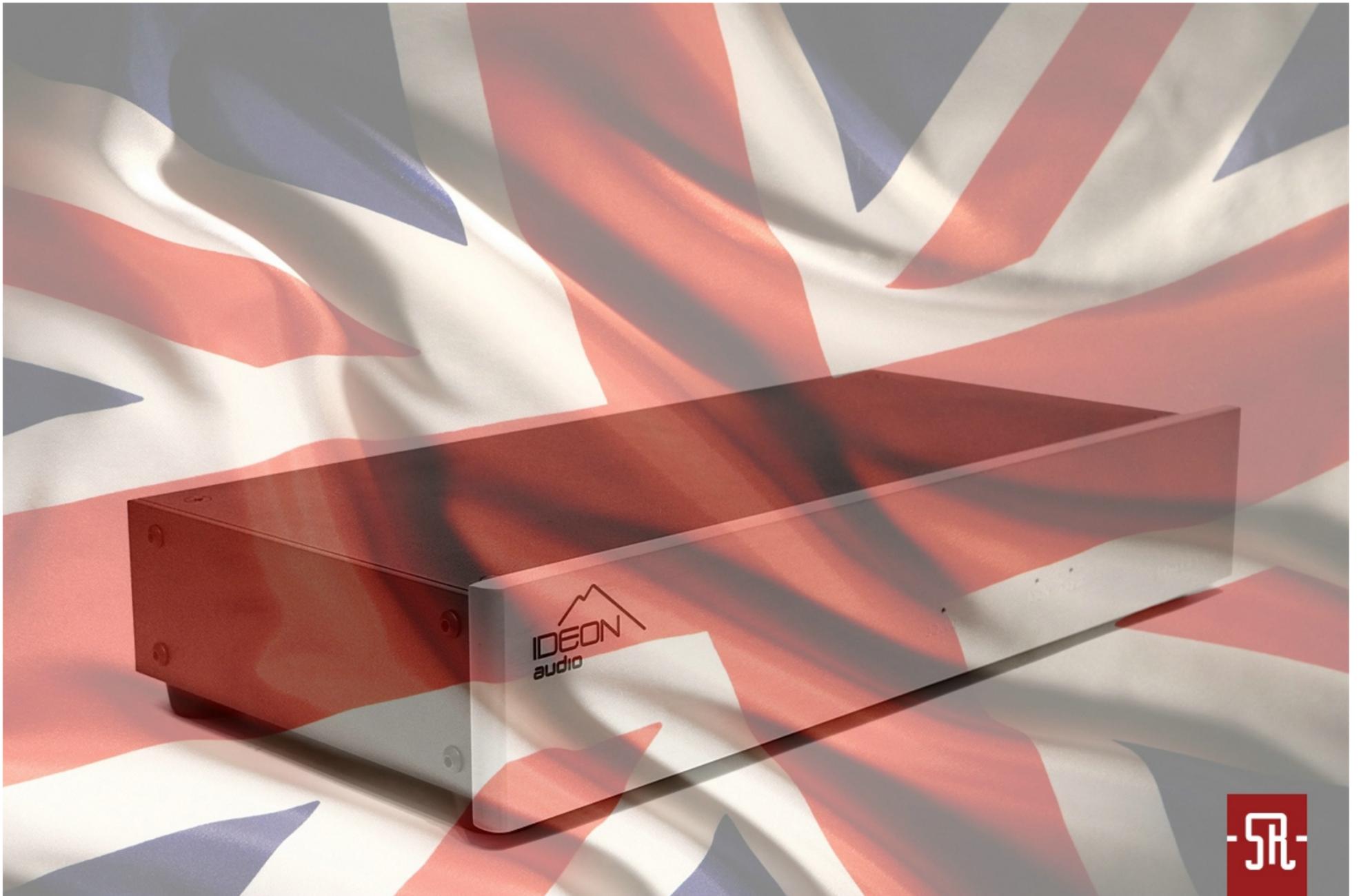




S O U N D R E B E L S

Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star English ver.



### Opinion 1

From history lessons, or even from personal experience, most Polish people know the saying “3 x Yes”. Or at least it should ring a bell. And while the peoples referendum from June 1946 where everybody „voted as they wanted, but elected who needed to be elected” can, and should, be regarded as grim reference to times past, the realm of the tested device is much more modern. Knowing life, there will be immediately a gathering of ‘audiophile flatearthers’, with their guru in the spear, for whom the USB transmission consists only from zeros and ones, so its efficiency can only be regarded in binary terms, so either it works or does not. For the more enlightened amongst us, I do not need to explain, how complex this is in reality. It is sufficient to remember, that from our, audiophile, point of view, the fact that something works is not the goal in itself, but only the starting point for future bettering of the process. This is the reason that today we will look at a device, that somehow connects that saying I mentioned in the beginning with the soul of audiophile, the Greek USB conditioner, USB Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star, which does “3 x R” instead of “3 x Yes”.





According to the company nomenclature, and the introduction above, the goal of the Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star is the ‘3R’, standing for Re Drive – Re Clock – Re Generate, or translating into plain English, to regenerate and re-clock the signal, improving the dynamic aspects of the digital transmission. All those actions might be seen as elimination of jitter, something, which existence is fortunately no more negated by anybody sane. The device itself should be plugged between the digital sound source – a dedicated transport or a computer – and an external DAC. But before we concentrate on how the final sound of our system is influenced by plugging in the Ideon, I would like to look at the exterior followed by a peek inside. Due to the company unification the chassis of the unit is a copy of what we saw during the review of the [Ayazi mk2](#), but with some small changes resulting from a different functionality. So the aluminum fascia does not carry any switches, which are present on the DAC. 3R MTBS (Master Time Black Star) has only 3 small LEDs – an amber one for power and two green ones (Host and Lock) informing about the operational status of the conditioner. The top cover and the sides were covered by a black, structural varnish, and there is nothing interesting about them, except the visible screw heads. The back panel is something different though, although still not overcrowded. We see there, from the left, an USB-A output, a switch cutting off the 5V power supply, an USB-B input (printer type), a dip power switch and a three pin IEC power socket. Similar to the DAC, if you want to exchange the fuse, you will need to unscrew the top cover. And returning to the 5V USB power supply – the Greek recommend to switch it off, but if your DAC requires it nevertheless, then the Ideon provides “clean” 600mA of it, separated from any noise the computer might have outputted.

Inside the chassis we find about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the space available filled with a PCB with a small 15VA PSU from Telema, a dozen of 330uF capacitors and the control and regeneration center composed of ultra-low noise oscillators, femto clocks and a programmable controller Microchip USB2532. This chip is mounted on a separate PCB, plugged into a special socket on the motherboard, what allows for future upgrades, confirmed by the manufacturer.

Compared to the younger sibling – in terms of size, but also application (I do not like devices, which are lighter than the cables being plugged into them), the basic regenerator [3R USB Renaissance mk2 Blackstar edition](#), we deal here with much more mature proposition. So we are no longer treated with the “magical” state of levitation, but got away with the irritating, and not very welcome in this case, wall-wart type power supply. So the changes are all for the better. But let us move on. The solo performance of the [Ayazi mk2 DAC](#) left nothing but good memories, but enriching it with the today’s hero caused the sound of this set to evolve by a level or two. All aspects were improved, and at that not as a compromised, and with that I mean something in exchange for something else, but globally and unequivocally so, and the only backlash (leaving aside the financials) I could mention here, was the need to have a very high class USB cable. Or let me phrase it a bit differently. Instead of two different, it is much better, at least in my opinion, to invest in two exactly same USB cables, and if this is not possible, at least give the better one behind the 3R MTBS. In terms of details and differences to the “naked” Ayazi, as well as the Renaissance mk2, the tested device offers very visible improvement of palpability, dynamics, saturation and resolution. And in exactly that order as I listed them. It suffices to take the cabaret-vaudeville album „[Bitter-Sweet](#)” by Bryan Ferry to experience the noble singer to materialize in our listening room, or to taste a climate resembling the twenty years between the world wars, brilliantly depicted in the series “[Babylon Berlin](#)”, where even Bryan Ferry appears himself. When needed, the brass section is suggestively covered with a tad of patina and matted, just to catch our ears with juiciness and depth of timbre in the next moment. Similar observations are true for the ability of the Greek device to reproduce the naturality of the human voice, with all its assets and shortcomings. You can hear, that Ferry’s vocal is very exploited, grey and far from its youthful power, but due to this suggestively reproduced truth about it, becomes much more authentic than when too smoothed and saturated. A separate compliment is due for the ability of the 3R MTBS to create space and placing the individual musicians in it. It could seem, that the increased palpability would mean focusing of, if not all, then most lights on the first plane and the soloists presenting their assets there. Yet, in this case, we deal with true democracy and equity here, where the first, second and third plane events are treated exactly in the same way. And additionally, due to filtering away the parasitic artifacts, and thus improving resolution, nuances, previously hidden somewhere in the unlit corners of the stage, had a chance to see the daylight, or even shine and enchant us with their presence.

Much more expressive and more captivating enchantment is spread on “[Redemption](#)” Rage of Light, by the Bydgoszcz born, but living in Amsterdam, Martyna Hałas. Of course I know, that this very successful marriage of groove and melodic death metal, would not be easy for everyone to swallow, but I recommend this disc to everyone, at least for cognitive and testing purposes. It is about what happens there on the lower part of the sound spectrum. If your system is able to reproduce this trans-metal apocalypse, of course. What is important, this not a classic, synthetic “mash”, but very complicated structures, which can keep their differentiation only, when having appropriate control and resolution. And now we come to the main aspect – the 3R MTBS not only allows them to reach the lowest levels of hellish depths, but also keeps them under full control, adding as a bonus, additional amount of adrenaline and drive. It is worth mentioning, that the metaphorical “nitro” activates only, when the needle of the gauge is close to the

end of the scale. This results in us not having the impression, that the sound is chasing anything the whole time, but just the certainty, that when needed, when we do reach the extreme, with the Ideon in the sound path we will have a reserve of power and dynamics. This might be something small, but if you are of the loud listening kind, then this “booster” will be a true goldmine.

I will not hide, that you can live without the Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star and you can listen to the [Ayazi mk2 DAC](#), or any other for that matter, and be completely satisfied with that. But it is worth knowing, that this state will only last as long as we don't include the Greek contraption in our system. Because when we remove it, we will not have such a satisfied look on our face. Somewhat jokingly, we could compare the 3R MTBS to an analogue step-up, like the Thrax Trojan, as the amount of changes introduced, and at that only positive ones, is truly undisputed. This is why I suggest to use the Ideon conditioner not only when you want to make some final touches to your audio system, but also when you are looking for a new DAC, as it may turn out, that you are not really aware of the full potential of your device, despite owning it for years, and the 3R MTBS just unleashes it upon you.

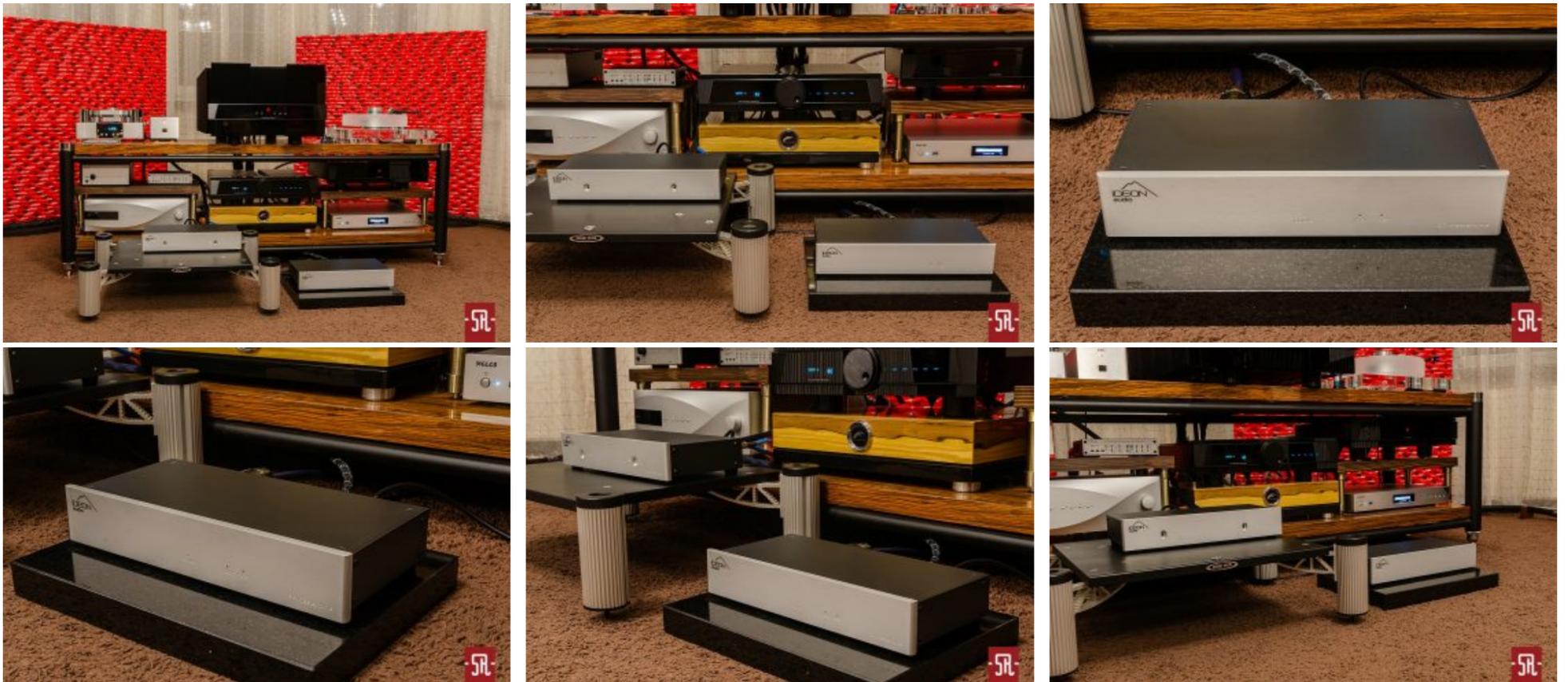
Marcin Olszewski

System used in this test:

- CD/DAC: Ayon CD-35 (Preamp + Signature) + Finite Elemente Cerabase compact
- Network player: Lumin U1 Mini + I-O Data Soundgenic HDL-RA4TB
- Digital source selector: Audio Authority 1177
- Turntable: Kuzma Stabi S + Kuzma Stogi + Dynavector DV-10X5
- Phonostage: Tellurium Q Iridium MM/MC Phono Pre Amp
- Power amplifier: Bryston 4B<sup>3</sup> + Graphite Audio IC-35 Isolation Cones / Synergistic Research MiG SX
- Loudspeakers: Dynaudio Contour 30 + Brass Spike Receptacle Acoustic Revive SPU-8 + Base Audio Quartz platforms
- IC RCA: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond
- IC XLR: Organic Audio; Vermöuth Audio Reference; Acrolink 7N-A2070 Leggenda
- Digital IC: Fadel art DigiLitz; Harmonic Technology Cyberlink Copper; Apogee Wyde Eye; Monster Cable Interlink LightSpeed 200
- USB cables: Wireworld Starlight; Goldenote Firenze Silver; Fidata HFU2; Vermöuth Audio Reference
- Speaker cables: Signal Projects Hydra; Vermöuth Audio Reference Loudspeaker Cable
- Power cables: Furutech FP-3TS762 / FI-28R / FI-E38R; Organic Audio Power + Furutech CF-080 Damping Ring; Acoustic Zen Gargantua II; Furutech Nanoflux Power NCF
- Power distribution board: Furutech e-TP60ER + Furutech FP-3TS762 / Fi-50 NCF(R) /FI-50M NCF(R)
- Wall power socket: Furutech FT-SWS(R)
- Anti-vibration platform: Franc Audio Accessories Wood Block Slim Platform
- Switch: Silent Angel Bonn N8 + Silent Angel S28 + Silent Angel Forester F1 + Luna Cables Gris DC; Innuos PhoenixNet
- Ethernet cables: Neyton CAT7+; Audiomica Anort Consequence + Artoc Ultra Reference + Arago Excellence; Furutech LAN-8 NCF
- Table: Rogoz Audio 4SM
- Acoustic panels: Vicoustic Flat Panels VMT

## Opinion 2

When you look at our home page, you will easily notice, that we have crossed our swords with the Greek company Ideon Audio quite recently. I am talking, of course, about the digital-to-analog converter [Ayazi mk2 DAC](#), which turned out to be a true sonic powerhouse in his league, despite the modest looks. And looking at the positive aspects of us perceiving its sound, it might seem, that we should make a longer pause from dealing with this brand, if we do not want to be associated with some subliminal positive actions towards the distributor Audio Atelier, but already the photo session for the DAC revealed, that we have completely different action in mind. What am I talking about? Of course the USB Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star, a USB signal regenerator, designed to accompany the DAC. What would be the reason for that? Well, this is very obvious. Current times are truly devoted to streaming, so a music lover will, at least, attempt to extract from this medium everything possible. This is the reason, that the Greek engineers, who know the current trends, worked on the project 3R Master, which included in the sound path together with the Ayazi changed so much in the final sound of the system, that there was no option, than to devote a separate test to it. So if you are interested, what was the direction the sound, which was already brilliant, moved to, please read on.





When we are talking about a dedicated device from one product line, then you should not be surprised, that a similar chassis to the DAC was utilized. This is a medium sized, rectangular shape made from aluminum, finished in black, with a slightly thicker, brushed fascia. This front, due to the quite static nature of the actions performed by the unit, carries only the company logo, milled unit name and three LEDs indicating the status of the device: Power, Lock and Host. Looking at the back panel we are also not dazzled with over the top glitter, we have there only an USB input and output, an IEC power socket and two dip switches – one for switching the 5V USB power on and off, and the main power switch. And this is all what you can find on the tested unit with regard to application. Too little? Absolutely not, as the device was designed around the principle of minimizing all elements, that could negatively influence the sound, and often are just superfluous. And in my opinion, the confirmation, that this approach works, you can find in the paragraphs below. Are you interested? If yes, then I would like you to be invited to read about the main dish called “Face to face with the modest Greek”.

When someone claims, and especially when that someone is the manufacturer, that his device not only undisputable, but also brilliantly improves something, I am sceptical about that from the start. Yes, based on many years of experience, I allow such things to happen, but most of the time, those turn out not be a gigantic step forward, but merely a cosmetic correction of the results. Fortunately, tests like the one today, are here to verify such situations. And that not to negate what the manufacturers claim, but to verify the level of change, possibly neutrally. However you look at that, blatant cheating of the clients is quite rare nowadays, so after positive perception of one product of a brand we often take another from the same brand without any prejudice. In this case it would be the USB signal regenerator. And the result of this approach? Well, in this case very positive. And not on the verge of human perception, but with a very solid influence on palpability and presence of the sound.

After plugging in the 3R Master in the signal path, the music somehow got alive. Yes, yes, alive, because compared to this version, the previous one looked like the DAC was on muscle relaxant. Instantly everything go livelier. From a stronger and better controlled bass, through a juicy, and at the same time more resolving midrange, to the vital treble all notes were absolutely joyful. And it did not matter, if I played the, mentioned during the test of the **Ideon Ayazi**, Japanese edition of the “Marriage of Figaro” under Teodor Currentzis, or the hard rock sounds of Antimatter “**Black Market Enlightenment**”, the sound was nicely upped. In a very thoughtful way, as it was not pumped up, but everything I perceived as nice, but yet still slightly averaged, due to the thicker drawing of the scenic events, plasticity, here, besides working towards a darker background, everything else was converted in pure energy. Interestingly, the whole came together, but did not move its aesthetics towards any kind of obtrusive overinterpretation. The events playing out in my room were consistently with a good package of body and transparency, were at one hand, already at low volume levels, offering more information, on the other, you could turn up the volume much more than before, without deterioration of the sound. I caught myself doing that quite a few times, so I absolutely needed to mention this. I know, that for most of you, due to where you are living, and with that I mean your neighbours, this first aspect is probably much more important, but for me, with the whole aspect of having more information when playing at levels only slightly higher than the ambient noise, control and not distorting the sound when going at high levels and with a truly demanding genre regarding this, like rock. This is when you truly can see, if the system is good. Most of audio toys can sound well quietly, but when the volume is brought up, then doing the same without any artifacts painful for our ears is much more difficult. Summarizing the description above, one thing is certain. The regenerator absolutely clearly improved the sound in both aspects, as when it corrected the edges of the sounds, their previous slight blur was converted in pure energy, and this again, translated into a good insight into the recording and elimination of any understatements in terms the beginning and ending of the individual sounds. As a response to those actions, opera became more refined, and due to that more palpable, while any musical rebellion much more fiery. And all backed with a well-defined balance of weight, attack of the signal and breath in the presentation. For me this is an evident confirmation, that the manufacturer did not try to deceive us with his brochures, but was absolutely sure, of what he was doing. It was not about any change of key, thinning or colouring of the sound, but showing it in a clean and clear way, for as far as budget allows. For me this was a very nice way to confirm the results suggested by the distributor.

Concluding the test, I hope, that from my review you can see clearly, that in this case, we deal with something not only very interesting, but even indispensable in any sound path made to play files. Those were absolutely no hearing delusions, but a very clear progress of sound quality proposed by the Greek. And, what is most important, the improvement was audible in each and every aspect. This is why, when you are listening to music by streaming the zeros and ones through the USB port, you should at least invite the Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star home for testing, however with the caveat, that this might become a much longer stay. Even more, if you like music, and you would like to live it in the highest quality possible, I do not imagine, you would not try it out. But if you pass on it, you will lose a lot, for sure.

Jacek Pazio

System used in this test:

Source:

- transport: CEC TL 0 3.0
- streamer: Melco N1A/2EX + switch Silent Angel Bonn N8
- DAC: dCS Vivaldi DAC 2.0
- Master clock: Mutec REF 10 SE-120
- reclocker: Mutec MC-3+USB
- Shunyata Research Omega Clock
- Shunyata Sigma V2 NR
- Preamplifier: Robert Koda Takumi K-15
- Power amplifier: Gryphon Audio Mephisto Stereo

- Loudspeakers: Dynaudio Consequence Ultimate Edition, Gryphon Trident II, Gauder Akustik Berlina RC-11 Black Edition
- Speaker Cables: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond
- IC RCA: Hijiri Million „Kiwami”, Vermouth Audio Reference
- IC XLR: Tellurium Q Silver Diamond, Hijiri Milion „Kiwami”
- Digital IC: Hijiri HDG-X Milion
- Power cables: Hijiri Takumi Maestro, Furutech NanoFlux NCF, Furutech DPS-4.1 + FI-E50 NCF(R)/ FI-50(R), Hijiri Nagomi, Vermouth Audio Reference Power Cord, Acrolink 8N-PC8100 Performante
- Table: SOLID BASE VI
- Accessories: Harmonix TU 505EX MK II, Stillpoints ULTRA SS, Stillpoints ULTRA MINI, antivibration platform by SOLID TECH, Harmonix AC Enacom Improved for 100-240V, Harmonix Room Tuning Mini Disk RFA-80i
- Power distribution board: POWER BASE HIGH END
- Acoustic treatments by Artnovion

Analog stage:

Drive: Clearaudio Concept

Cartridge: Essence MC

Step-up: Thrax Trajan

Phonostage: Sensor 2 mk II

Polish distributor: [Audio Atelier](#)

Manufacturer: [Ideon Audio](#)

Prices: 3500 € Silver, 3600€ Black

Specifications

Dimensions (W X H X D): 290 x 170 x 80 mm

Link do tekstu: [Ideon Audio 3R Master Time Black Star English ver.](#)