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Equipment Report



Nordost QRT QPoint and QRT QSource Resonance Synchronizer

Strange but True

Jacob Heilbrunn

About a year ago, I first heard the Nordost QKore system—a passive approach to grounding that proved to be extremely effective. Even though my stereo system was running off an Equitech transformer and special Cardas runs of wire to hospital-grade outlets, it turned out that the noise floor could be taken down another notch. The benefits—a silkier presentation and blacker backgrounds—were immediately audible.

To my surprise, Nordost hasn't stopped there. Nordost representative Michael Taylor indicated to me that the company was introducing a new and separate product to try and further improve playback sound. I first got a chance to hear it during an open house at a local Washington stereo emporium called JS Audio. There Taylor was demoing Nordost's new device with a passel of Audio Research equipment. He played the system for me with his device turned off and then on. I remained impassive. I got an inquiring look from Taylor. I intimated that I thought

I heard an improvement, but given that I was listening to an unfamiliar system wasn't 100 percent sure. Further listening, in my own system, was in order.

A few weeks later, Taylor showed up at my doorstep with a variety of boxes containing a QRT QPoint that is coupled to something called QRT QSource. You plug the QSource into a wall socket and run bright green DC cables from it to the QPoints, which resemble hockey pucks. The claims that Nordost advances for the QPoint are intriguing: "The QPoint Res-

onance Synchronizer emits a subtle field which manipulates all electromechanical resonances within its immediate proximity so that they resonate in unison with each other." The idea seems to be that in an individual component, parts like capacitors are vibrating. These vibrations become an inadvertent source of noise. Nordost says that the QPoint "eliminates this internal electrical noise," thereby enhancing the coherency and timing that are at the heart of an audio system.

There are two settings for the QPoint—you get to

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choose which resonances you prefer. I went with the blue setting, which is said to operate more quickly than the green one. The aim throughout is to try and lower the noise floor.

In my view, the QPoint does that. After Taylor inserted the QPoints underneath my dCS Vivaldi stack, I heard an instant improvement in musical clarity and precision. Small but significant details that had previously been obscured were now apparent. Deploying it under the Ypsilon PST-100 Mk. II preamplifier and Wilson Audio active crossover offered further, if not quite as substantial benefits.

Take a lovely but somewhat troubled

recording on the Erato label of the French harpsichordist Jean Rondeau playing Bach concertos. I don't know how it is with you, but there are some recordings that are captivating musically but aggravating sonically. This is one of them. The promise is all there: great performance and even greater music. But the orchestra, particularly its bass line, has always sounded muddy. With the introduction of the QPoints, the orchestra really snapped into place. It was like a photo that went from blurry to sharp in the blink of an eye. It was a sheer pleasure to hear the interplay between the harpsichord and orchestra on the Concerto in D minor. What a revelation!

It was also possible to discern improvements on CDs that were well recorded. On a recent CD of trumpet recordings by Matthias Hofs playing with the Bremen chamber orchestra on the Berlin Classics label, I was quite sure that the playback sounded airier and more precise. On the Telemann Concerto in D major, which is one of the more treacherous trumpet solos, I heard a pinch more air in the treble as well as improved transients. There was just a shade more pop in the explosive passages of the concerto to be heard from Hof's piccolo trumpet. These are subtle differences, but when added up they combine to produce a larger musical whole. The result is a more engaging and engrossing performance, one step closer to the real thing.

If I was sold on the QPoints, it was also intriguing to explore the capabilities of the

QSource. Thanks to the importunings of the North American dCS representative John Quick, I finally dipped a toe into the digital streaming waters by procuring a Roon Labs server. It turns out that you can jettison the flimsy wall wart that accompanies it and substitute the QSource, which in essence allows you to run the Roon off a linear power supply. This turned out to be a nifty upgrade. While I enjoyed opening the portal to a wealth of music by entering the streaming world, it never really sounded all that competitive with the dCS transport. I don't think that the QSource can completely cover the gap, but it offered a substantial improvement in image density, resolution, and hall ambience. There really was no comparison between it and the wall wart, something that was immediately apparent on a Martha Argerich recording of a live performance at the Lugano Festival or Cat Stevens' classic *Tea For the Tillerman*. Argerich's piano just sounded so much more formidable and the hall more spacious with the QSource powering the Roon.

I don't doubt that there will be more than a few skeptical glances cast at Nordost's latest offerings. When I first heard them, I tried to keep an open mind but couldn't quite suppress my skepticism. Nordost's technical explanations for these products will undoubtedly arouse controversy. After listening to them in my own system, however, I can enthusiastically attest that both the QPoint and QSource provide valuable sonic benefits in a high-end system. **tas**

Specs & Pricing

QRT QPoint

Weight: 0.9 lbs.

Dimensions: 5" x 1"

Price: \$749

QRT QSource

Weight: 6 lbs.

Dimensions: 1" x 4.75" x 2.625"
(with feet)

Price: \$2499

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