

## Scheu "Das Laufwerk No.2"

### Legacy and Masterpiece

Product: Scheu "Das Laufwerk No.2" turntable  
Manufacturer: [Scheu Analog](#)  
Approx cost: 3800 euros  
Reviewer: [Hartmut Quaschik](#) - TNT Germany  
Reviewed: February, 2007



I had been long aware of Scheu turntables, even had a lot of them during a five years period, but it was last year when I met Ulla Scheu at the High End show in Munich, that she offered me her newest top turntable for review. I was pleased to take the turntable home after the show, and there it stayed for lots of listening experiences.

### Some History

It was back in 1997, that a fellow audiophile told me about a new phantastic turntable, and that I should gave it a listen. He gave me Thomas Scheu's phone number, and we immediately made contact. Thomas gave me the opportunity to listen at one of his customer's place. I took my then Garrard 401, SME 3012/2, Denon 103 combo and had a good listen at the costumer's place here in Munich. I was immediately impressed by the qualities of the Scheu turntable. It gave so much detail and rightness of the music, that my Garrard 401 sounded veiled compared to it. From then, I was hooked. This turntable was considerably cheap and available as DIY kit, platter was 350 DEM at that time, bearing the same, a motor with pulley and regulation, but without case and wall power supply around 100 DEM. Think 1 DEM was about 50ct, be it EUR or USD. I took the next opportunity to meet Thomas Scheu personally and bought a whole combination with tear drop shaped steel base and motor with case for less than 2000 DEM.



It happened that two months later, being in Paris/France for holidays, I had the luck to get my hands on a used Platine Verdier, directly from Maison de L'Audiophile. I could not have been luckier, buying two top turntables for not that much money. The following months had been very interesting, I had a lot of tonearms to play with at that time, and did a lot of comparisons. All friends came by and got a listen to these turntables. We did several times a pure turntable comparison, transporting tonearm and cartridge from the Scheu to the Platine Verdier and back. This is what all visitors said to me: "Sell the Platine Verdier, the Scheu is much better ..."

Of course I sold the Platine Verdier half a year later. Well it does not imply that the Platine Verdier is really worse than an acrylic platter DIY kit, but my Platine Verdier was a used one, and presumably in not optimal condition. Although I tried several motors, and found that a current production original DC motor, borrowed from another Platine Verdier owner, sounded a lot better, the fundamental differences between Platine Verdier and Scheu were obvious. The Platine Verdier had a powerful and impressive sound, with good resolution of the soundstage and overall good dynamics, though its pitch stability was less than perfect, and it had fine resolution grain. Some Verdier owners even used rubber rings to damp the platter's ringing or used eddy current brakes or friction brakes to improve pitch stability. The Scheu, on the other hand, was less impressive in the bass, but had near perfect pitch stability, and a lot more transparency and fine resolution in the midrange and treble region. Using the most advanced unipivot tonearm of those days, the Immedia RPMII, together with a Lyra Clavis, gave all the realism of a classic concert hall experience, the vibrating air from the reflecting walls as well as every fine detail.

This does not mean at all, that the Scheu DIY kit from then was perfect. There is nothing like a perfect thing in audio, did nobody tell you? With time passing by I realized some shortcomings, like the soft bass, and the noisy motor. The platters from that time had a rubber ring towards the bearing. I had to remove this to get more bass impact. I tried different platters: while the standard platter is 50mm, there was also 80mm available and also, but really expensive, 100mm. Then there was an oversized platter, 80mm high, but with 420mm diameter, like those for transcription records in radio stations. I also asked Mr.Scheu to make me a Delrin platter, the same material like the TW-Akustiv Raven turntable today is made from. Then I tried several motors, like the Maxon DC motors. A friend of mine, Manfred Huber, designed a complete drive unit using the Maxon. This design later has been used for the Teres turntables. I also tried some bearing modifications, like a double inverted bearing using two ceramic balls, or with brass bearing well. Then I tried a lot of turntable mats.

There are lots things one can do with a so called DIY turntable, and I did it all. In the end all variations were simply that, namely variations. The sonic character of the Scheu remains intact, but can slightly be changed in one or another direction. Regarding the platters, the 80mm platter was the best balanced, with the 50mm being a bit softer, and the 100mm more analytical and a touch lean. The oversized platter had even more pitch stability, but was softer again. The original Scheu regulated brushless DC motor was perfect pitch, but was a bit noisy. The Maxon sounded more relaxed and less forward. With a Transrotor motor (yes!) the Scheu sounded more like a Linn LP12. Forget the string delivered by Scheu, get a thin fishing line, this will last very longer, and will give much better impact and dynamics. Use thin oil, as it gives better fine resolution and more transparent sound. From the platter mats that I tried, heavy lead/rubber turntable mats worked quite good, as well as suede mats (but not soft ones!), but you need them only, if your system needs some taming down of details coming from the turntable. If you have for example a high resolution no feedback design tube preamp, you presumably can cope with all the details coming from the Scheu unfiltered.

As the Scheu is unsuspended, it works best on a heavy block, like from concrete. Putting the Scheu on a suspended base like the Cotter base, yields in adding some liquidity to the sound, but at the same time curtails bass response.

During the five years, that I owned Scheu turntables, I tried a lot of tonearms. The Scheu was happy with most of them, be it air bearing or unipivot or gimbal. The Scheu prefers unipivots: Immedia, Moerch, ARO, but also likes gimbals like Zeta, SME V, Kuzma Stogi, Origin Live. It seems not to like the FR-64FX, the SME309 (first version), Linn Ekos or Ittok.



I also did even more comparisons with the Scheu. At last it knocked down a Simon Yorke S9 at first sight. The Simon Yorke had not the slightest chance to win.

All I really wanted was a turntable with really big sound, but also the fine resolution of the Scheu. Well, I bought a Pluto 10A in 2002, this made my dream come true. The 10A had all the balls of a Verdier, but at the same time all the resolution and rightness of the Scheu. Drawback of the Pluto is that it is insanely expensive. Due to financial restrictions, I sold the Pluto 10A in 2004, and now have a Kuzma Stabi Reference playing. The Kuzma is a very well balanced turntable which is able to play all kinds of music, like the Pluto, but a bit less forward and a bit less excited. At its price of around app. 8000USD/6000EUR new it is a bargain, when a Simon Yorke S7 costs several times as much. I consider the Kuzma Stabi Reference a best buy in the turntable world, delivering real hi-end class performance, while just being affordable. I admit I bought the Kuzma second hand, as well as the Pluto before.

Lots of friends around still have their Scheu, be it Premier Mk.II, or based on DIY parts, playing with SME V or Immedia tonearms, and Lyra Helikon, Myabi cartridges, in stereo setups worth 5,000 EUR to 50,000 EUR. It always is amazing, which qualities are affordable when choosing Scheu.

### **Scheu Analog of Today**

Sadly, Thomas Scheu passed away in 2004, in a tragic sudden accident. His wife struggled a lot, but then successfully took over the business, keeping production and service alive. As she told me, she is involved with all duties from constructing and producing tonearm parts to talking to Russian importers. The turntable under test is a new development under her management and at the same time the most beautiful Scheu turntable until today - most previous models had a real industrial charme, if you know what I mean. Of course with the exception of the Scheu "Cello".

Enter "Das Laufwerk No.2", which is this turntable's official name. And this beast is heavy, omigod! I had to carry the 40kg box from my car to my listening room, and it nearly broke my back. The weight is mainly due to a heavy stainless steel insert to the base, which is partly hidden by the base and also by the platter, so that you see only just a few Millimeters, while it might be 30mm thick. This way the turntable is always coupled to a heavy mass, with a brass ring as intermediate material between the base and the bearing. Some kind of constraint layer damping technique, I think. I do not want to bore you further with obvious details, you can read them yourself on Scheu's now quite elegant web site, in several languages.

When I asked for tonearm boards, I got a clear acrylic board for SME, and a black one for Rega, just for testing. The SME tonearm board works for all lengths of SME tonearms, from 9 to 12 inch. Boards are available on request in all possible colors and materials, from pink acryl to bronze, for any tonearm you like. It is possible to mount a tonearm board on each corner of the triangle shaped base, for those who like it extreme.



## First Listening

My first impressions were very positive. This Scheu was better than all variants that I had tried in the past. First of all the presentation was more focussed and less soft than ever. The motor remained the same basically, but with the heavy motor block, noise has been diminished to an extent, where it is only noticed near by, when no music is running. This showed me that both turntable assembly and motor unit really do really need high mass. Sadly, the same old soft string had been delivered together with the turntable. Out went it, in went the fishing line, and - ahhh! - now things are getting interesting.

At first, I had mounted one of the usual suspects, SME3012/2 with Shindo SPU cartridge, a classical combo, which I had used last when I had a grey grease-bearing Garrad 301 one year ago. Using this combination, this Scheu turntable proves to be liquid and solid at the same time, in a sense that the music is able to flow, while the sound stage ist nailed down, and still focussed. Now, this was just for fun, an SME 3012 is not meant to show what a turntable is able to do in respect of detail or resolution, it just shows whether a turntable can play music, that you can really put a record on it, listen to it with joy and interest, and then fetch another record to listen further. This new Scheu turntable passed this test easily.

## Comparisons



Being satisfied with the Kuzma Stabi Reference for long time now, I wanted to compare my Kuzma turntable side by side to the Scheu "Das Laufwerk No.2", using the same tonearm and cartridge. Now, this will be interesting again.

I was using the new SME M2 tonearm with a Tubaphon/Einstein TU-2 moving coil cartridge for the comparisons. While these are not ultra expensive components at all, the SME M2 tonearm plays in one league with the SME V. In fact, I even prefer it to the SME V, as it plays more vividly, and not sooo, ahem, restricted. The Tubaphon/Einstein is a variant of the professional EMT TSD15 "Tondose", like the vdH Grasshopper is, with improved ingredients. Soundwise, I could describe the TU-2 as "Lyra with balls", if that helps you. I like this combination so much, that I have two SME M2 tonearms, and also two TU-2 cartridges, the latter just being overhauled by Benz/Switzerland. I did not only listening privately, but sometimes invited friends for sharing thoughts and second views.



We listened to a lot of records, and found that some records sounded nearly identical on both players, like the Earl "Fatha" Hines direct cut, others sounded different in a way that the listening experience and perception of the music changed, like "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts" from Brian Eno and David Byrne. The Scheu had the music from this album playing in the midrange in the most of the time, and it had the most open, clear midrange you can imagine. The Kuzma, on the other hand, had the music

playing in bass sometimes, and in the midrange sometimes. So the Scheu sounded more engaged, and the Kuzma more relaxed. The Scheu had better resolution of voices and absolutely no grain. This does not mean that the Scheu is bass shy, it simply does not have the extreme deep bass extension of the Kuzma, which is like no other in that respect. Talking hifi aspects, the soundstage of the Scheu had better width and height extension, and was a bit shallower, while the Kuzma had a deeper, but smaller soundstage. Installing a bronze base for the SME tonearm helped a bit producing more bass, but the difference stayed. When listening a whole evening to one turntable or the other, listening was always good without seriously missing something from the other turntable. Pitch wasn't an issue with both turntables, neither colorations, compressions, fuzzyness or other nasty characteristics. There was no false detail coming from ringing materials. And at last, but not least I could not detect any preference of music genre, as they both were happy with all records I threw at them.

In the beginning listening was with my DIY state of the art (well at least I hope so ...) transistor preamp, evolved over years, and able to beat a lot of commercial designs. When too many records sounded similiar on both turntables, I changed to an Audio Note (UK) tube preamp. This tube preamp favoured the Scheu a bit, because it made visible the enhanced resolution in the midrange, which the Scheu was able to deliver, compared to the Kuzma. From then we did further listening with the Audio Note preamp, and my friends participating the comparisons favoured the Scheu, while I myself still favoured the Kuzma. This is just to show you, that in this top region of high end audio personal preference does play a vital role, and there is simply no product for all men.

## Conclusion

Yes, Scheu is in business again, and better than ever. Prices are quite high now, for those of us, who had been used to see only budget prices on Scheu products, but in times when real hi-end turntables cost at least around 10,000 EUR or USD, and the Scheu really does play on that level, the Scheu is a bargain, like the Kuzma Stabi Reference is. This Scheu turntable does not only sound like reference quality, it now also has reference quality looks.

This Scheu turntable costs in the 3000 region, but do not mistake it for a common entry-level turntable, like those delivered from the well known manufactureres in this price region. It has reference quality, and would it be produced by brand XX (please fill in your favourite usual suspect yourself), it would cost double or threefold the price.

For those who cannot afford this top of the line turntable, lower priced models are still available, like the Premier Mk.II at less than half the price and 85% the quality (but at the same time a lot less elegant).

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