

## Van den Hul The DDT-II Special

# NERVE POISON?

Original text by Marius Donadello  
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**In normal life DDT is an insecticide with fatal toxic effect on the nervous system. In the hi-fi world, DDT is a phono cartridge which generally is considered not particularly harmful. How does this classic work in its actual version?**

**A**lt Jouk Van den Hul seems driven by such honourable motives like a boy scout: On this side of the world the Dutchman doesn't only hold the fort as one of the last large European phono cartridge manufacturers, he moreover tirelessly concerns himself with everything around the topic. Van den Hul offers extensive service for his products and partly also for products from other manufacturers; With requests from like a needle exchange up to a coil modification, the help searching and tuning willing can turn to him. His nose for soundwise meaningful paths in development seems also comparable with the unerringness of a scout, if one believes the general hearsay. But as with all that have come far, the works of the old master do not enjoy popularity without contradiction. Occasionally the characteristic tonal tuning of the systems with difficultly memorable to awkwardly selected names also meets disapproval. So far, so good, because after all it shows that the products are of importance anyhow and have "something to say" to their listeners - you of course know the saying "everybody's darling is nobody's darling".



### Team-mates

#### Record-players:

- Acoustic Solid One-To-One with Acoustic Solid WTB 213
- Rega Planar 2 refurbishing kit, Marvel Heiss
- Transrotor Fat Bob with Dynavector DV 507 MK II
- Transrotor Fat Bob with SME 309
- Transrotor Royal Black SE with SME 3500

#### Phono pre-amplifiers:

- Lehmann Black Cube SE
- Pass XOno
- Progressive Audio Phono 1

#### Amplifiers:

- Lavardin Technologies IS
- Symphonic Line Klarheit 1
- Pass X2.5 / Pass X.250

Whoever asks himself how a human being can get the idea to name his product exactly the same as one of the most well-known and in all industrial nations forbidden environmental poisons, finds the answer in the preference of audiophile manufacturers for names that cryptically apply to product characteristics and which suggestive intended message no human could decode if he doesn't find something to read about it somewhere. In this case, hiding behind the abbreviation "DDT" is the meaning "Depth, Detail and Timbre". Aha!

The DDT-II is a hand manufactured Moving-Coil system with pairwise selected silver wire coils, the highly regarded VDH type 1 line contact stylus and a boron cantilever, which low mechanical compliance predestines the system for medium weight to heavy arms; Van den Hul recommends an effective tone arm mass of eight to twelve gram. With its 0.65 millivolts output at the contact pins, the DDT-II delivers a value that is uncritical for



*Consistent with its standing the DDT-II Special comes in a pretty wooden container, which even contains a spirit level for phono cartridges. The master personally perpetuates himself on the cover of each little treasure chest by noting the technical data in handwriting.*

**Loudspeakers:**

- ATC SCM7
- Progressive Audio Diablo
- Spondor S 3/5se

**Opposition****Phono cartridges:**

- Benz Micro Ace L
- Koetsu Urushi
- Ortofon Valencia
- Shelter 501 MK II
- Transfiguration Aria



R.E.M. - Around The Sun

**Played****Alan Parson's Project**

Tales Of Mystery And Imagination

**Chuck Mangione**

Children Of Sanchez

**Clair Marlo**

Let It Go

**Clarissa Wilson**

Traveling Miles

**Edvard Grieg**

Sonatas for violin and piano;  
Ole Böhn, Einar Stehennökleberg;  
Sound-Star-Ton SST 0181

**Madonna**

Ray Of Light

**Kari Bremnes**

Norwegian Mood

**Kate Bush**

Lionheart

**Orb**

Orbus Terrarum

**R.E.M.**

Around The Sun

**Robbie Williams**

Greatest Hits

**Technova**

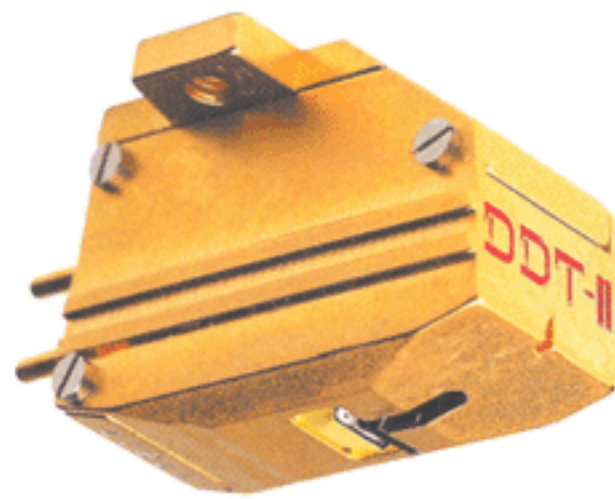
Tantric Steps

all phono pre-amplifiers and the same applies to the broad range of tolerated load impedances from 100 Ohm to 47 kilo Ohms. The designation "Special" refers to improvements compared to the older DDT-II. In detail these refer mainly to the magnet system of the DDT II. Particularly small magnets are now used there, which in the area of field strength however are equal to their predecessors. Due to this factor, the magnetic field can be focused more narrowly so that as a result the field intensity increases. The sonic results of such efforts generally express themselves by a further increase of the resolution. With the DDT-II Special additionally, in the same manner the somewhat higher output voltage could be generated.

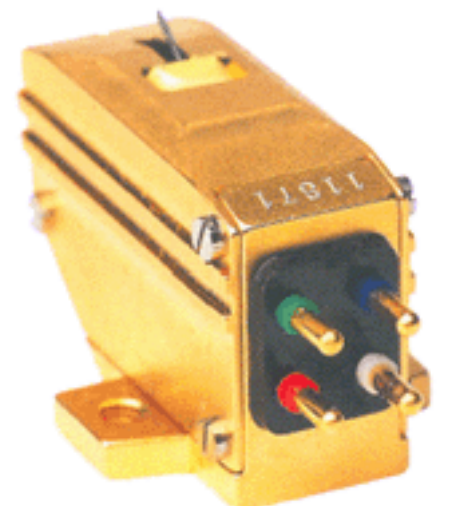


First the DDT-II Special landed up in the Transrotor Fat Bob with the SME 309. This combination seems suitable to grant a first view on the qualities of the Van den Hul, and in bottom line the lecture already turns out favourably altogether. The DDT-II Special shines with pronounced dynamic capabilities and very generous spatial imaging. In comparison with well-known systems of its price class, the DDT-II Special in addition presents a sharply outlined and energetic, but also a little clinically sounding bass reproduction. Although these observations do not describe any nuances, one must at first concentrate on these characteristics. In such a way the composition of the layers of presence engages the listener. After having played a few pieces the special dynamic qualities move more and more into the background of perception, because delicate bells in the midst of the Tibetan atmosphere of the Goa album "Tantric Steps" by Technova sound like pieces of glass powerfully smashed together. The DDT dispenses high tone in almost toxic dose. That can't be! Therefore, waiting and gently letting it run-in. After about fifty hours of playing, the DDT-II Special has noticeably changed up in all dimensions, but its reproduction of the upper middle range and high tones still gets on the nerves, some sounds prick like pine needles - has it become even worse with time? Slowly the suspicion arises that this system enters into a less harmonious relationship with the SME 309 than first assumed.

So we need "heavy artillery". We mount the DDT into the Dynavector DV 507 MK II, which also stands beside the Fat Bob and which effective mass lies within the recommended values by Van den Hul. Next we allow the DDT an additional twenty hours of running-in. After that the same music plays again, however another phono cartridge! The venomousness has transformed into a pleasure-giving nerve stimulation. It becomes definitely clear that here a proper play partner has been found and



*The form of the system body favours an uncomplicated installation and a precise adjustment without nerve-racking actions*



*As clearly visible here, the side parts of the DDT-II Special are screwed onto the framework*

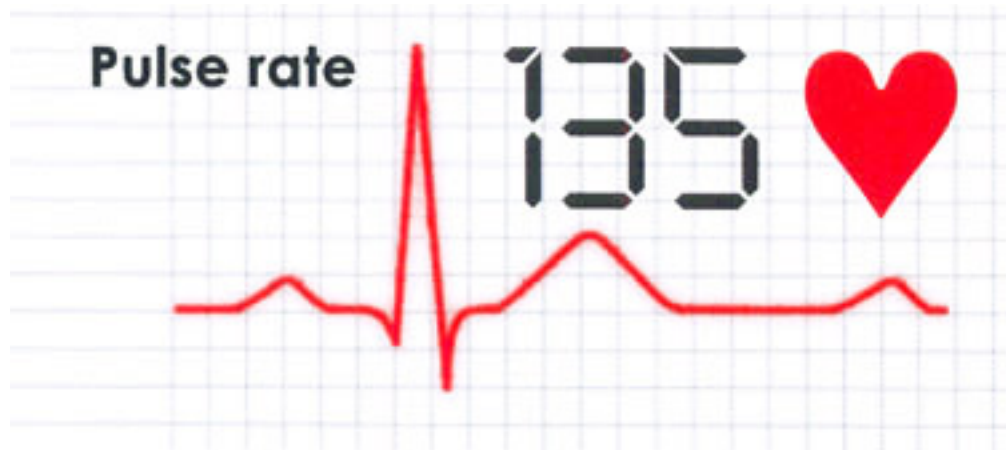
that the dramatic changes go less on account of the advanced burn-in. Now the Van den Hul sketches the reproduction of spatial illusion almost perfectly focused, outlines the contour of single instruments razor-sharply and in all axes spans a very wide and brightly illuminated space, without distorting the correct proportional relations. Yet the best about the DDT-II Special is its coarse and fine dynamic resolving power and the crystal-clear transparency of the entire spectrum. Even with a view to more expensive competitors, the DDT-II Special may be attested as being superb in this regard. How almost overbubbling lively the Van den Hul pulls its weight and how effortlessly, musically transparent and jumping at you it plays is a rarity. And how is it meanwhile going with the tonality? Not fundamentally different, but it has now been rescued to the right side of the extremely narrow razor-edge between astonishing high tone energy and a too much in front standing balance of the layers of presence, on which the DDT promenades. The reduction of the load impedance from 470 to 100 Ohm by the way also contributes to the success of this

balancing act, as also to an increase of the sovereignty. Apart from its habits, the DDT nevertheless may also overwhelm some listeners, while others are offered with a precision of expression which they later, if not sooner, will miss with many other systems.

<b>Measured</b>	
Weight:	8.2 g
Output voltage:	0.65 mV (1 kHz / 5 cm/s)
Frequency range:	5 Hz - 50 kHz
Channel unbalance at 1 kHz:	< 0.75 dB
Static compliance:	28 Micron / mN
Recommended tracking force:	13.5-15 mN
Recommended load impedance:	200 Ohm
Running-in time:	About 70 hours

**Van den Hul  
The DDT-II Special**

Price:	See Advisory Retail Pricelist on van den Hul website
Warranty:	2 years



**Below the line ...**

>> ... The DDT-II Special is really "special", a phono cartridge which divides its audience into a group of spurners and a crowd of fervent admirers.

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