

# Hi-fi news<sup>TM</sup>

PURE AUDIO EXCELLENCE

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AOL Keyword: Hi-Fi News

## GROUP TEST m-c cartridges

- Allaerts • Koetsu • Clearaudio
- Zyx • Van den Hul
- Roksan

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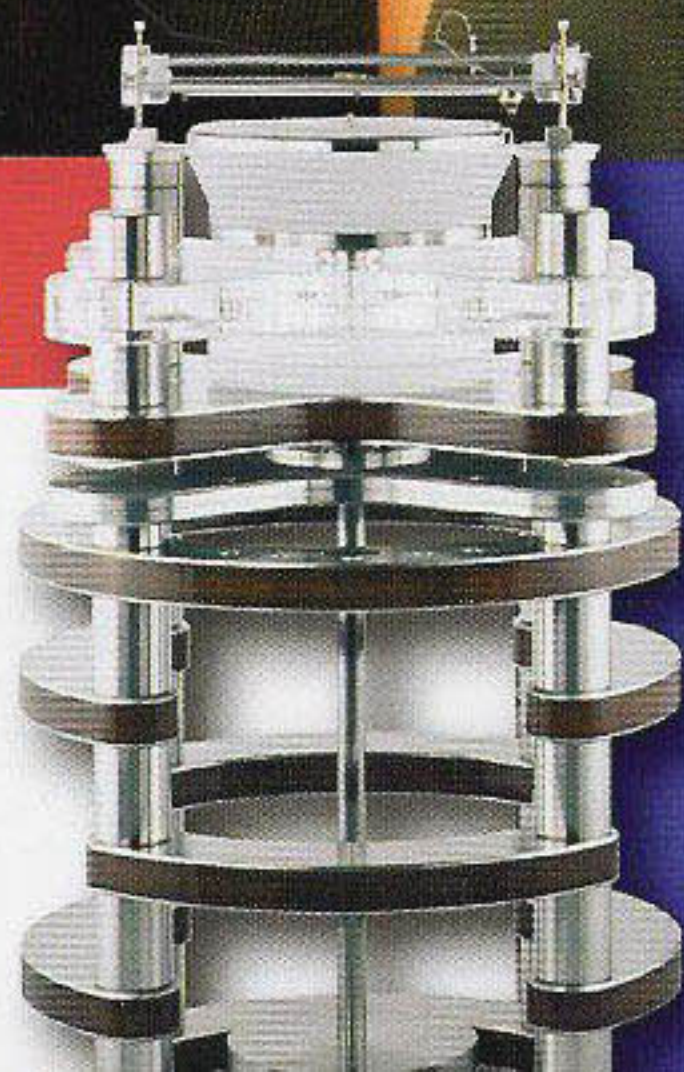
THE VINYL  
COMEBACK  
Special  
investigation

INSIDE B&W  
Location report

# B&W Diamonds 802D SPEAKERS

## WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

Ken Kessler  
tests the  
stunning  
\$100,000  
Clearaudio  
Statement  
turntable!



## Speakers

### Exclusive verdicts...

- » Sonus Faber  
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Anniversario  
Homage
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### Top tests

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Model 3 tonearm
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Reference CD7  
player

## Amps

### Exclusive!

- » Leema Acoustics  
Tucana amp

UK £3.95 US \$9.50 Aus \$9.95





**ON TEST: LEEMA  
ACOUSTICS  
TUCANA**  
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STATEMENT**  
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internet traders. Some prominent people in the hi-fi trade have contacted me to say we were promoting buying via the internet. That's rubbish. Within half an hour of watching the Hi-Fi Doctors in action most of the key benefits of having a reliable dealer to work with are crystal clear. So if you're not happy with a dealer find another one. Better still, the Hi-Fi Doctor will be happy to book you into his surgery!

STEVE  
FAIRCLOUGH  
EDITOR

# Contents September issue

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PAGES OF  
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TESTED



# Excess all areas

**CLEARAUDIO STATEMENT (£55,000)**

Probably the most luxurious turntable in the world comes from Germany and will cost you around \$100,000. Step forward the astonishing Clearaudio Statement...





One day, hopefully before I die, the British will stop acting like it's 1951 and rationing is in full flower. In the league tables of whingeing, penny-pinching, bargain-hunting hustlers, only the Yanks (especially the newly-rich ones with dot-com wealth) are actually worse for bitching about price and looking for ridiculous 'deals'.

Why this offensive opener? Simple: I want to drive away all of you who recognise that trait in yourselves; I want you to move onto the next article. And for a very simple reason: I am about to laud a turntable that costs \$100,000, and I absolutely refuse to say 'sorry!' for its completely off-the-radar price tag.

Put it another way: I will apologise for the cost of the Clearaudio Statement when *Car* apologises for the price of the Ferrari FXX and Jancis Robinson apologises for the price of a good Petrus.

Actually, it gets much worse than that, for I'm assessing its major rival next month, which means that turntables with six-figure stickers may be multiplying. At least, US six figures, which in today's money is 'only' £55,000 (there are rumours, too, of one new turntable where the deposit is \$100,000, followed by a second payment of the same amount! Idiots, mugs and assholes: the queue forms in Narnia). Even so, I'd expect the Statement to come in closer to £80,000, given that we live in 'Treasure Island', where everything costs more than anywhere else, and which goes some way to justifying why the British always moan about price. Like the cost of iTunes downloads here versus everywhere else.

## GERMAN AUDITION

But to reinforce my notion that the British, despite being the third-largest market for Ferrari, often act so low-rent that it's offensive, organising this review had nothing whatsoever to do with the UK importer, who doesn't have one in stock. Instead, I went straight to the manufacturer. Literally. I flew to the Clearaudio works in Germany, to spend two days listening to the Statement. Through my system... in their room.

There are reasons why it was easier for me to fly to Germany than to have one installed *chez* Kessler. For one thing, it won't fit in my room without removing a ludicrous amount of kit. For another, this has been a hellishly hot summer and I don't want to tear apart the listening room to accommodate it. Moreover, there was the lack of desire in involving the importer, the thought of having a squadron of strangers assembling a deck in my room for

'When you get to this level of vinyl playback, you enter a realm not unlike that of 'Super Tuscan' wines, bespoke clothing, hand-made shoes, cars of the Lamborghini ilk, a shave at Trumper. Normal rules no longer apply'

BELOW: Standing 125cm tall, here the Statement sports the TQI tonearm

a day, the urgency of meeting the deadline for this issue. It was crucial that we make this issue, because Clearaudio will be exhibiting at the Hi-Fi News show at Heathrow, and I didn't want any of you – that is, those who don't have an issue with the price of the deck – to miss the opportunity to talk to Clearaudio personnel about the Statement.

## BEYOND THE FRINGE

While at Clearaudio, I learned that the company long ago transcended freaky, fringe audiophile status. It's a real manufacturer, with over 40 employees and a need to expand beyond the ex-Siemens factory that's bursting at the seams. In addition to their not inconsiderable cartridge, arm, cable and accessory sales, Clearaudio sold over 10,000 turntables last year, and not just their budget offerings.

Emphatically, they're heavy hitters. The Statement is the Suchy family's testimonial to nearly 30 years in business.

Indeed, Robert Suchy likes to think of the Statement as: '... the result of more than 28 years in research and development, with several patented technical and mechanical features, never seen or realised in turntable designs before'. And he's not kidding. Instead of one watershed feature, the Statement offers the following elements:

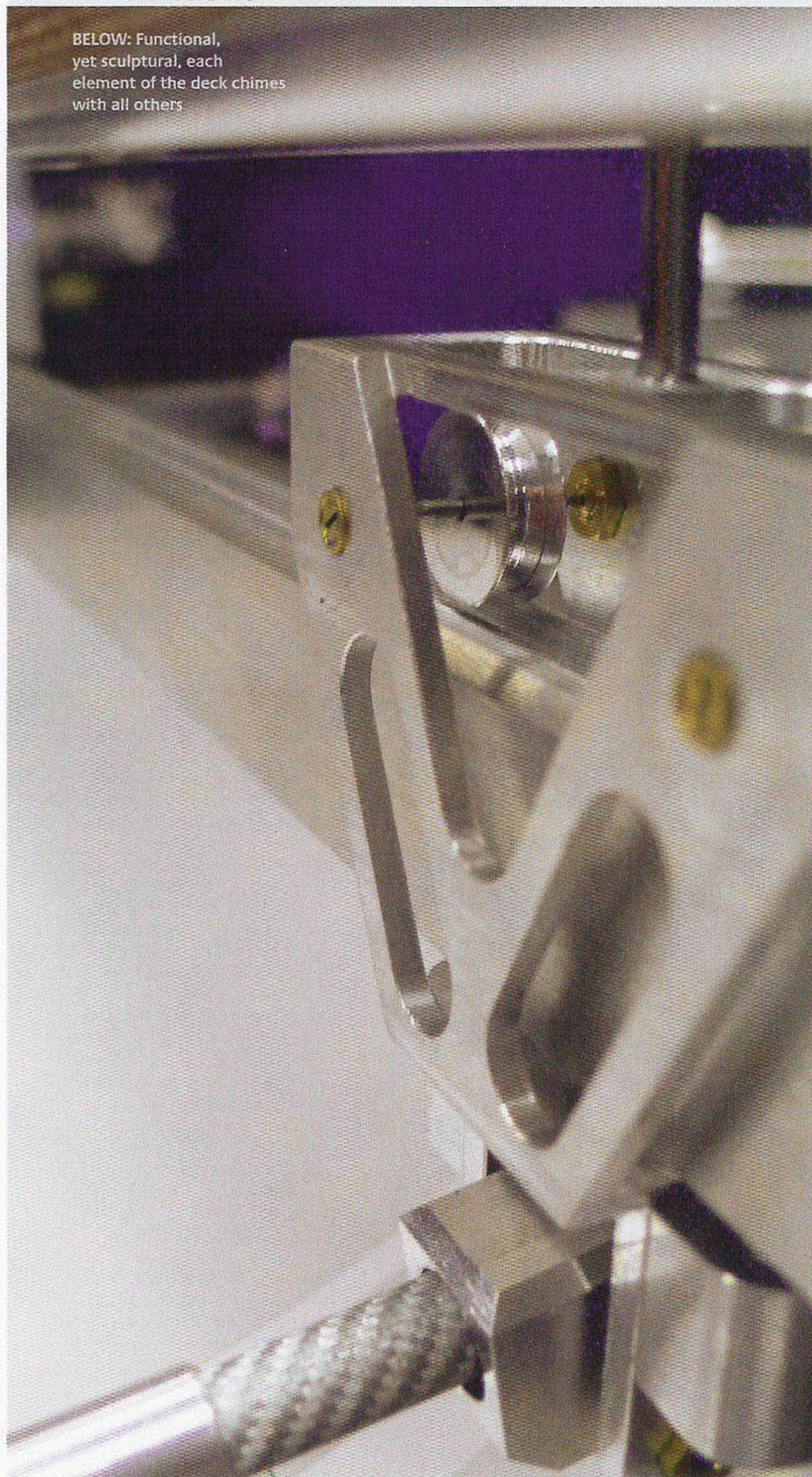
- Its massive acrylic platter is driven by a patented magnetic driven sub-platter, with absolutely no contact to the main platter. One of the Suchys' fave party tricks is slipping a sheet of paper between the two while the platters are spinning;
- It also uses a magnetic vertical platter bearing;
- All platters are dynamic balanced with state-of-the-art testing equipment as critical as Ⓢ





Excess  
all areas

BELOW: Functional, yet sculptural, each element of the deck chimes with all others



those used to balance wheels on racing cars;

- A seriously butch pendulum weighing 80kg provides the self-levelling of the top platform, so you can say, with a straight face, that this table 'rocks'; its automatic horizontal levelling device also includes the tonearm platforms, and there are no air pumps or compressors;
- A high-speed processor-controlled motor-drive unit drives the sub-platter;
- The turntable's main chassis is oil-damped;
- Operation includes a real-time speed control with an active blue LCD display, and fine speed adjustment (33-1/3, 45, 78 rpm) is provided;
- The Statement can support up to four different tonearms;
- Its dedicated and integral stand is completely damped against resonance, using special construction techniques consisting of a damped sandwich made of bulletproof wood, stainless steel and acrylic. Yes: bulletproof wood, a special ply that seemed too dense to be organic in origin.

#### LINEAR TRACKING TONEARM

Crowning this is the new Clearaudio Statement TQI linear-tracking tonearm, engineered and designed specifically for the Statement Turntable (it may or may not be offered to non-Statement owners, just as the SME 312S is only currently available to SME 20/12 owners). The TQI employs a new type of ultra-low-friction, high-precision sapphire bearing design, it's said to be easy to set up, and it very much looks like an extension of the Statement in that its frame also uses the sandwich construction of the turntable plinth.

All of this combines to form a system that stands an impressive 1250mm tall, with a footprint of 690x570mm. And another thing: your floor will need to support 350kg, or 770lb in real money. Let's put it another way: you notice a Statement the way you'd 'notice' a Hummer, a St. Bernard, or a member of the Harlem Globetrotters. Aside from a slightly unfinished look to parts of the arm, the Statement has the kind of surfaces and fine details you expect of genuine luxury products, like the heater controls in a Rolls-Royce, or the



buckle on Girard-Perregaux. This is a showpiece deck, the antithesis of the hideaway Technics SL10 in size and presence. In other words, it looks like a turntable with attitude.

And it sounds that way. Whatever your beliefs about linear trackers, acrylic platters, huge stands, ad infinitum, there's no doubting that the Statement exhibits three sonic qualities that announce their presence with all the restraint of John Prescott proclaiming his innocence: rock-solid imaging, sledge-hammer bass that plumbs truly Stygian depths and dynamic contrasts that will have you jumping out of your seat every time the music hits a crescendo. I didn't cite the Hummer above by accident: this turntable is all about command, about immunity to upset, about retrieval of detail. It's a deck that says: 'My name is Arnold. I will be back. *Hasta la vista*, baby', etc etc.

I should mention here that the system was equipped with the Clearaudio Goldfinger, the company's flagship moving coil. Suffice it to say that a review will be forthcoming, and that everyone who hears it wants one. 18 grams of solid gold! A naked cantilever! Eight magnets matched to a tenth of a gauss! The reason we used it is simple: the Statement was made for it. So I lived with a Goldfinger for a few months before my Statement sessions. And I fell in love with it, too. But that will have to wait...

#### WHAT THE PUCK?

Then we get to the puck, an area I really didn't want to touch upon, given my ever-increasing dismay with audio accessories. But here's what happened, a few hours into the session, while listening to Linda Ronstadt's take of 'Girls' Talk':

Those who recall the West Coast releases of the late 1970s and 1980s will remember an awful-sounding processing gimmick called the Aphex Aural Exciter. In its earlier incarnations, at least, it was responsible for crapping up the sound of more music by more major artists than anything this side of the transistor. Whether or not it's in use on Mad Love isn't the point: the LP exhibits the same nasal dullness that characterises the era. But the album was so enjoyable that I learned to listen through it.

So, when Peter Suchy asked if I minded him tweaking the sound a bit mid-track, I said, 'Go ahead'. He stood between me and the

Statement. For all I know, he could have changed cartridges. What he didn't do was go near the pre-amp. When he lowered the stylus onto the LP, what I heard was a change greater than any cable swap, a change on a par with a speaker swap. I kid you not.

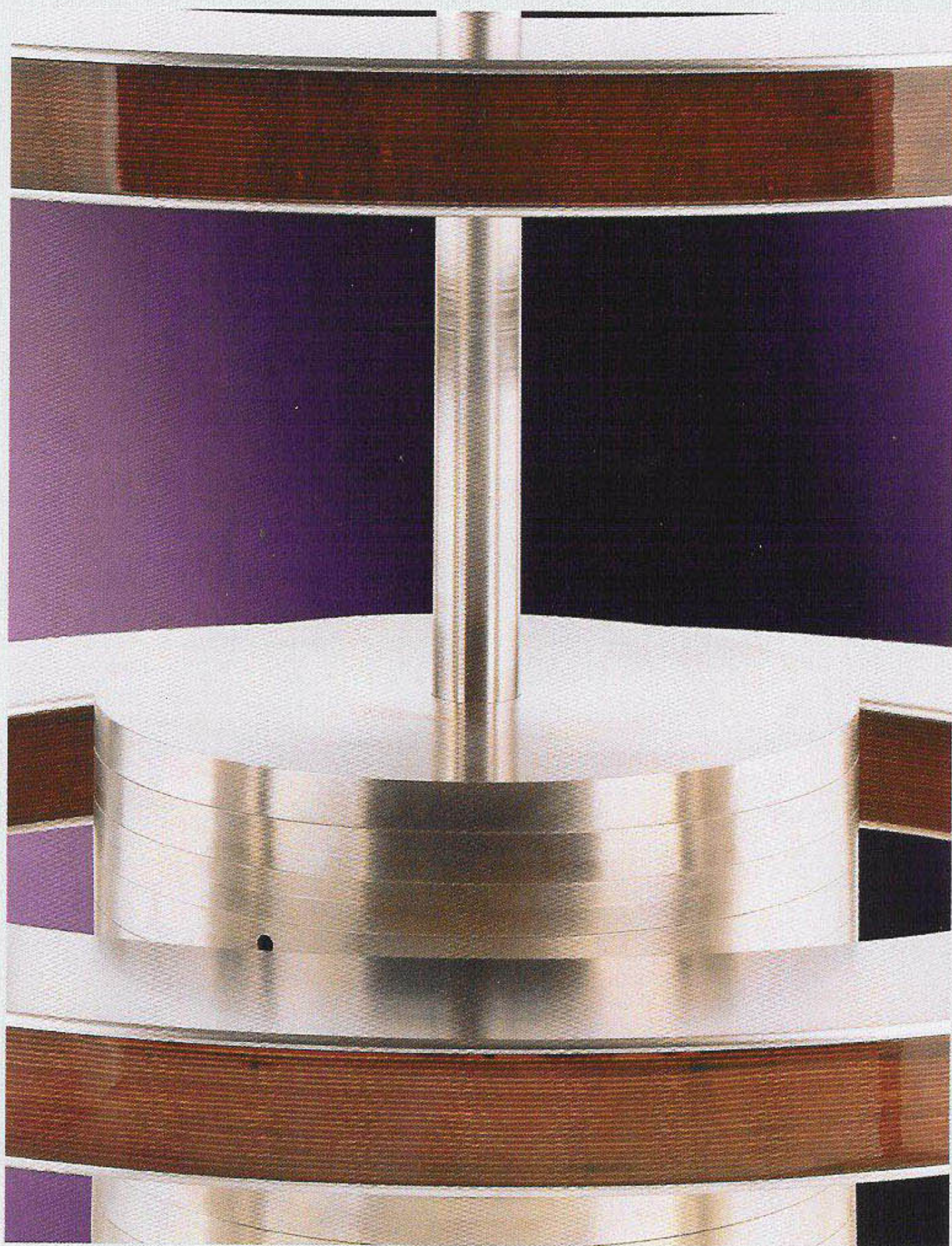
I asked what was it? VTA? Tracking force? Tell me! He motioned me over to the turntable and pointed to the puck. He had changed the conical metal weight for a label-sized disc of sandwich construction: a disc of metal (aluminium?) between two discs of wood, the entire affair no thicker than eight CDs and weighing but a few ounces. No clamping, just a pressure fit over the spindle. The gains were earth-shattering,

'This isn't merely a great turntable: it's a turntable that says 'up yours' to the small-minded miseries who have kept high-end audio from finding its rightful home'

BELOW: Stand is made from bulletproof wood, stainless steel and acrylic

especially in the context of the horrible-sounding mix of Asylum Records circa 1980: better treble extension, sweeter vocals, less sibilance, rounder bass, more air.

You read it here: the puck will go on the market this year, possibly selling for as little as €99 (which probably means £99 in the UK). How much of this was the Statement ☺





Excess  
all areas

serving as an ideal platform for the puck, or for any accessory for that matter, is open to speculation; the Statement is that revealing. Regardless, I can't wait to try it on something like the Funk.

# SENSE OF SCALE

The Suchys left me alone with the Statement, and I ploughed through a stack of albums – mine and theirs. Discovery after discovery: new resonance and weight to the percussion in ZZ Top's epic, 'Tush'. Unmistakeable flow to the bass in 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone' and an increase air to the acoustic guitar in Mr. Big's 'To Be With You'. Meshed harmonies from Hall & Oates. Reduced sibilance and surface noise, black silences, negligible tracing whoosh.

Subtle, it ain't. There's a sense of scale about the whole affair that exploited the WATT Puppies to the maximum, that filled every nook and cranny of the Clearaudio's 9.3x7.4x3.3m (dwh) room, a real extravaganza that says, 'Size matters. Put your little weiner away and get to grips with big boys' toys'. With few exceptions – namely, the SMEs, the top Kuzma, Clearaudio's own Reference, and the like – the Statement makes the case for cost-no-object turntables, disarming any naysayers in an instant.

Which can only be a good thing. For me, it prepared the stage for the Continuum, which I heard the following week [see October's issue – Ed]. Conversely, it let me know, upon returning to the UK, that the SME 30 is still the 'gold standard' of turntables

and, in light of the escalation of prices, something of a bargain. But above all else, it demonstrated beyond any doubt, beyond political influence, beyond prejudice, that vinyl is still the supreme recorded music format.

When you get to this level of vinyl playback, you enter a realm not unlike that of 'Super Tuscan' wines, bespoke clothing, hand-made shoes, cars of the Ferrari/Porsche/Lamborghini ilk, a shave at Trumper. Normal rules and standards no longer apply. Mere mortals lose their sense of bearing, because their values, their points of reference have been thrown out the window. It's probably the reason why the finer things seem unappreciated by chavs, footballers and WAGs, who go from Watney's to Mouton-Rothschild overnight.

If that sounds patronising or condescending, my apologies. But any e-mails from any of you, kvetching about the Statement on any level – unless you've actually heard it – will be greeted with a click of the 'delete' button.

This isn't merely a great turntable: it's a turntable that says 'up yours' to the peasantry, to the small-minded miseries who have kept high-end audio from finding its rightful home amongst names like Solaia and Corneliani and Speake-Marin and Loiminchay.

But here's the punchline: Clearaudio has already sold over 30. Without a review. Without the USA or UK. And there's already a waiting list. If the world is going to Hell in a handcart, at least let's get there with a fine soundtrack? ☺

FOR:  
Sonic and  
sculptural  
triumph

AGAINST: Only the  
price tag

BELOW: Operation includes a real-time speed control with blue LCD display



Hi-fi news  
Verdict

CLEARAUDIO  
STATEMENT  
£55,000

Unabashedly living up to its name, the Statement is as much an exercise in excess as it is a valid choice of turntable. And the latter is true: Clearaudio is too experienced, too clever to release a deck at this price point that doesn't behave like the audio equivalent of a supercar. Conversely, in living up to its name, it also serves as a piece of functional sculpture, a showpiece, something to tell your friends that you're serious about vinyl. Very serious.

SPEC/FEATURES



SOUND QUALITY



BUILD QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



Hi-fi news  
OVERALL RATING 16/20

## Lab report

Not yet tested.

## Specifications

TONEARM	Linear tracking
BEARING	Sapphire
SUB PLATTER	Magnetically driven; no contact with actual platter
SPEEDS	33-1/3, 45, 78 rpm (with fine adjustment)
CONSTRUCTION	Resonance-damped sandwich hardwood, stainless steel and acrylic
WEIGHT	310kg without tonearm
DIMENSIONS	125 x 69 x 57cm (hwd)

## Contact numbers

TEL: 00 49 91 31 59595 or 00 49 91 31 57705  
WEB: www.clearaudio.de

## Review system breakdown

SOURCE: Clearaudio Statement, Clearaudio Goldfinger m-c cartridge

AMPS: Clearaudio Balanced Reference phono stage, McIntosh C2200 pre-amplifier, McIntosh MC2102 power amplifier, Moscode 401HR power amplifier

SPEAKERS: Wilson WATT Puppy System 7 speakers

CABLES: Clearaudio speaker cables and interconnects

## We listened to

HALL & OATES  
Voices  
(RCA PL13646)

MR. BIG  
Lean Into It

THE TEMPTATIONS  
'Papa Was A Rolling Stone'

JULES SHEAR  
The Eternal Return  
(EMI 06424-0317-1)

LINDA RONSTADT  
Mad Love  
(Asylum AS52210)

ZZ TOP  
'Tush'

