

## Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo): Whether vinyl sounds better, part 2

In my previous column “Does vinyl sound better?” I mentioned the three-dimensional listening experience when playing a record on vinyl on a decent stereo set.

I can't put my finger on it but everytime I play a great record on vinyl I tend to hear some kind of 3D-effect. When I play that same record on cd it lacks that effect, or at least the effect is present to a much lesser degree.

Goose bumps are the directly visible effect of such a 3D listening experience.

I will ignore music streaming services, since they almost always play lossy file formats like mp3, Ogg, AAC etc.. In this discussion I'll focus on music played at its highest fidelity (Hi-Fi).

Some albums appear to be made for vinyl and yes, in these cases vinyl does tend to sound better, provided the album is properly mastered, has had a healthy cut to vinyl and is played back on a decent turntable.

If we add up the fantastic artwork of a release on vinyl, the popularity of this medium suddenly becomes a lot more obvious.

*More technique!*

*Almost all vinyl records are made by cutting the music with a diamond needle onto a lacquer. The lacquer consists of a coated aluminum disc and serves as the mother of which the stamper is made. The stamper in turn is used to press the actual vinyl records.*

*For classical music, jazz and some singer-songwriter albums DMM (Direct Metal Mastering) is often used as a way to make records. DMM uses a copper disc on which the music is directly cut. This copper disc serves as the stamper of which the records are pressed.*

*Another method to cut vinyl is called “direct cutting”. With direct cutting the music is directly cut onto the vinyl. This makes direct cutting more useful for smaller runs.*

In the land of music the human ear is king. While I may find that a record sounds better on vinyl, someone else might have a totally different opinion. Luckily there's no right or wrong here. If someone is very familiar with a record on cd (or another digital medium), a vinyl record would only detract the energy and focus associated with that digital record. In this case the digital record sounds better to his/her ears than the analogue one on vinyl.

Besides, listening music is a rather subjective activity. The mood you're in, the time of listening, your listening environment, whether it's winter or summer. All factors that can influence your musical opinion.

After reading the above we can only conclude that vinyl *could* very well sound better. Not taking into account that some people's ears are not going to hear the difference between analogue and digital or between vinyl and streaming, even at its lowest quality settings.

Whether the above applies to you? That's a good question. Buy yourself a record player and a couple of great vinyl records with your favourite music and start listening. You'll soon find out you'll

embrace this beautiful medium or that it's not your thing. If not? Not to worry, the artwork of your favourite albums will probably do great as wall decoration.

A fine glass of Scotch single malt whisky is supposed to help you decide in favour of vinyl, but all that aside...

Renzo

*Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for many independent artists like Bart Voncken, The Legendary Orchestra Of Love and the John F Klaver Band. More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).*