

The Hifi Lounge New High end Room

Review by Lawrie Newton

Paul has waited patiently for the arrival of the **DeVore FIDELITY O/Reference** speaker system, and due to other commitments had to wait even longer to set them up. During that time I'm sure the many configurations (source, amplification, cabling and presentation) that had gone through his mind had to be discarded once he had unpacked the boxes and saw the O/Reference in all their glory.

The obvious digital source had to be the **dCS Varese music system**. And so it was that the Varese was chosen as the digital front end plus the **Antipodes Oladra** Server/Player.

Likewise the analogue front end, at the time of my visit it was **SME Mk2 Synergy Turntable**, but this has recently been replaced with the **SME 30/12** with an **Audio Research Reference 10** phono stage.

For amplification, from a very select shortlist, the **Trafomatic Audio Elysium single ended mono amps and Tara 30A Preamp** took up residence.

The complete system is intended to be a permanent high end reference installation available to audition by appointment.

Wednesday March 12th 2025 – date of review

At the time of my visit the system had been run in well, cabling though is a work in progress.

The sense of excitement I felt driving down to Biggleswade from where I live near Ashby was intense. On arrival a couple were listening to the system so I was able to relax talking with Billy, Paul being involved in installs all day. After about 20 minutes I set myself up in the Reference Room, familiarised myself with the equipment and started listening, via the Varese/Qobuz.

Music was what I heard. Pure and simple. For nearly four hours I sat immersed in music, be it live, studio, rock, soul, folk, country, house and classical, mesmerised and seduced by the experience.

The system is capable of bringing old and new favourite tracks to life, a life that I thought I knew before listening via this reference system. After an hour or so I stopped choosing tracks that were hi-res, why, because I was not concerned about red book or hi-res transcriptions on Qobuz, but to the music not to the quality of the source.

The system displayed an effortless ability with music passages moving from soft to loud, a singer almost whispering to being forceful and intense.

The delivery was such, that it was the music that I was listening to and not the system, new insights into tracks I knew enhancing the musical pleasure.

Throughout my listening I was never aware of the speakers. They disappeared. Leaving a huge palette of captivating performers allowing me to enjoy and become engaged in their performance.

Emotion and immersion were the words that I kept writing down. I listened to many tracks. For example, lyrics I knew well such as those in the Jackson Browne classic *In The Shape of a Heart*, and Pearl Jam's *Just Breathe* I now understood better. The feelings of loss and regret in the voices of Browne and Vedder were tangible and heart felt. I was immersed in the sound, relaxed and involved.

Rhythms were totally irresistible; I could not stop my foot tapping and smiling at my involvement on for example Lee Ritenour's live version of *Papa Was a Rolling Stone*.

The system will change as the cabling selections and management are fine tuned. Such are the vast attributes of Varese, Elysium and the DeVore O/Reference. But wow, the music I heard today was a revelation, reminding me of the first time the bandages came off my eye after my cataract operation and I could see the world at it's best.

Some photos taken on the day

