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18 watts of high-current triode



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AUDIO PREVIEWS

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JUNE 2007

EERA DL2



Reviewers: Marja & Henk

Sources: CEC TL5100, Audio Note tube DAC, Philips DVP 5500S SACD/DVD player, *Tentlabs DIY CD player* [in for review]

Preamp/integrated: TacT RCS 2.0 room control system], modified Audio Note Meishu with WE 300B (or AVVT, JJ, KR Audio 300B output tubes); *Moscode 401HR* [in for review]; Trends Audio TA-10

Speakers: Avantgarde Acoustic Duo Omega; Avantgarde Acoustic Solo in HT 2.0 setting; Audio Note AN/Jsp silver-wired

Cables: Audio Note AN/Vx interconnects; Siltech Paris interconnects; Gizmo silver interconnect; Qunex 75 reference interconnect; Crystal Cable CrystalConnect Reference interconnect, CrystalDigit S/PDIF RCA/RCA and RCA/BNC, Y-cable, Crystal Cable Piccolo iPod to XLR, CrystalPower Reference AC-Eur/IEC' CrystalSpeak Reference; Audio Note AN-L; Gizmo silver LS cable; Virtual Dynamics Revelation power cords [in for review], *Harmonic Technology Magic Woofer, Magic Tweeter & Pro AC11* [in for review]

Power line conditioning: Omtac PowerControllers

Equipment racks: Two double sets of Solid Tech Radius; Acoustic System amplifier shelf

Sundry accessories: IAR carbon CD damper; Boston Audio graphite CD damper, Denson demagnetizer CD; Furutech DeMag; Nanotech Nespa #1; TacT RCS calibrated microphone and software; Exact Audio Copy software; Compaq server w/Windows Server 2003 and XP; wood, brass and aluminum cones and pyramids; Xitel surround processor; Manley Skipjack; Boston Audio Design TuneBlocks

Room treatment: Acoustic System Resonators; Gizmo's Harley Davidson cap

Review component retail: € 4,100



En France on n'a pas de pétrole, mais ils ont des idées is a favorite saying and ever so true. Look at all the great innovations that come from the Gallic country. Wine, great cheeses -- the question there is for how much longer now that the EU interferes with raw milk usage - and some wonderful cars. And what about the Ariane rocket? All were invented or at least enhanced by the French and basically intended only for the French. For a long time, the world's center has been France and more specifically, Paris. Don't agree? Live somewhere else then. But now that even the French are speaking English, some things *have* changed, though luckily not all. Many French are still very opinionated and stubborn. And doesn't that add up to a real identity?

The same goes for French audio products - BC Acoustique, Neodio, Riffaud, Focal, Actinote, Jadis, JM Reynaud, Davis, Atoll, Icos, AudioAero, Cabasse, just to name a few and then we have omitted a great number of speaker manufacturers. Some you may know of by reputation, some are completely obscure. But all have one thing in common: they go their own way.

Located in the sunny south of France, in Marseille, there lives and works another dedicated and typically French audio maker. Under the lead of Didier De Luca, that's Eera. Mr. De Luca made a name for himself with his highly original Helios CD players. Based on this Helios experience, Mr. De Luca now produces his Eera line of CD players of which we received the top of the line DL2 for review.



It is nothing special to have a CD player manufacturer claim that he has solved the distortion problems inherent in CD reproduction. The CD medium is not the most flawless concept after all. Due to its far from completely digital way of working, it is very susceptible to outside influences. It is indeed fair to say that CD is quite analog by nature. Differences in the ways of countering external influences to extract the purest signal from the shiny disc also affect tonal sound quality differences between various CD players and transports. A truly neutral CD player is completely lifeless. It is the ear and hand of the designer that make it a personal statement.



Didier De Luca concentrates his counter measures on two fields. One is the mechanical, the other the electronic. When these two are adequately treated, a very clean signal should be the output of the player. To start with, the Era

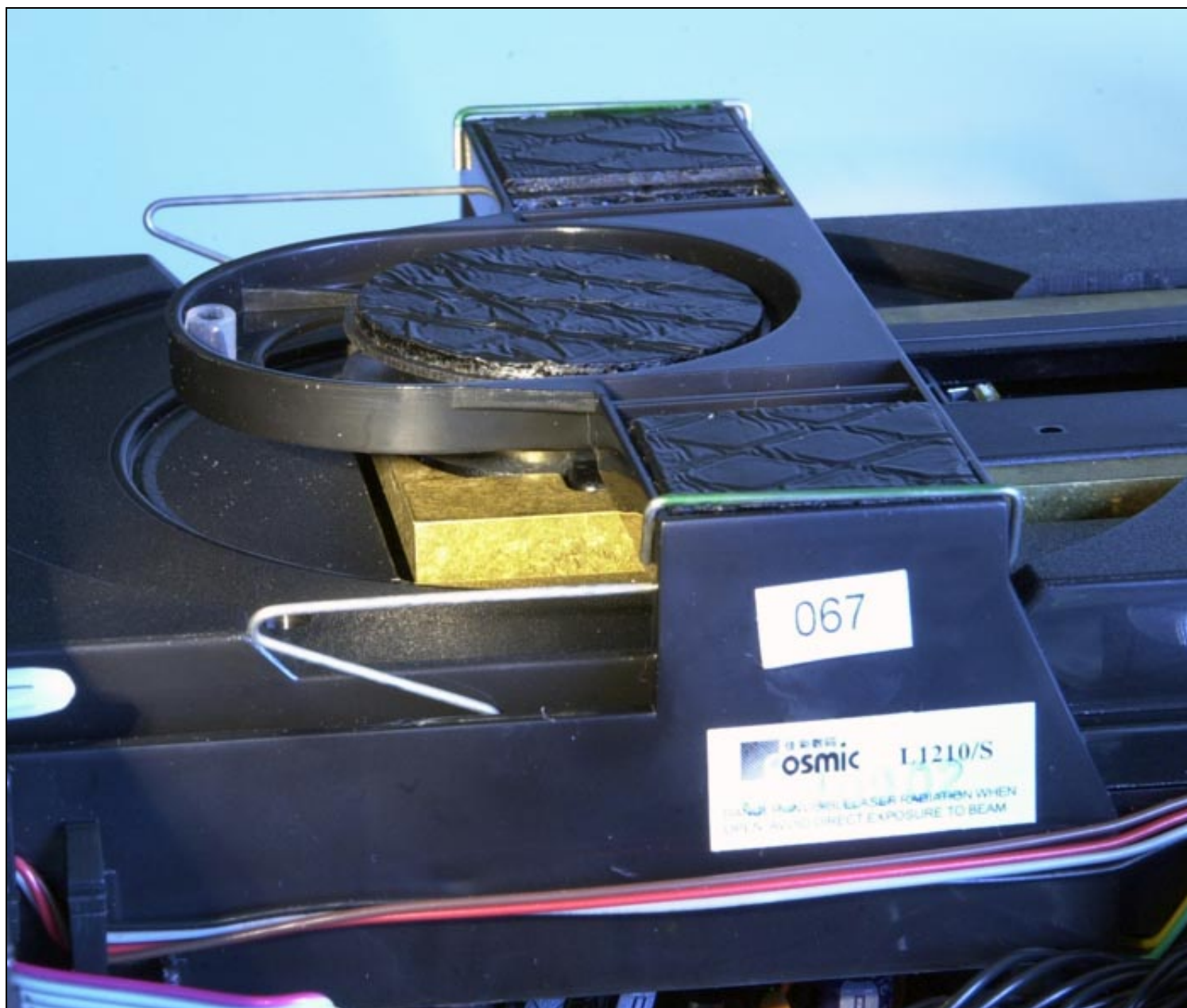
DL2 uses an in-house modified Philips CDM 12.10 transport. This is the version with a motorized tray. Era adds the term *Gyropoint* to the transport's nomenclature. With Gyropoint, the designer has made a major change to the mechanism. In original form and as used in many tray-fitted CD transports and players, the CDM 12.10 is a bit 'plasticky'. Didier De Luca designed a new carriage holder for the laser diode in the form of a thick brass plate. When the tray is open, the brass plate tilts down towards the front. Closing the tray brings the plate upward, securing the CD disc to the top clamp. The brass plate extends quite a bit to the back and on purpose. When fully closed, the end of the brass plate is caught by a carbide ball that sits atop a small column. This column is securely attached to the frame of the player. In addition, a new frame for the transport is constructed from electrolytic zinc coated steel that is again damped with felt.



Gyropoint technology thus becomes a means to secure the CD better in the transport as well as to offload any mechanical vibration to the CD player's frame. But that's not all. All mechanical parts of the player are covered with heavy, inert bitumen, again to get rid of spurious vibrations.



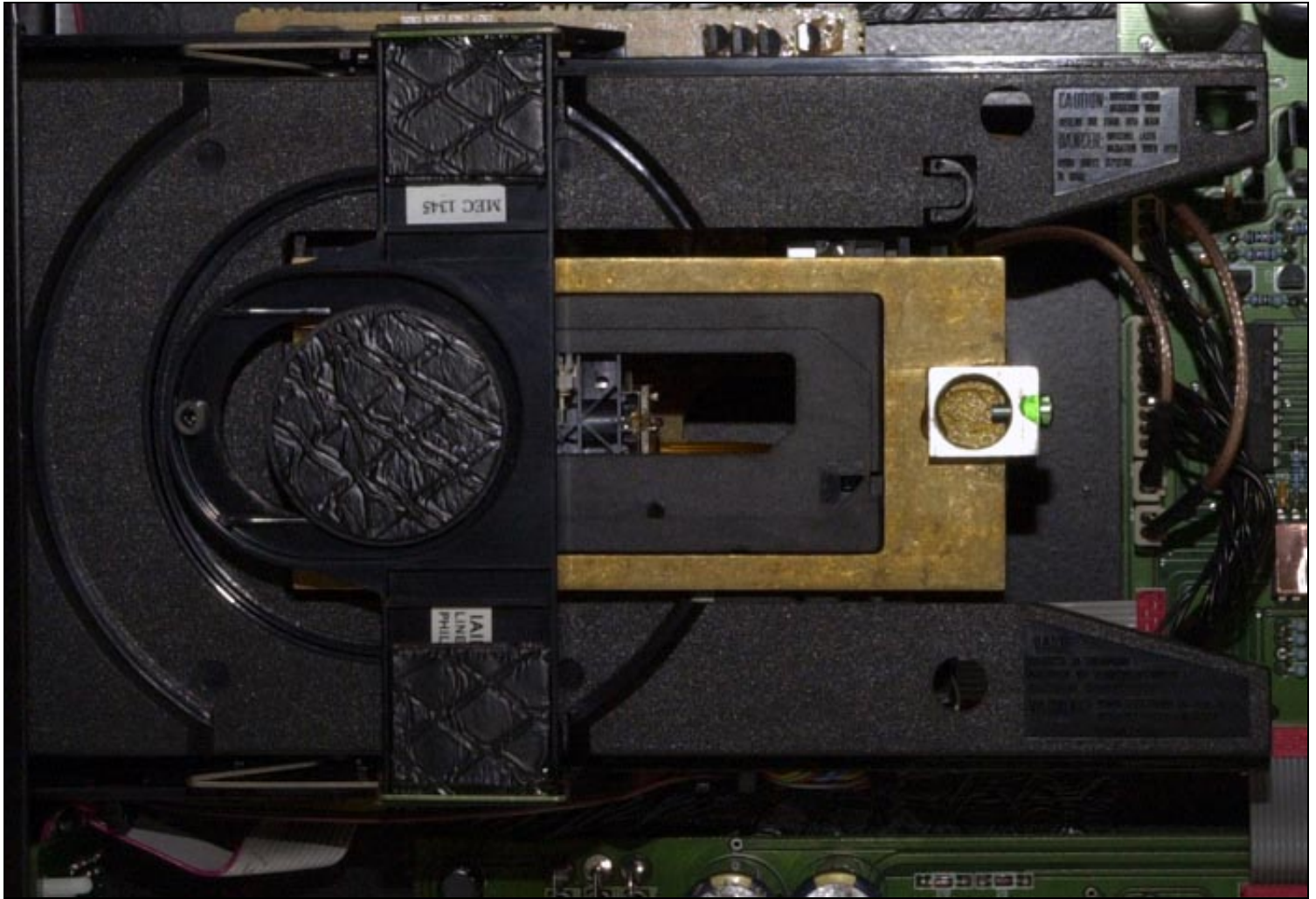
In the non-mechanical department, there is always the problem of jitter. Timing errors in the course of the pit-to-wave conversion are audible and should be countered. Eera does this in a typical French way - the Eera way. Instead of using a precision clock to reclock the signal, De Luca opted for a dual-coaxial cable layout instead. Two cables are used in parallel to connect to the DAC board and, according to the designer, are sufficient to ensure correct synchronization.



The DAC itself is of the 24/196KHz 8-times oversampling type and constructed in dual mono layout explaining the two coaxial cables. Eera uses three separate power supplies for the board. At the output stages of the DAC, a pair of MPSA05/56 transistors are working in class A and are fed from their own power supply.

Eera is proud to announce that all players are hand-made in Marseille. That means hand-soldering of even the PCB parts too. Next, as many parts as possible are French or at the very least European. Vive la France, vive l'Europe!

From the shipping box emerged a standard 430mm wide black Eera DL2. By the first looks, this was a very modest, non-obtrusive piece of machinery. Its 10 mm thick black acrylic front plate has a standby switch and the five common operating controls. The tray is located in the middle and above the controls sits the standard Philips display. The back holds a pair of RCA unbalanced outputs as well as a pair of XLR balanced outputs. Next to that there is an S/PDIF outlet and the IEC with mains switch inlet. For a French design, there's nothing particularly mysterious or strange to be found.



Curious to what the *Marseillais* really had wrought inside the DL2, we opened it up. A very neat outlay greeted us, the Gyropoint structure prominently in the middle. Opening and closing the tray showed how the ball catches the plate and secures it. Where possible ICs are nicely covered with copper foil and the liberal use of bitumen was obvious. Funny was seeing how certain components had their specification imprints filed away. One has to protect his ideas, non?

Because the player hadn't too many hours on the clock, we gave it some time to get used to us and the environment. Thus we played some old Michel Fugain, Serge Gainsbourg and Buddha Bar discs while enjoying a nice bottle of 2005 Medoc (okay, two) and some wonderful matured Camembert and Pont-l'Évêque. With some pain Poilâne, it was a real feast. The music played softly in the back, the concentration was on each other and the food. Life *is* wonderful.



Next morning, it became time for some serious listening. The level went up to a decent 86dB and the first CD got cued up. We used standard pressed CDs that were either Nespa'd or Intelligent Box'd, as well as some EAC copied and Plextor burned MAM-E CDRs with or without Gigarec 0.8 (20% longer pits, thus a 20% faster spinning CD player) and all were first DeMag'd. After the rather loud mechanical sounds the player produced while loading and securing the CD in its mechanism, the DL2 was completely quiet in use thereafter. With the standard RC5 remote control, all functions were easily available from the seat.

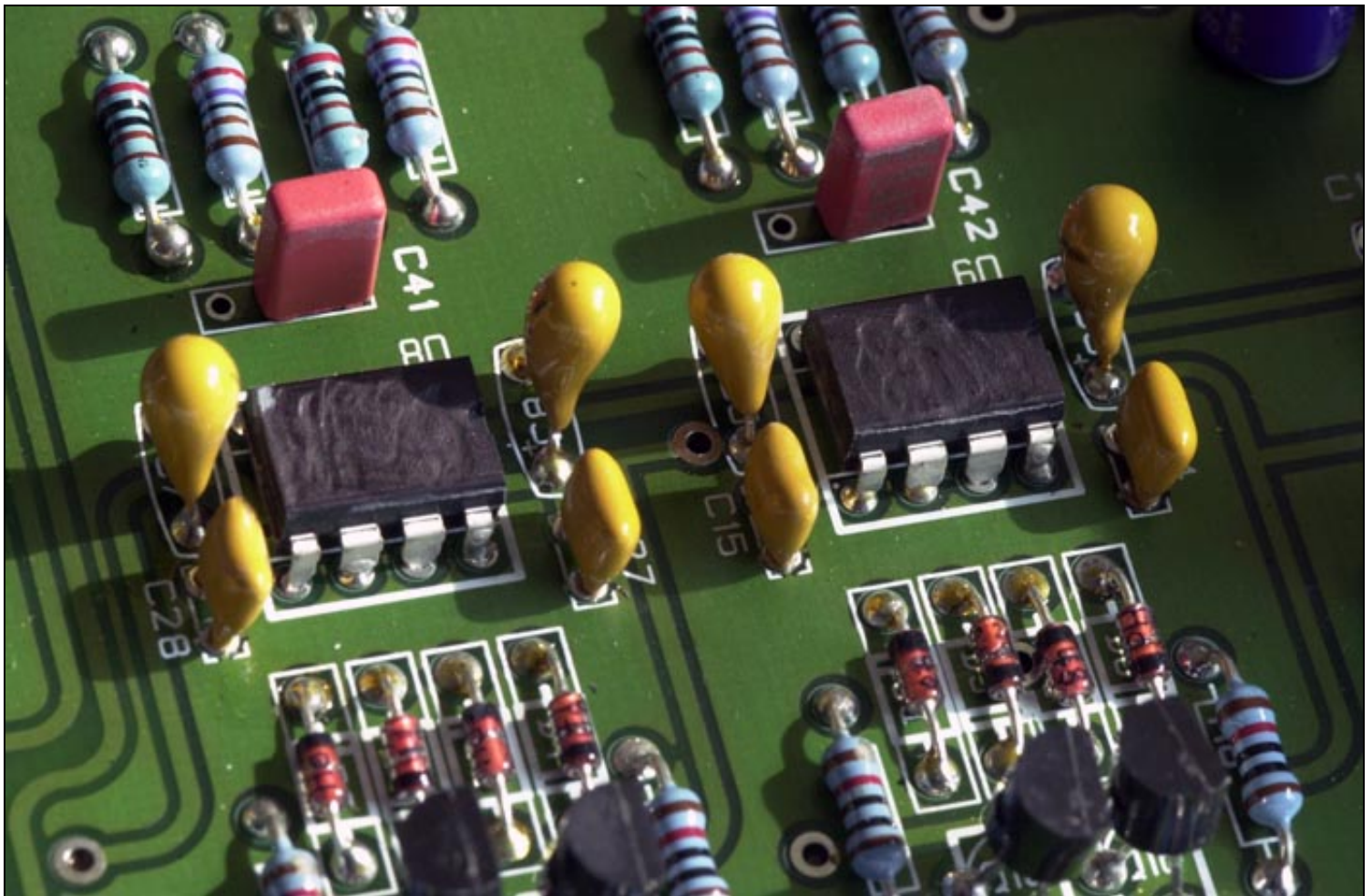
The first impression was that the DL2's output is somewhat higher than the standard 2 Volt. With preamps or integrators of high input sensitivities, this could be a point of attention but was unproblematic in our setup. The next impression was one of ease and rest. Listening to music revived through the DL2 did not make us sit on the edge of the couch. We could sit back, relax and enjoy what came to us. It was the same as we noticed the evening before. Sometimes when playing music in the background, it can be too much. Instead of being musical wallpaper, it is asking for your full attention. You are drawn away from what you are doing straight into the music. That can be just as annoying as having a running TV contending for your attention while you're doing something else. With the Era DL2, any kind of music could be used as background music -- not merely the more loungey sort -- without getting intrusive at all.



This very quality also was evident during the more formal listening. Even after more than 100 hours of playing, it was still present. Describing the effect the DL2 had in our setup comes to a nice full low frequency depiction with mids tending to the smooth, creamy side. Highs can be best described as airy, not bright or crisp. Overall the player has a very nice musical contrast although we think it is not particular fond of more extreme music. By this we mean that very expressive music with lots of transients and sharp notes is out of sync with the 'voicing' of the Eera.



Where music like flamenco, Indian ragas or breakneck gypsy brass bands was not emerging as vibrant and forward as we like from the DL2, the player was very comfortable with more classical music. From chamber music to large symphonies seems what this player was tuned for, just as it is for small jazz ensembles and other more intimate settings. If very outgoing highly energetic music does not top your musical menu, the DL2 is a player you can get old with - and the ones around you, too.



UP



*Dr. Marja Vanderloo &
Dr. Henk 'Longbeard' Root*

Manufacturer's [website](#)

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