

Pluto 12 turntable

'Mechanical eyecatcher'

Pluto Audio is a typical Dutch company, but most of the products are shipped to Asia, ~~the United States~~ ^{USA} and the southern parts of Europa. We're talking here about expensive turntables and tonearms, which are beyond the financial limits of many consumers. The new 12 series 2 turntable was introduced at the Frankfurt exhibition last year and it's a lot cheaper than the Pluto reference models.

Pluto turntables are famous for the high level of fine mechanical engineering. The factory is located in the eastern part of the Netherlands and you will find there an extensive collection of tools and metal forming equipment. The lathe, drills and folding machines are computer-controlled and in my imagination you can build there a complete military plane. The turntable parts are build within very small tolerances and Pluto applies valuable engineering materials. Think about stainless steel, titanium, aluminium, carbon and ceramic compounds. All tonearms and turntables are handbuild and it takes several weeks to assemble a complete product. Pluto's engineering level can be compared with the former Goldmund and the Rockport products. The already delivered turntables are from small series, and every handbuilt serie has some minor improvements in comparison with earlier ones. Pluto is constantly innovating its products and most of the time it's possible to sent them back to the factory for modifications. Aside from the technical specs, Pluto turntables are also enormous eyecatchers. My listening room is occupied with a lot of equipment, but most visitors pay very little attention to the converters, amplifiers and cables. They are mainly attracted by the Pluto-turntables with their retrospective fifties looks. It's all glamour and glitter, especially for people for whom their Rega or Thorens is the ultimate piece of equipment. For me, the best part of this ritual is the listening test. Many were again convinced about analog's superiority. With an exception for Sony's DSD-format, most conventional 16bit/44KHz-systems can simply not compete with analog sound provided by the Pluto-system.

Pluto 12

The Pluto 12 is heavy, just like the other turntables build under the Pluto-logo. The platter is machined form solid stainless steel and on top is a carbon layer, isolating the record from bearing-induced vibrations. The

platform is holding the bearing housing and the main pivot. It can be fitted with most any arm, as long as there's a SME-mount. Pluto can provide the turntable with several Pluto tonearm models. A very stiff and ingenious spring suspension isolates the whole system from external vibrations. Three socket head cap screws are mounted in the platform, and are intended to align the suspension's spring tension and the leveling of the table. Execute this before mounting the platter, because the platter will hide the screws and freeze further adjustment. The platter is provided with a ball and diamond seated slide bearing. Follow the instructions for mounting and disassembling the platter, otherwise the diamond can be easily damaged. The base is constructed from a solid and cylindrical aluminium structure. It has three ceramic feet. The Pluto is belt-driven by a free-standing DC motor and a rechargeable battery power supply. Together, the Pluto's quality of workmanship is dazzling and superb.

Listening

Pluto turntables are in my system for a couple of years now. Most of the time I'm running them with van den Hul's Black Beauty and Frog cartridges, but Pluto can also provide their own Pluto One cartridge. Building a reference-system here in Europe is not a big issue. Especially in the Netherlands, there's a fine selection of US high-end components available. On the downside, you can notice that prices are much higher than in the United States. Our advantage is that some famous manufacturers, like Siltech and van den Hul, are located within one hour traveling distance. There're a lot of amplifiers in my system. The Pluto was combined with CAT-amplifiers, but also with KR-Enterprise gear, Levinson, Nagra and Spectral. I especially like the phono-amplifiers in the Levinson 32 pre-amplifier. During the review period, the new Siltech Signature amplifiers also stayed here for several weeks. Cables are Nordost SPM, Siltech LS-288Gold G3 and SQ88Gold G3, Harmonic Technology and Fadel Art.

The sound resulting from a turntable results from the combined interaction made up by the turntable itself, the tonearm, the cartridge, the phonocable and the support system. When all other parts of the system are beyond suspicion, the turntable can wreck your performance in several ways. It has to do with rest, space, resonance-control, authority and silence. A good turntable can add important features to the sound. The new Pluto turntable produces a fast and well organized sound. It has bass clarity and authority, and the sound is dynamically and rhythmically involving. The low frequencies are tight, deep and rich and the highs are very refined. The system as a whole will provide you with a deep and life-like soundstage. Normal 16 bit-cd is not capable of doing this. The only convincing digital

performance of real soundstaging and imaging was emulated by Sony's DSD-process in my listening room.

Conclusion

Pluto's new 12A series 2 turntable will be known by its outstanding engineering, combined with a real state-of-the-art performance. It's hand build in the Netherlands in small series. I've gone just gaga over it, because it begs comparison with the best turntables in the market.

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Associated Equipment

Analog source: van den Hul Black Beauty, van den Hul Frog, Pluto 5a tonearm.

Digital sources: Sony SCD-1 SACD-player, Mark Levinson 30.6/31.5, Audio Research CD-1.

Preamplifiers: CAT mk3, Mark Levinson 32, Spectral 12, Musical Technology C2.

Power Amplifiers: Spectral 150, Mark Levinson 335, Nagra VPA, KR-Enterprise 8000, KR-Enterprise Kronzilla, Siltech Signature.

Cables: NordOst, Harmonic Technology, Fadel Art, Siltech.

Loudspeakers: Infinity IRS, Final 0.4, Final 0.3, Thiel PCS, JBL, Acoustic Energy, B&W Nautilus.

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