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## CD ENERGIZER

### Audiophilia Review by Roy Harris

<http://www.audiophilia.com/wp/?p=12685#more-12685>

There are two approaches to “improving” the sound of a stereo system, namely, changes in hardware and changes in the “sound” of software. One can purchase recordings having higher sampling rates, or tread the recording. This review will examine the effects of applying a CD treatment upon the “sound” of a stereo system. Products in production which may change and hopefully, improve the sound of a CD include several types, such as chemicals applied to the playing surface, those which alter the shape of a CD, CD mats, heat and light generation devices, and those which alter the magnetic and atomic structure of the CD itself.

The subject of this review, The IPC Disc Energizer, is a device designed to alter the playing surface of a CD and which can also treat a component within one to three meters from the location of the Energizer, according to the owner’s manual. The principle of its design, according to the manufacturer, is based upon Quantum Mechanics.

Pushing the button on the Energizer, aligns electrons and protons, to enhance their basic properties, reducing their vibration, and, consequently improving the sound of a CD and any component within a distance of from one to three meters, for a period of 2 hours.

The product has a retail price of \$495. It requires two triple A batteries, and the batteries can accommodate about 500 treatments.

Product use is exceedingly simple. Place a CD on the spindle, with the label side up, press a grey button, and a spindle will be illuminated for about 5 seconds. Then, remove the CD and place into a transport or CD player. Note, while the CD is playing, the transport or CD player is itself being treated, for a period of about 2 hours.



## Listening Results

A suggestion from a reader of my three recent CD player reviews has been the impetus to slightly modify the tone of the review, by relating, as appropriate, the relationship between changes in sound elicited from the Energizer and the experience of listening to some recordings. I have excluded this aspect in previous reviews and welcome the feedback of readers, which can help make the review a more interesting read.

The focus of the review is to evaluate a component's affect upon frequency response, spatiality, dynamics and timbre. I find it is easier to ascertain the effects of a "new" component, when the rest of the stereo system is relatively free of egregious coloration. Thus, I have selected the TEAC CD-3000 as the CD player, as I believe it is the least colored of digital hardware I have heard, to date.

The first task was to examine the affect of the energizer upon frequency response. I have selected three reference recordings to assist in this endeavor.

### **The first is Holly Cole, DON'T SMOKE IN BED, track 1, Alert Z2 81020.**

I first listened to the CD, untreated.

The recording itself is very quiet and clear. Holly Cole's voice is close-miked. It was characterized by a noticeable sibilance when she pronounced words beginning with the letter "s", followed by a vowel, or ending with an "s", preceded by a vowel. Two examples were the words "see" and "obstacles". I have heard this CD many times and have noted that sibilance has been more and less pronounced than what I experienced from the TEAC. While I did not measure the SPL, subjectively, I found the it significantly loud, and the aforementioned words, louder than other words.

The acoustic bass was very focused, extended and controlled. There was a balance between the sound of the plucked strings and the wood body. The vibration of the wood body was especially forceful when the bassist was playing in the lower register. The piano, while extended in the treble and not sounding harsh, was a bit thin in the upper treble, i.e., its highest fundamentals, which created a "tinkly" sound.

After treatment, the sibilance smoothed out, reducing the volume of the above mentioned words, although it was still audible. The piano had more weight and the thinness in the upper treble disappeared. The reduction of an irritant, i.e., sibilance and thinness in the upper treble made it easier to concentrate on the message of the music, namely the words of the song, and increase the enjoyment of listening.

### **The next selection was a test of the quality and quantity of bass response. I selected Bela Fleck, FLIGHT OF THE COSMIC HIPPO, track 4, Warner Brothers 9 26562.**

In the untreated mode, I found the recording to be of high sound quality, and natural sounding in its representation of timbre. The kick drum had impact without overpowering the banjo and electric bass. One could easily follow the fingering of the bassist, as he pressed and released the strings, the "squeak" that followed the release of the string, and the movement towards the lowest notes of the instrument.

A very powerful vibration was induced, when a note was struck which excited the resonant frequency of the wood body. While the vibration occurred, the strings were still audible.

After treating the disc, its effect was evident immediately. The first note of the bass had more impact. The strings of the banjo sounded fuller (thicker), without any loss of detail. The cymbal also sounded like a thicker piece of metal. Thus, both banjo and cymbal had more natural timbre, after the CD was treated.

The electric bass sounded more extended. The instrument seemed to elicit a lower fundamental, as it vibrated. Essentially the treatment created a more realistic sound of instruments, which, for me, was more enjoyable, as I appreciate the natural beauty of an instrument when they exhibit accurate timbre.

### **Another test of treble response, is TWO WORLDS, track 8, Decca 012 157 960.**

At the beginning of this selection, one hears a note struck by the pianist. It sounded deep and had weight. The violinist was very precise in his intonation, and the treble was extended, without harshness, however, there was slightly more emphasis on the string tone than the wood body. Further on in the piece, one could observe the pianist exerting pressure on the keys. Lee Ritenour's acoustic guitar sounded like its strings were made of nylon. Its wood body could be heard when notes were struck in the lower midrange and bass regions.

After the disc was treated, the piano sounded more defined, and I detected sonic cues of the ivory content of the keys. The violin's balance changed. There was greater emphasis upon the sound of wood than prior to treatment. The brief pizzicato playing sounded more rounded and less sharp, and the violin strings sounded thicker without a loss of detail. One could hear the pianist's use of the pedal, not audible in the untreated version. The piano sounded more robust and more natural in timbre. Finally, there was greater articulation in the playing of the guitar. I thought I heard a wrong note barely struck after a guitar string was released. The change in the sound of the violin, giving an impression of warmth and not quite as extended, altered the emotional content communicated to the listener. The sound of the violin, seemed to indicate a feeling of sadness.

The next selection is an excellent test of spatiality, timbre and dynamics. It is a sampler containing 16 tracks, each of which can assess a different aspect of the performance of a stereo system.

If you have this disc, you can expose many flaws of a stereo system, or the lack thereof.

### **It is TEST RECORD 1—DEPTH OF IMAGE, track 5, OPUS 3 CD 7900.**

Initially, I set my Radio Shack meter at 70 DB, and then increased it to 80 DB. It reached 90 DB at its maximum SPL, prior to treatment.

The bassoon was positioned all the way to the left at the rear wall, while the piccolo was positioned right of center at the rear wall, and a trombone, was located to the right of the piccolo. The bassoon and trombone were full-bodied, while the piccolo was extended without a trace of thinness. One could hear the bassoon reaching a fundamental near its lowest note, which is 55 Hz. All instruments sounded reasonably natural in timbre. I could detect no obvious "errors".

After the disc was treated, the aforementioned instruments sounded more full bodied, but the piccolo, especially, changed the most, with respect to sounding more natural in timbre.

I again brought out my Radio Shack meter and noticed that it registered 95 DB at its maximum SPL, a gain of 5 DB in dynamic range.

While instruments sounded more fleshed out, there was no change in spatial relationships. This music, "Polka" from "The Bolt", by Shostakovich, has an ebullient, whimsical and satirical flavor. I don't think it has much emotional content. The more realistic sound of instruments following treatment, probably would appeal to one's aesthetic sensibilities, and please many audiophiles whose aim is to attain a more life like sound from a recording.

**While the OPUS 3 CD is a good test of timbre, Prokoffief's "Peter and the Wolf", narrated by Sir John Gielgud , with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Licata, track 2, ACUM 204 446,** provides a closer perspective of the sound of instruments of the orchestra. Each ensemble of the orchestra is represented, either in solo, or ensemble form.

Untreated, the flute and oboe sounded very realistic, while the clarinet sounded rounded, lacking the presence of the reed. The reed was present in the playing of the bassoon, which sounded more natural in timbre than the other wind instruments. French horns, strings, and percussion instruments had no noticeable flaws in timbre. I noticed decay from the tympani—the sound of the kettle following the last strike of the mallets.

After treating the disc, the clarinet exhibited the sound of the reed. I also observed greater articulation from the other instruments, without a loss of fullness, and the horns and strings were positioned further to the left. Finally, the decay of the tympani was a bit lower in frequency.

The last selection was a tone poem of Liszt, an orchestral composition, in contrast to the previous selections, which featured small ensembles.

**I chose "Mephisto Waltz number 1", taken from the Reference Recording, RR 22CD, track 1.**

As an untreated disc, I noticed that the string section was smooth in tone, while extended in the treble. The orchestra was positioned at the rear wall. The sound of a solo violin was delicate and poignant in feeling. All wind instruments were full bodied.

During the performance I observed the flute section in the foreground, deep into the orchestra, exhibiting space between them and other sections of the orchestra. A solo oboe had very realistic timbre. A brief harp and triangle solo, recorded at a very low SPL, was audible, even as other instruments were playing much louder. A cymbal crash sounded washed out and unnatural.

I set my Radio Shack meter at 80 DB and observed a range from 70 to 90 DB of SPL.

I had no objection to the sound of the orchestra, with the exception of the cymbals, which, in my experience, are usually significantly poorly recorded on orchestral recordings. In general, this is a well engineered recording, by a legend in the industry, Keith Johnson. In spite of the sound, I felt the performance was lacking tension and emotional content. What was missing was a representation of the thematic content of Liszt's tone poem. I found tempos at times to slow, and an absence of emotional content, associated with the actions of the two main characters, Faust and Mephistopheles, from which Liszt based his compositional efforts.

After the disc was treated, I found that the violins were more full-bodied and the bowing of the strings was more noticeable. There was greater instrumental texture, separation, and articulation. One could observe the conductor's phrasing and gain more insight into his interpretation of the music. I felt more tension and intensity, communicated in certain passages. It seemed that the musicians were enjoying themselves, and the conductor was more in control of the orchestra. Instruments recorded at a very low level, like a triangle and harp, were louder, even when my Radio Shack meter registered 90 DB. The cymbal crash was louder and its timbre was more natural and I noticed a change in the spacing of background instruments. A flute and oboe solo seemed to be positioned further back, and in a defined space. They also exhibited more natural timbre.

As I was noting changes in "sound", accruing from the treatment of the Energizer, I was listening intently to the performance.

In all of my years as a reviewer, I have never heard such a transformation in the sound of an orchestra. It was as if the conductor was replaced, accompanied by a change in artistic interpretation of the music. The orchestra woke up, tempos got faster at times, the phrasing changed, some passages were louder, and the overall effect was a more realistic musical representation of the thematic content of Liszt's tone poem, based on German folklore, specifically authored by Lennau.

Based upon the story, I think Liszt tried to represent in music, seduction, evil, amorousness and frenetic behavior. sound of two violin solos, very tender and smooth, which facilitated the communication of the composer's intent.

The treated disc was more effective in stimulating the imagination of the listener, and representing the above mentioned "themes". The orchestra was able to convey, passion, deception, a wild and diabolical tempo and a feeling of frenzy, near the end of the composition, and a sensuality, in the middle section.

When reviewing tone poems, or other compositions having a central theme, e.g., Debussy's "La Mer", it is useful to relate how changes in sound contribute to the appreciation and enjoyment of the music.

I would point to changes in tempo and phrasing, an increase in dynamic contrasts, and the sound of two violin solos, very tender and smooth, which facilitated the communication of the composer's intent.



## Conclusion

After treating CDs with the IPC Disc Energizer, all recordings exhibited the following changes:

They included, greater smoothness in the treble range, more natural timbre, greater dynamic range, and an increase in the body of instruments. Other changes accruing from the CD treatment, such as, increased definition, greater bass extension and presence of upright basses, increased depth, greater separation of instruments, and an increase in the audibility of background instruments, were recording dependent.

For me, the enjoyment of listening to music is dependent upon timbre, phrasing, changes in tempo and dynamics. Listening to the intrinsic beauty of an instrument in its natural timbre is very enjoyable. If instruments have sufficient errors of timbre, it is a distracting and it will detract from my enjoyment of the music.

Dynamic compression creates boredom. Distortions of tempo and phrasing are also distractions, and make it more difficult to receive the emotional content that music can provide.

The Energizer provided a welcome change to the above mentioned attributes of sound and performance, that enhanced my listening experience to Liszt's "Mephisto Waltz number 1". The Energizer's ability to transform the sound of the orchestra was simply astonishing. The aforementioned changes increased my satisfaction by facilitating the communication of the emotional and programmatic of the music.

### Associated Equipment

CD Player: TEAC CD-3000

Preamp: Blair Chapman

Amplifiers: VTL Deluxe 120s and Quicksilver Mid Monos

Speakers: QUAD ESLs and Magnepan 1.6s

Interconnect Cables: High Fidelity Cables CT-1

Speaker Cables: High Fidelity Cables CT-1 and Ear to Ear

Power Cords: Ear to Ear, Emotiva, MAC Burley and Distech, Power Products, PS Audio Noise Harvesters, Alan Maher parallel line filters, Quantum line filters, PS Audio Power Bases, PS Audio Juice Bar, Balanced Power Technology power strip

Accessories: Sound Fusion Sound Boosters, maple bases, egg crate mattresses, Room Tunes, Corner Tunes, Echo Tunes, Herbie's Audio Disc Stabilizers, and a Millennial CD mat

The IPC Disc Energizer

Source: Manufacturer loan