

September 2007

# Enjoy the Music.com Review Magazine

Audiolics Anonymous Chapter 95  
Digital Systems & Solutions Ultrabit Platinum Disc Treatment

Review By Bill Gaw

It is interesting how things converge. While writing this article I received a package from George Louis, developer of several digital disc treatment solutions. For a review of his previous efforts, please go to Audioholics Anonymous Chapter 77 and Chapter 81. Before further discussion, I must tell you that George, Clark Johnsen and I have had some serious discussions and disagreements relating to absolute polarity, which ended in basically a shouting match. I mention that so that you will know that this made this evaluation somewhat more difficult than others as I did carry somewhat of a grudge against Mr. Louis. But he was still willing to allow me to evaluate his product, letting the stones fall where they may.



If there is any topic that gets the bullets flying between the two audiophile camps, its whether any disc treatment can make any difference in sound. Through experimentation, I've found several which make a distinct difference, and others that do absolutely nothing.

The objectivist are usually in the camp that feels that none of these treatments can possibly help as long as there are no major dropouts, as there are various methods built into the information recovery and processing that should make any treatment superfluous. "Bits are bits" and any decent unit should be able to recover all of them and reproduce the music, at least on the digital side, perfectly, is the argument. If this were true though, there would be no reason for the high end to exist, as any decent player should reproduce music as accurately as any other, and obviously, I'm not in that camp. If you're reading this column, you probably aren't either.

What these individuals don't realize is that the recovery of the bits from a digital disc is actually an analog rather than a digital process, with not the bits being recorded on the disc as on and off signals like tape with 0 and 1 numbers, but a pit system with the laser seeing the beginning and end of the pits vs. the flat unburned or unpressed surface of the disc, measuring the lengths of the pits and flat areas to determine the values. If the beginning or end of the pit is slightly indistinct to the reading head, or the CD is warped or not perfectly round causing a misalignment similar to record wow and flutter, or the head is seeing the pit from the side rather than straight overhead, this will lead to timing errors of the on and off signal, otherwise known as jitter, or dropped bits which then have to be recalculated by the processor chip, giving its best guess estimates as to what the dropped bits represent.



Most of the disc tweaks supposedly improve the ability of the head to more correctly read the beginning and ends of the pit, thus improving jitter. Mr. Louis has been in on the development of fluids to improve this since the early 90's when he developed Fynyl, one of the first disc improvement products. His latest products are the Ultrabit Platinum Optical impedance Matching Disc Treatment, and CleanDisc cleaning solution. The Clean Disc is actually the same as his previous ClearDisc solution, and need only be used if other disc solutions have been applied to the surface.

Unlike his previous solutions where he recommended several applications, with the Ultrabit Platinum, only one application is necessary. Supplied in the kit are two shammy cloths to spread and clean off two drops of the oily fluid. One can easily see if all has been removed as there is a beautiful sheen to the cleaned areas as opposed to a film on the unpolished ones. If one is making a CD-R of the original disc, which by the way tend to for some reason sound better than the original (go figure), one should clean both the original and CD-R before copying for best results. If the original has been treated with any other solution, clean it with the CleanDisc before applying the new solution. That's all there is to it.

For experimentation, several CD-R's of two of my best discs were made using George's RealityCheck CD duplicator, a Folk Era Sampler that is no longer available, and Opus One, both before and after treatment of each disc. Blind experimentation was done by putting numbers on each disc, then having my wife play several tracks without her knowing what the numbers represented and in no particular order, and recording my findings.

With an almost perfect score (two misses out of about 50 tries) I could tell whether the original and/or the CD-R had been treated. So there's some objectivist related information; there is a difference in sound between treated and untreated discs, at least with this experimenter's ears. While this wasn't a so-called ABX test, it was double blinded with my wife not knowing what the hell I was doing and my not knowing what disc she was playing.

So what did I hear as a subjectivist? First was a tightening of space around instruments and voices, in other words more clarity of position. The sound actually projected more from a specific place that sounded more natural. Second, the bass was firmer with more thwack and less blah, if you know what I mean. There was also a more natural decay to the bass.

The biggest improvement though was a more 3D freedom to the space, with stereo mic'ed recordings allowing the hall signature to come out beyond the listener. With 5.1 SACD and DVD-Audio discs, the rear channels could be turned down by one or two dB with the sound being more enveloping and the decay of hall sounds more natural, plus all of the above characteristics. Remember, I'm using a TEAC DV-60 universal player, one of the best units out there. Also, I'm comparing some of these differences to George's previous fluids effects, which were as good as or better than all of the others I've tried.

Video also showed some improvement, making images out of the TEAC at 1080i a little closer in quality to true high definition video from DirecTV. DTS and Dolby digital decoded either by the TEAC or my Lexicon MC-12B pre-pro was superb with more dimensionality and naturalness.

Any disadvantages? First, the stuff is brand new so I cannot say how long the improvement lasts and whether we'll go through problems with disc degradation down the road. I would doubt it as George has been producing fluids for digital discs for years and must know the chemistry by now.

He's also suggested that I could be the first to experiment on cleaning my vinyl and possibly the cartridge stylus with the fluid, but I'm a little reluctant to use the stuff on my \$15,000 list Kondo IO-J cartridge, so I'll leave that experiment to others. I believe the cleanest record is the best, so I'm not so sure that gunking up the surface with this fluid would be of value, but who knows. Somebody with a cheap cartridge try it out and let me know.

Price is very reasonable, at \$65 for the Ultrabit Platinum and \$16 for the CleanDisc, which will treat about 500 discs. Included are two shammy cloths for polishing. I like to use Charmin Ultra toilet paper for the initial removal as then the cloths don't get dirty as fast and the Ultra never causes any micro-scratches to the discs that other papers do. Plus my wife then gets it for the house, which is very nice for the po-po. If one buys his RealityCheck CD duplicator at the same time, there will be a further reduction in the total cost.

George is an audiophile fanatic who wants as many people as possible to get as much enjoyment as possible from their recordings without taking any monetary risk. Thus, if one doesn't think the solution lives up to one's expectations, George will take the fluid back, reimburse you the full cost for it and the shipping both ways, and will add \$5.00 for your time and effort. So I hope this will get some of you objectivists off of your duffs and try it to see if there is a difference and whether it's an improvement or not over a straight from the store CD.

George S. Louis, Phone: (619) 401-9876 or toll free (888) 588-9542 best between 8am and 9:00pm Pacific Time and e-mail anytime at [GsLouis@GsLouis.com](mailto:GsLouis@GsLouis.com)