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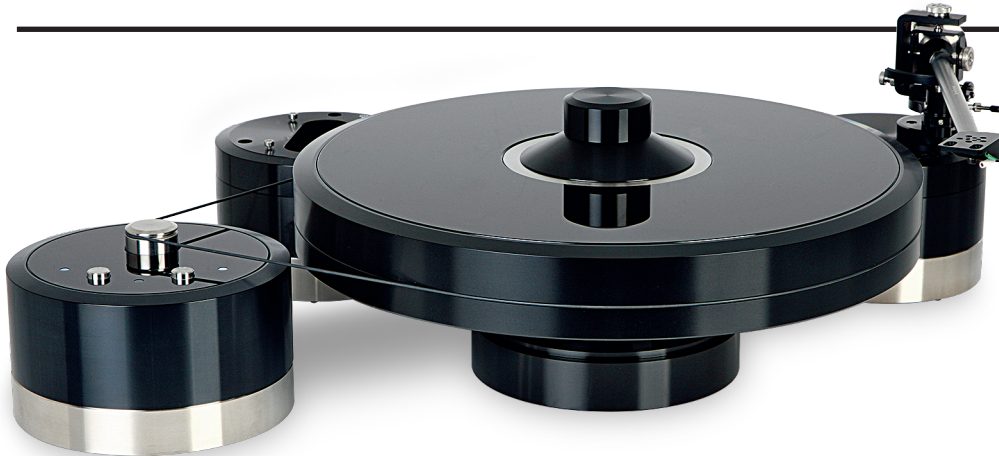
Opinion
Our columnists'
hi-fi high points

• VINYL/PHONO STAGES Brinkmann to Technics • TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS Audio Research to YBA
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AUDIO FILE

Belt-driven turntable with electronic speed control
 Made by: Brinkmann Audio GmbH, Achberg, Germany
 Supplied by: Symmetry, Herts
 Telephone: 01727 865488
 Web: www.brinkmann-audio.com; www.symmetry-systems.co.uk
 Prices: £9795 (deck), £2995 (tube PSU), £3895 (10.5 tonearm)



music gets loud, the Spyder happily conveys this, while its stability brings great focus to the sound, allowing it to excavate masses of low-level detail. Things snap into place and one feels as if a fog has lifted from the recording. The effect is clear everywhere, from its deep, extended bass to the treble, which is finely etched, spacious and crisp.

In the midband you find yourself fixating on the beauty of vocal harmonies, for example, or the purity of aggressively struck steel guitar strings. Cue up a track like Kate Bush's 'Babooshka' [*Never For Ever*; EMI] and you're greeted with an impressively deft rendition of those opening arpeggios with their stinging attack transients – which lesser turntables invariably slur.

Another enjoyable aspect of the deck's character is its particularly fine soundstaging. With Steely Dan's 'Rikki Don't Lose That Number' [*Greatest Hits*; ABC Records] a good but pretty unremarkable recording suddenly assumed a scale and stature we rarely hear, pushing far left and right, with excellent depth perspective too.

The Brinkmann Spyder's superb soundstaging certainly made Handel's *Messiah* [Dunedin Consort & Players; Linn Records] a delight, and while it's perfectly possible to have technically adept turntables that still end up making the music sound rather uninteresting, the Spyder is not one of them.

VERDICT

This redoubtable device conveys rhythms with ease, offers great clarity, a smooth tonal balance and expansive soundstaging. Factor in the excellent finish, flexible design and overall engineering, and this turntable is fine value. ☺

Brinkmann Spyder

This high-end turntable package needed to be special given the surfeit of fancy disc-spinners on the market, and so it proved. Its modular construction means you can add up to four tonearms – up to 12in in length – in bolt-on 'pods'. Our deck came configured for the £3895 Brinkmann 10.5 tonearm.

A novel electronically heated bearing means that it is largely immune to changes in ambient temperature while the supplied 'Sinus' motor is designed to

'It's fun to kick off the audition period with a poor recording'

reduce cogging, powering what is effectively a 500g flywheel, giving a smooth feed to the platter. We also used the optional £2995 RÖNT II vacuum tube power supply, making a cool £16,685 in total.

The large 10kg alloy/crystal platter is driven around its edge by a thin rubber belt from the offboard motor. It sports the usual two speeds, with speed-trim pots sitting either side of motor control buttons. The arm pods bolt to the main chassis and contain detachable arm mounting plates, which – if they're specified for Brinkmann tonearms – come pre-wired to simply plug straight into the base of the arm.

The Brinkmann 10.5 went on very smoothly – it's a beautifully

finished design with a claimed dynamic mass of 12g, so will work well with most modern cartridges (as our original lab test confirmed).

The tube is made from aluminium and stainless steel, with a so-called 'high tech synthetic material' also used, while the allen-key locked headshell has an anodised finish. Double gimbals with precision ball-bearings are employed in the bearing and there are adjustments for VTF, VTA and headshell azimuth. Magnetic antiskating is fitted too and there's a beautifully silky feel when you hand-cue your LP tracks.

In use, this turntable feels lovely. It oozes quality and gives no impression that engineering corners have been cut. There are no creaks or groans from the belt

as the deck spins up to the correct speed, during which time the motor remains absolutely silent.

STRONG AND STABLE

It's always fun to kick off the auditioning period with a particularly poor recording, and so it was that a well-campaigned pressing of 10cc's *How Dare You!* [Mercury] was deployed – scratches, crackles and all. 'I'm Mandy, Fly Me' proved an unexpected treat via a Lyra Dorian MC, delivering a powerful sound that had something of a master-tape feel to it.

There was a surprising amount of dynamic scale to the presentation that was notably less compressed than with other decks. When the

ABOVE: Simple, but elegant, the Spyder's modular construction confers a high degree of 'upgradability'. A freestanding motor drives the 10kg alloy platter via a groove around its edge

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error at 33.33rpm	33.28rpm (-0.16%)
Time to audible stabilisation	7 seconds
Peak Wow/Flutter	0.02% / 0.03%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-68.3dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-71.5dB
Hum & Noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-59.9dB
Power Consumption (with RÖnt II)	75W (65W idle)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	500x160x400mm / 21kg