coming from nowhere, but is still focused in the middle of the soundstage. I normally used to be able to count the distance between this unearthly voice and me at about 10-15 meters away..

With the VYGER system playback, I thought the distance was double... or even triple!

Finally...

Being a "fanatic" in your first review of *Enjoy The Music.com™*, I know it is not a good thing. I can tell you, I am just the *opposite* type of a reviewer. But I had the bad "luck" as it were to test that damned VYGER Indian Signature turntable firstly and I must tell the truth and only but the truth. Verdier OK is a very good turntable. If I'm gonna sell it, I will earn a lot of money to buy records, to go to Santorini or Mykonos or... to buy more vinyl records. But for my convenience I will keep it since, after all, I still enjoy music through it. What about the VYGER Indian Signature? As you might guess, I *bought* it! Be damned and and all to Enjoy The Music my friends.

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|------------------------------------|------|
| Tonality | 95* |
| Sub-bass (10 Hz - 60 Hz) | 100 |
| Mid-bass (80 Hz - 200 Hz) | 100 |
| Midrange (200 Hz - 3,000 Hz) | 100 |
| High-frequencies (3,000 Hz on up) | 100 |
| Attack | 95 |
| Decay | 95 |
| Inner Resolution | 95 |
| Soundscape width front | 100* |
| Soundscape width rear | 100* |
| Soundscape depth behind speakers | 100* |
| Soundscape extension into the room | 100* |
| Imaging | 95* |
| Fit and Finish | 90 |

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Self Noise | 100 |
| Value for the Money | 100 |

* While my studio is acoustically treated and also has the right dimensions/volume, due to a strange column it shows a specific acoustic behavior that has me listening from the "monitor" seat position. Actually, this is not a bad circumstance since it is an enlightening way of listening.

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