



Cleansing agent

Lee Dunkley prepares to clean up his LP collection with this ultrasonic wonder, which promises to rejuvenate vinyl old and new

We've often discussed the benefits a thorough wet clean can bring to those coveted LPs in your collection that have been well played over the years and are in need of a refresh or secondhand purchases that just need a bit of TLC to sound their best, but few people realise the benefits it can bring to newly pressed records too. As part of the production process, residues such as mould-release agents can often be left behind embedded in the grooves of newly pressed vinyl. Equally, grime can quickly build up on precious LPs of even the most fastidious record collector with traces of dust and dirt retained inside the sleeve that can

contaminate a disc every time you slip it back inside. With several wet cleaning products already on the market, many look like adapted turntables complete with rotating platter, wet clean applicator arm and some kind of suction system to remove the dirt along with the moisture and dry off the record once the cleaning process is complete. With these machines, to clean the opposite side of a record users often need to flip the vinyl over and start the entire process all over again.

The curiously named Degritter isn't like that. Developed with the help of online crowd funding by a young team of vinyl enthusiasts and engineers based in Estonia, the new

company has been fine tuning its record cleaning machine since 2017, and it goes about the business of cleaning up records in a refreshingly different way.

Lacking a specific model name for now – except the aforementioned Degritter monicker – this inaugural record cleaning machine looks like a large, single-slot toaster. The graceful curves of the wraparound brushed alloy casing afford it an elegance that sees me want to keep it out on display and the emblazoned branding on the front in what appears to be an achingly retro font is eye catching in a way I really like – rarely has a record cleaning machine looked so cool.

First impressions after unpacking the unit from its shipping crate are of a product that is well thought out and nicely put together. With around half the footprint of a regular-sized turntable, it sits on my hi-fi rack with room to spare and is conveniently close to my deck to enable me to quickly playback and hear the results. What becomes clear during set up is the remarkable attention to detail that this young company has lavished on every area of the product's manufacture process, from the robust packaging to the feel and finish of the

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Degritter
ORIGIN
Estonia
TYPE
Automatic record cleaning machine
WEIGHT
9kg
DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
370 x 280 x 210mm
FEATURES
• 120kHz ultrasonic cleaning process
• Four customisable cleaning programs
• Progress screen
DISTRIBUTOR
Degritter
TELEPHONE
00372 5884 8839
WEBSITE
degritter.com

The sound is more focused and there's a significant decrease in surface noise

unit and the impressively informative instruction manual that demonstrates just how seriously the Degritter team takes the business of cleaning records.

The two rotary controls on the front provide navigation to a surprisingly slick menu system displayed on the circular screen above that offers a choice of three automated cleaning programs: Quick, Medium and Heavy. Configuration settings and software info are selected via the control on the right, while drying times are chosen using the left control. At the back there's a removable water tank with 1.4-litre capacity, a mains IEC power inlet, on/off power switch and SD card slot for future software updates – version 2.2.0v8 is the latest. A replaceable open cell foam filter is located on the right side of the unit to collect dirt particles removed during the cleaning process. Spare filters come supplied.

Unlike other wet cleaning machines we've seen, the Degritter is fully automatic and adopts the same ultrasonic cleaning techniques utilised



in the semi-conductor industry where surfaces need to be pristine on a molecular level. Using 120kHz high-frequency pressure with a 300W amplifier to create tiny bubbles in a phenomenon called cavitation that releases energy as heat and miniscule strong water jets, the technique claims to be able to clean down to a microscopic level.

Cleaning quality

Out of the box, the cleaning machine accommodates 12in records, but 10in and 7in adapters are available directly from the company website for around £50. As someone who values their vinyl collection, posting an LP for the first time through the Degritter's rubberised loading slot feels a little odd given that at this stage of the review, I have no idea of the cleaning process and there's no clue as to what's inside the unit and the potential for scratching my vinyl.

I needn't have worried, but I play it safe and select a well-worn version of

Yazoo's *Upstairs At Eric's* as I already own a second copy as a Mobile Fidelity pressing in my collection. The earlier album is plagued by surface noise that's not evident on the Mobile Fidelity version, so I am keen to hear the effect a wet clean has on it.

As I carefully insert the LP halfway into the slot, the bottom edge rests on what feels like a set of rollers that carefully rotate the record in a clockwise direction throughout the cleaning process without touching the playing surface. Degritter recommends using impurity-free distilled water. The removable 1.4-litre reservoir at the back of the machine aids filling and with it topped up for the first time from a new batch of distilled water purchased online, it's recommended that the machine goes through its 'degas' program to rid any excessive gas from the water before the ultrasonic cleaning process for the best results.

With some drops of cleaning fluid added to the water to aid cleaning, I opt for the Quick program and press



Priced at £1,375, Clearaudio's Smart Matrix Silent record cleaner (HFC 453) is the closest rival to the Degritter that we've seen recently. Despite the name it's not silent in use, although it is one of the quietest models around. It spruces up vinyl to a high standard, but unlike the Degritter it's not fully automated and only cleans one side at a time. You'll also need to factor in an extra £125 for the dustcover.

The chamber surrounding the playing surface fills with the distilled water and the record slowly rotates as the ultrasonic cleaning process takes place. The status display counts down the remaining cleaning time followed by the desired drying time that's set separately (up to 20 fan speeds can be selected).

Even after the machine's shortest clean, I am left with a shiny piece of vinyl that looks to be rejuvenated after removing years of dirt and grease from careless fingerprints while avoiding any moisture contamination on the record label itself. The disc looks so pristine, I play it immediately to hear the result and there's no doubt the sound is brighter and more focused and there's a significant decrease in surface noise.

Conclusion

The Degritter automatic record cleaning machine does a remarkably thorough job and is one of the most sophisticated models we've seen. It's a great addition to any vinyl collection and only the slightly high price counts against it ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

CLEANING QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Fully automated cleaning; functionality; nice styling
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Fan noise; high price
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A convenient and highly effective record cleaner that will rejuvenate any record collection
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

