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May/June 2008

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# Clearaudio

## Statement Turntable

**First, a confession.** As an esteemed member of the hi-fi press, I was once offered a Clearaudio Statement turntable... at no cost to myself. That is... *gratis*... free! How's that for graft and corruption?

It happened like this. There I was at CES in Las Vegas, mouth agog, listening to the most beautiful sound I'd ever heard issuing from a turntable, my eyes glistening at the apparition before me, which was none other than the Clearaudio Statement, the subject of this review and undoubtedly the world's most stunningly beautiful turntable. A heavy-set man sidled up to me, glanced at my press badge, and asked under his breath, and with just the slightest hint of a foreign accent, what I thought of it. 'My God, it's fantastic... I want one,' was my automatic reply. To my sheer and utter astonishment he glanced behind him then whispered: 'Would you like this one? It's yours, for free...'

As my mind whirled, weighing up the ethics of the situation against the ownership of a Clearaudio Statement, I almost failed to hear the continuation of his sentence, which was

'...the only condition is that you have to take it exactly as is, and carry it out by yourself.'

It was only at that point I realised I'd been the butt of some Germanic humour, because even if I could bench-press the current Australian weight-lifting champion (heavy-weight division), there was no way I was going to be able to get Clearaudio's Statement out of that room at Alexis Park. It weighs a touch over 350kg (and that doesn't include the weight of the phono cartridge!). And it wouldn't just have been the weight... the Statement is also physically unmanageable, standing 1.25 metres high, 69cm wide and 57cm deep.

And so it was, two years later and two continents away that I prepared to get my own back on the good folk at Clearaudio...

### The Equipment

It's difficult to know how to even begin describing Clearaudio's Statement turntable because, quite simply, it is a masterpiece of engineering.

For me, the single most important attribute of the Statement is the turntable platter,

which literally 'floats' in the air, thanks to its magnetic bearing and its magnetic drive, which means there's absolutely no direct contact between the platter and the turntable motor... or even the drive belt. So where does the platter get its motive force? How, exactly, does it turn? What happens is that underneath the 'active' platter is a secondary 'platter' that's belt-driven by a high-speed, microprocessor-controlled motor that is, reportedly, 'identical to the motors used in the Mars Rover.' (Call me trusting, but I didn't call NASA to check.)

The top surface of this platter is magnetically coupled to the turntable platter, so it revolves synchronistically with it. You can prove to yourself there's no physical connection: just peer between the two platters—all you'll see is empty space. The second most important part (at least for me) is the Statement's TT1 tangential tonearm. You can actually fit conventional arms to the Statement (up to four different arms simultaneously, to be precise), but when you have a TT1 what would be the point? Every other arm pales by comparison. Unlike every other tangential

tracker I have ever seen, the TT1 uses a bearing carriage made from glass, which I think makes it the single most fragile part of the Statement. Pretty-much everything else used to build the Statement is bullet-proof... and I use that term in its most literal sense, because all the wooden parts are crafted from some material called 'Panzerholz' that Clearaudio claims really is bullet-proof! The arm itself is made from carbon fibre and is as short as is technically possible, which means that there's no tracing error at all: that is: 'no error', as in 'none', 'zilch', 'nada'...

As you have probably gathered, if only from the photographs accompanying this review, overkill is the name of the game with the Clearaudio Statement, and for me, this was completely evidenced by the huge damped pendulum contained within the base, the most obvious feature of which is the set of weights that looks for all the world like they came from a bar-bell. This so-called 'DSL' pendulum adds 80kg of weight to the turntable and so far as I am aware, its sole function is to ensure that the platter remains level. Unlike all other turntables, where you have to do the levelling yourself (and where, bar earthquakes, the turntable will stay level for quite some time once you have) the Statement's system is actually completely self-levelling, so that no matter what, the platter will always be perfectly level with respect to the earth's surface (as distinct from the floor in your home, which very likely is not at all level!).

### Listening Sessions

If there is any good news about auditioning the Statement, it's that you won't need to set aside hours and hours to evaluate its performance. Just one track is all you'll need, after which you'll instantly understand what music sounds like once you've banished wow, flutter, tracing distortion, motor noise, bearing rumble and most all of the myriad other

flaws that have plagued vinyl replay since the days of Edison. It makes music sound exactly like music is supposed to sound.

Indeed that one quick audition will even answer at least one question you've likely never asked yourself, because once you have listened to the Clearaudio Statement, you'll never be able to listen to any other turntable and say 'I don't hear any rumble' because you will... you just didn't know what it sounded like before. That may seem a little Zen-like, but it is only by hearing music played back without any added rumble that you will truly understand the debilitating effect it has on vinyl playback.

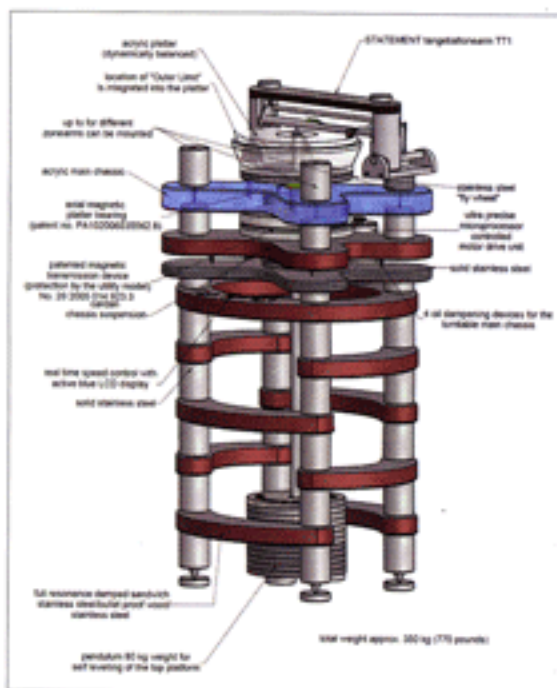
'Once you have listened to the Clearaudio Statement, you'll never be able to listen to any other turntable...'

Needless to say, you will not be able to stop at playing just one track... I certainly couldn't, but I can assure you that listening longer did not tell me any more about the sound quality than drinking a glass of wine tells you any more about its taste than you knew after just the first sip. As for comparisons, there aren't any I can make: the Clearaudio Statement is so clearly in a class of its own.

### Conclusion

Having started with one confession, I feel I need to conclude with another, which is that when I sat down to write this review, I promised myself I would not discuss how much the Statement costs. But following my time with the Statement and my subsequent enthusiastic lectures about it to anyone who'd listen, I have been asked the same question so many

times that I now feel compelled to give an answer. That question is: 'Who'd buy it?' And the answer is: 'I would.' If the money were sitting in my bank account, it would be winging its way into Advance Audio's vaults as we speak. Why? Surprisingly, it would not be for the Statement's sound quality... though this would be reason enough. It would be because of the sheer beauty of the structure, the pure joy of pondering the intricacies of the engineering and for the intellectual satisfaction of knowing that at last I owned a turntable that worked perfectly. Clearaudio's Statement is, without any shadow of a doubt, the finest turntable in the world. *greg borrowman*



## Clearaudio Statement Turntable

**Brand:** Clearaudio  
**Model:** Statement  
**Category:** Turntable  
**RRP:** \$189,000  
**Distributor:** Kedcorp Pty Ltd  
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