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Furutech Saves the Day!

**Two Must Have Accessories for
the Hardcore Vinyl Enthusiast**

By Jeff Dorgay

I must admit I walked into the Furutech room at CES this January with an attitude of complete skepticism wanting to make fun of their 2000 dollar record demagnetizer. The man doing the demo was none other than Michael Hobson, owner of Classic Records, so my interest was piqued.

After listening to Hobson bag on SME turntables for a few minutes, we got on with the demo. Tech editor Dan Babineau and I are both happy SME owners, so now we were really ready to hear this guy hang himself with the latest overpriced snake oil gadget, but you know what?

The damn thing works and the effect is not subtle.



While I understand that 2000 smackers isn't exactly chump change, if you are a pretty serious audiophile that has thousands of records, it's not out of reach, especially considering what power cords cost these days, or one of those silly coat rack things that is supposed to treat the acoustics in your room.

Furutech claims that the carbon particles that make a record black hold a minute magnetic charge that can cloud the sound, which makes sense considering the extremely low level that a moving coil cartridge operates. Interestingly enough, I could not hear any effect from the demagnetizer when I tried it on my gold copy of Grand Funk Railroad's *We're an American Band*, the clear copy of Synergy's *Cords* or the white copy of *Live in the Air Age* by BeBop Deluxe. I also noticed less of an effect with the Continuum Criterion than my other turntables, perhaps due to the magnetic suspension in the Continuum?

So I am on board with using the demagnetizer as part of my vinyl ritual.

I did my usual battery of tests with my favorite guinea pigs and even the non-audiophiles in the group came away feeling that the music sounded smoother and more open. That's the impression I always got when using it, but you know how we audiophiles can fool ourselves into thinking the latest expensive gadget has to sound better.

Diminished grain is exactly how I would describe the effect that the Furutech demag has on a recording. I would compare the effect to going up to the next notch in cartridges from any given manufacturer, or perhaps swapping our some Chinese 12AX7's for some great NOS ones, so if you have a pretty good system, I think you will be impressed.

Granted, the nerdtrons in the audience might be able to build one of these for less money, but it won't look as elegant as the Furutech and if you get the charging circuit wrong, you will probably make things sound worse.

The Furutech is definitely one of those cool hifi accessories for the man who has everything. The guys out on the various Internet boards squealed like pigs when I said I bought one of these, but I wouldn't be without it. If you've got the system, tons of records and would like a new gadget fix that actually works, I highly recommend the Furutech demagnetizer. (*continued*)



The “Saves the Day” Part of the Story

I’m sure you are wondering how a record demagnetizer saved my day. It didn’t, it just made my day better. However, the Furutech DFV-1 LP flattener did. Again, this one is not for the faint of heart at \$1628. The best part of the DFV-1 is that this is an accessory that you can share with your buddies.

Considering what records cost these days and the inability of the vendors to just exchange the defective ones, it’s getting easier and easier to get stuck with 35-100 dollar Frisbees.

Case in point, the recent Radiohead two record/two CD box set that was almost \$100. After its long trip from England, I anxiously tore it out of the box to give it a spin. The first record was perfectly flat, but the second one was warped like a pretzel bowl. Well, maybe not quite that bad, but warped enough that I wasn’t going to let my Dynavector XV-1s bounce around on it.

Of course this was a limited edition set and after waiting four months to receive it, I knew there was no way to get another copy, so it was the perfect chance to give the DFV-1 a try. I have a big stack of warped records sitting in my garage that needed a purpose, so I started there, before letting the DFV-1 have a go at my one and only rare Radiohead album.



Not to worry. The whole process takes about three hours; as it slowly warms up your record between two metal plates, almost like a dry mount press. This gently returns your LP to its original flat shape and then cools down equally slowly.

There are two lines of thought surrounding the effectiveness of this device; the naysayers and the true believers (I’m in the latter category to a point), but there is a limit to how much you can defy the laws of physics or at least bent plastic. Remember, anything that is bent beyond a certain point will still retain some of its bend even when you try to flatten it. Think of the 5mph bumper on your car; a modest impact and it will return to its original shape, but if you nudge something at about 10mph, you get somewhat of a permanent warp. Hmm.

I tried the DFV-1 on a number of different types of warped records to see just how effective it was and what the side effects might be. I had the best success with moderately warped records (about 1/4 inch or 5mm) that had the warps fairly evenly spread apart. These are usually the ones you experience in shipping with new records. You can be pretty certain that these will flatten out and the record in question will sound better than ever.

I did not have very good luck trying to flatten a couple of records that had multiple, sharp warps, somewhat akin to what happens when an LP sits in a warm FedEx truck for too long.

Should you have some very seriously warped records, the DFV-1 will make an unplayable record playable, but there will be some damage to the grooves and as a result, some distortion. If the choice is between some music and no music, it’s still a lifesaver.

One last thing to keep in mind before using the DFV-1 is that record cleanliness is a must! I highly suggest a double cleaning and some liberal use of compressed air before you insert a record. Remember, you are heating up the record, which will soften it considerably. The last thing you want to do is imbed big dirt particles in the warm vinyl!

Again, this is not an audiophile accessory for the faint of wallet, but if used within its range of effectiveness is very handy. It’s also the perfect gift for the audiophile on your list that has everything (but not one of these). Now that I have one in my arsenal, it’s great to haggle with used record store owners, exclaiming how warped said record is. If the store is pretty full, the proprietor will usually knock the price in half on the warped records just to get rid of me right now! At this pace,

I’m figuring the DFV-1 will have paid for itself by the end of the year.

Those of you with voracious appetites for vinyl will find this little gadget indispensable. ●

MSRP: DeMag \$1980 DFV-1 \$1628

MANUFACTURER: Furutech Co. Ltd.

Tokyo, Japan www.furutech.com