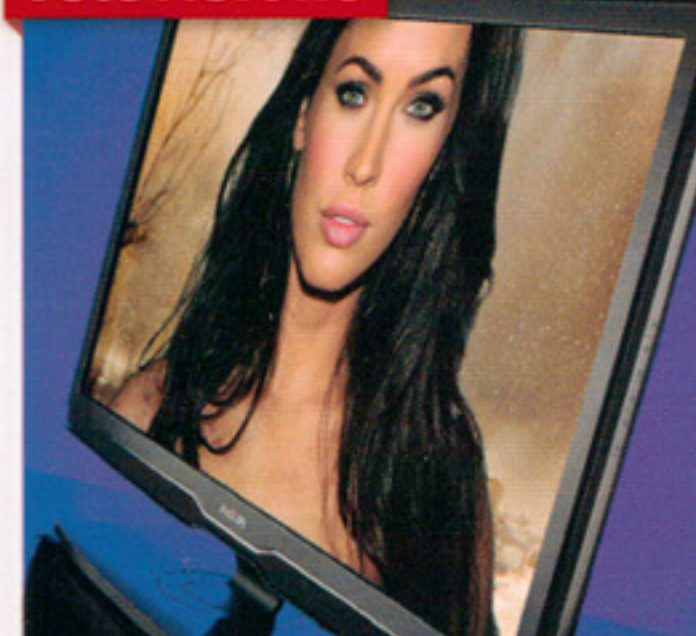


# WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION

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# AWARDS 2009



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## ★ AWARDS '09 TURNTABLES

# Awards '09

**TURNTABLES** Whatever your budget, there's no excuse not to dust off that old vinyl. These four decks will revitalise your records

### PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

**BEST £600-£1200**  
CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT  
£1050

The Concept is that rare thing, a 'plug and play' audiophile turntable package. Everything from the cartridge weight to bias adjustments is set at the factory. Shipping an arm with the cartridge and balancing weight attached is not normally a good idea, but the Verify arm's clever magnetic main bearing not only ensures low friction – it resists damage, too. Speed change is done at the twist of a control knob and gives the rarely featured 78rpm option, too. The deck feels solid, finish is impressive, and in use the Concept has a well-engineered feel that most rivals lack. And it turns out an excellent performance: it's fast, agile and detailed in the manner of most Clearaudio decks, and sounds at home with everything from Nirvana to an old mono recording of Ravel's *Boléro*. Dynamics are strong and there's a decent amount of heft to low frequencies. This is a turntable you can buy with total confidence.



VIDEO REVIEW

You can see video reviews of the WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION 2009 Award winners by logging on to [www.whathifi.com/awards](http://www.whathifi.com/awards)

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### TURNTABLE

CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT

★★★★★

£1050

### FOR

Easy to set up;

great build;

excellent

all-round sonic

performance

### AGAINST

Needs care in

sitting to get the

best results

### VERDICT

The Concept is a

great buy. It's a

well thought out

package that

sounds fantastic

Electronic speed

change and the

option of 78rpm

mark this deck

## Clearaudio deck is a fine Concept

**'PLUG AND PLAY'** is a term seldom associated with audiophile turntables. Most decks arrive in kit form and need some assembly before you can get going. The Concept is a rare exception. Apart from putting the platter and drive belt in place – platters have to be

**"The Concept is easy to set up, easy to use, and it sounds great"**

shipped unmounted to avoid damaging the main bearing – the Concept is as fully assembled as turntables get. The package includes an innovative new arm called the Verify and a Classics moving magnet cartridge.

Everything from the cartridge weight to bias adjustments is set at the factory. Shipping an arm with balancing weight and cartridge attached is not normally a good idea, but the Verify arm's clever magnetic main

bearing not only ensures low friction but resists damage, too.

All turntables benefit from careful positioning on a rigid, non-resonant surface placed well away from the speakers, and this Clearaudio is no different. It's a solid design lacking any form of suspension, so getting the support right is essential.

### At home with all records

Once installed, this deck turns out a superb performance. It's fast, agile and detailed in the manner of most Clearaudio decks, and it sounds at home with everything

from Bruce Springsteen and Nirvana to an old mono recording of Ravel's *Boléro*. Dynamics are strong and there's a good amount of heft to low frequencies.

Timing, not always a brand strength, is crisp enough to deliver the hard-charging momentum of Nick Cave's *Babe, I'm on Fire* with verve, and the deck stays composed throughout.

The Clearaudio Concept is a great all-rounder: it's easy to set up, easy to use and sounds great. At this price point, it's king.



### ALSO CONSIDER

?

THORENS

TD160HD/

TP250

★★★★★

£1560

An Award-

winning design

that delivers

top-class sound

and most of the

Clearaudio's

ease of use

FUNK FIRM

VECTOR

★★★★★

£750

An immensely

likeable turntable

with an agile

and articulate

sound. But it

needs a cartridge

and finish could

be a bit slicker

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