

On Wednesday, March 3, the (February) monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the Audio Alternative Shop in Atlanta, Georgia. There were easily over 35 members and guests attending to hear a great presentation by our special guest, Michael Fremer, who writes for Stereophile Magazine. Our hosts for the evening were the owners of Audio Alternative, Alan and Shawnn Jones, who have a shop in North Atlanta that features many fine lines of audio and video gear, such as Audio Research, McIntosh, Magnapan, Vandersteen, Thiel, NAD, VPI, Audioquest and many others.

There was no business meeting of the club before the presentation because of the special nature of our guest, so the presentation began right at 8 PM, after a brief introduction by John Morrison and Chuck Bruce. The topic of Michael's presentation and demonstration was how to properly set up a turntable, arm, and cartridge.

Michael Fremer is well known by all audiophiles as a senior writer for Stereophile Magazine, with his monthly "Analog Corner" feature and other articles. In front of Michael were a VPI Classic turntable, a VPI 10.5 tonearm, and a DB20X cartridge that needed to be set up properly, which were supplied by our hosts. I will give the highlights of the presentation here, but if you want the details on how to do the setups, you can purchase a turntable setup DVD created and sold by Michael, and/or read his many articles on the subject.

The highlights of his presentation were:

- Do the work in an open, well lighted area, when you have plenty of time and are not upset. He jokingly said do not watch "Fox News" before starting the work. You need to be able to stay focused since there are many small (tiny) parts that could get lost or damaged during this process.
- Level the turntable at the platter.
- Install the cartridge using needle nose pliers, but do not squeeze too hard on the pins or they could break off. Use a toothpick to prevent this.
- Put the arm in the arm rest and start your adjustments.
- Set the cartridge weight according to manufacturer's recommendations using an electronic scale (better to use that instead of mechanical balancing gauges).
- Mike prefers a pivoted arm to a straight arm (most arms are pivoted), and a 9 to 10 inch arm versus a 12 inch arm.
- Set the overhang, which is the distance from the center of the spindle to the stylus tip. He used a special gauge for this. He placed the stylus in the proper arc of the gauge (based on the length of the arm). In this case, he set the overhang to 265 mm. The longer the arm, the less overhang there is.
- Next, adjust the zenith angle (angle of stylus body to record), then check to make sure the stylus pressure is still set correctly (this adjustment can change it).
- Michael then used a special tool (looked like sling on a frame) to set the anti-skating force of the arm. He prefers this special tool versus using a "blank" vinyl record.
- Next, set the Vertical Tracking Angle (VTA), and in this case the arm manufacturer's recommendation is usually pretty close. Double check this after 40 hours of use, because cartridge suspension changes can affect it.
- Finally, set the Stylus Rake Angle (SRA) at about 92 degrees (not 90), which Mike actually considers slightly more important than VTA.
- For expensive cartridges, be sure to do the VTA and SRA adjustments to really get the best performance. Lock in soundstage with proper crosstalk settings using an Azimuth meter (these can cost \$250, so maybe borrow one from your dealer).
- Double check your pressure and other adjustments as you work through these steps, because one adjustment can affect the others.

It was another great meeting and the club especially thanks our hosts for having a great set-up for Michael to use, and of course to Michael for coming to Atlanta to be with our growing club, and giving us a lot to think about and enjoy when we set up and use our analog front ends. After the

meeting, a group of about 15 members joined Michael for dinner at a local restaurant where more great stories and advice were given all around the table.

As information, the January 2010 meeting was an informal club get-together at the home of Lee Tingler. This secretary was unable to attend this meeting due to work commitments.

Thomas Horner
Interim Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta