

Spin Clean Mk 2

Record Cleaning Machine

By Rich Teer

I have a small confession to make: despite being a music lover all my life with vinyl being my medium of choice, I have never owned a record cleaning machine. The first machines I heard of—one of the Nitty Gritties if memory serves, or maybe it was the Keith Monks one—were beyond my financial means in those days, and the thought of hand washing my precious vinyl gave me the

willies (to be totally honest, it still does)! So, with the exception of a flirtation with Last Record Preserver, I have never washed my records. I am, however, extremely fastidious with them: I never touch the playing surfaces (handling the record by the label and edge only), I always keep them in anti-static sleeves, and I never lend them to anyone.

When I buy used records, I give them a thorough examination to make sure they're in good condition (or at least, visibly clean).

In the last year or so I started hearing about more affordable alternatives to the



vacuum record cleaning machines, and at last year's RMAF I met Mark Mawhinney, Spin Clean International's head honcho. Spin Clean has been making record cleaning machines since 1975; when I heard that the base package (consisting of the cleaning machine itself, a pair of brushes, a pair of rollers, two washable drying cloths, and a 4 oz bottle of cleaning fluid) retailed for a very reasonable \$80, I had to give the Spin Clean a, err, spin. A month or two later, Mawhinney sent me a package containing the complete Spin Clean Record Washer system. In addition to the base package, the complete system also comes with a 32 oz bottle of cleaning fluid, an extra pair of brushes, and five extra drying cloths. The complete system costs \$125, a saving of \$25 compared to buying the items separately.

Technical Description

The Spin Clean Record Washer is a deceptively simple contraption consisting of a bright yellow plastic washer basin and lid (as well as screaming "Look at me!", the yellow case was chosen so that dirt and debris from the records being cleaned would show up more clearly, enabling one to better judge when to change the fluid). In the base are a pair of slots for the felt cleaning brushes, and three pairs of slots for the rollers. The outermost pair of slots is used when cleaning 12" LPs and singles, the middle pair are used

when cleaning 10" records (be they 10" singles, EPs, or 78 RPM discs), and the innermost pair are used when cleaning 7" singles.

The rollers are made from plastic with a rubber ring around the centre to provide a better grip on the records being cleaned. The two brushes are covered with felt; because there are two of them, both sides of the record are cleaned simultaneously. Replacement parts and extra bottles of cleaning fluid are available from Spin Clean.

A year or two ago, the Mark 2 version of the Spin Clean was released. This review is of the Mk 2, and there are several differences between it and the original: the basin and lid are stronger and UV resistant; the rollers have been totally redesigned; the brush foam and fabric are improved; the unit has new feet; there's a new owner's manual; there are new drying cloths; and finally, the cleaning solution has been improved.

Setup and Listening

I set up the Spin Clean on a towel-covered table, filled the base up to the line with distilled water (the manual states that tap water can be used, but I advise against it; water that's perfectly fine to drink may contain dissolved solids that you don't want anywhere near your precious vinyl!), and poured three capfuls of the cleaning fluid over

the brushes. I selected a few records to test (at least one of each size). In each case I cleaned the record with a carbon fibre brush and played it before cleaning it in the Spin Clean. After cleaning the record I visually inspected it and then re-played it to compare the before and after sound quality.

The cleaning process is simple, if a little tedious after a while: place the record between the two brushes (after putting the rollers in the correct place, of course!) and rotate it clockwise for three or so revolutions; rotate it anti-clockwise for another three or revolutions; carefully remove the record from the cleaner, letting excess water drip back into the base; and very carefully dry the record using one of the towels. Once the record is dry, place it back into its sleeve, or if it's a new record, replace the sleeve with an anti-static one. At all times, touch only the record's label and outer edge (especially when rotating it in the Spin Clean: use your palms rather than your fingers). Do not touch the playing surfaces, even the lead-in groove!

Spin Clean suggest that one can clean as many as 50 records with one batch of solution. I recommended changing the fluid more frequently than that, say every 20 to 30 records, depending on how dirty they are. If the water looks dirty at any time, it's time to change it!

So far so good, but how well does the Spin Clean actually work? To get right to the point, it works very well! Even



Example 2: pre-owned LP, before cleaning.

This second example is also littered with dust boulders, but the record also has a big smear that looks like a scuff mark. A few minutes later, after a dip in the Spin Clean, the same



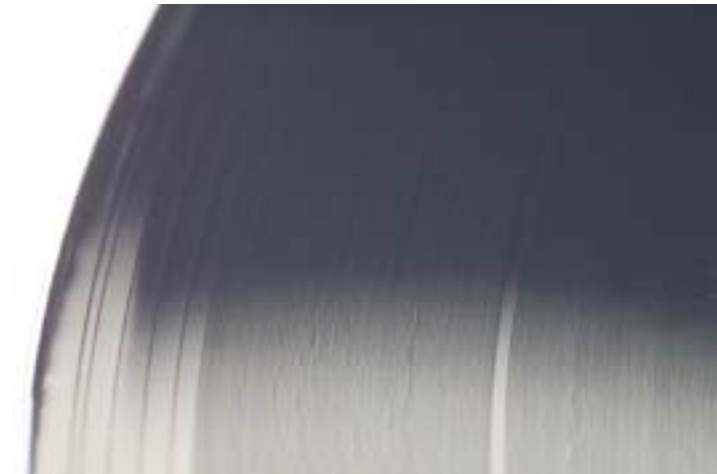
Example 2: pre-owned LP, after cleaning.

section of the record is unrecognisable! The scuff-like smear is all but gone, as is the dust debris field.



Example 3: new LP, before cleaning.

As you can see from the final set of pictures, even a brand new record from a well-known audiophile label isn't completely



Example 3: new LP, after cleaning.

dust free and benefits from a cleaning session in the Spin Clean.

Apart from the quieter surfaces and blacker backgrounds, I couldn't really detect any change in the sound quality of cleaned records compared to uncleaned ones. That said, the reduction of surface noise etc. is a welcome improvement! (Most of my records are free from ticks and pops, but a reduction in surface noise—even when one's records are virtually silent anyway—is always welcome.)

Verdict

Being a manual cleaner, the Spin Clean has the advantage of silent operation, and zero power use. The flip side to this is that cleaning more than a dozen or so records at one time gets old very quickly, and drying my records by hand makes me a little nervous. These caveats notwithstanding, the important question is “Does the Spin Clean Record Washer work?”, and the answer to that is easy: as the preceding photos show, the Spin Clean not only works, it works very well. I don't doubt that a vacuum record cleaning machine would be less tedious and more efficacious, but the cost difference (at least several hundred dollars) is considerable.

The bottom line is this: the Spin Clean Record Washer easily earns my highest recommendation. If you have any number of records and can't justify the not insignificant price jump for a vacuum record cleaning machine, you *need* one of these.

Specifications

Description Manual record cleaning machine.

Supported record sizes 7”, 10”, and 12”.

Dimensions (hwd) 138 mm x 370 mm x 154 mm.

Weight 720 g.

Finishes Yellow plastic.

Serial number of unit reviewed N/A.

Price \$80 (base package), \$125 (complete system).

Warranty Limited lifetime transferable.

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Associated Equipment

Analogue source Forsell Air Reference Mk 2 turntable and arm.

Phono cartridge Lyra Parnassus.

Phono stage Allnic Audio Labs H-3000.

Preamps Allnic Audio Labs L-3000, Audio Research SP-9 Mk 2.

Power amplifiers Allnic Audio Labs M-3000s, PrimaLuna ProLogue Sevens.

Speakers MartinLogan Spire.

Cables Phono: Nordost Frey. Interconnects: Nordost Frey. Speaker: Nordost Frey. AC: stock.

Accessories Target and SolidSteel equipment stands; Mission Isoplat; Furman Elite 15-PFI power conditioner; Audio Physic cartridge demagnetiser; Acoustech carbon fibre brush; Last record and stylus cleaning products; The Cartridge Man stylus tracking force gauge.

