

# An Audio Triangulation, Part 3: Final Thoughts on the KRONOS Discovery LP Playback System

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 [positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/an-audio-triangulation-part-3-final-thoughts-on-the-kronos-discovery-lp-playback-system](https://positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/an-audio-triangulation-part-3-final-thoughts-on-the-kronos-discovery-lp-playback-system)

By David W. Robinson

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**Louis Desjardins and David W. Robinson: a moment. (Photograph by Bill Parish; image processing by David W. Robinson)**

You know, I just *knew* that Louis Desjardins was up to something.

Last spring, I got a *very* excited Facetime call from him, talking about a discovery that he had made.

No, make that "talking about *The Discovery* that he had made."

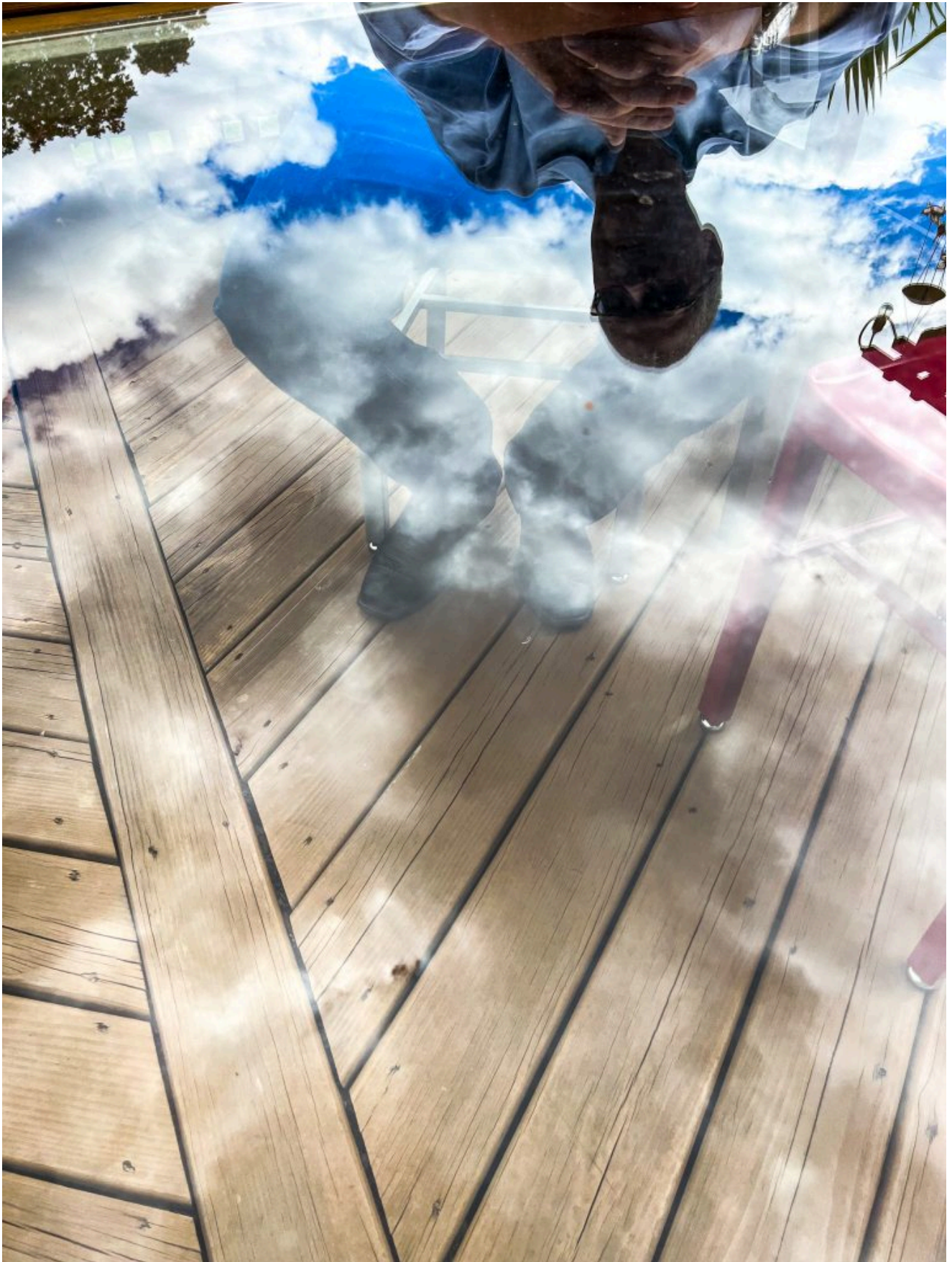
Now I was very familiar with Louis' earlier design work. Bill Parish, a very good audiobud of mine, being a lover of music and great cigars, had kept me in touch with this remarkable turntable at various audio shows, and in the occasional trip to visit him at GTT Audio Central in NJ. Every time that I heard the KRONOS Pro LE, I had come away impressed.

Finally, Bill and I agreed to a turntable review project. As a result, back in 2016 and early 2017 I had spent significant time with the predecessor to KRONOS's earlier reference model, the two-platter counter-rotational Pro LE with its Black Beauty tonearm, in this case outfitted with the Air Tight PC-1 Supreme. Having twirled an awful lot of LPs on that exceptional system, I knew its virtues. [My very favorable commentary about my experiences with the Pro LE was eventually published back in PF Issue 90, Jan/Feb of 2017.](#)

As the next few years went by, Bill kept me apprised of Louis' new developments for the Pro LE. First came the Super Capacitor Power Supply (SCPS); then his own very special tubed phono amp; which was followed by a dedicated rack. I hadn't heard these in my listening room, but I did catch these additional designs in the GTT Audio room at various shows. Best of all, I heard them when I would visit Bill in NJ.

Incrementally, step by step, each of these new products brought the KRONOS Pro LE to new levels of performance. Louis Desjardins was restlessly creative, and always working on something new to enhance what his turntable system could do. (All of the best turntable designers do this, in my experience: Lloyd Walker and Mark Dohmann come to mind, just to name a couple.) Step by step; here a little, there a little.

But *then*...this Facetime call in the spring of 2021 comes along....



**Louis Desjardins: a portrait dreamscape. Long Valley, NJ, 2021 (photograph and image processing by David W. Robinson)**

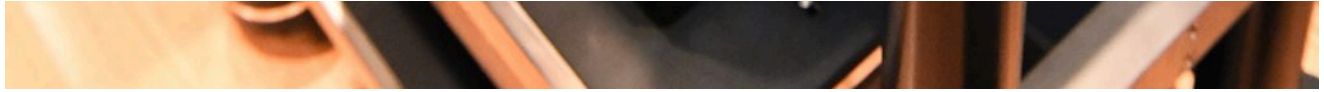
Turns out that Louis had been working on something radically different. As we talked, and as he gave me a virtual tour through the KRONOS facility in Montreal, it became clear that he was *extremely* excited about the work he had been doing for the past couple of years. For he had thrown most everything out that he had been doing, started with a more or less clean slate, and set forth to see whether there was something really greater beyond the clouds of unknowing.

You know: burn your ships and set out. Do, or die...or just admit that there's no more *there* there that you can find. (It *might* be there...but you're not going to be the one to put your hands on it.)

In so doing, Louis told me that he had actually achieved something way beyond an incremental improvement. By meticulously building up from near-scratch, carefully evaluating every part and piece, taking nothing for granted, and being willing to go where the creative spirit would take him, after some two years he ended up with an entirely new turntable system. One that did things that he didn't realize that turntable systems could do.

He named it the Discovery.





## The KRONOS Discovery Turntable System

As Greg Weaver noted in [his Part 1 of this audio triangulation series](#), he was the first to be able to hear the Discovery at Bill Parish's reference listening room back in August. Maurice and I didn't get to share the experience until the very end of September and the first of October.

Greg, whose audio sensibilities I have extremely high regard for, seemed to have gone to a new level of amazement when I first read his comments on Facebook. In fact, I called and followed up with him to double-check his reactions. He told me what you can read in Part 1... no reason to rehash it. All that this did was confirm my powerful interest in hearing the Discovery in a known listening environment for myself.

So, Maurice and I made the arrangements to meet with Louis and Bill in New Jersey in late September/early October. We would converge on Bill's listening room, and spend some serious listening time evaluating what Louis had accomplished. Would it prove to be every bit as astonishing as Greg had said?



First glance, when we walked into the room, my reaction to the look of the Discovery was definite.

**"Wow!"**

(Actually, I said something else. Emphatically.)

I had never seen any turntable that looked like the Discovery looked. Counter-rotational platters, yes...but power supplies, tubes, indicators, on a brilliant custom isolation rack, all looking like a cross between...what? Art Deco? Steampunk?

And yet pulling you closer by the sheer massive seductiveness of its visual audio-lust-in-the-dust.

*What the hell was this?!*





**The Discovery turntable system on its rack, just to the right of the Audionet Stern Reference Preamp.**

The complete system description in Bill's room on that day is listed below:

- Discovery Turntable
- Kronoscope Arm
- D-SCPS Power Supply
- Kronos Phono Stage
- Kronos Discovery Stand
- My Sonic Labs Signature Platinum Cartridge
- Audionet Stern
- Audionet Heisenbergs (2 pairs)
- YG Acoustics *XVi* reference loudspeakers
- JL Audio Gotham subwoofers (one pair) for 24hz and down
- Kubala Sosna Realization cables and power cords throughout
- Kubala Sosna XPander distribution box
- Finite Elemente Master Pagode Stand

Most of this was familiar to me...but not the Discovery. This was clearly a system that was world-class; what would it reveal about Louis Desjardins' achievement?

After some brief conversation, it was time to go...



I settled into my seat; Bill dropped the stylus onto the lead-in.

And then, waiting for the comforting feel of grooves...

*...an immediate reaction: what the hell??!*

***Where were the grooves???***

Gone. Lost. MIA. AWOL.



**"Reflections on an LP: a study." (Photograph and image processing by David W. Robinson)**

Then...the music started. No groove sound...no shushing, no phase-shifting...none of the things that LP lovers normally associate with vinyl playback, even at the highest levels.

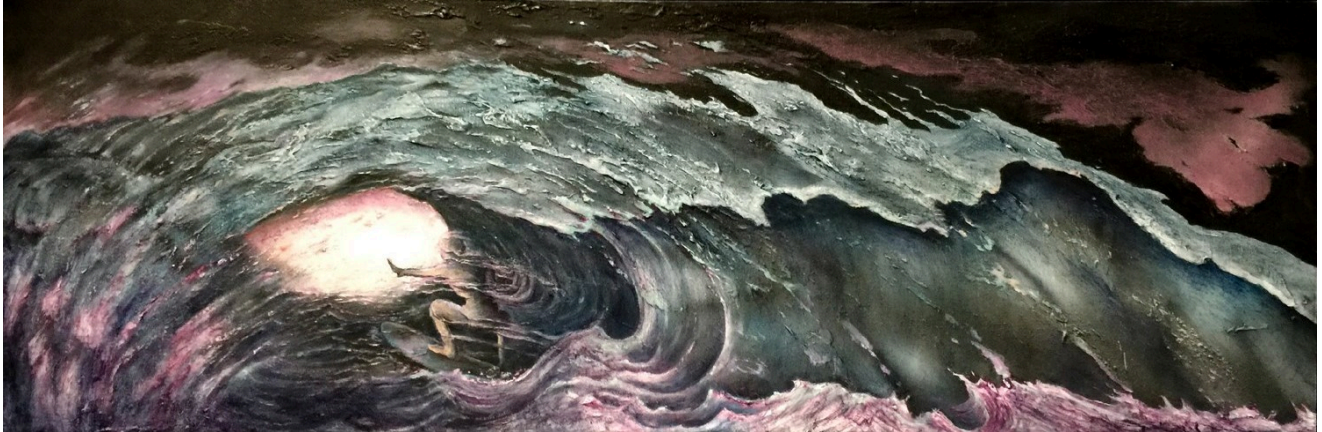
The music just...started.

And I was just...startled. And said so, again and again, while Louis and Bill just grinned. And chuckled. And smiled.

Album followed album, as Greg and Maurice mentioned in their essays. In each case, my response was variations of the above: "*Where the [whatever] are the bloody grooves?!!*"

That's not to say that the occasional tic or pop might not suddenly spring out from its lair and bushwhack us. But it didn't so under the cloak of groove noise. And Bill takes great care of his extensive LP collection, so T&Ps didn't intrude very often at all during the two days that we listened.

I want to be very clear about this. *The quality of the listening experience that I had while hearing a variety of LPs with the KRONOS Discovery was not like anything else that I've ever encountered in my long years in high-end audio.* What I was hearing was what the ancient Romans would have called "*sui generis*"... "a category of its own," or, more simply, "unique." I know of no other turntable system that transforms LP playback so completely. And I say that categorically, no pun intended.



**"In the Tube," a painting by Dan Zimmerman, 2020**

This meant that I could simply settle back in complete ease, getting in touch with the music and the recording without feeling the jacket of grooves guiding it in. "Extraordinary" is too mild a word for what was happening here.

Losing the grooves meant that I was hearing recordings in a way that was unlike anything else that I had heard. Assuming clean and well-maintained LPs, the effect was astonishing. It transformed listening into something that reached into master tapes and...that ultimate will-o-the-wisp of the audio arts...microphone feeds. *From an LP!*

This reminds me of something that Tim deParavicini told me at CES many years ago. He had been working with master tapes from the early 1950s, and had found that once you took the time to get the playback properly aligned for a given tape, the results were like listening to a recording that had just been made. He then told me something quite emphatically, a strong statement that I've remembered ever since:





Tim deParavicini, a portrait. Orange, CA, 2018 (photograph and image processing by David W. Robinson)

"David, the problem is not one of *recording* an audio signal. That's easy. The real challenge is *playback*. *Getting back from a tape what you put onto it*. That's the trick."

Which was exactly what I was feeling in my hours with the KRONOS Discovery: the most complete playback of LPs that I had ever heard, minus the groove noise, and with results that...depending on the condition of the source album...conjured up master tapes, and...lo, and behold!...mic feeds. There is so much more on our LPs than we ever suspected. The Discovery will show you proof of this like no other turntable system that I've heard.



"Light Up There." Painting by Dan Zimmerman.

I simply melted into the music, with album after album. Trance-like. At times the Discovery playback actually relaxed me so much that I found myself dozing off, drifting back and forth between discovery and dream. And *that*, friends, is the hallmark and touchstone of great

leaps in the audio arts. You and the recording of the music become *one*, a fusion of passion and realization that is the highest attainment of fine audio as a collection of related art forms.

Having said that, I'll also observe that the Discovery didn't simply sound "like RTR tape." As a RTR lover, I have to say that it was something different than that. I'm not sure what category one could put the LP playback experience with the Discovery into...thus it occupies its own category.

As I said: *sui generis*.





**A portrait of Louis Desjardins of KRONOS Audio. Long Valley, NJ, 2021 (photograph and image processing by David W. Robinson)**

In speaking with Louis, I asked what he was looking for when he started from near-scratch two years ago. Was he expecting to achieve the Discovery turntable system, and to have it perform at this highest level?

He said that this was a good question. No, he hadn't any idea that he would end up with the listening experience that the Discovery delivered. He had hoped for a good incremental improvement; that he ended up with a true paradigm shift for LP playback was something that he didn't expect.

But I'd say that you have to remember: *discovery is something that you know you are setting out to do; but it is also something quite unknown that you find at the end of the journey.*

Maybe. Because not all voyages end well, and sometimes nothing much is discovered.

In other words, you don't know the end from the beginning.

And you have to be willing to take the risks and have the courage to see what's out there, beyond the horizon, in the great cloud of unknowing.





**Louis Desjardins with his KRONOS Discovery turntable system. Long Valley, NJ, 2021 (photograph and image processing by David W. Robinson)**

Louis did; the discovery of The Discovery is the result.

The last time that I was so surprised and gob smacked by a massive audio advance was all the way back in September of 1998. That was when I was invited by Mobile Fidelity to the first high-end audio press event for the new digital format, DSD. I reported my reaction at the time in the then paper 'n ink pages of *PF* ([reprinted in Issue 1 of \*Positive Feedback\*](#) when we went to full-time Web-based publication).

That was my last "once-in-a-generation" moment, DSD being an audio development that changed me forever.

And 1998-2021 is about a human generation in time.

Looks like the KRONOS Discovery has done the same for me when it comes to LP playback, in this audio generation.

Yes, the Discovery at USD\$200,000 for the full monty is expensive. But there are turntables that are even more expensive...in some cases, much more expensive...in this price category. So, you will definitely have to have the necessary shekels before you make this leap.

But if you do qualify, your life as an LP-loving audiophile will *never* be the same.

Based on my time with it in GTT Audio's reference listening room, if you are looking for a real "once-in-a-generation," *sui generis* experience with your LPs, the KRONOS Discovery is *it*.

**In sum: The Discovery turntable system is a historic achievement in the history of fine audio. The Discovery represents a one-in-a-generation advance in the audio arts. Louis Desjardins has, in my estimation, created a true watershed design in high-end audio that will set a benchmark for all other turntable designers to examine and reflect upon in their own work.**

*Enough said....*

Part 1 <http://positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/an-audio-triangulation-part-1the-kronos-discovery-lp-playback-system-sui-generis/>

Part 2 <http://positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/kronos-discovery-lp-playback-system-2/>

**All photographs and image processing by David W. Robinson, unless otherwise indicated.**