



**A SOUND EXPERIENCE NEWSLETTER 12 FOR 2008: 27 DECEMBER 2008**

This is the twelfth newsletter for 2008, issued each month. Read more about:

- ' Getting it right at the beginning of the chain - purchasing decent software
- ' Delivery policy for 2009
- ' Return policy for 2009
- ' Supplying dealers
- ' A Sound Experience in 2009
- ' Looking back to 2008

**GETTING IT RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CHAIN**

So, you have spent a small fortune on your hi-fi system but things just do not seem to sound right. All the tweaking in the world is not going to improve anything. Go back to the source of it all - the software you purchase. Now why would we spend thousands of rands driving to dealers; evaluating systems; having them installed at great cost and then purchase CDs along with toilet paper and groceries at the local supermarket, or from some music store? Yet this is what many people do. Your system is only going to produce results to the level that you feed it. The GIGO principle applies - garbage in, garbage out.







The solution is to hunt down decent software. With the vinyl revival a few years ago, it was clear that we would never again have “commercial” vs “audiophile” pressings and that everything pressed on the black stuff would be top notch. Reality has proven otherwise though and I have come across some problem pressings and just this weekend had to sort out two glitches. One had to do with what was obviously a handling error while inserting a record in the sleeve, which damaged the surface beyond repair. The other was a typical case of a worn stamper with resulting below standard pressing. None of these is expected to happen when one spends over R300.00 for a piece of treasured plastic.




Fortunately though there are exceptions and many companies are now supplying top notch vinyl (and other formats). Four of these are my favourite manufacturers, Stockfish Records, The Naim Label, Groovenote Records and Foné Records. However, these come at great cost. Below is information on some new releases by some of these manufacturers.

**STOCKFISCH**

Stockfish Records in Germany is known for excellent mastering, top notch in-house artists and the resulting performances, in whichever format you choose, will blow you away. The following items are either available now; will be ordered in the first week of January or are being released at the end of January 2009:



	<p><b>New release:</b> Canadian outfit, The Paperboys, visited the Stockfish studios earlier this year and the result was “The Paperboys, Live at Stockfish Studios”. A unique blend of folk, pop, Irish music and a bit of light jazz makes for great listening. Stockfish decided to release this album on both a 180 gram vinyl (R450.00) and a hybrid SACD/CD (R290.00). Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
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	<p>If you like jazz / swing, then the Bassface Trio's "Tribute to Cole Porter" should be part of your collection. The Cole Porter album is available as a single 180 gram pressing (R450.00) and hybrid SACD (R290.00). The recording is top notch, no matter which format you prefer.</p> <p>Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p>The Bassface Swing Trio earlier in 2007 released "Plays Gershwin" and Stockfisch released this as a 2000 copy limited edition, with hybrid SACD included. This is a full analogue recording and the 180 gram pressing is a gem. The limited edition retails for R895.00 (Vinyl, CD, SACD included). The hybrid CD/SACD retails for R290.00.</p> <p>Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p>One of the best selling Stockfisch vinyl albums is the "Vinyl Collection" which spans the very impressive Stockfisch catalogue. The music contained on this album is equally impressive. Retail price is R380.00.</p> <p>Three copies are available as on 15 December, in time for Christmas and new stock will arrive mid-January 2009.</p>
	<p>Nothing can be said of the Sara K, Water Falls album that has not already been said. Spread over four sides, this is probably the best value for money you can get and the voice is a gem. The retail price is R450.00 for a 2LP set. The equally impressive CD version retails for R230.00. As on 15 December 2008 four copies are available on CD.</p> <p>Orders are being taken now for a mid-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p>David Roth is an American guitarist / vocalist and once Stockfisch heard him, they immediately signed him for a recording session. "Pearl Diver" was released on vinyl and followed up with "More Pearls" on CD. The LP retails for R380.00, the CD for R230.00.</p> <p>Three copies are available as on 15 December (on both CD and vinyl), in time for Christmas and new stock will arrive end-January 2009.</p>
	<p><b>New release:</b> Gergely Bogányi is regarded as one of the most exceptional pianists of our time. His brilliant technique and deeply expressed artistic interpretation make him an outstanding performer. He was so affected by the recent piano-recordings from the Stockfisch studios, that he decided spontaneously, to record all of the 21 Nocturnes by Frédéric Chopin within a few hours - amazing! This recording is released as a double SACD/CD hybrid. The Direct-Cut DSD layers feature the pure sound of the Fazioli 308 grand piano. The retail price is R390.00. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>

	<p><b>New release:</b> Once more you can listen to Stockfisch-Studio's new Fazioli piano on a SACD. Patrick O'Byrne, internationally renowned pianist and professor of piano in Bremen, recorded famous piano pieces from Maurice Ravel in Northeim. "Miroirs" and "Gaspard de la nuit" belong to the most difficult pieces written for piano. The retail price is R290.00. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p>Sara K. was invited by the German radio station MDR to play a radio concert in Leipzig, the city in Saxonia, where JS Bach lived and worked. On November 8, 2007 she performed a convincing solo concert, which Günter Pauler had been asked to record for broadcast. As everybody was so happy with this performance, Stockfisch-Records decided to release this concert on CD: Sara K. - Solo Live: 60 minutes, 14 tracks, Sara's voice and her four string guitar! This item is currently in stock and retails for R230.00.</p>
	<p>Stockfisch offered us another audiophile experiment when they transferred their high resolution stereo mix sound files of the SACD "Hell or high water" to the JVC Studios in Yokohama. Renowned sound engineer Kotetsu mastered a XRCD24 based on this material. This item is now available and offers an interesting comparison between the ultimate in high resolution formats: SACD and XRCD. The item is currently in stock and retails for R380.00. It is worth every cent, especially for those who do not have SACD players or do not prefer the SACD decoding.</p>

**GROOVENOTE RECORDS**

After I had purchased Jacinta's "Lush Life" on XRCD I simply had to find out more about this artist and then found Groovenote Records. Specialising in jazz and with a large catalogue of female vocal, Groovenote has proven to be a perfect hunting ground for decent music. The first shipment contains two copies each of the albums below and these are available in either LP (R390.00) or SACD format (R295.00). Prices may vary according to the exchange rates. Since this is a first order, items are limited to a first-paid-first-ordered basis.

	<p><b>Anthony Wilson and Diana Krall, Power of nine</b>, A new album by Anthony Wilson featuring the super talented and top selling jazz vocalist Diana Krall with whom Anthony has been recording and touring for the last three to four years. Krall appears on the track "Looking Back" on vocals. The material includes a mix of Wilson originals and some jazz standards. Pressed on 180-gram vinyl, this two-LP set includes eight tracks on regular 33 1/3 with a four tracks cut at 45. The album was produced by Joe Harley and recorded by Michael Ross at Oceanway in Hollywood. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p><b>Eden Atwood, This is always</b>, Eden Atwood - This Is Always: The Ballad Sessions. Produced by Joe Harley and engineered by Mike Ross, this an awesome collection of romantic ballads and other standards and features the sensational Tom Harrell on flugelhorn and trumpet and Bill Cunliffe on piano/arrangements.</p> <p>Eden Atwood has a voice that is many things - seductive, plaintive, sensitive, gifted with perfect intonation and phrasing, and entertaining. Eden Atwood is one of the best young female jazz vocalist today! This LP represents Eden's best work to date. Her music shows the influence of many classic jazz and pop singers, including Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughn, Rosemary Clooney, Julie London and Billie Holiday.</p>
<p>Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>	



**Eden Atwood, Waves**, The inviting sensitivity of singer Eden Atwood and the sensuous rhythms of Brazil make for a stirring musical marriage on Atwood's first Groove Note release *Waves: The Bossa Nova Sessions*. Atwood, who's thrilled audiences from Chicago to Shanghai with her superb vocal instrument and unbridled sense of expression, gives the music of Jobim, Ellington, Lennon-McCartney and others fresh meaning with unmatched warmth, conviction and a flirtatious touch of playfulness.

On *Waves*, Atwood is accompanied by a group of like-minded musicians including pianist, arranger and Thelonious Monk International Piano Competition winner Bill Cunliffe (whose 2001 Groove Note recording *Live At Bernie's* received unanimous praise), guitarist, bandleader and award-winning arranger Anthony Wilson, first-call bassist Darek Oles and drummer Joe LaBarbara, whose touch and superb rhythmic facility graced the trio of the late Bill Evans among many others. Saxophonist-flutist Pete Christlieb, for years the leading reed player in Los Angeles' highly competitive studio scene, rounds out the gifted combo. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.



**Jacinta, Autumn leaves**, The Groove Note Records team of Joe Harley (producer), Mike Ross (engineer) and Ying Tan (executive producer) join forces once again to orchestrate the second release from the label's first artist Jacinta. *Autumn Leaves* is a collection of songs from Johnny Mercer. "Autumn Leaves" finds Jacinta in excellent form and, once again, delivering several strong performances on many of the songs. One of the highlights of the album is the title track which finds Jacinta singing in the original French intro and first verse as well as the later Johnny Mercer English lyrics. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.






**Jacinta, Here's to Ben**, Already a tremendous figure in her native Singapore, Jacinta has been turning heads and ears in this country as well. With an outstanding singing style on par with the greats, Jacinta will enrapture you in a perpetual state of musical bliss! (We're not ones for overstatement either.) Jacinta debuts in the US. with a tribute to the legendary tenor saxophone player: Ben Webster. The songs have been specially selected to reflect this premise, i.e. they are mostly great vocal standards and/or ballads that have been recorded by Webster many times and are thus associated with his particular style and name. Some of these songs like *Stardust*, *How Long Has This Been Going On*, *Georgia* and *Our Love is Here to Stay*, *Over The Rainbow* are Webster classics. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.



**Jacinta, Lush Life**, The beautiful and talented Jacinta's new recording from Groove Note features the silky background of a full string section as well as the superb instrumental artistry of Bill Cunliffe (piano), Anthony Wilson (guitar) and Dmitri Matheny (flugelhorn) in several highlighted solos. With a listener and radio-friendly program that includes *Harlem Nocturne*, *Summertime*, *The Shadow Of Your Smile*, *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams*, *Black Coffee*, *Manha de Carnaval*, and *September Song*, this latest recording by the intimate and sensual-voiced Jacinta will be her best selling album ever. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.



**Jacinta, The girl from Bossa Nova**, Jacinta picks up the tempo in her first bossa nova session. Featuring a program of some of the most well known classics of the genre including several Jobim favourites like *So Nice*, *Desafinado*, *Dindi*, *Corcovado*, as well as less familiar tunes like *O Ganso* and *So Danco Samba*, *The Girl From Bossa Nova* is a striking change of pace for Jacinta that will enthrall all of her fans. With superb solos from tenor Harry Allen and acoustic guitar from John Pisano (ex-Diane Krall), the album is given the supreme finishing touch by the magical playing of Brazilian master percussionist P. D Costa who's recorded and performed with all the legends - Jobim, J Gilberto, Gilberto Gil, Astrid etc. His contribution truly gives the entire album it's authentic bossa nova vibe. And yes, there are a couple of classic Jacinta ballads done bossa style -- *This Masquerade* and *Dindi*. A must buy for Jacinta fans and all bossa nova lovers. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.

	<p><b>Jacinta, Jacinta is her name</b>, This tribute to the great torch songstress Julie London is a spectacular recording with outstanding sonics and performances including “Cry Me A River,” “Light My Fire,” “Willow Weep For Me,” “God Bless The Child” and “Don’t Smoke In Bed.” With Harry Allen (sax), Ron Eschete (guitar) and Larry Bunker (vibes). Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p><b>Lauren White, At last</b>, Lauren White is an extremely talented 20-year old from Texas who has been studying under the same vocal coach as Norah Jones. Lauren blends the sensuality and vulnerability of Norah Jones with the vocal range of Linda Ronstadt combined with a voice that exhibits both emotional depth as well as nuance and delicacy!</p> <p>Lauren's first album features a wide array of songs, the album opens with a Billie Holiday styled tune “My One &amp; Only”, then drops to the darker overtones of the Anthony Wilson arranged “Love For Sale”, and transitions into a swinging “Mack The Knife”. This album also includes memorable covers of popular songs like “Blue Bayou” (Roy Orbison), “Superstar” (Carpenters), and to the country influenced, “Why They Call It Falling” (Lee Ann Womack). Lauren White also displays an impressive talent for song writing with three original songs here including a retro-ish “Do You Remember”, a heartbreaking ballad “All I Do Is Cry” and an up-tempo “Brand New Love”. Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>
	<p><b>Jacinta, Best of</b>, For the first time ever, Groove Note presents a collection of the finest recordings by the incomparable Jacinta. Spanning a decade of musical output, this set is the definitive Jacinta sound.</p> <p>With a timeless voice that resonates across the world, Jacinta is quickly becoming a modern classic. Her interpretations are smooth and sensuous, ranging from ballads to bossa nova. Jacinta is able to bring poignancy to any lyric, with a delivery that is both sultry and relaxing.</p> <p>New fans and seasoned devotees alike will be amazed at the clarity of presentation on this compilation. Modern jazz has never sounded quite like Jacintha, and Jacintha has never sounded quite like this! Orders are being taken now for a beginning-January 2009 shipment.</p>

**DELIVERY POLICY FOR 2009**

Those who have purchased items from A Sound Experience before will know that I always try to get stock to clients personally where possible or otherwise use Postnet. Should I deliver personally, this is usually tied with business in your area so that I do not have to charge delivery fees. However, this is not always sustainable and delivery charges can take a huge chunk out of the profit margin, which is already very small.

As from 01 January 2009 a shipping charge of a minimum of R50.00 will be added to every order, should the item be sent via Postnet or the post office. The minimum fee will increase as the shipping weight increases. In order to ensure accurate billing for shipping, these costs may be sent with a separate invoice.

I trust that this will be accepted as not intending to rip off anyone. Of course, those who have decided to import items themselves will testify that it is often expensive and thus ordering through a supplier is still the cheaper option.

**RETURN POLICY FOR 2009**

This is a tough one. Vinyl is a delicate medium and the purchase thereof has been the centre of huge controversies with other suppliers in the past. It sometimes happens that the very best recording could have been damaged while being handled (record put into the sleeve for example) before shipping. At the end of the day humans still handle the items and damage may occur.

The process is simple: should a vinyl product be genuinely defective, I will replace the item immediately. Should I not have

another copy in stock, the client can choose something else to the same value, or pay the difference, should the selected item be more expensive. It is not always possible to refund a client and I expect client to understand and accept this. If a record is genuinely faulty, it will be returned to the supplier for replacement.

What are the problems encountered with vinyl records? In some cases there is end-of-side distortion (Mozart's Zauberflöte on Deutsche Grammophon being one title I have in stock with this problem). There is nothing I can do about this other than to warn the client about the problem. The other title, which I do not supply but know that there is a problem, is Eva Cassidy's Songbird. The sibilance on the title track at the end of Side One is a recording fault and it sounds the same on the CD version and is thus not a tracking error on the vinyl copy but rather an anomaly in the original recording process. If a vinyl record has this "defect" I will not replace it as it is part of the package.

I am often tempted to open a product before shipping it to the customer. I sell hardware on this basis - no item leaves my premises without having been opened and played in my own system. This way I ensure that whatever I supply meets my own standards. Should I feel the need to open and check a vinyl record before shipping, I will ask the customer's permission first. The chances that one gets a sealed LP in a less than perfect condition are slim, but still exist.

## **SUPPLYING DEALERS**

**Definition of a dealer:** A dealer is someone who sells and promotes products I supply, through his retail outlet.

Since he has overheads to cover, a dealer receives a discount on items purchased from me. Unfortunately there are some dealers who have no intention at all in reselling my products and instead will purchase a single item or more, use it at home for private purposes and then expect a huge discount. I quickly see which dealers are serious about supplying software on a relatively *constant* scale (I did not say that they would always supply on a *large* scale.) and these dealers can expect the discount agreed on. Other dealers who are once-off purchasers will get very little, if any, discount.

## **A SOUND EXPERIENCE IN 2009**

### **More software**

What can we expect in 2009? Firstly I would like to supply more titles from a variety of manufacturers and am negotiating with them at present. While the vinyl supporters may be a small number, they are loyal and purchase many items. The supply of high quality vinyl, CD, SACD, XRCd and selected DVD items will continue and expand.

### **More hardware**

2009 will also see me working closely with another distributor of analogue products to ensure that these are available in the Gauteng area while the supply of Rega products continues. The recent success of the P3-24 turntable should ensure that many newcomers are introduced to vinyl while the supply of decent software may just entice more people to spend money on decent titles.

### **Involving the public**

The "mini expos" or "music days" that were held in 2007 and 2008 will continue but more venues will be used. Pretoria has a large number of music lovers who purchase items from me and a music day is planned at a guest lodge in the north-east of Pretoria. If you have never attended one of these events, you have the opportunity to have a lot of fun, share a bit of your passion for music with others and get to know some new faces. Of course everything on display is also in stock and for sale, often with special discounts.

### **Collaboration with other dealers**

Working in isolation is a sure way to stay just that way - isolated. In this regard, expect close collaboration with Pretoria-based hi-fi businesses AV Cables and Valve Audio, two of my best allies in an industry often filled with some strange characters. Jeandré and Schalk are two real gentlemen and will always offer excellent advice and service, not to mention the products they supply.

### **Web site database**

By January 2008 the A Sound Experience web site, [www.asoundexperience.co.za](http://www.asoundexperience.co.za) will have a decent database to drive the search for software, where you can do the usual search, sort and filter. The database is meant to be easy to maintain so that any changes / new items / pre-orders are immediately reflected.

## LOOKING BACK TO 2008

In many ways 2008 was a tough year. The economy took a nose dive and many of us realised that our cars don't move on fumes alone. The expo was a great success for my business, despite disappointing attendance figures. I have had the support of a number of people who understand the nature of the hi-fi sector in this country. Some criticised as much as they could, but then that is their nature and I cannot change that. However, I will also not do business with these characters. For those who have supported my business, I would like to extend my best wishes for the Christmas period and for 2009.

Best regards, Andries O  
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