

Furutech

Demag and DeStat Review

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SuperiorAudio

DeStat

This enterprising Japanese company makes a number of interesting accessories as well as a broad range of cable products. The DeStat (\$360) is a hand-held battery-powered device that eliminates static charges by blowing a gentle stream of positively and negatively charged ions. Traditionally the greatest use for static eliminators has been with LPs, but static can be a problem not only with media CD and DVD discs as well as LPs but also with cables and hardware components. The DeStat is designed to let you zap static charges comprehensively throughout your system and media collection.

Plowing through a box of miscellaneous stuff that hadn't been opened since I moved to Chicago, I recently unearthed my old Discwasher Zerostat gun. Audiophiles of a certain age will probably remember this cute little pistol-shaped piezo-electric generator. I used it for years, but never on anything but LPs (it predates the CD). It still does a fair job of static reduction and sold for a small fraction the DeStat's price but only a couple of comparative tests established that the DeStat is far superior in clearing static from LPs, and it is good for much more than that.

Much of the DeStat's effectiveness comes from the airstream it produces. With LPs, the DeStat not only eliminates static, but also blows away surface dust. I no longer use any pad or brush to clear dust from the grooves a process that as often as not used to create static, even with supposedly static-eliminating carbon fiber bristles. And the DeStat also works well for CDs and DVDs, reducing aural and visual "haze" and allowing some previously veiled detail to emerge. Moreover, I got a very pleasant surprise when I opened the drawer on my front-loading Modwright/Denon player and aimed the airstream from the DeStat into the opening for about 20 seconds. Replaying the same disc (Patricia Barber's *The Cole Porter Mix*) I'd heard just before, it sounded slightly warmer and more natural. I now do that little maintenance tweak every couple of days.

I have also found that, especially in combination with the Furutech DeMag (discussed below), the DeStat audibly contributed to a lowering of my system's noise floor and improved focus after destaticizing all of my cables. Static can be even more of a bitch than I used to realize, and I am glad to have this very effective tool for combating it.



Furutech DeMag

DeMag (\$1,980) is a hefty piece of gear with a kind of retro/futuro look. It's easy to imagine Commander Data hunched over it in the science lab of the Enterprise. It's also, as I gather from a cursory look at past commentary, a product that has stirred considerable passion among supporters and detractors.

The audible benefits of degaussing CDs have been understood for a long time. I've previously gotten worthwhile results with the original little hand-held Bedini, and after misplacing that, with a bulk tape demagnetizer. So I was perfectly ready to believe that the DeMag would be effective in degaussing CDs and DVDs.

But Furutech makes other claims for the DeMag as well they should for an accessory that costs nearly two grand. The company has published data to support its assertions that degaussing vinyl LPs also yields sonic benefits, as does treating the cables in a system.

The case for degaussing digital discs is based on the fact that there are magnetizable impurities in the composition of the discs, as well as in the inks used for printing the label sides. OK, I'll buy that and as I've already said, demagnetizing digital discs is generally accepted as a good thing to do. The DeMag allows you to degauss quickly and powerfully up to five discs at once on its large work surface. Frequently these days I take a few minutes to plan a "program" of CDs I plan to listen to in a session, and do a little prep first. If the chosen discs have not already had some of these processes, I apply the AUDIOTOP Digital (I mark them for future reference), trim the discs on my Audio Desk lathe (still one of the finest tweaks around), degauss them on the DeMag, and then hit each disc with the DeStat before loading it into my player with the Millennium M-CD mat and enjoying the fruits of my labors. Sounds a bit tedious, I know, but the whole sequence takes about 15 minutes, and the resulting sweet sounds are well worth the trouble.

But, does degaussing LPs really make a difference? Furutech says that the black dye that makes LPs black, and (again) the label inks contain metallic impurities that can become magnetized and adversely affect the sound of the record. I was pretty skeptical about this claim, but ready to check it out. Here my testing methodology was first to thoroughly clean the LP on the VPI Typhoon and "relax" the vinyl with AUDIOTOP Vinyl2. After using the DeStat, I play the record, listening attentively, then remove it, treat it with the DeMag and play it again.

The first recording I used for this was the Classic Records single-sided 45 rpm LPs of the Reiner/Chicago Respighi *Pines of Rome*. This dazzling orchestral feast has everything you need from a sonic standpoint: a dynamic range from *ppp* to *fff*, and a glorious riot of orchestral color. Conclusion? Post-DeMag, this already glorious-sounding recording was even more glorious-sounding. Not a night-and-day difference, but the Chicago strings now had a slightly silkier sheen and the brass a bit more bite, and I could now hear more breath and color in the woodwind solos. I repeated the experiment with a number of other familiar LPs, and I would say I heard clear improvements with about 80 percent of them.

What about degaussing cables? My JPS Aluminata interconnects are not the most flexible, but with the help of a couple of heavy books I was able to coil them over the work surface of the DeMag. I couldn't do the JPS speaker cables too stiff. But I was able to do all of my Bybee power cords. After treating all of those cables, I also zapped them with the DeStat before reinstalling and listening. Under those circumstances no quick A-B comparison is possible. But I know intimately the sound of this system, and I could hear that its already excellently low noise floor had been slightly improved.

I must say I found all of these experiments intriguing, and I yearn to add the DeMag to my audio arsenal. It does a better job of degaussing digital discs than anything I have previously used. It has made smaller but valuable improvements in my analog listening. And I can certainly see myself repeating the cable degaussing process every couple of months. But the darned thing costs significant money. I don't begrudge the price; the obvious build quality can't be cheap to achieve, and the DeMag is a fair value. As of this writing, I'm still trying to decide whether to further deplete my battered exchequer or, regretfully, pack up the DeMag and return it to Furutech. Check the component listings in my reviewer's bio next month and you'll know the answer.

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