PHONO COLOSSUS WITH FINESSE



The Typhoon Neo is by no means the largest turntable from Acoustic Signature. Yet it is a clear statement of ultimate standards in workmanship, sophistication – and sound.

Text: Matthias Böde

It's almost a hi-fi paradox: this 37-kilogram behemoth of a turntable sits enthroned on the rack, proudly displaying its bulk and making no attempt to conceal its weight with a graceful design. And yet the music flowing from the speakers is of the most graceful kind — finely chiseled, perfectly fanned out, and organized as if with pointed fingers. Simply put, it is of the high-end, floating, weightless variety.

Specifically, Ana Caram's album "Blue Bossa", which Evolution Music recently presented as a superbly remastered and cut vinyl reissue, spins on the platter, which weighs 11.3 kilograms on its own. The 2001 recording from Chesky Records is indeed magnificent: it sounds extremely lively and transparent, yet sonorous and colorful at the same time. And that's exactly how the title track comes across, in a way that is as delicate as it is nuanced, seemingly counteracting the literally profound performance of the playback device.

Spotless workmanship

This is the Typhoon Neo from analog specialist Acoustic Signature – based in Süßen, Swabia, southern Germany –, which is machined from solid blocks of aluminum. Having tested its smaller all-metal sibling, the Hurricane Neo, in STEREO issue 2/22, we now wanted to know how the larger model fares in terms of complexity and sound.



The more affordable Hurricane Neo is very similar in design but less elaborate.

Photos: STEREO, Manufacturer



The tonearm comes with a phono cable from Atlas Cable with a five-pin connector and RCA plugs.



After setting the tracking force, the brass counterweight on the thread should be locked in place.



Thanks to point-like contact and fine threads, the feet can be easily adjusted in height.

Back then, Acoustic Signatures' TA-2000 Neo tonearm, suitable in terms of price, was used. For the Typhoon Neo, however, we chose the TA-5000 Neo from the extensive range offered by the company as a more appropriate partner for the massive drive. After all, we had only recently conducted a direct comparison between the TA-2000 Neo and the TA-5000 Neo and were convinced of the sonic differences that a higher-quality arm can make, even demonstrating this clearly in a STEREO workshop (see issue 5/25).

In terms of cost, the beefy Typhoon Neo, manufactured entirely in-house under the motto "Teutonic Engineering," comes in at just under €16,170. The TA-5000 Neo, equipped with a stiff tube made of three layers of carbon fiber and precision bearings, costs around €7,275 on its own. In return, the customer receives finest German craftsmanship. After various disputes with suppliers, the decision was made some time ago to manufacture practically everything in the mechanics section in-house, right down to individual screws.

Three motors in unison

This not only means that all parts are exceptionally precise, but also that the black or silver surfaces of the drive and arm are flawlessly finished. And everything fits together precisely, which is all the more important because the Neo Typhoon and TA-5000 are delivered to the customer individually packaged and have to be combined. Although both units come with exemplary detailed instructions, this is either a job for the experienced amateur or for professionals – such as competent hi-fi dealers.

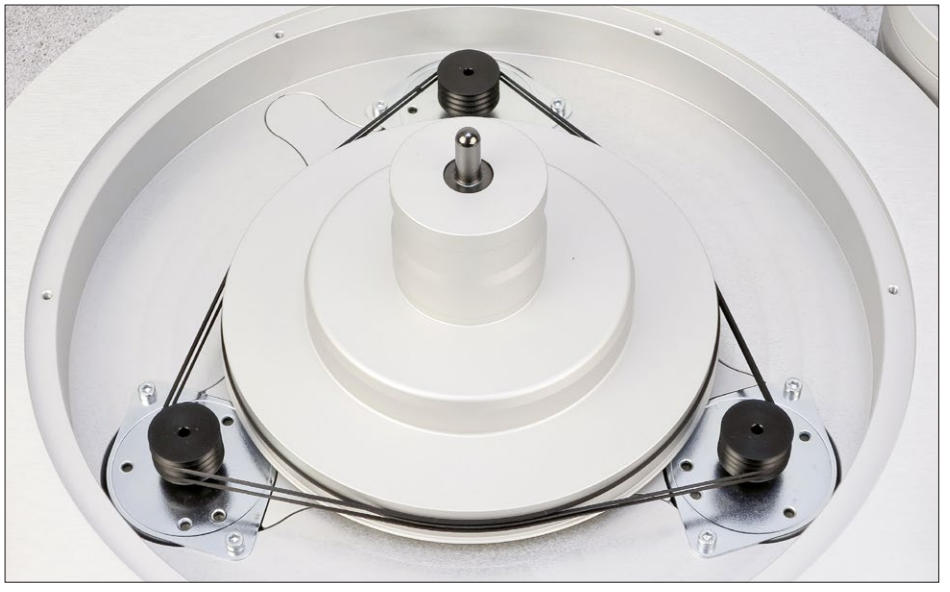
One thing the manufacturer has already taken care of is attaching the belts. There are three of these, which wrap around the pulleys of the same number of AC motors and enclose the sub-platter, made of solid aluminum, on three sides. This is thus driven without any lateral torque onto the bearing, and the motors compensate for any irregularities between each other via the belts that connect them. All in all, this is intended to ensure ultra-smooth motion.

The average listener usually doesn't notice the effort that goes into this section, because the drive is located in a recess milled deep into the turntable, which is closed by a screwed-on acrylic cover. They rather tend to enjoy the stoic consistency of the turntable, which makes even the most subtle fluctuations in the timing of the music audible, thus preserving its authentic charisma and natural charm.



Matthias Böde
STEREO editor

»THIS MAGNIFICENT UNIT FROM SWABIA IS THE EPITOME OF THE HIGH-END TURNTABLE.«



No fewer than three AC motors drive the solid sub-platter via three short belts. These also link the motors to one another so that any minor irregularities between them are equalized.



The tonearm rest, lockable and fitted with rubber strips, stands for quality in every detail.



Of the numerous connectors on the external power supply unit DMC-20, only the one labelled Blue is needed for the Typhoon Neo. The round control module is plugged into the upper left socket.

The external control unit, which is connected to the Typhoon Neo via a LAN cable, plays a significant role in this. It supplies the three motors individually and reduces their own movements using a clever "anti-vibration control" system. Tiny plus and minus buttons can also be used to adjust the two speeds in mini steps.

Thanks to the defined, spherical contact point of the three solid, gel-damped feet and their fine thread, these can be easily adjusted in height using their smooth-running outer ring to align the drive perfectly horizontally, despite the substantial mass of the turntable. Incidentally, adjusting the tonearm is just as quick and easy. Once again, practical detailed solutions make a big difference here. For example, the brass counterweight can be loaded with additional metal rings depending on the cartridge used.

Ultimately, the weight should be positioned as close as possible to the pivot point of the TA-5000 Neo when the tracking force is set, i.e., in a position that is favorable in terms of mass dynamics. Small grub screws, which can be tightened with one of the keys supplied, not only prevent accidental twisting, but also eliminate any sound-damaging movement of the counterweight on the thread. The package also includes a 1.5-meter-long phono cable from Atlas with a RCA plug.

Everything is solid and precise

One of the special features of the TA-5000 Neo is the included adjustment template made of sturdy plastic, which can be used to determine not only the correct distance between the tonearm and the turntable axis. Printed guide lines and a target point also indicate the ideal position of the stylus and the lateral alignment of the pick-up, which is also defined by the guides for the mounting screws in the metal headshell. The flange that holds the TA-5000 at the correct height can be tightened securely. This makes this turntable the epitome of stability and precision.

In addition to the carbon mat on its underside, the 24 brass "silencers" furthermore ensure that nothing rattles or clatters. Acoustic Signature has embedded these into of the platter from above using a press fit, so that only their upper side is visible. Two rubber rings ensure a tight fit for each of these elongated cylinders. Specific measurements and listening tests confirmed the effectiveness of the silencers.

Care must of course be taken when placing the heavy platter onto the turntable. This must be done gently to avoid damaging the platter bearing. Otherwise, according to Acoustic Signature, it is "practically indestructible." The German company has long relied on its proven "Tidorfolon" bearing for this purpose. This component

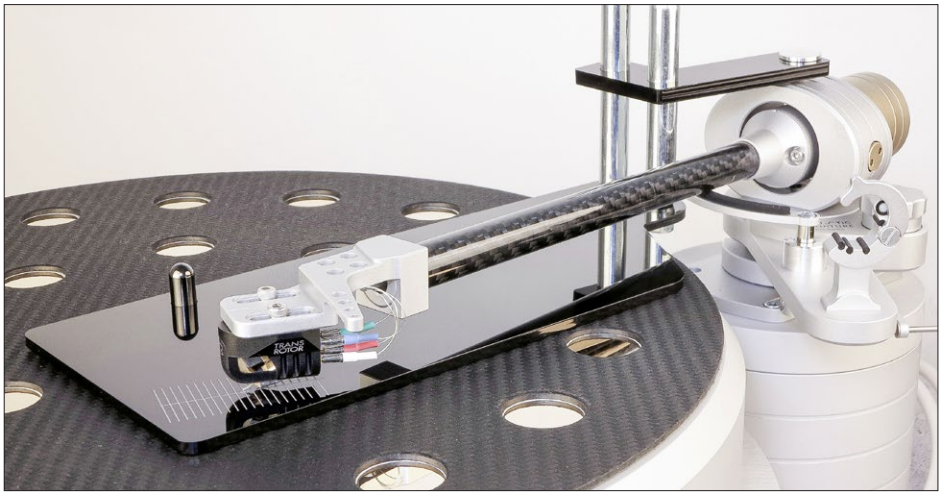
WHAT WE'VE HEARD



ANA CARAM: BLUE BOSSA
The Brazilian musicians plays bossa nova hits. Outstanding both musically and sonically.



TINY ISLAND: TINY ISLAND
This audiophile gem from the Opus3 label impresses with top-notch sound and atmosphere.



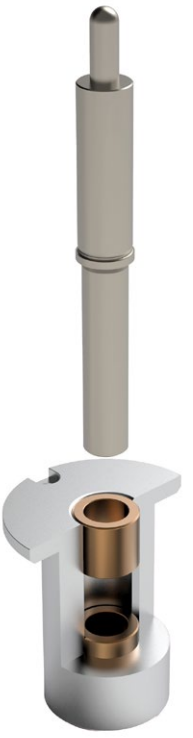
Using the alignment template supplied with the tonearm ensures perfect geometry with regard to its distance from the platter spindle as well as correct cartridge alignment.



The Typhoon Neo is also available in black as well as in a mixed version combining both finishes.



24 „silencers" are furthermore embedded into the massive, damped platter.



Acoustic Signature's proven Tidorf-olon bearing also supports the heavy platter of the Typhoon Neo.

consists of a vacuum-hardened, plasma-coated stainless steel axle with a diamond-like surface, whose coefficient of friction has thus been reduced by 60 percent according to the manufacturer, mounted on a mirror made of sintered material, which is said to absorb three times more oil than usual. This prevents the high pressure of the bearing shaft from displacing the lubricant.

Analog hearts taken by storm

The Typhoon Neo's solid chassis, which can accommodate up to three tonearms, acts as an analog bulwark against any external influences. Thanks to "constrained layer damping," which involves silicone layers between the chassis components, its aluminum layers are designed to interrupt resonance circuits and nip vibrations in the bud.

Press the "On/Off" button on the right of the circular control unit, which can be placed anywhere but can also be slid under the metal frame, and the platter starts moving after a short "click" coming from the power supply module. Speaking of which: as our checks quickly revealed, for the best spatiality and smooth elegance of playback, the mains phase on our test device had to be at the top of its power socket.

Beyond that, all that remained was to change records and surrender to the impressive performance of the Typhoon Neo. True to its name, it takes the hearts of vinyl listeners by storm, so to speak, but it also represents the eye of the hurricane, where calm and silence reign, as we all know.

With the Acoustic Signature, this manifests itself in the form of exemplary, well-organized, and precisely defined sound images. Nothing seems vague or merely hinted at; all elements have their place, be they musicians or room reverberations that are constantly threatened by overlaying and overshadowing from louder, more prominent sound sources, but which are essential for the completeness of a performance and the preservation of its natural aura and sparkling flair.

We have listened to Diana Krall's furious opener of her famous "Paris" concert countless times on our reference system. However, it has rarely sounded as clear and serene, yet at the same time as urgent and forward-moving as it does on the Typhoon Neo. The fact that this player also presented "I Love Being Here With You" in the acoustic conditions of the location – the "Olympia" in Paris – provided the realistic setting for the song, which was refined down to the smallest detail. Not only the dry, agile, and color-changing bass line was easy to follow thanks to the turntable's enthusiastic and conscientious performance.



On its underside, the platter is damped by a carbon fibre plate.

Maintaining composure

During our equally informative and enjoyable listening tests, the TA-5000 Neo, which operates with preloaded SKF ball bearings in a gimbal arrangement, proved to be the ideal partner for high-end cartridges. It did not only bring out their respective strengths to the fullest, but also managed to showcase their individual sound characteristics. With these high-class capabilities, it is – who would have expected otherwise – a perfect match for the drive.

As a team and in combination with exquisite MC pickups, they reproduced the resounding, thunderous bass line of James Taylor's "Her Town Too" with elastic conciseness. It was also no surprise that the Typhoon Neo and TA-5000 Neo duo did not lose any of their style and clarity at higher volumes in the room, nor did they lose any of their delicate nobility, which we mentioned at the beginning. This highlighted the generous use of materials as well as the apparently effective damping measures.

In this way, Acoustic Signature has solved the hi-fi paradox: its heavyweight turntable ist not only able to make a powerful and dynamic impression, but can also dance gracefully on tiptoes like a prima ballerina when required. ■

TEST DEVICES

Turntable: Transrotor Rondino nero with tonearm TRA9 and MC cartridge Figaro

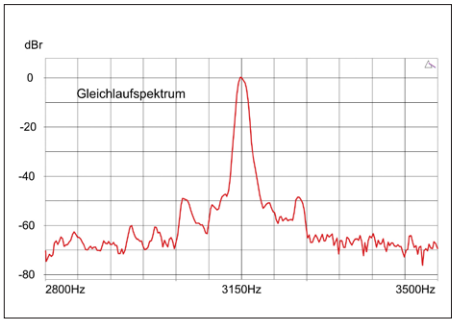
Cartridges: Brinkmann Pi, EMT JSD Novel Titan G, Hana Umami Black

Phono preamps: Brinkmann Edison MK II, Nagra Classic Phono

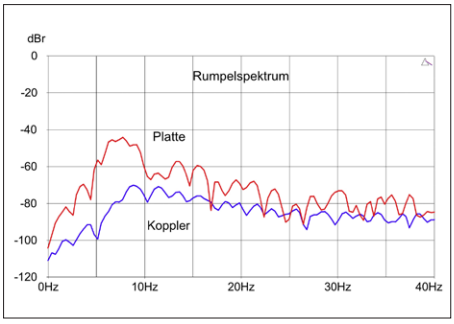
Phono cable: Audioplan Maxwell A

Pre/power amplifiers: Accustic Arts Preamp V / Amp VI

Loudspeakers: B&W 801 D4



Very good speed consistency; thanks to finely stepped speed adjustment, the speed is spot on.



Very low rumble values with the test record, further improvements when using the coupler.

TEST RESULT: PROFOUND, CRITICAL, TRANSPARENT.	
ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE TYPHOON NEO	
Product type	Turntable
Website	www.acoustic-signature.de
Price in euros	around 23,445 euros (incl. tonearm TA-5000 Neo / 9 inches)
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm	45 x 19 x 46
Weight in kg	37
German distributor / phone	AS-Distribution / +49 7162 207970
Turntable type / drive principle	manual / belt drive
Bluetooth / connections	no / five-pin
Phono-preamp built-in / cartridge included	no / no
MEASUREMENTS 35%	**very good 1.2**
Rumble	very good
Speed deviation (in percent)	very good (0.04)
Power consumption idle (in watts)	good (12.3)
FEATURES 25%	**satisfactory 2.6**
Cover included	no
Haptics and workmanship	very good
Tonearm cable replaceable	yes
Speeds in rpm	33, 45
Fine speed adjustment or automatic regulation	yes, finely stepped adjustment for both speeds separately
Impact noise damping	no
Hard mains switch	yes
HANDLING & OPERATION 40%	**good 2.1**
Speed switching	simple via button
Quality of the manual	very good
Warranty in years	15 (with registration)
Adjustability	tonearm height, foot height, azimuth
Removable headshell	no
Initial setup	adequate
Adjustment convenience	very good
PRACTICAL MARK	**good 1.9**
Sound description	explicitly ordered and defined sound image with pronounced dynamics and a high-end flair
SOUND SCORE	**93 / 100**