

Bergmann Audio Magne Turntable

JUNE 9, 2014

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I first discovered the Bergmann Audio turntables during an event at a local dealer. Before I heard a note, I fell in love with the look of these Danish Bauhaus beauties. All straight lines, simple design and an air bearing, tangential tracking arm that looked as elegant as the turntable to which it was attached. Since many air bearing arms and tangential trackers have been a nuisance to setup and maintain, having two difficult technologies in one arm and looking awfully easy to use, I was doubly intrigued.

Bergmann Audio makes three turntables – the Sindre, Sleipner and the least expensive Magne. In Nordic mythology, Magne means ‘strength’. Magne was the son of the Nordic God, Thor.



The Bergmann Magne Tonearm

Air

The bearing of the turntable is subject to many stresses, all of which add to sound degradation. The Magne's breezy helping hand in alleviating these problems is its air bearing vacuum pump, supporting both the bearing and the arm. Designer Johnnie Bergmann explains 'The air supported bearing, which is frictionless, reduces bearing noise to a minimum, together with exceptional speed stability. The linear tracking air bearing tonearm also gains an advantage by the use of air bearing technology. The tonearm glides frictionless, its only contact with the turntable being through the stylus tip and the wire of the tonearm.' Bergmann suggests '...the unique friction freedom in the bearings is expressed through a gripping musical timing, where nuances and details are a natural part of the transparent and vivid acoustic image. Bergmann turntables are, among other things, commented on as having an unexpected fast and very effective bass response.' More of the sound later. Let's get back into the air.

The stand alone, noise-free vacuum pump (no need for placement in the closet next door) is equipped with dust filters and reservoirs to allow dry, clean airflow. The pump supplies the platter which floats on the thin film of air. Also receiving a clean flow of air is the Magne Tone arm – the frictionless motion as you move the arm tube's aluminum sliding pipe back and forth is mighty impressive. The arm is manufactured in aluminium and carbon, the armtube is damped inside and the counterweight is decoupled from it. Adjustments include VTA, overhang and leveling. Inside, you'll find high quality copper litz wiring with gold plated copper clips, RCA, XLR and DIN connections. The mass is 11 grams.



The plinth is 45 mm thick and is finished in a tactile matte black. It's a solid block and large enough to accommodate the wide linear tracking arm. Airflow is adjusted individually on the back of the plinth to both arm and platter. The Magne uses an aluminium platter/Polycarbonate mat weighing 5.5 kg and a steel spindle, low friction polymer bearing. The sub platter is also aluminum with a weight of 1.5 kg. The motor is DC and the drive is belt driven. Bergmann provides a 300 gm record weight (and it works beautifully). The top of the plinth is where you'll find the speed controls, two buttons for Play/Stop (with small blue light indicators) and two smaller buttons for fine pitch and speed control (the Magne has a separate, plug-in power supply).

Setup

Setup seems fairly simple for what is advanced and elegantly implemented analogue technology. Bergmann supplies a spirit level for plinth adjustment via its feet. The arm is adjusted by two bolts on the mounting pillar. Here's where I bailed. After discussions with the distributor, we had her crack setup man do the geometry, math, fiddling and shifting for me. I know! What kind of audiophile am I? A chicken when handling 18K worth of somebody else's kit. I figure there are three types of vinyl heads – the novice, the enthusiast and the expert. If you're an expert, the setup will be a doddle. If either of the former, it is suggested that you have it setup in your home. Better safe than sorry. Any reputable Bergmann dealer will offer that service to you.

Your dealer will insist on a good foundation not some shelf that you made from scraps. You'll want to show it front and centre, anyway. You'll also be encouraged to provide the turntable with quality ancillaries. No good feeding a Ferrari 'regular' gas.

I was in the midst of reviewing the Audia Flight Strumento n1 Stereo Pre Amplifier (CAD\$16,400) and the Audia Flight Strumento N°4 Stereo Power Amplifier (CAD\$25,000), so, was encouraged to use the company's fantabulous FL Phono phono stage (\$6100). I had also recently [sung](#) the praises of the Ortofon Blue, a lovely entry

into cheap as chips cartridges. I thought we should go a little further to match the legacy of the arm/'table design. I wanted a Clearaudio Titanium, my favourite cartridge, and a masterpiece in this rarefied world. None available. So, as my Clearaudio Concerto was being retipped, I borrowed an Ortofon Cadenza Red moving coil cartridge (\$1,219). It's a real goer at that price and has all the qualities of the Ortofon 'colour' range, but many of the refinements (mainly in control and accurate timbre) more expensive cartridges advertise.



Sound

The 'sound' of a turntable is always a growing, living, breathing experiment. Mood, weather, vinyl oddities, stylus heat, dust, and many other nonsenses can and do alter the way a listener perceives the sound of turntables. No matter, as these nonsenses are the things we love about analogue – the vagaries, the search, the discovery, the good, the bad and the ugly. Just like real love, right? Over three months I got to hear the 'table in all its moods, or what passes for them. It turns out, elegant technology can make many of the perceived vagaries benign.

As such, I have news for you vinylphiles. Your 'search' may be over, at least the pain of it. The Magne is a superlative turntable that provides rock solid images with the warm and rich analogue sound that you love. The 'there' is in the music, the wide and deep sound stage, cymbals that sound like cymbals, castanets that click and resonate far more than a pinpoint sound source, a floating flute under shimmering strings that sound like, uh...strings, and a block of horns, that under the scrutiny of lesser tables sound in disarray, are portrayed by the Magne as the beefy, honest, on target section this conductor loves.

Voices like Frank (Nice 'N' Easy 180g LP) sound part of Nelson Riddle's musical fabric, not a phoney, kaleidoscopic image fest. The control the Magne Tone Arm has over the grooves is quite astonishing. I do not have a great deal of experience with linear

tracking arms, but as heard here, I'm loving it. And, that air technology! So beautifully executed by Bergmann. It's a treat to see and hear. The Magne 'system' is a big chunk of change, for sure, but it's a lifetime 'table/arm. No buyers remorse for Bergmann punters, I'm guessing.

I used couple of torture tracks to see how the Magne handled musical bad moods. The arm and cart handled the cannons of the famous Telarc 1812 without any fuss. More worrying for me is piano stability. If the speed accuracy on a 'table is not spot on, a piano can sound muddy or wobbly. I used an original, beat up Wilhelm Kempf Beethoven DGG LP. The famous bit from the Moonlight was as pure and musical as my speakers would allow. No mud, no wobble. Lovely.

The noise floor on LP after LP was very low. It's a magical time when listening to gobs of vinyl and the avid collector realizes the engineer/producer's wishes are being heard. My original Klemperer/Philharmonia/Beethoven Symphonies/EMI and Beecham/RPO/Haydn Symphonies/EMI Mono can be problematic. Lots of musicality on a thin film (more crust) of crackle and mist. They have been cleaned and cared for, but it's there all the same. I'm probably the third or fourth owner. The synergy of Johnnie Bergmann's great design cleaned them up a treat but without scrubbing the vinyl sheen, if you know what I mean? Well, of course you do. You love and adore vinyl.

As for 'rhythm and pacing' as read in just about every turntable review? I'm not sure what the hell that is. In fact, I think it's cobblers (rhythm is 'the flow of music in time' and pacing, I assume, indicates tempo. Hmm?). What the Magne does is allow the musicians' true intent through – the subtlety, the power, the emotion, the little stresses here, the pushes there, his/her art on the line. You'll hear (I hope) differences in orchestras' timbres, in their tuning pitch, the differences between Fournier and Tortelier, Rampal and Pahud, Szigeti and Szeryng. Up the ante on the cartridge, and I'm guessing you'll hear a damn site more than me. As such, it'll be pretty hard to max out the Magne Tonearm, even with a Goldfinger.

Summary

Once more, a caring, bright designer/audiophile has hit a technological home run. In a very attractive package, you'll be purchasing 'difficult' technologies that sound terrific, but without any of the fuss. It's not like cheating with a well made, bottled marinara sauce. You'll be buying into the product so deeply, it'll be as if you helped make the sauce without the peeling and dicing and then gently placed the tasty liquid in the bottle. For guys like me, it's the only way to fly. The price is CAD\$18,000 (incl. Magne Tonearm).

I want the best. I'm spoilt. I'll admit it. My wife has to rein me in regularly. But, the Bergmann Audio Magne is so good, I'll be plotting to get one into my listening room permanently. In fact, I've already begun. Very highly recommended.



Further information: [Bergmann Audio](#)