

# hi-fi WORLD

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

NOVEMBER 2003 UK £3.20



CLASSIC AUDIO SUPPLEMENT  
INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

## ARC LIGHT ROKSAN'S BRILLIANT RADIUS 5



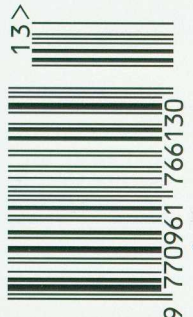
## PURE GLASS! Unison Research S6

### SPECIAL VALVE ISSUE

Musical Fidelity's Tri-Vista 21 DAC  
Dynavox's DynaStation CD player  
top hi-fi designers talk tubes  
Leak Stereo 20 revisited  
hot valve amp supertest  
thermionic theory



NOVEMBER 2003



ORELLE CD100evo \* BEYER DT-990 \* ATC SCM-12

COMPUTER AUDIO CREATIVE LABS SOUNDBLASTER MP3+

MARKET PLACE - 100s OF READER CLASSIFIEDS INSIDE!

COMPETITION - WIN A DENON DV-2900 DVD UNIVERSAL PLAYER!

it seems to sway all over the place in classic unipivot style. A complete set of tools is included in the case, along with (unusually) a pair of stylus scales. Roksan has even got the scale right, as it is set in micro-Newtons and not in the usual grams. The conversion is approximately 10 mn to 1 gram. Assembly of the Roksan took approximately thirty five minutes. Now let battle commence!

At first the Radius 5 was disappointing. Bass was extremely boomy with a lot of splashy mid range. It was obvious the turntable was suffering from an attack of structure borne feedback. So I decided to build a wall-mounted turntable shelf. The reviewing process was halted for two days while I designed the new support system, using a frame into which I could drop spiked platforms, which would support the equipment. Finally, we were ready to begin listening again!

The difference was staggering. Suddenly bass was clean and extended, while midband and treble had a smooth, sweet, warm balance. The Roksan was finally able to acquit itself with aplomb – with the deck properly sited at last, it was capable of extracting oodles of inner groove detail. Stage depth proved very good, with width and height of the highest order. James Brown's music was presented with an almost visceral feel. Single instruments were displayed with force and drive, making John Williams' rendition of Bach's Suite No.3 for unaccompanied violoncello (on Delyse ECB3149, deleted many years ago but a very fine piece of work) a very rewarding experience. The acoustic of the room was plainly obvious. His classical guitar had richness, which a lot of budget/mid-price decks simply omit.

Changing styles of music did not make this turntable stumble. Frankie Goes to Hollywood's 'Two Tribes' was suitably expansive - the stereo image extended out into a vast a semi-circle in front of me. Although 'Clever' Trevor Horn's production was a little bright for my taste, I have rarely heard this 12" single played with so much punch in the bass, and with the instruments so explicit etched into my listening space.

I then changed the cartridge to an Ortofon

MCI15 Super 2 in a bid to isolate its tonality – was this rich sound due to the Roksan Corus? The answer was no - the MCI15 seemed to have a vice-like grip of the music, but with a slightly ragged treble presentation, although the imaging hadn't lost any of its scale. Next, a Decca C4E cartridge went in – these are extremely difficult to track in most arms, but the Nima arm had no such problems. This rare transducer is capable of tremendous musicality in the right carrier, and I'd just found it – no thirty year-old cartridge should sound this good! Its vivacity and control, along with superb stereo imaging made the walls of my living room melt away.

In a bid to nail down precisely why I was getting such great results from a turntable affordable by many mere mortals, I set about eliminating the possibilities. The Nima arm was duly whipped out, and in its place the venerable (and venerated) Origin Live modified Rega RB250 was mounted, with the Roksan Corus duly re-installed. The stereo image shrunk by a few feet in width, and along with a small foreshortening of image depth the height of the image was affected as well. After auditioning many types of music, I can't help but feel that at last we have a rival for the OL RB250.

Overall then, here's a seriously capable mid-price turntable with a naturally warm and engaging sound.

#### THE EDITOR SAYS:

With more substitutions than Sven Goran Erikson's England playing a friendly against the second Liechtenstein eleven, AL finally got to bottom of why the Radius 5 is so good – the Nima unipivot tonearm. The deck itself is excellent; oh-so-close to Michell's TecnoDec, albeit with a less detailed and analytical sound (not a bad thing in a budget system).

The Nima arm has a brilliantly organic and cohesive sound which invests this already capable deck with a far greater musicality than you'd expect even at this price. The result is that – in conjunction with a nicely warm and 'big' sounding cartridge like the aforementioned Roksan Corus or Goldring G1042, you get a vast, panoramic sound. Contrast this to the Michell school of sound reproduction, in which things are so tidy, ordered and detailed and you can see that the new Roksan deck will win many friends. It's not ultimately as incisive as the TecnoDec, but it's a less cerebral and more endearing listen.

As for the Nima unipivot – see how it does in our forthcoming superarm supertest... DP

Its bass is particularly generous – grippy but tonally fulsome in the way the Garrard 401 is (albeit not to the same extent), while its midband is wide and deep and tall, yet smooth and sweet. There's very little to criticise, save the fact that it can't scavenge the last nth degree of low level detail and treble air that the best of the rest – Michell's TecnoDec – can. Also, it really does need a good support – much like its other price rivals. As for its bundled Nima arm, suffice to say that this is a brilliant budget arm that simply sounds far better than it has a right to at the price.

#### VERDICT

Great turntable displaying real thought behind its design. The bundled Nima unipivot tonearm raises its game still further, making it superlative value for money.

**ROKSAN RADIUS 5** £749.95  
(£100 EXTRA FOR PERSPEX FINISH)  
Roksan Audio Limited  
☎ +44 (0)20 8900 6801/6802  
www.roksan.co.uk





# Arc Light

**Albert Lee takes a shine to Roksan's new Radius 5 turntable - and especially its Nima unipivot arm.**

It's all too easy for us vinyl junkies to take those 'two ounces of black plastic with a hole in the middle' for granted. We do not remember the effort engineers have put into making this medium possible. When did we last marvel at the mechanical ingenuity of the process, and the sheer naturalness of the reproduction? Audiophiles demand engineering excellence – only this lets us experience the tangible emotional force between performers, composers and their audiences.

Roksan Audio is one such company famed for this. Formed in 1985, its commitment to high quality reproduction is legendary. The first product was the Xerxes turntable, which was a milestone in vinyl reproduction - at the time when the Linn Sondek was the deck to have, it burst upon the scene and upset the proverbial apple cart by. Its pitch stability was superb, bringing incredible definition to transients and showing the mid-Sondek up as not

quite worthy of the purple prose lavished on it by many hi-fi hacks.

The new £750 Radius 5 continues the theme; available in both acrylic and timber plinth finishes it's compact at 400x350x150mm and weighs in at 7kg. It sports an acrylic platter, and main bearing spindle that's precision machined from stainless steel. The main bearing housing is solid brass, and case hardened steel is used for the main bearing ball. The motor pulley is machined from aluminium alloy, and is powered by a 24-pole AC synchronous motor giving both 33.33 and 45rpm speeds.

The motor board is coupled to the turntable support via three spikes, positioned to enable motor noise to drain into the support system. Interestingly, the standard Nima pick up arm is a wide-tubed unipivot design with a bearing yoke and headshell fashioned from acrylic. Its effective length is 240mm and has an effective mass of 10g. The internal arm wire is made of a very flexible

printed circuit board and has no less than three earth lines along with the normal signal lines.

## GOING LIVE

Unpacking this unit was a breeze, and made all the easier by an extremely well penned user manual. Assembly was very simple, and levelling the record deck was made very easy by the inclusion of three height-adjustable spiked feet.

The Nima pick up arm was a simple task to set up, possibly due to a misspent youth ritually taking record players to pieces and putting them back together again. Mounting my chosen Roksan Chorus pick up cartridge was aided by the accurate alignment gauge, although care must be taken to read the instruction manual very carefully, as it's very easy to rip the cantilever out of the cartridge when attempting to mount it into the one-piece headshell/arm assembly!

It is vitally important to be confident with this arm even though