

# The Trichord Delphini Mk2 Phono Pre-amplifier and Never Connected Power Supply

by Dave Davies

As a long time user of a much loved Michell ISO/Hera it was only the arrival of the highly affordable Trichord Dino that had jolted me out of my vinyl complacency. This unlike similarly priced contenders I'd tried offered when coupled with the larger power supply, many of the qualities of the ISO (in the full-bodied midrange in particular) along with much improved speed, detail and bass precision. The Dino has stayed in my system, with a short-lived detour to a Clearaudio, since I purchased it following my review in 2001. At that time I'd also sampled its bigger brother the Trichord Delphini and had been mightily unimpressed since its younger sibling beat it hands down in just about every area of performance.

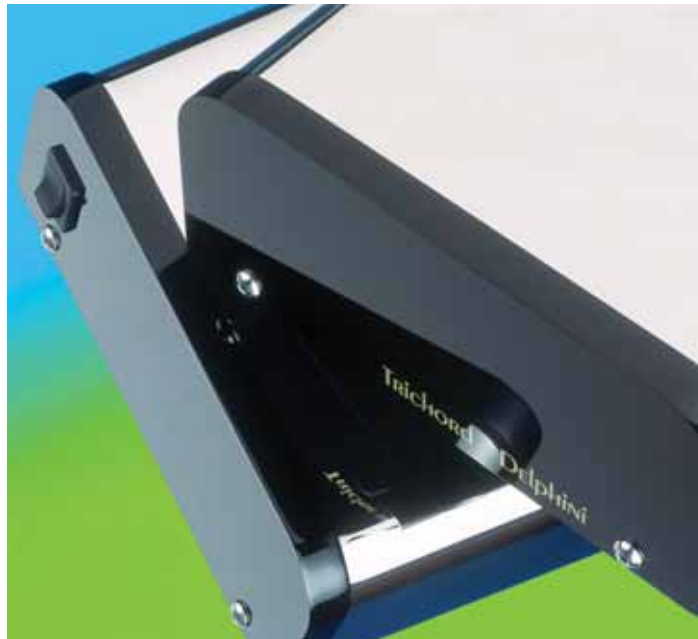
Now in its Mk 2 guise, the Delphini is outwardly identical to the Mk 1 but for a blue LED shining through the front panel rather than the green of the original model. However, whilst it sports the same polished steel casing and dark acrylic front panels, the interior of the latest Delphini reflects a total re-design. The most obvious change is that like its little brother the Dino, it now features fully user configurable switching (via tiny dip switches beneath the cover), allowing simple changing of load and gain settings, allowing it to work to its optimum with either moving coil or moving magnet cartridges. High performance ultra low impedance,

low noise wide band voltage regulators are also a feature of the Mk 2. The new unit complete with the chunky matching PSU retails at just under £1,000.

So how did it sound? Directly replacing the Dino via my 'Orbe-d' Gyro/Mission Mechanic & Clearaudio

Delphini were brought to the fore. The layering of the multi-tracked vocals, the attack and drive of the percussion were superbly caught, blowing the cobwebs off what could so easily have become yet another outing of a demo track cliché. The 12" single of Martin

Stephenson's 'Wholly Humble Heart' features a lovely version of 'Get Get Gone'. Here the Delphini demonstrated its ability to convey the joy of this performance from the spoken Geordie interjections, the neat slide guitar fills to the foot stomping beat. This was so much closer to the feel of live music when compared to the Dino, the musicians taking



up a tangible presence between the speakers. Signature (via a Michell Orca and a pair of Stereo Alecto's to AudioPlan Kontrast 111i's), the Mk2 immediately stomped on any lingering negative memories of its original incarnation. 'Some People's Lives' from Janis Ian's *Breaking Silence*, which had sounded fine through the Dino, snapped into much sharper focus with a more expansive soundstage. Her voice gained in tangibility and expression, the piano became more three-dimensional. On the title track the increased resolution and speed of the

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'Way Out Basie' from the Analogue Production pressing of *Farmers Market Barbeque* brought the clout of a superb big band to the living room. With no sense of constraint to the many crescendos, the sly blocked chords of Basie's piano and Freddie Green's guitar held true beneath the storm raging around them. This superb album can, in the wrong hands sound a little strident (via my old ISO for one), but not ▶

▶ here. The muted horns in 'St Louis Blues' were just more real, and with the stage spread deeper and wider than the Dino could manage, the Delphini demonstrates that vinyl still holds the edge in its ability to create a believable,

### The Never-Connected Power Supply

Shortly after completing this piece, Graham of Trichord contacted me to tell me about a 'must-try' upgrade option – the new 'Never-Connected'

from load-generated noise.

Given that my system enjoys a fair degree of attention to mains quality c/o the excellent Russ Andrews Purifier block and Super Purifier, I was a little sceptical of



three-dimensional performance.

I'm still digging out old favourites and staying up far too late for the good of my day job. From Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, various Richard Thompson albums, Little Feat, Charlie Mingus, David Lindley's *El Rayo Live*, hell, even some much treasured old Bonzo Dog albums, I've found new things to enjoy in each and every one. The Delphini successfully combines pace, detail, subtlety and power in a highly affordable package. In its new incarnation it's finally a very worthy big brother to the Dino and given its combination of performance, superb build quality and good looks, it is a must for any vinyl lovers shortlist, and has already made it to the top of mine.

power supply. This supply distributed by Trichord, was developed over two years by Fenson Ltd and is aimed to do just what it says on the tin. Equipment is never connected directly to the mains, providing total isolation from mains borne noise and interference and delivering substantial improvements in sound quality. The supply sits in place of the existing bridge rectifier and power supply, isolating the equipment from the existing supply (and from the relatively noisy rectifier diodes most supplies rely on) resulting in clean, low-noise D.C. power. The Never-Connected is also claimed to provide 'total reverse isolation' of the incoming A.C. feed

the claimed results from the Never-Connected upgrade. I was wrong. The effect of this seemingly simple improvement to the Delphini turned an already outstanding phono stage into something substantially better. The effect was not subtle. Even from cold – the Never-Connected was supplied installed in a brand new Delphini supply - the effect was of an increase in musicality: pacing was markedly improved, staging gained a layer of depth, but most importantly the music was simply more real and more enjoyable. The upgrade also added a degree more resolution, subtle aspects of performance were more readily noticeable: the sound of fingers ▶

► on guitar strings, the delicate inflections of each musicians technique, the characteristics of each instrument in the mix. In comparison with the standard Delphini, the effect at first was of a marginally more lightweight performance but it takes no more than a few notes to establish that that's simply because there's so much more detail being conveyed. Downsides? None really, there is slightly more background hiss at high volumes when compared to the standard Delphini, but this is no problem in practice since it in no way interferes with the music. The increased resolution will also mercilessly expose shortcomings in turntables set-up, but that's no bad thing either. I also briefly tried the upgraded power supply with my Michell Orca pre-amp (it uses exactly the same supply as the Delphini), and whilst the effect was not quite so dramatic as with the phono stage, this too showed worthwhile improvements in the same areas.

I have a much-loved Copland 289, a bulky, big, but rather beautiful beast. Its primary strength has been in its delivery of a warm, big-hearted sound much in keeping with its looks. (a 'Ben Webster' when compared to the 'Jan Garbarek' of many CD players). Given the size of the casing, there had to be plenty of space in there to try out a Never-Connected supply, so I duly gave Graham a call and arranged to ship the player to him. Within a few days the job was done and the player returned.

I hooked it up with a little trepidation – had I unwittingly robbed the Copland of its essential character? At least I had the comfort of knowing that the job could be reversed if I didn't like the results. I needn't have worried, in fact the use of the Never Connected has wrought an even bigger improvement in the Copland

than with my pre and 'phono stages.

It still has lost none of its presence and warmth but has now gained hugely in musicality. Timing is more accurate, and it's gained in speed too, with dynamics like rim-shots much more, well, dynamic. Imagery is also more precise, on the excellent Paul Motion CD *On Broadway Vol. 1* (JMT edition 919 029-2), it's much easier to position the individual elements of his drum kit, and the sense of Joe Lovano's fingers on the keys of his tenor, and of Bill Frisell's fingers on strings and fret as he powers out his characteristic sustained notes making it all more tangible and human. This is not to imply that the result is a much more squeaky-clean 'hi-fi' performance. Far from it; Sonny Rollin's tenor has never sounded more in my room and three-dimensional from a CD source, nor has acoustic bass sounded so tangible and full-bodied. Moloko's *Time is Now* has gained a new urgency, and Richard Thompson's *Old Kit Bag* (Cooking

Vinyl), sounds markedly more like his excellent band's live performances of these songs.

The effect of all this is simple: The player is much more musical and therefore more involving, in short, the Never Connected has made a good CD player even better. And that's with just one supply powering the 5V digital stage. In theory, Graham could fit a multiplicity of supplies powering each of the voltage rails in the CD player including the analogue stages...Now there's a thought!

The Never-Connected upgrade adds £275 to the cost of a new Delphini bringing it to £1270 in total and for existing users it's available as a \$295 upgrade. Fitting to the Copland cost £175 (including VAT but excluding carriage). In my opinion, in both cases this is a bargain and a quick 'pre and post' demonstration should be enough to convince anyone of the merits. The Davies cheque book has already felt the impact. ➤+

#### Specifications Delphini Phono Amplifier

Output impedance:	33ohms
MC input capacitance:	2nF
MC input impedances: (all link selectable)	33ohms resistive 100ohms resistive 330 ohms resistive 1K resistive 47K all links open
Selectable gains (all link selectable)	54dB@1KHz - 1K setting 62.5dB@1KHz - 2K49 setting 68.5dB@1KHz - 5K1 setting 70dB@1KHz = 5K9 setting
Dimensions (WxHxD):	160 x 65 x 240mm per box

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