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Furutech deStat Antistatic Device and DFV-1 LP Flattener

...The first disc I tried the deStat with was the Allison Krauss SACD *Now That I've Found You – Collection* [Rouner 11661-0325-6]. This is a well-recorded compilation of some of Ms. Krauss's early recordings. The SACD is one of the best-sounding recordings in my collection. The instruments are clearly rendered and precisely located. Krauss's voice is ethereal. Yet after a quick ten-second zap with the deStat the disc opened up even more, allowing me to hear more of the recording's personality. I heard a slightly better sense of not just Allison Krauss's singing but how that angelic voice was formed -- from inhale to its projection into the soundstage. There was also a slightly better sense of space around voices along with a clearer rendition of the instruments.

Moving to CD, I was treated to much the same results. I picked two discs for testing: Soul Farm's *Scream of the Crop* [Desert Rock Records 26-6] and Jay Boy Adams' *The Shoe Box* [Rockin' Heart Records 7057 2006]. On both discs the bass went deeper with better definition after deStating. Vocals, as with the SACD, were better defined -- especially any harmony vocals. I could more clearly make out who was singing and where he or she stood in relation to the lead vocalist. I heard more of the small inflections of both voices and instruments, which made each sound more realistic.

On DVDs I both heard and saw an improvement. I pulled the new *Cream At Royal Albert Hall* [Rhino R2 970421] from my shelves, zapped it with the deStat, slipped into the Oppo DVD player and sent the signal to my Olivea HDTV. In its native form this is a great DVD of one of the most-anticipated reunions to come down the pike in a long time. Yet, after the deStat treatment, I was treated to an even clearer picture and crisper sonics. Edge definition was sharper, and color was more truly represented. Plus I got all of the sonic benefits I'd heard with SACD and CD. I saw

the same improvements in *Gettysburg* [Warner Brothers T 6139] as well. Colors were more vibrant, cannon and musket fire cracked that much more sharply. Voices, even those in the background, were much clearer. No matter how I sliced it, the deStat made a small but definite improvement with all of my digital media.

But, to me, the real test would come when I tried it with an LP, as that is still, to my ears, the medium that best represents what music really sounds like and the form of software for which eliminating static charges was supposed to be the most beneficial. Until now I've never had cause to doubt that I was hearing the best my analog rig could produce. So to say I was a bit skeptical as to the deStat's benefits would be a gross understatement.

Well it didn't take more than the first song of the first LP to hear that it wasn't only digital that the deStat could work its mojo on. With *Ben Webster at the Renaissance* [Analogue Productions AJP 011], suddenly Webster's tenor sax sounded more like it was right in my room -- there was *that* kind of immediacy. Webster's breath as it flowed through and around the reed in the mouthpiece was replayed with a startling sense of verisimilitude that made me melt in my chair. I was also treated to cleaner, clearer, more extended highs than I'd previously heard with this album.

I spent the better part of one Sunday afternoon pulling out albums to deStat. With Dire Straits' self-titled album [Warner Brothers BSK 3266] once again things were made cleaner and clearer. I've not heard this album sound better. The same held true on David Oistrakh's *Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 4* [EMI C 069-02324]. It wasn't that I was hearing albums anew, more that I was now hearing more of what each LP had embedded in its grooves. Another side benefit of using the deStat was the impression that my albums gained a decibel or two of volume. But *why*? Perhaps because of what wasn't now present -- an extraneous raising of the noise floor caused by static electricity. It's something that, until it's gone, you'll never know you're listening to. You're so used to hearing it that you listen around it. But once its absence is heard it's hard to go back.

I now consider the deStat a mandatory accessory for any self-respecting audiophile who wants to extract the best from his music. It brought improvements to both digital and analog media in equal proportions. I plan to keep it around my house so I never have to wonder what I might be missing with any kind of disc I spin...

The LP flattener, if you'll pardon the pun, just flat-out works. From the first record to the last, all were made perfectly flat after a spell in the DFV-1. In fact, the first album I flattened was the Dire Straits LP I mentioned above. I've owned it for years, and though it has always been slightly warped it was never completely unplayable. I guess that's one reason I like record clamps -- they help flatten slightly warped records such as this one. But, hey, I had the warped LP, I had the DFV-1, so why not see if this long-warped LP could be put into pancake-flat condition? So in it went for an hour and a half heating time -- remember the vinyl albums of the 1980s weren't very thick. When the two hour cool-down time was up I opened the DFV-1 with more than a bit of trepidation. What did I find? A perfectly flat LP that played through end to end just fine, thank you very much. There was nothing amiss during playback that I could attribute to the workings of the DFV-1. The LP sounded just as it has all the previous times I've played it -- minus the humps. So we were off to an auspicious start.

Next up was the second LP of the new two-record set of Lucinda Williams' *West* [Lost Highway LLH0882-2], which I bought brand new. I only discovered the serious warping to the second record when I went to clean it. Why didn't I just take it back? Because I bought it in Maine while on vacation, and I wasn't driving hours to exchange it. Good thing I had the DFV-1. It was time to see if it could work its magic on a thick slab of 180-gram vinyl. I placed the record on the spindle, placed spindle and record in the DFV-1, and set it for its maximum heating time of two and a half hours. Four and a half hours later I extracted a perfectly flat, perfectly playable LP. Saved! Once again the DFV-1 came to the rescue.

But what of those LPs that become severely warped through some sort of negligence or poor storage -- garage- and estate-sale finds, and albums you find in the corner of your relatives' basements? Could the DFV-1 work its magic on

something like that? To find this out, I took an old, long-unplayed and perfectly flat album and left it inside my car on a hot, sunny day. When I looked at it the next day it was warped beyond belief. I wouldn't have dared let my stylus within a country mile of that LP for fear one of those warps, which looked like the final wave in *A Perfect Storm*, would send my cartridge flying off the record to an early grave. Giving it the full treatment in the DFV-1 brought the LP back to the flat, even surface it had before my little experiment. I could set the LP on the platter and even without the clamp keep the stylus locked in the grooves. *Impressive*. The DFV-1 had managed to resurrect an album that should otherwise be in the trash.

But are the deStat and DFV-1 worth it?

The answer to that question is like the conundrum of beauty -- it's in the eyes of the beholder. Having used both the deStat and LP flattener, I can say that they each worked just as advertised. The DFV-1 flattened any warped LP I threw at, no matter the weight or warping, and did so without damaging the LP in any way I could see or hear. The DFV-1 probably has its greatest utility for dealers or audio clubs, which can keep it in steady use, but if you have a huge LP collection or you frequent yard sales to get your LPs, then the DFV-1 might very well be worth the cost, as it will allow you to pick up for pennies (literally) albums that you would have had to pass on because of warping. Now if only some bright-eyed person could find a similar way to repair scratches.

The deStat also lived up to its billing. It gave me a better view into each recording, and I can't imagine living without it now that I've heard the improvement it can bring. Anyone can enjoy the deStat, while the LP flattener is for the committed vinylphile who has a large collection or wants never to pass on an album due to warping.

So here we have two accessories -- tweaks -- that *work*. They will bring you increased enjoyment of your music each time you use them, and that's just what they're supposed to do.

...*John Crossett*