

# The Q-Tip:



Ortofon's Qbert carts "grip like Gorilla Glue."

By Jody Amos & Robert LaFrance

East meets West again: Connecticut-based club DJ Robert LaFrance opts to test-drive Ortofon's Qbert Series of phono cartridges, while Cali mobile Jody Amos warms up QSC's HPR Series of active speakers.

## QSC HPR Series

Powered loudspeakers have become increasingly popular for mobile DJs, musicians and A/V techs within the last few years. And, as mobiles especially know, the ability to plug in and play makes setting up a breeze. With a wide range of powered speakers on the market, Costa Mesa, Calif.-based QSC Audio has just raised the bar with its new HPR series. This is not your average system—these are bigger, better and more powerful speakers to handle your big events.

To start, the cabinets themselves are beautiful in appearance and will take some abuse on the road. You'll be proud to roll into your event sporting these beefy cabinets. Say goodbye to speaker carpet because QSC gave this series a black, textured, durable spray finish that looks amazing. The powder-coated 16-gauge steel grille is built tough to withstand anything that you can throw at it. QSC even gave the grille a slight concave shape to keep it rigid. They have handles everywhere! Users get two ergonomic, non-slip handles on each side and grab bars on top and bottom which makes loading up and transporting easy—I wish all my speakers were built this way.

Each HPR cabinet has a professional-grade QSC amplifier built inside. Knowing this gave me comfort, as most of my mobile systems are equipped with QSC amps. Over the years, I have personally come to trust the quality and reliability of QSC products. In fact, they're my amps of choice.

So how'd they perform? Let me just say, they were awesome. I've done two gigs with them so far—and both worked well. The first was a club where we host parties a few times a year. Using two HPR152F's (15-inch, 2-way models) and two HPR151W's (15-inch subwoofers), we had the club kickin' all night long.

From the QSC website (qscaudio.com), I read that we could push these speakers to the limit without having to worry about them shutting down on us. (According to the company, the 2-way unit's output stands at 400W LF/100W HF, while the sub kicks 700 watts.) I had that in mind that night when we were at our peak capacity, so I turned the gains all the way up and my meter was in the red. The sound was still crisp and clean with plenty of

# QSC & QBert

bass and no distortion—just what I was looking for.

My next event was a holiday party for about 200 people, so I took the 100-pound, 2-way units on their own, leaving the 98-pound subs back at my office. After a little dinner music and a speech by the CEO, the crowd was on the floor. The speech and my announcements were crystal clear. The two tops alone gave me everything I needed, including the bass that so many other powered speakers seem to lack on their own.

The verdict: If you are looking to move up to a higher-end active speaker, then the QSC HPR series is for you. In addition to the HPR152F (\$999 MAP) and the HPR151W (\$999 MAP), QSC offers two other models—the HPR153F 15-inch, 3-way (\$1,099 MAP) and the

HPR181W 18-inch sub (\$1,199 MAP). These are not your average active speakers—they're the next level. Check out QSC's HPR Series—you won't be disappointed.

## Ortofon QBert Cartridges

To quote one of the godfathers of modern DJing from a recent DJ Expo, "Needles are like women—everyone has their preference and you never want to share yours."

Grandmaster Flash certainly knows a thing or two about needles, having essentially invented hip-hop and turntablism. And I think he would be proud that QBert—one of his modern disciples—has teamed with Ortofon to create a new standard in scratch phono cartridges.

Denmark's Ortofon has a history of excellence in serving the DJ market. The company's disco needles, including the Night Club series, have long been fixtures with top-tier jocks. And these performance-oriented DJs typically place high demands on their cartridges through backspinning and scratching—all the while requiring the needles to survive hours of playback without damaging or placing excessive wear on their precious vinyl. Turntablism only escalates these demands, so it was imperative for Ortofon to partner with an experienced and creative force like QBert to target this market segment. And with a pair of DJ QBert signature models—the QBert OM and QBert Concorde—Ortofon has done just that.

The two most important features of any cartridge dedicated to support the turntablist or scratch DJ are grip and output level. Given Ortofon's 30-year history of developing cartridges for hi-fidelity hobbyists and audio professionals, there is no shortage of scientific expertise at the company. So they challenged their engineers to push the limits of these two features and the results are spectacular.

My background as a club DJ is primarily rooted in Top 40 and house music. While I occasionally interject some scratching in my residency at Alchemy Nightclub in New Haven, Conn., I am certainly not to be considered a turntablist. So, I asked our resident hip-hop and scratch DJ, Grant Ogren (aka DJ Subconscious) to put a pair of DJ QBert Concorde units through their paces. Grant spins, scratches, and beat juggles his way through hip-hop sets on Thursday through Saturday each week and has now decided to use Ortofon's QBert Series exclusively—a good sign!

"The first thing I noticed about the new scratch needles was the incredible sound quality," says Grant. And I agree. I compared the Ortofon QBert Concorde to the Ortofon Gold, my personal favorite cartridges: The QBert's output level far exceed the Gold's output, justifying Ortofon's claim of an output voltage of 11mv compared to the Gold's at 6mv. I am no scientist, but this translates to at least a 5db increase in pure volume. Great news for all the DJs who have consistently complained about

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QSC's HPR Series: The next level of active speakers.