

KNOW HOW

Turntables can sound great, but they need a little love and care before they deliver top-class sound quality

MORE THAN JUST about any other hi-fi component, record players rely on decent set-up. Even the likes of the Roksan Radius won't impress if every adjustment and detail isn't spot-on. Here's a quick guide on the things to look out for.

Location, location, location

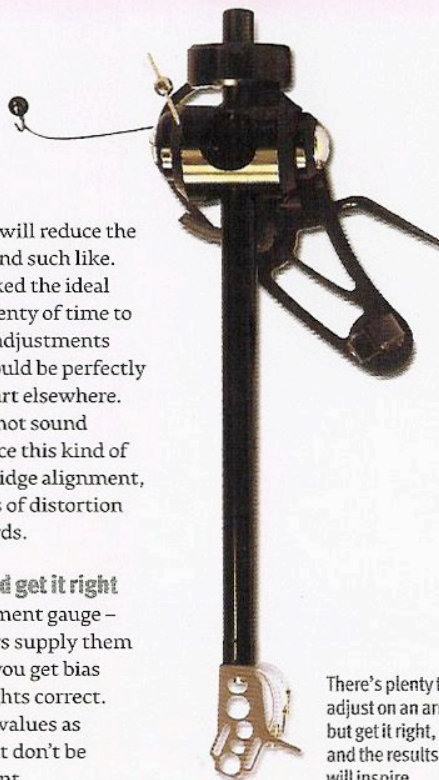
No, we're not about to give to house-buying advice. Turntables – even the ones with elaborate suspension systems – are very sensitive to external vibrations. Make sure you use a dedicated support, and try to place it as far away from the speakers as possible. This will minimise sonic vibrations from the speakers spoiling the sound. If you have a bouncy wooden floor, try a wall

shelf, because this will reduce the effect of footfalls and such like.

Once you've picked the ideal placement, take plenty of time to get all the various adjustments right. The deck should be perfectly level before you start elsewhere. One degree might not sound much, but introduce this kind of error into the cartridge alignment, and you'll get loads of distortion and damaged records.

Take your time and get it right

Use a proper alignment gauge – most manufacturers supply them – and ensure that you get bias and cartridge weights correct. Use the suggested values as starting points, but don't be afraid to experiment.



There's plenty to adjust on an arm, but get it right, and the results will inspire

WHY THEY WON

So, we have four excellent record players, but which one is right for you?

IT'S IMPORTANT TO remember that every record player here is a winner. So your choice should be dictated by both budget and system, and nothing else. Stick the hugely talented Pro-ject RPM5 in a three-grand system, and it'll be the weak link, despite its Product of the Year tag. However, the superior insight and transparency of Roksan's Radius 5 means it'll shine in such an ambitious set-up.

On the other hand, Pro-ject's Debut III is a great choice for a starter system, or if your vinyl replay is a secondary consideration in your home.

Clearaudio's Emotion remains a stunning option for most mid-priced systems. Why didn't it retain the Product of the Year crown? Well, the RPM5 has a slightly better performance-per-pound ratio. It's that simple!

BEST TURNTABLE £500-£800

Clearaudio Emotion

£690

DON'T WORRY, LAST year's Product of the Year remains an excellent buy. The Emotion's combination of elegant looks, solid build and class-leading sound quality are as attractive today as they've always been. This is a complete package, including arm and cartridge. Though it needs more assembly than either of the Pro-ject decks, we think most people won't have much trouble putting it all together. If you do, we're sure your hi-fi dealer will be more than happy to help. This Clearaudio is a solid design, lacking any form of isolation – even the Pro-jects have rubber feet – so take care to use a dedicated support and put it as far away from the speakers as possible. Do this, and you'll get the most from this talented deck.

Classy deck with a classy sound

Once up and running, the Emotion sounds terrific. It has a dynamic, full-bodied sound that gets straight to the heart of the music. Timing is crisp, and bass taut, making this deck an ideal choice for all types of music. The Emotion remains a top-class product.

VERDICT

Clearaudio's Emotion continues to deliver a class-leading combination of excellent build and insightful sound quality



Smart appearance complements the Emotion's more-than-capable sonic performance

BEST TURNTABLE £800-£1500

Roksan Radius 5

£850

TRUST ROKSAN TO do things differently. The Radius 5 might look like a stylish, but relatively conventional deck, but look beneath the skin, and you'll find engineering treasure that traces its roots all the way back to the company's first ever product, the Xerxes turntable. The deck is arranged in layers, where the platter is isolated not only from the motor, but also from external vibrations via carefully chosen rubber suspension. And the motor is very compliantly mounted, not only to reduce vibrations fed to the player, but also to even out any speed irregularities. The list goes on, but we're sure you get the idea: this is no 'me too' design.

Crystal-clear sound with bags of detail

All the clever ideas in the world wouldn't mean a thing if the final results weren't good. In this case, there's no need to worry. The Radius 5 is a stunner, with a level of control and resolution that even the talented Clearaudio Emotion fails to match. Have no doubt, this is a magnificent buy.

VERDICT

This is a great all-rounder. The Radius 5 looks great, and sounds even better

Stylish Roksan pleases interior designers and the audiophiles

