



Two Voices

The SoundSmith is an American company from New York State. Owner and President of the company is Peter Ledermann, whose career goes back more than 30 years. He worked for a number of known companies and has been building Bang & Olufsen cartridges since B&O stopped productions. But the demand for the cartridges is still there. That needed a reengineering of all systems, since there are no more blueprints.

I admit, that B&O never interested me that much, even if some products earned some consideration, especially the legendary Tangential record player that came with an early version of the T4P cartridge.

Peter Ledermann developed the "Strain Gauge" cartridge that with its completely new working principle created a stir at last years CES.

SoundSmith's Moving-Iron System Cartridge "The Voice" realizes analog dreams.

This report is dedicated to the Moving-Iron-Cartridge called "The Voice", that he developed from the top B&O SMMC1 model. Until now the SoundSmith System can only ordered directly from the United States over the Internet (www.sound-smith.com). It's easily ordered and with the current dollar exchange rate very attractive. A dealer for Germany is currently looked for and hopefully will soon be found.

The first example of the voice that came into my hand simply *amazed/delighted* me. Since then the

original voice has had several *siblings*, two of which I would like to introduce. First, the "normal" Voice connects directly to a B&O tonearm. Any other tone arm will need an adapter that transforms it to a standard half inch system. The adapters are available in three different models: one in transparent acrylic (\$ 1.600 or approx. €1.080) and two in wood (\$ 2.200 or approx. €1.480), and you can choose between ebony or *cocobolo* wood. Two compliances extend the selection. The high compliance "H" is for light tonearms that are designed for cartridges that can track at 10 Millinewtons of

tracking force, while the "M" is for heavier arms with cartridges designed to track at 14 Millinewtons. The Voice is a moving-iron cartridge with a moving iron part with a fixed magnet arrangement. The cantilever is a solid ruby, the stylus is a "selected Nude Contact Line Diamond". The main attention was to reduce weight of the moving mass.

I tested the "M" version on Stax UA, Roksan Artemiz and Kuzma Stogi Reference and the Voice went very well with these tonearms. The "H" version played on Stax, Artemiz and Infinity Black Widow (an early design from Isamu Ikeda) without any problems. The tonearms were installed on Audiolabor Konstant, Garrard 301 and Feickert Analogue Twin. I used the GSP Era Gold Reflex, Whest TWO and PS30R as preamplifier, Brocksieper Phonomax and the Stax preamplifier. The Voice works with all these preamplifiers.

ANALOG

How do the Voices sound? Ordinarily I don't get euphoric that fast, but here I want to use just one term: simply dreamy. But I can't get away with that, so here is a little music. Many people know "Daefos", a reference recording by Keith Johnson. He uses a lot of percussion without clinging to a specific genre. At "Subterranean Caves Of Cronos" Mickey Hart beats a Kodo drum named "The Beast" which is frightening and fascinating at the same time. It frightens the listener with its sheer vehemence and power and fascinates with the unbelievable precise image of the "Big Bang" action, from the first assault on the eardrum to the last fading vibration of the notes in the room.

Now for something different: Joan Baez on her first record "Farewell Angelina" and the song "Wild Mountain Thyme". Her quavering voice can get

really on your nerves, especially with this song and especially with some MC cartridges. But the "Voice" shows the Tremolo as a stylistic device that she used to use then often, and it doesn't get on your nerves. I could go on and on, because every record was something new to be discovered, even on the familiar ones. Really fascinating.

The spatial representation is strikingly precise in the arrangement of the interpretation. The "Voice" doesn't miss anything in the dynamics, including the fine dynamics, and opens the smallest shades. *Finally the tone quality is even in its richness and always rightly balanced.*

I especially liked the MM or MI-mode with end resistor above the usual 47 kohm. That works with my Brocksieper Phonomax with 150kohm and the Whest PS30R with 3 mohm, it brings enhanced speed and an uninhibited flow of music. It doesn't work with all

set-ups, the conditions have to fit. After a few pleasurable hours I can dare to differentiate between the Acrylic and the wood adapter. The differences are subtle but audible. The acrylic articulates more intensively, the wood has more flow and flexibility.

The "Voice" Systems from the Soundsmith is the currently most reasonable possibility to reach the analog dream class. They are top cartridges, that – especially with the current dollar exchange rate – which deserve an unreserved recommendation.

With "adjust+" we will have a new software for analog measuring. The "Voice" will be measured with that.

Helmut Rohrwild

C o m p a c t D i s c C o n c e p t



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