

Houdini

The Power of Illusion

Testimonials:

These are worth reading individually because as we ourselves learn how Houdini works in different systems, we're finding it really interesting how different people pick up on different aspects of performance improvement of the same product. This contrasts with most other upgrades which have only a small effect and so can be easily described. It's pretty clear that Houdini sits outside of that.

What can you expect from Houdini?

A universal truth: Every time you change an arm the sound changes. This is because you are hearing the arm's signature on the cartridge. This happens even to £20,000 arms.

Fitting Houdini, the first thing you hear is that the sound of even these exotic cartridges is improved.

This brings us to the second truth: Comparing two different arms, both fitted with Houdini, at the very least the arms start to sound very, very similar. This is because Houdini has been correctly designed to decouple the cartridge from the arm, in effect it's re-creating The Record Cutter in Reverse. You are now left hearing the cartridge and *only* your chosen cartridge, and what a wealth of new information you will find lurking there.

The arm is now relegated to its original job: To simply and passively carry the cartridge across the record.

We think paying £300 to dispense with all the complex vagaries of arm resonances is a small price to pay. This leaves you only paying for a well-engineered arm that allows the cartridge to track optimally.

Why's it called Houdini?

We believe that for the first time in 100 years we've performed the real trick of "Sonic Escapology".

We have achieved our stated aim.

Now look into the links on forums:

Art of Sound: Scroll down half way to find the entries.

<https://theartofsound.net/forum/showthread.php?70533-Matt-The-Funk-Firm-and-Houdini-the-latest-offering-from-Funk/page23>

German Forum:

<https://www.analog-forum.de/wbboard/index.php?thread/149830-funk-firm-houdini-ein-decoupler-spielt-wie-entfesselt-ein-hörbericht/&pageNo=1>

Tannoyista:

<https://www.tannoyista.com/2020/11/the-funk-firm-houdini-and-achromat.html>

Stereonet:

<https://www.stereonet.co.uk/reviews/the-funk-firm-houdini-cartridge-decoupler-review>

"I've got to say that this is one of the most astounding upgrades I've heard. And it's less than one side into a record!!"

Now added to with the following:

Every once in a very long while, I come across a component or a tweak that surprises me in my long quest for reproducing music with Absolute Fidelity. Last week, I was sent something that took this a huge step forwards.

The first album I put on was Bert Kaempfert's Strangers in the Night - a worn out, thin, crappy pressing with mediocre sound. I was going to let it run for a bit to settle down before I fine-tuned the alignment and settings. I set the stylus down, and walked away to my office to do some work.

But I couldn't do any work. I had to come back and sit down to listen. This mediocre-sounding album just came alive. I already loved the music from my childhood, but the sound grew in dimension, clarity, and

dynamics. From an album I used as background music, it became music that captivated me and brought back memories.

Needless to say, I did not get any work done that day. And spun album after album - the worst sounding in my collection. Magically (may be that's why the designer calls it the Houdini), every album I put on sounded amazing.

The Funk Firm Houdini will not be easy to sandbox. This is because it will sound different on every different tonearm/cartridge/turntable combination. I can even imagine that it could sound worse with some cartridge/tonearm combinations (but the price of the Houdini should preclude those combinations). For many years, I have been fighting with the problem that Houdini solves. One of the biggest problems with the record player is vibrations caused by resonances. To explain why this is so, we have to understand the analog music reproduction chain.

When musicians play and sing, the soundwaves physically vibrate the diaphragm of a microphone which turns this physical energy into electrical energy. The "electric music" then drives a cutter-head to cut a physical representation of the music into the grooves of a record. In turn, this physical groove drives the stylus of a cartridge to generate electrical energy which eventually gets converted back to soundwaves by the loudspeaker.

When the grooves of the record vibrates the diamond stylus, the vibrations travel up the cantilever to drive moving coils (or magnets) to make an electrical signal and it is this signal that is amplified. However, the vibrations don't stop there. Vibrations will travel through to the cartridge body, and from the cartridge up to the tonearm, and down to the structure of the record player itself.

All those vibrations cause resonance in the tonearm tube, can be reflected back to the cartridge by the tonearm bearings, and will be picked up again in the coils of the cartridge. To minimize this reflected and non-musical vibrations I've been obsessively tweaking the cartridge/tonearm interface with blobs of Bluetack to try to dampen arm-tube resonance, precise adjustment of the torque on cartridge screws to adjust the interface, and even little espresso cups of water on the arm-board.

The Houdini makes all this unnecessary, and when you hear the difference, it is a revelation. Unfortunately, it now means that I'm going to have to obsessively tweak the resonances on the cartridge body itself
Disclaimer - the designer Arthur Khoubesserian sent me two of these to try. I've asked for a bill as I'm keeping both,
(Gary Koh: Genesis Loudspeakers)

Hi Arthur,

after a few hours of enjoying music I honestly can say that I love your Houdini ☺

It improved my system in a way that no other component was able to do (and I invested a lot ...) It didn't change the tonal character of my system in any way, but it purified the the tones. Much lower sound floor, much more details, much more timbre and character in voices and instruments. The bass is "detoxified" from disturbing resonances, therefore more precise and a little bit leaner sounding. But the best the Houdini does is the unbelievable 3D staging. It's like being live in the concert hall. The instruments are clearly separated with much air between them. A very new level of my system 👍. It made a big step forward from hifi to live music, which makes me enjoy music more than ever. Thank you 🙏😊

Invoice please!

Regards
Christoph

Dear Sir,

You are a genius!

Halfway through my first album since the veil was lifted.

I cannot believe how good this is.

Thanks again, Gary.

Arthur,

I would not have believed this kind of sound reproduction was possible. This is an utterly amazing product.

I agree with everything you say on your website about the improvements. The sense of actually being present in the recording venue is overwhelming.

I remember the Hi-Fi choice review of the Pink Triangle Anniversary "Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny".

"Detailed, clear and neutral" do not do justice to the Houdini. I think the recording engineers of the 60s and 70s will be smiling in their graves at how this brings their work to life. This is the sound they must always have wanted, and it's not just neutral, it's vibrant, it's emotional and it's fun, just like being there (only better sound quality!)

I am definitely keeping it.

Best wishes,
Keep well and many thanks,
Patrick

Hi Arthur
Now playing the first side of Simon and Garfunkels greatest hits.... OMG
Individual instruments..
Voices like I've never heard them before.
Clarity
Fast punchy clean bass
Headroom (as I call it)
It's like I'm there
And best of all the wife can hear the difference too.
Thank you
Kev

"This arrived today...spent some time earlier fitting it...I can't say enough about the results, WOW. Well done funk firm."

Reviewer: (VPI Prime)

"It's now attached to a Hana ML. My word! To be fair I was expecting an incremental change, but I seem to be getting more of everything while cutting out the VPI Prime. I actually found myself turning the volume up – not because I couldn't hear properly, but because I could without fear of nasty little artefacts becoming audible."

Saffire / FXR: "I don't have time to go into it right now, but f*** me that isolator is unbelievable, biggest improvement I've ever heard with any upgrade. It's better EVERYWHERE
I put some seriously complicated stuff on and handled it with joy and shows what the speakers can really do (*this guy listens to a lot of Trash. He's using a pair of Curvis with BMR driver and a couple of REL subs. Never been to his room but I'm told it's not small.*)
I was expecting improvements but minor, given that I'm running the FXR, but it was huge.
If I'd spent thousands on a new arm I'd have been happy.
What I'd said to Matt...Amazing. Thanks."

Tarantella / FXR: (This guy has 2,000 albums, Audio Research amplification, Proac Response 2. Felt he wanted to replace the speakers)

"Just had my first quick listen. The Houdini is quite something.; I'm very impressed. Before, I thought the Kontrapunkt B was a bit weedy, but it seems to have grown a pair...
There's definitely more space for individual instruments to breathe, separation/ depth improved, soundstage better balanced. I don't think I'll need new speakers!! Result."

Acoustic Solid: From an International dealer: "He was kind of in a shock (positive) regarding *loss of distortion*. Describing the Denon 103 a beast with a very stiff cantilever, it transfers all the resonance to the arm causing massive distortion. He has twice returned "The Magnificent Thad Jones" album to the seller, thinking that the record is faulty, until he realised that it was Denon not being able to play or let's say not compatible with AN arm. A deeper soundstage, more air around instruments and more + tighter bass were his comments. But again, his main shock: The lack of distortion. He says that *this device makes the cartridge-arm matching problem... "history"*.

"Only in the past few days could I say what the diamond profile is doing. Refinement is sublime"

Rega P3: "This is amazing. Really. How is my music now filling all the air in my room. I keep wanting to see what the next record sounds like but can't – I can't move to take this one off..."

From a dealer:

Well what can I say. I've heard things on the Carpenters Hits I didn't know were there - reverb on Karens voice, Layers of sounds so easy to hear, etc.

Using a Lyra Argo (old) on the FX3 you sent with the Houdini. Going to try on better system downstairs when I get chance. But seriously impressed.

Just thought I would let you know. The others have'nt heard it yet.....

Andrew.

Hi Arthur,

Jon has heard it now with Grace Jones Pull up to the bumper track. The traffic sounds like its in the room - and although played loud does not sound harsh or edgy with an holographic sound stage. He was blown away !

Andrew

Just a quick update on the Houdini which was received on Saturday. I don't know how you do it but it is truly amazing! I can't believe the difference it has made. My whole system sounds like it has had major upgrades.

One very happy customer here.

All the best,

Darren.

Bonjour Monsieur Arthur

Pardonnez-moi mon anglais mais....."Wow f###ing Wow!!!"

The H is amazing and as I have said already, you are an audio magician!

Yes please - I'll keep it. Please send me cost and payment stuff. The result is a hugely different and better sound. We tested it on "The Concert in San Francisco" after some Baduism for a female vocal test - just gorgeous.

Thank you

Yours

R

In addition check out our FB page: