



Two Historic KlipschTape Reissues in High Resolution Digital

by Teresa Goodwin

Present-day representatives of Klipsch, a famous speaker manufacturer, worked together with Bob Witrak of High Definition Tape Transfers (HDTT) to carefully preserve a sampling of Paul W. Klipsch's original recordings. This resurrection of *KlipschTape*, a former milestone in audio history, represents the best of the original Klipsch reel-to-reel master tapes reissued on CD and 24 bit PCM, see listings below for more details on the formats and resolutions. Volume II is also available as DSD128 (5.6MHz) and DSD64 (2.8MHz) downloads.

Originally conceived in 1956 by Paul W. Klipsch and assisted by recording engineer John Eargle, *KlipschTape* provided early audiophiles with reference quality program material, as well as offering Klipsch compelling audio demonstrations at trade shows. Throughout its two-year existence, the *KlipschTape* division was able to create seven tapes that were amongst the earliest stereo recordings ever offered to the public. In addition, Klipsch was one of the first equipment manufacturers to attempt to make direct tape masters available to audiophiles.

Paul W. Klipsch (1904-2002) was one of the most important pioneers in the history of audio reproduction, as was John Eargle (1931-2007) whose paths crossed in the early 1950s when they were just starting out. Klipsch initiated his speaker manufacturing company in 1946, which makes it the oldest company still making the same model, the Klipschorn.

During that time, all LPs were monaural, however there was stereo on commercially recorded two-track tapes from RCA, Mercury, and a few others. Klipsch decided to make his own stereophonic tapes, mostly to have some reliable software to demonstrate the abilities of his Klipschorns. His tapes were made at 15 IPS (inches per second) to achieve the highest fidelity possible and the first ones were sold in 1954. Luckily the master tapes were still in miraculously good shape, so Bob Witrak of HDTT transferred them directly to high resolution digital.



KlipschTape Reissues Volume I, *Various Artists*

- Source used for transfer: original master tapes and production master tapes
- All selections recorded by John Eargle under the supervision of Paul W. Klipsch
- Released by HDTT with the cooperation and permission of the Klipsch Group, Inc.
- A sampler of the following original Klipsch Tapes:
- Demonstration Tape with track introductions by John Eargle (KST1000)
- Flem Ferguson Combo "Tin Roof Blues", Weldon Flanagan playing the Wurlitzer pipe organ "The Yellow Rose of Texas", John Eargle playing the Aeolian-Skinner organ "Mulet's Carillon Sortie", and Joe Holland Quartet "I Think You're Wonderful"
- An Organ Recital by John Eargle (KST1002)
- "Bach's Toccata in D minor," "Langlais's Arabesque for the Flutes," "Bach's Gigue," "Liszt's Harmonies du Soir," "and Alain's Litanies"
- Flem Ferguson and his Dixieland Jazz (KST1001)
- "Lady be Good," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "and Muskrat Ramble"
- June 21, 1954 Television Interview with Paul W. Klipsch
- Formats available:
- Compact Disc burned on a Gold CD-R
- HQCD (High Quality Compact Disc) Playable on all compact disc players
- 24bit 96kHz DVD Playable on all DVD players
- 24bit 192kHz DVD-A playback must support DVD-A
- 24bit 96kHz FLAC downloads
- 24bit 192kHz FLAC downloads
- 24bit 352.8kHz DXD FLAC downloads (Demonstration Tape KST1000 only)
- Formats reviewed:
- 24bit 192kHz FLAC download
- 24bit 352.8kHz DXD FLAC download (Demonstration Tape KST1000)

First, let me say that this is without a doubt one of the finest recordings in my collection regardless of age. The fact that it was recorded in early analog in 1956, some fifty seven years ago, is amazing. This is further proof to me that high resolution digital is just now beginning to catch up with the finest analog recordings. It's too bad none of the analog "consumer" formats offer the ease of use, robust quality, and easier maintenance of the digital formats. I am still finding my favorite recordings are from analog masters even though I listen to them in high resolution digital from my Mac Mini and Teac USB DAC combo.

The first four tracks come from Demonstration Tape KST1000 which is offered in both 24bit 192kHz and 24bit 352.8kHz. I compared those first four tracks in both resolutions and found the higher resolution version offers the most sonic refinement. The first selection is a Dixieland jazz standard called "Tin Roof Blues" played by Flem Ferguson and his Dixieland Jazz from KST1001 and the 24/192kHz presentation sounds utterly wonderful until I put on the 24/352.8 version which offers goose bumps with even more realistic sounding instruments. This is jazz that moves my soul, and it sounds as great as anything recorded today by the audiophile labels, the ambiance and presence is to such a degree of realism that is seldom accomplished.

Next up is Weldon Flanagan playing "The Yellow Rose of Texas" on the Wurlitzer pipe organ in the Palace Theatre in Dallas, Texas with an unnamed percussionist from KST1006. I used to collect early reel to reel tapes from the 1950s to 1960s and this sounds a lot like some of my favorite music from that time, which is really nothing like what is made today. I'm saying its sound is dated, but in a good way, sort of like really exciting easy listening music, an oxymoron in 2013 but commonplace in the 1950s. The percussion sounds so real as does the organ, in addition the tonal quality of the organ is very pleasing. Once again the 24/352.8kHz version takes one to a higher plateau of realism.

The third selection is John Eargle playing "Mulet's Carillon Sortie" on the Aeolian-Skinner organ in the First Presbyterian Church in Kilgore, Texas from KST1002. It has some really deep bass which is reproduced relatively distortion-free and with more power in the 24/352.8 version.

Next is Joe Holland Quartet playing "I Think You're Wonderful" from KST1003, see below for a review of the full recording and at the end of the article for a three way comparison of this song in 24/192kHz, 24/352.8kHz PCM and 5.6 MHz DSD.

The rest of the review is the 24bit 192kHz download. An Organ Recital by John Eargle (KST1002, tracks 5-9) includes five more selections "Bach's Toccata in D minor," "Langlais's Arabesque for the Flutes," "Bach's Gigue," "Liszt's Harmonies du Soir," "and Alain's Litanies" in the same sonics I described above for the third track. Who knew the famous Delos recording engineer John Eargle also played organ? Based on this program John Eargle reveals himself to be a very fine organist.

The next section is Flem Ferguson and his Dixieland Jazz (KST1001) which offers more selections "Lady be Good," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "and Muskrat Ramble" from the same tape as the first selection, also in killer sonics. In my opinion these wonderful jazz pieces are the highlight of this sampler. All three are definitive versions of these Dixieland standards, if you love Dixieland these are a must have.

The recording ends with a June, 21, 1954 television Interview with Paul W. Klipsch speaking, and is quite entertaining. I won't reveal the content as that would spoil the fun of your first listening.



KlipschTape Reissues Volume II, *The Joe Holland Quartet*

"Yesterdays," "C-Jam Blues," "Night and Day," "Blue Moon," "I Think You're Wonderful," "Memories of You," "Fine and Dandy," "Indiana," "Pennies from Heaven," "Lady is a Tramp," "Holland's Holiday drum solo," "Lullaby in Rhythm," "There's a Small Hotel (alternate)," "There's a Small Hotel," "There's No You," "September Song," "Jazz me Blues," "I Got it Bad, That Ain't Good," "Disc Jockey Jump"

- Source used for transfer: original 15 IPS 2-track Master Tapes
- All selections recorded by Paul W. Klipsch
- Tracks 1-11 recorded June 19th, 1955 (KST1003)
- Tracks 12-19 recorded March 10, 1957 (KST1004)
- Released by HDTT with the Cooperation and Permission of the Klipsch Group, Inc.
- Formats available:
- Compact Disc burned on a Gold CD-R
- HQCD (High Quality Compact Disc) Playable on all compact disc players
- 24bit 96kHz Resolution DVD Playable on all DVD players
- 24bit 192kHz Resolution DVD-A playback must support DVD-A
- 24bit 96kHz Resolution FLAC downloads
- 24bit 192kHz Resolution FLAC downloads
- DSD128 (5.6MHz) and DSD64 (2.8MHz) downloads*
- Format reviewed:
- DSD128 (5.6MHz) download*

*The DSD downloads were transferred straight to a DSD analog to digital converter with no PCM conversion for editing or processing. A pure transfer right off the original tape master.

To play DSD in its native format one needs a DSD-ready media player since iTunes will not play DSD, I use Channel D's "Pure Music" which integrates with iTunes and makes a

"bookmark track" in iTunes that directs it to the original DSD file which "Pure Music" plays. In addition to a DSD-ready media player one also needs a DSD DAC to play pure DSD natively; I use the Teac UD-501 USB DAC.

DSD can also be converted to high resolution PCM using AudioGate for DACs that don't offer DSD playback

Below are the original notes included with the commercial release:

The Klipsch Tape Division Of Klipsch And Associates Presents The Joe Holland Quartet

"In July of 1955 when the music in this album was recorded, none of the principals concerned had any idea that the tapes would one day find themselves on the market. The purpose was merely to record material suitable for demonstrations. As a result the performers were under no strain whatever, and the playing clearly shows a spontaneity and vitality that one seldom hears outside of live and informal performances. In keeping with the nature of the music, intimate microphone placement was employed with the result that certain extra-musical sounds are clearly audible at times. The usual practice of recording engineers is to edit out sounds of this sort, replacing them with portions of later "takes" of the same piece in which "errors" of this sort do not occur. While editing of this sort might result in a note perfect performance, it is in no sense a natural one. Since we believe that these sounds enhance rather than detract from the performance, and, since they are actually a part of what did take place, we wouldn't think of cutting them out.

To be specific, the drummer's suspension seat, as he bobs up and down on it, emits a sometimes audible squeak if one knows what to listen for. In addition there are breathing sounds and occasional key clicks from the clarinet as well as a few random subdued comments from the players. And perhaps the best of all occurs in the introduction of one of the numbers where one player, somewhat in doubt as to what the piece is, looks around quizzically and says, "What is this, Blue Moon?" (Whereupon one of his fellows nods affirmatively telling him that it is Blue Moon.) The performers are: Joe Holland, drums; Fred Rogers, clarinet; Bill Wallace, piano; Howard Ward, bass."

Yes, you will hear some tape hiss at the very beginning, after all this is a 58 year old analog recording. However after the music starts tape hiss pretty much disappears, combined with the realistic attack of high percussion instruments and the spot on correct timbre of all the instruments is a testament on how well these tapes were recorded nearly six decades ago, and how well they have been preserved and restored.

I had trouble making notes about the songs as I kept getting pulled into the music, all I can say is every selection is wonderful and a total joy to listen to. I wish all jazz was this good.

From the opening notes of "Yesterdays" I knew this recording was going to be something very special. The bongos are really cool in "Night and Day" and "Lullaby in Rhythm". I found their version of "Blue Moon" to offer a sweet romantic vibe. Some really great drumming in "Fine and Dandy", "Holland's Holiday" and "Jazz me Blues".

24/192 PCM versus 24/352.8 PCM versus 5.6MHz DSD

Joe Holland Quartet's "I Think You're Wonderful" is in both volumes, so this gave me the opportunity to compare 24/192kHz PCM, 24/352.8kHz PCM and 5.6MHz DSD of the

same song. Volume I has both the 24/192kHz PCM and 24/352.8kHz PCM versions and Volume II has the DSD 5.6MHz version.

The 24/192kHz PCM version sounded wonderful until I played the 24/352.8kHz PCM version which had more ambiance and the instruments sounded more like the real thing in my room, especially the high percussion bringing out more of the little details in addition the low frequencies were fuller and more powerful.

Then I played the 5.6MHz DSD version which offered perhaps more realism in the higher frequencies than the 24/352.8kHz PCM version, however there was less impact and fullness in the bass. The low frequencies were more on par with the 24/192kHz version.

I liked the three versions in the following order 24/352.8kHz PCM followed by 5.6MHz DSD and then 24/192kHz PCM. I went back and forth many times between the music files with headphones and speakers to confirm my preference as I was fully expecting the 5.6MHz DSD version to be the overall best. I'm really splitting hairs here as even the 24/192kHz PCM is sonically better than the majority of high resolution digital and analog recordings in my collection. You'll find these recordings in any of the three resolutions simply amazing. And this finding doesn't diminish my love for the 5.6MHz DSD recording of The Joe Holland Quartet performance in Volume II of the KlipschTape Reissue series. I highly recommend both volumes!

KlipschTape Links

<http://www.klipsch.com/pressreleases/KlipschTape-release>

<http://www.highdeftapetransfers.com/product.php?pid=6448>

<https://www.highdeftapetransfers.com/product.php?pid=7189>

Other HDTT reviews

If you're interested on my take on earlier HDTT releases check out these reviews:

The new high-res contender which sources from a most unlikely place

<http://www.positive-feedback.com/Issue38/HDTT.htm>

Five 24 Bit 96kHz DVDs from High Definition Tape Transfers (HDTT)

<http://www.positive-feedback.com/Issue39/hdt.htm>

Six 24 Bit 96kHz DVDs from High Definition Tape Transfers

<http://www.positive-feedback.com/Issue40/hdt.htm>