

ELEMENTAL FORCE FROM SWABIA

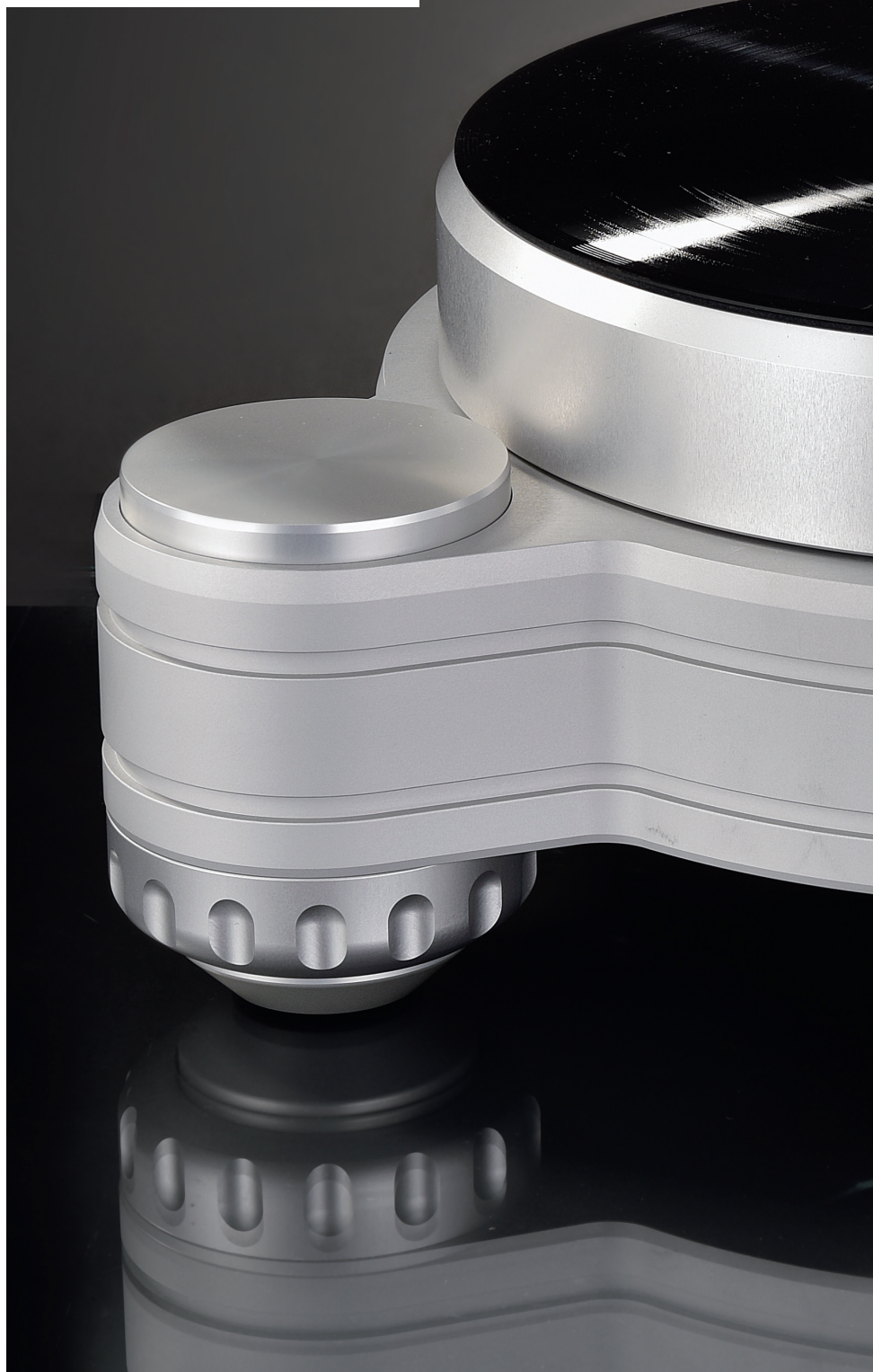
They are named after storms, look like precision machines and are made in Baden-Württemberg: the exquisite turntables from Acoustic Signature. We're testing the Typhoon Neo.

■ By Andreas Eichelsdörfer

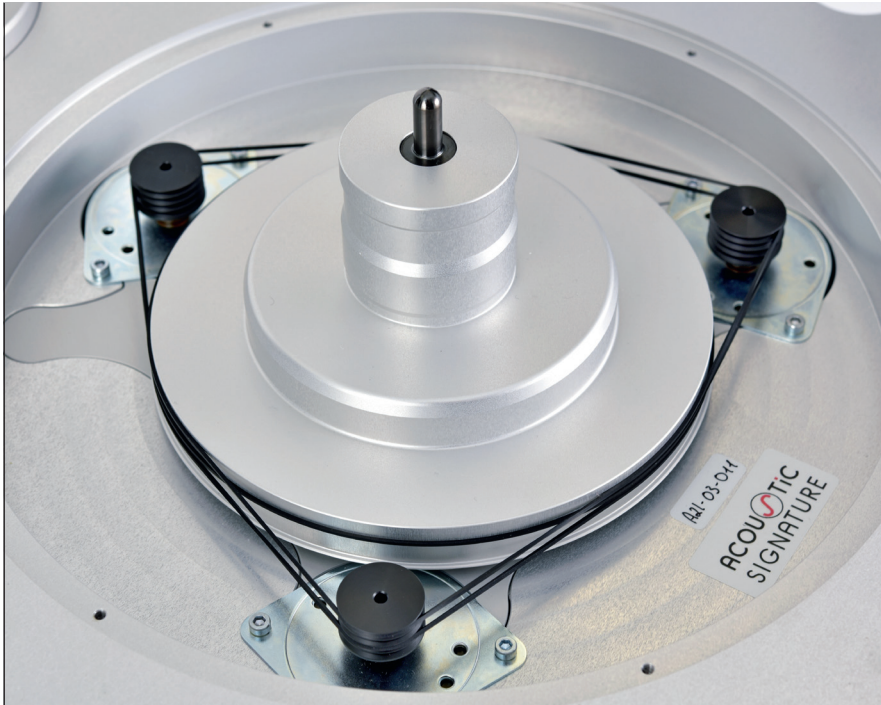
Nine drive units are comprised in the port-folio of the Swabian turntable manufacture Acoustic Signature, three of them named after cyclones: Tornado, Hurricane, and Typhoon. As terrible as these gales may be, they also thrill us by demonstrating Mother Nature's omnipotence and, when viewed from space, by revealing a unique aesthetics. This also holds true of the three mid-sized drives made by Acoustic Signature, where elemental force and aesthetics join to form a singular technical masterpiece.

Those who really want to understand the turntables from Suesen in the district of Goepfingen must see the production with their own eyes. I got a chance to visit the manufacture in the spring of 2021, you can read the report in AUDIO 5/21. Gunther Frohnhoefer, the head of Acoustic Signature, loves heavy engines. No, not motorcycles; biking is already no longer on his agenda. He's keen on milling machines and lathes, NC-controlled and ultra precise like his turntables.

But then again, the qualified communications engineer is a self-made man who has taught himself virtually everything. The onset was hard, he told us during his visit to our editorial team. Working on a lathe is not easy and will soon cause big frustration if the result doesn't







THE POWER OF THREE HEARTS: Three motors, each with a dedicated belt – every three years you'll get a free replacement – are driving the

meet the expectations. But that was long ago. Today his production enjoys such an excellent reputation that lots of manufacturers get him produce parts or even complete turntables for them. Among these are numerous high-end brands.

SERIOUS GEAR

For the test we picked the Typhoon Neo which costs 12,450 euros already bare-stripped. A generous 15-year warranty

period for the drive gives the customer plenty of investment safety. The tone-arm of choice is the Acoustic Signature TA-2000 for 2800 euros, a middleweight 9-incher from in-house production. The installed MCX3 pickup is an MC system for 1300 euros. This is a more than solid gear park for a start. Those who prefer can have two more tonearm bases mounted. Six tone-arms are available at Acoustic Signature, five of them as 9- or 12-inch variants.

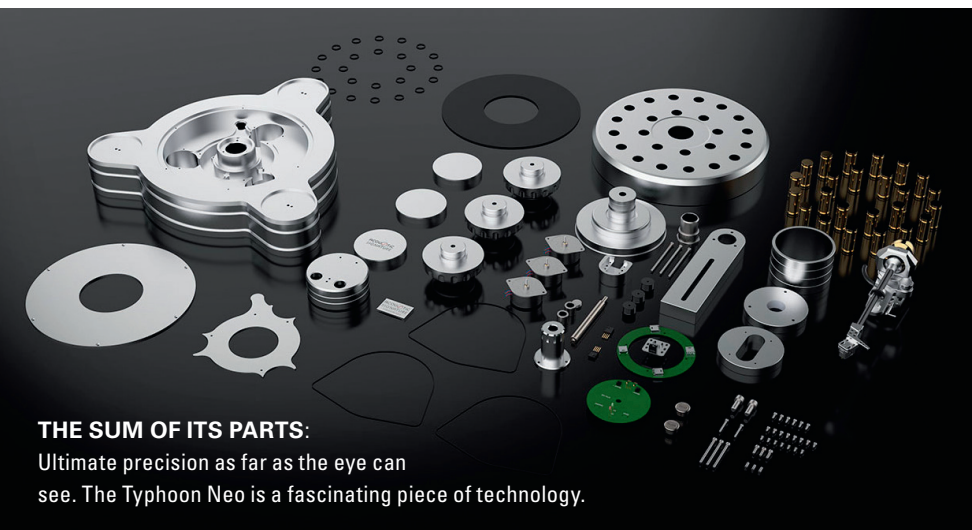


INSIDE VIEWS: Part of the bearing with two copper bushings.

The drive tips the scales at a hefty 35 kilo-grams (77 lbs). This doesn't yet call for a stress analyst, however, the rack should command adequate re-serves. The chassis is a mechanical boon for all senses. Here the eye spots clearances the automotive industry would be happy to have. The chassis rests on three massive feet which are, of course, adjustable and dampened by gel inlays. The aluminum housing based on CLD tech-nology ("Constraint Layer Damping") ensures an improved resonance behavior. The sub-plate is driven by three belts and exceptionally quiet motors.

Putting the belts into place is a hassle, but as always in life this is also true here: once you've done it, you know how it's done. Every three years Acoustic Signature sends free spare belts which should indeed be replaced then. Before putting the platter onto the sub-plate, the motor and belt duct is locked by a metal cover which is secured by six screws. This looks great and makes sure that no noises from the almost noiseless motors and belts can leak out.

The heavy platter may now be married to the drive. Embedded inside the platter are 24 gold-plated cylinders, the so-called



THE SUM OF ITS PARTS:

Ultimate precision as far as the eye can see. The Typhoon Neo is a fascinating piece of technology.

PORTRAIT

	ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE TA-2000 NEO
Distributor	AS-Distribution GmbH Phone +49 (0)7162 207970
www.	acoustic-signature.de
List price	2800 EUR
Warranty period	5 years
Model version	9" arm
Weight	545 grams (19.22 oz.)
Recommended pickup mass	4-16 grams (0.14-0.56 oz.)
Variants	9" & 12"
Special features	Audioquest phono cable



GNATIVE SWABIAN: The TA-2000 Neo tonearm is an in-house development by Acoustic Signature and also produced in Swabia, of course.

silencers. Those massive copper cylinders are given a gold coating (24 carat) and suppress any self-resonance in the platter. At first sight it may look like a press fit, but in reality two rubber bands hold the silencers in place. However, they have no direct contact with the platter. Gunther Frohnhoefer has demonstrated it during the factory tour. Striking a platter without silencers sounded like a little bell. With the silencers there was only a dry "plock" to be heard.

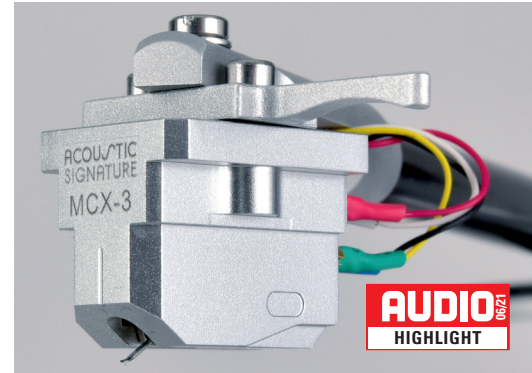
As beautiful as the silver-colored platter with the golden circles may look, it would be fatal to put the records on it directly. The right contact is provided by a black leather mat with 24 recesses so that the pretty golden cylinders won't simply disappear underneath. Both the drive and the platter are also available in black, a combination is equally possible, but let's be honest: in silver it just looks really snazzy. The motor control is housed in a little separate box. The control unit is designed as a detached, round enclosure which can be placed under the chassis so that the "On/Off" and "33/45" function keys will peek out.

Yet it can also be placed anywhere else – the connection to the control center

is made via a common network cable with RJ45 connectors. A smart idea, because that way the customer can determine the cable length himself and set up the control unit at will, for instance beside the couch. Included in the test was the Grip-S record clamp. Another aesthetical gem of German engineering art. A quarter turn is sufficient to loosen the clamp. One can also use the 750-gram Grip-S as a record stabilizer. Here we also meet again old acquaintances in the shape of five silencer modules.

9 INCHES FOR A START

With a weight of 545 grams the TA-2000 Neo from their own collection is a medium-heavy 9-inch tonearm that is also available in a 12-inch version. A stiff, well dampened dual carbon pipe, combined with a zero-play ball bearing suspension makes it the ideal partner for the Typhoon Neo. Should one ever be craving for more, the catalog of Acoustic Signature still offers upgrades aplenty. At this point I'd also like to commend visiting the newly designed company website www.acoustic-signature.de. The MCX3 pickup is a low-output MC system. Its naked diamond has a fine-line cut.



MOVING COIL: The Acoustic Signature MCX3 is a perfect match for the TA-2000 tonearm.

PORTRAIT

	ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE MCX3
Distributor	AS-Distribution GmbH Phone +49 (0)7162 207970
www.	acoustic-signature.de
List price	1350 EUR
Warranty period	2 years
Needle carrier/cut	Aluminum/Nude fine line
Tracking force/ recommended arm	23 Nm/medium-heavy
LF trackability	80 µm
HF distortions	0.09 % (left); 0.14 % (right)
Output voltage (DIN)	0.75 mV (left); 0.77 mV (right)
Impedance/Inductance	7,5 Ohm/0,008 mH
Recommended input/termination	MC/100 Ohm
Weight (w/o screws)	12.6 g (0.42 oz.)

AUDIOGRAM

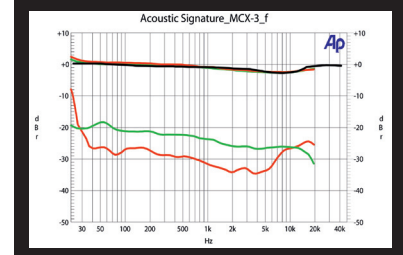
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+	very balanced and natural with a beautifully deep stage	-
Sound	100	
Features	good	
Operation	very good	
Workmanship	superb	

AUDIO SOUND SCORE 100 POINTS
PRICE/PERFORMANCE SUPERB

MEASURING LAB

The MCX3 scores with extremely low HF distortions (0.09%/0.14% L/R) as well as a high upper limit frequency. The frequency response graph shows a little presence dip, channel separation is decent over the entire bandwidth (31 dB L/R; 24 dB R/L). With just under 80 µm the trackability at 23 mN is sufficient.





PERFECT CONTROLLING: Using common network cables allows a free placement of the operating box.



PORTRAIT

ACOUC. SIGNATURE TYPHOON NEO	
Distributor	AS-Distribution GmbH Phone +49 (0)7162 207970
www.	acoustic-signature.de
List price	12450 EUR
Warranty period	15 years
Dimensions W x H x D	45 x 19 x 46 cm (17.7 x 7.5 x 18.1 in.)
Weight	35 kg (77.3 lbs)
Drive	Belt (three)
Speeds	33 & 45
Speed selector	•
Adjustable arm height	•
Height adjustable feet	•
Pitch control	•
Fully automatic/limit switching	-/-
Separate switching box	Umschaltbox extra

A MASTER OF SOUND

For the first check we put on a maxi single from the 1970s: The Salsoul Orchestra with "Salsoul 3001". A funky version of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra!" This record is an heirloom, but never before had we heard it in such a way! With serenity and power the Typhoon was building up the acoustic backdrop while showing a good feeling for the soul in this piece. The room was deep, with precise locatability. Thoroughly it was fishing the sonic information from the groove, yet without harshness, without analyse, without excessive attention to detail, and then there was also a mighty bass without booming. Only the crack-

ling noise in the lead-out groove (yes, this record is old) reminded us that it was indeed vinyl rotating just a few seconds ago.

With the "Burmeser Selection Vol. 1" a heavy 45 rpm record followed next on the platter of the Typhoon Neo. The live atmosphere on "Keith Don't Go" by fabulous US rock guitarist Nils Lofgren instantly created the goose pimples that were to be expected. This had got verve, an acoustic backdrop to dive in. From the Typhoon Neo came the pure music. What sounds so trivial, is actually the very great art which only a few can master. The Typhoon Neo is a master of sound.

AUDIOGRAM



+	Incredibly quiet nature, wonderfully unagitated, absolute elite	-	expensive
Sound	123	Features	very good
Operation	very good	Workmanship	superb

AUDIO SOUND SCORE 123 POINTS
PRICE/PERFORMANCE HIGH-END

BOTTOM LINE



Andreas Eichelsdörfer
Editor-at-Large AUDIO

The Acoustic Signature Typhoon Neo with the TA-2000 Neo and the MCX3 is an analog dream team at a large price tag of 16,600 euros. But it meets its clientele since quality of workmanship and sound properties are unique. One of the best players we've ever had for review.



FINE ADJUSTMENT: Via speed buttons the rotation speed can be optimally adjusted. By the way, there is only one RJ45 connection cable to the turntable.

MEASURING LAB

Good synchronization ($\pm 0.12\%$ weighted) and the meticulous adherence to the 33 rpm ($+0.03\%$ norm) are enabled by the fine-tuning speed buttons on the control box. The synchro tone spectrum (left) looks clean, the rumbling noise values (70 dBs/73 dBs with record / measuring coupler) are nothing to sneeze at, either, after the clever placement of all cables has minimized the motor hum interferences.

