



Re-equalization

I know those numbers not because I'm smart, but because I have in front of me the owner's manual for the Rek-O-Kut Re-Equalizer, perhaps the least expensive and easiest to use of all 78rpm-specific equalizers on the market.³

A reason for that: Whereas most such products are designed as standalone phono preamplifiers with full gain and

equalization facilities, the Rek-O-Kut Re-Equalizer is designed to work *with* the gain and EQ already provided by an existing phono preamp, whether built in to a full-featured preamp or itself a separate unit. (The Re-Equalizer, in fact, is a unity-gain device.)

The Rek-O-Kut, which has a pair each of Input and Output jacks on its rear panel, is intended for connection to any buffered tape loop or effects loop within the user's preamp or integrated amplifier. (Absent a loop, one can simply place the Re-Equalizer between preamp and power amp—which is what I had to do.) Once energized by the supplied 24V wall wart, the Re-Equalizer remains powered up at all times, the only user controls being a front-mounted Bypass toggle for switching the unit in and out of the loop, and the two eight-position rotary switches for selecting bass Turnover frequency and treble Rolloff. Both of those knobs include settings for Flat and RIAA, and the above-mentioned owner's manual has several pages of commendably thorough EQ recommendations for various labels, large and small, plus two pages of very helpful tips on record labels and matrix numbers.

The Re-Equalizer's circuitry is built into a metal box 9.5" wide by 1.5" high by 5.5" deep, itself fastened to a rack-width (19" W by 1.75" H) panel of black-anodized aluminum, and the construction quality is remarkably good. Even before using it, I was impressed by the apparently high value offered by the Rek-O-Kut Re-Equalizer.

I've had time for only a brief audition so far, but nothing has shaken that good first impression. If anything, I'm as amazed by the Re-Equalizer's apparent noiselessness as by its obvious flexibility. It isn't a perfectly transparent thing, of course; even in Bypass mode, the Re-Equalizer adds a very slight veiling or "grayness" to the sound. But the Rek-O-Kut is effective, it's useful, and it's fun. It gave me a refreshing new perspective on the 1935 recording of Mahler's Symphony 2 by Eugene Ormandy and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and Chorus—an interesting and thoughtful if way less than



Two views of the Rek-O-Kut Re-Equalizer.

masterful interpretation—and I had a great time using the Turnover knob to play "now you hear it, now you don't" with the kick drums on a variety of old jazz records.

Designer Mike Stosich, who keeps the Rek-O-Kut company name alive with the blessings of its founder's family, offers a whole line of phono products through his company, Esoteric Sound, many of which are geared specifically toward 78rpm enthusiasts.

1 Another windfall: The variable-velocity encoding of high frequencies made it easier for the signal level to swamp the high-frequency surface noise that bedevils shellac.

2 It's interesting to compare that range with the 500Hz–3kHz range in which acoustic recording technology was most effective.

3 Rek-O-Kut, Esoteric Sound, 1608 Hemstock Ave., Wheaton, IL 60189. Tel./Fax: (630) 933-9801. Web: www.esotericsound.com.