

FAVORITE PICK

TAKUMI TT LEVEL 2.1 DC A Rare Gem!



The Takumi brand, meaning "high-quality artisan" in Japanese, is the creation of Rik Stoet, who grew up under the influence of his grandfather, renowned for his audio transformers and tube amplifiers. After studying electrical engineering, this Dutchman founded Rik Stoet Audio in 1993. A few years later, he ventured into crafting an ingeniously designed turntable, producing 100 units that sold out on the Dutch market. This endeavor gave rise to the Takumi turntable we are presenting today. Born from Rik's genuine passion for vinyl and his commitment to delivering optimal performance within a targeted budget, the Takumi is grounded in solid physical principles, such as Newton's laws of motion, resulting in a product that is both fascinating and almost audacious given its price.

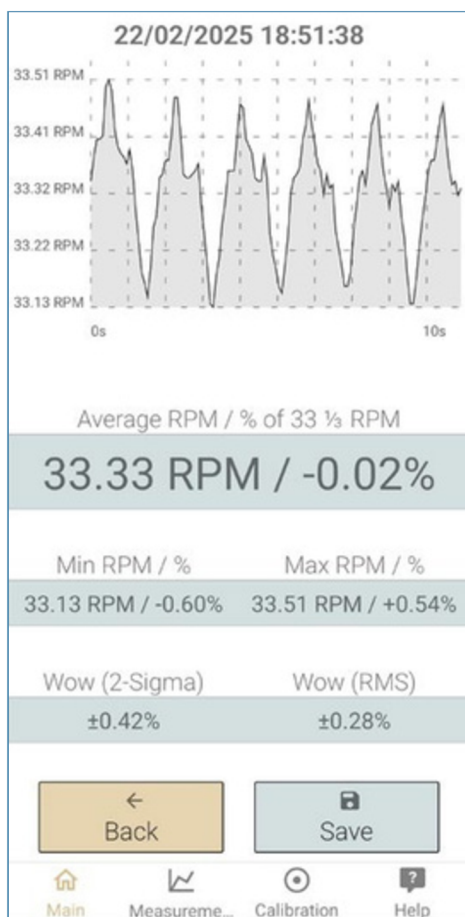
DESCRIPTION

To be precise, a turntable like the Takumi TT Level 2.1 DC contains approximately €200 worth of components. This highlights the challenge of sourcing manufacturers capable of supplying parts that meet the high-quality standards set by Rik Stoet for the Takumi's development. This was only achievable by collaborating with Chinese manufacturers known for their advanced technology. As a result, all Takumi components have tolerances below one-hundredth of a millimeter.

Most budget turntables use MDF for their plinth. To achieve effective resonance absorption, the plinth's thickness must be considered: the thicker it is, the higher the cost. For cost-efficiency, Rik Stoet opted for 2 cm-thick plexiglass, a material that is easy to machine and offers good vibration damping. The polished PMMA acrylic platter rests on an aluminum sub-platter, which is attached to a ceramic bearing shaft that sits in an oil-lubricated bronze bushing. This non-metallic component minimizes or eliminates electrostatic buildup at the record's center. The ceramic shaft rotates with virtually no resistance in the bearing, making it exceptionally quiet and wear-resistant. Takumi advises against using any platter mat, whether silicone or felt.

The platter and sub-platter are also decoupled, and the tonearm tube is mounted on a Delrin gimbal assembly. The tonearm features four bearings—one for horizontal movement and one for vertical movement—facilitating playback of warped records. You can adjust the tonearm height, lift height, stylus pressure, and anti-skating, which relies on a magnetic system. The headshell, which holds the cartridge, is directly fixed to the tonearm. The two-part counterweight accommodates any cartridge. The Takumi's connection cable is attached to the tonearm and includes an extended ground with two forks. The turntable rests on three feet, providing greater stability than a four-point support system. These feet are also decoupled with adjustable silent blocks (variable height).



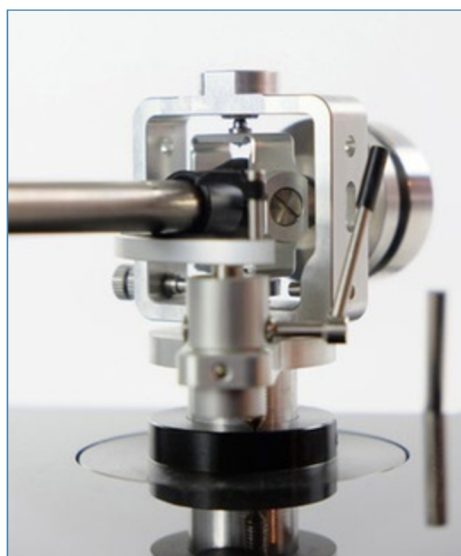


Special attention must be paid to adjusting the bearing block's height, as it affects rotational speed. The table above shows the measurements we obtained for 33.33 RPM after adjustment. The 45 RPM speed proved equally precise, with 44.96 RPM and -0.09% fluctuation. Thanks to the integrated bubble level, we easily adjusted the Takumi's horizontality, which is critical for optimal anti-skating performance. As an option, Takumi offers the SpeedPod, which allows precise speed adjustment and stabilization to within 1/100th of an RPM. It can compensate for belt stretch to maintain accurate rotational speed. The SpeedPod features a display showing the turntable's speed in RPM and allows manual speed adjustments via + and - buttons, as well as start and stop functions. Takumi turntables are generally supplied without a cartridge, except in France, where the exclusive distributor, Light & Music, equips the TT Level 2.1 DC with the entry-level Audio-Technica AT3600 cartridge.

Frankly, we expected a decent but unremarkable listening experience. Instead, we discovered a true gem—a rare find that comes along once every decade, making you forget that this turntable-cartridge combo costs just €1,695. The sound quality far surpasses what is typically found in this product category. With the volume turned up fully, we heard only the noise floor of our electronics. Even when tapping the plinth forcefully, we detected no vibrations or resonance in the speakers.

LISTENING

Most of the tracks we selected have been featured in our various test benches. Is it the acrylic plinth, known for dissipating vibrational waves, the gimbal-mounted tonearm designed to neutralize parasitic oscillations, the rigid tonearm tube and fixed headshell that keep musical distortion negligible, or the platter and sub-platter's mass combined with a near-frictionless main bearing that ensures no slowdown, resulting in remarkable timing and highly detailed sound reproduction? Or perhaps the turntable's extreme stability, which provides a solid foundation and three-dimensional soundstage separation? Whatever the reason, the Takumi delivered an exceptional sonic experience. The TT Level 2.1 DC possesses a musical clarity reserved for the finest turntables, with an effortless ability to bring music to life.



We achieved 89 dB at 4 meters with "The Festival in Baghdad" from Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade without any harshness or listening fatigue. With Jacques Brel's *Ces gens-là* (Barclay, 1966), we felt the singer's presence in our listening room. We could also mention *Jazz Samba* by Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd (Verve, 1962) or *Face Value* by Phil Collins (WEA, 1981). In the memory of Vinyl & Audio testers, only Vertere turntables have delivered this level of fluidity (*legato*) and the sensation of attending a live listening session.

VERDICT

This turntable boasts all the qualities of an exceptional model: dynamic, expressive, engaging, and immensely musical. In every respect, the Takumi TT Level 2.1 DC is a phenomenal turntable that can be further enhanced with higher-quality, more expensive cartridges than the one provided by the distributor. It offers unbeatable value for money. Its price, design, and build quality challenge the norms of the turntable market. In short, we want more!

Jean Razzaroli

ORIGIN: Netherlands (assembled in the Netherlands)

DIMENSIONS (LxHxP):

430 x 152-162 x 327 mm

WEIGHT: 8,1 kg

FINISHES: Transparent or black acrylic

PRICE : €1,695 with Audio-Technica AT3600L MM cartridge, dust cover, and record clamp. The user manual, available from the distributor, is written in four languages, including French—a detail worth noting.

INCLUDED: Takumi SpeedPod

MANUFACTURER'S WEBSITE:

www.playtakumi.com

DISTRIBUTOR FOR FRANCE:

takumi@lightmusiccompany.com