

Re-discovering your CD Collection with the Njoe Tjoeb 4000

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Having lived with my Njoe Tjoeb 4000 'Super' version fitted with the TjoUpsampler for several months, I thought it was time to put 'finger to keyboard' and summarise what has turned out to be a voyage of discovery of my CD collection.

In a previous article, I described my experiences with the standard Njoe Tjoeb 4000 and I commented on a couple of CDs that I also had on vinyl. A comparison of the same recording transcribed onto record and CD is not a true test as you are at the mercy of the recording engineer who may use slightly different mixes for each type of media. However, such a comparison does have a place in subjective testing and it would be interesting to re-run the comparison with my now upgraded 'Super' Njoe Tjoeb 4000 and the fitted TjoUpsampler.

Previously, a comparison of an 'identical' recording of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" (The Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields conducted by Neville Marriner) on record and CD had shown that the standard Njoe Tjoeb considerably reduced the harshness that I had experienced on the CD with a previous CD player and the overall balance of the orchestra was much closer to the sound from the vinyl. The CD had the depth and smoothness that I knew was present on the master recording. I concluded, however, that vinyl still has the edge over the CD, but the gap had considerably narrowed to the point where the difference was only quantifiable through the A/B testing process I had described.

So what about the 'Super' Njoe Tjoeb 4000 and TjoUpsampler? Could I still tell a difference between the record and the CD? Well ... yes there is still a difference - you can tell which is the CD and which is the record when you switch between the two. The record has a few clicks and pops due to surface imperfections and dust, while the CD is silent, apart from the music! Having been a confirmed vinyl addict for many years, I have to confess that the 'Super' Njoe Tjoeb 4000 and TjoUpsampler combination offers all of the depth, space and realism of records - and without those annoying imperfections. I feel a bit of a traitor having been a champion of records for so many years, but I really do feel this CD player reproduces all the qualities that I love of analogue recordings. Incidentally, after much experimenting, I concluded that it is best to leave the remote controlled volume setting of the player at maximum for optimum sound quality and use the volume control on your amplifier.

I am still re-discovering my CD collection - I have been listening to ones I hadn't played for a long time and I can't believe how good they sound now. I am hearing new instruments that were previously masked by harsh trumpets and coarse-sounding strings. Vocals, especially choral music, can often sound muddy with a blurred sound stage. No longer! My Decca recording of Vivaldi Glorias (443 455-2) now had all the clarity that must have been present on the original recording.

An early CD that I bought to show off my first CD player in the 1980s was 'Star Tracks' - a Telarc recording of the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra playing the theme from Star Wars, amongst others. It had not been played for some years. However, playing it on the Njoe Tjoeb - I hardly recognised it! The quality was staggering and the bass drum from 'The Empire Strikes Back' was felt in the stomach! Not loose, but sharp, tight and very deep!

To bring this summary right up to date, I had the pleasure of obtaining a copy of "U.D.A. - From then to here, 1993-2002" which is written and performed by Andrew Deeks over here in the UK. The music is mainly electronic, but clearly has instrumental parts (guitar, drums, etc) and it is very engaging. The best way I can describe the music is as a cross between Jean-Michel Jarre (of 'Oxygene' fame) and Pink Floyd! There are thirteen tracks of complete pieces and extracts (presumably from earlier recordings). Some pieces such as 'Layman' have a very *Indian* sound, 'Domestic Cyclopes' transports you to the jungle, while 'Amnesia' (my favourite track) reminds me of Pachelbel's Canon in D! A common theme throughout the CD is a well-extended sound stage and a bass line that certainly blew the cobwebs out of my transmission line loudspeakers! Although quite prominent, the bass was clear and has a well-defined frequency that was sometimes almost sub-audible and was mainly 'felt'! All in all, a very professional sounding album and worthy of inclusion in any CD collection.

Finally, I must mention how the Njoe Tjoeb 4000 sounds through my valve headphone amplifier driving my Sennheiser HD580s. Headphone listening is very demanding and CDs especially can be very tiring after long periods of listening. Although the Njoe Tjoeb 4000 has a headphone socket, it takes a proper headphone amplifier connected to the valve outputs of the CD player to do it justice. I can literally listen for hours on headphones to the Njoe Tjoeb 4000 with it's smooth, open sound that is free from the usual harshness usually associated with CDs.

If you add up your total investment in your CD collection, the 'Super' Njoe Tjoeb 4000 and TjoUpsampler well justifies the cost. Go on - you deserve it - treat yourself!

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