

Mystery Cream



PHOTO 1: This lunchbox contains the remedy for your ailing discs.

A small silver lunchbox appeared in my office one day, probably unpacked by Mike, our diligent and efficient shipper. I finally opened it out of curiosity and discovered packs of

white, soft cloths, another pack of firmer squares of white fiber, and a plastic container of white liquid that looked like Elmer's glue. Folded over the contents was a sheet with the message "ATTEN-

TION!!" Safety warning. Caution, sharp object with lots of exclamation points.

Under that was an instruction sheet which revealed that a kit for improving the sound of CDs and DVDs was spread over my desk. No details about cost seemed to be included and at the time I could not think of any of my discs which were misbehaving. So I put the kit back in its neat box and set it aside.

Months later (my apologies to the manufacturer) I was attempting to install a Microsoft application from two DVDs. Frustratingly, the installation went well until about a third of the way into the program. Then that nasty halt, and hopeful waiting. So I brought the kit home and read the instructions. Jena Technologies is the maker of this Esoteric 3D-X, which they describe as a CD-SACD-DVD Optical Enhancer. The contents of the box they describe as Esoteric 3DX cream, non-latex (hypoallergenic) applicator sponges and lint-free, optical quality polishing pads.

It turns out that what I had was their mid-size kit. It includes plenty of materials to treat quite a few discs. The instructions advise advance washing of discs that are obviously dirty or have fingerprints on them. The treatment is a very thin application of 3D-X with the sponge, which is a firm block of material which does a good job of applying the cream. Leave this coating on for five to ten minutes. Then use one of the lint-free pads to "remove" the cream by buffing. The manufacturer implies that a coating which enhances the performance of the disc remains. They suggest that the response of the disc will be improved by this treatment.

Given the number of "improvement" offerings there are in the hi-fi world, I was frankly doubtful about such a procedure. Why wouldn't a thin layer of cream on a disc degrade performance? However, with a practical problem of a disc that was not functioning, I thought "why not give it a try?"

Jena Labs do not claim that their product can "fix" discs. They imply that a treated disc will sound better after treatment. "Enhance" is their word for the results of treatment.

I treated my malfunctioning disc once, carefully following the instructions. I didn't wash it first because it did not

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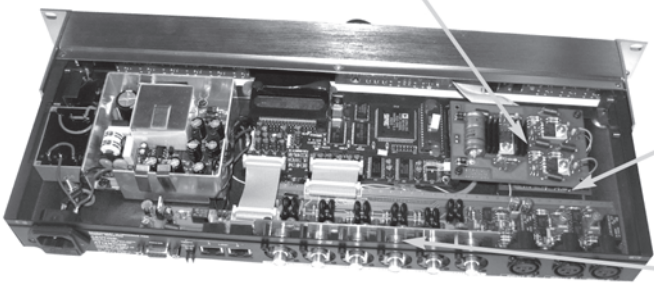


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seem dirty, nor were there fingerprints on it that I could see. However, when I inserted the disc, the program loaded without any hesitations. I was pleased as well as surprised.

In the meantime I remembered that a few years back I bought a Nimbus recording of Schubert's which hangs up about a third of the way through the first side of a 2-disc set. Nimbus is an excellent company. I am a delighted owner of a number of their products. They record routinely in Ambisonic format, which gives excellent results with The Quadpod (Audio Amateur 1971 series). On replaying the Schubert set, however, it refused to skip, stop, or misbehave at all.

I have two copies of a Decca disc with Ernest Ansermet and the Suisse Romande Orchestra accompanying four vocal works of French composers sung by Reginé Crespin. I treated one of these and played the first track of both, the delicious Berlioz Nuits d'Ete. I must report I heard no difference. But then despite my excellent equipment (Adcom preamp, Pass amps, and D'Appolito SEAS Thor speakers), my ears have become ancient somehow and therefore this is likely an unreliable result.

The less expensive Jena kit is available for \$40 plus postage from Old Colony (PO Box 876, Peterborough, NH 03458, 603-924-9464, custserv@audioXpress.com). If others of you are adventurous enough to do tests, and report on them, I'll be happy to publish your opinions.—
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