

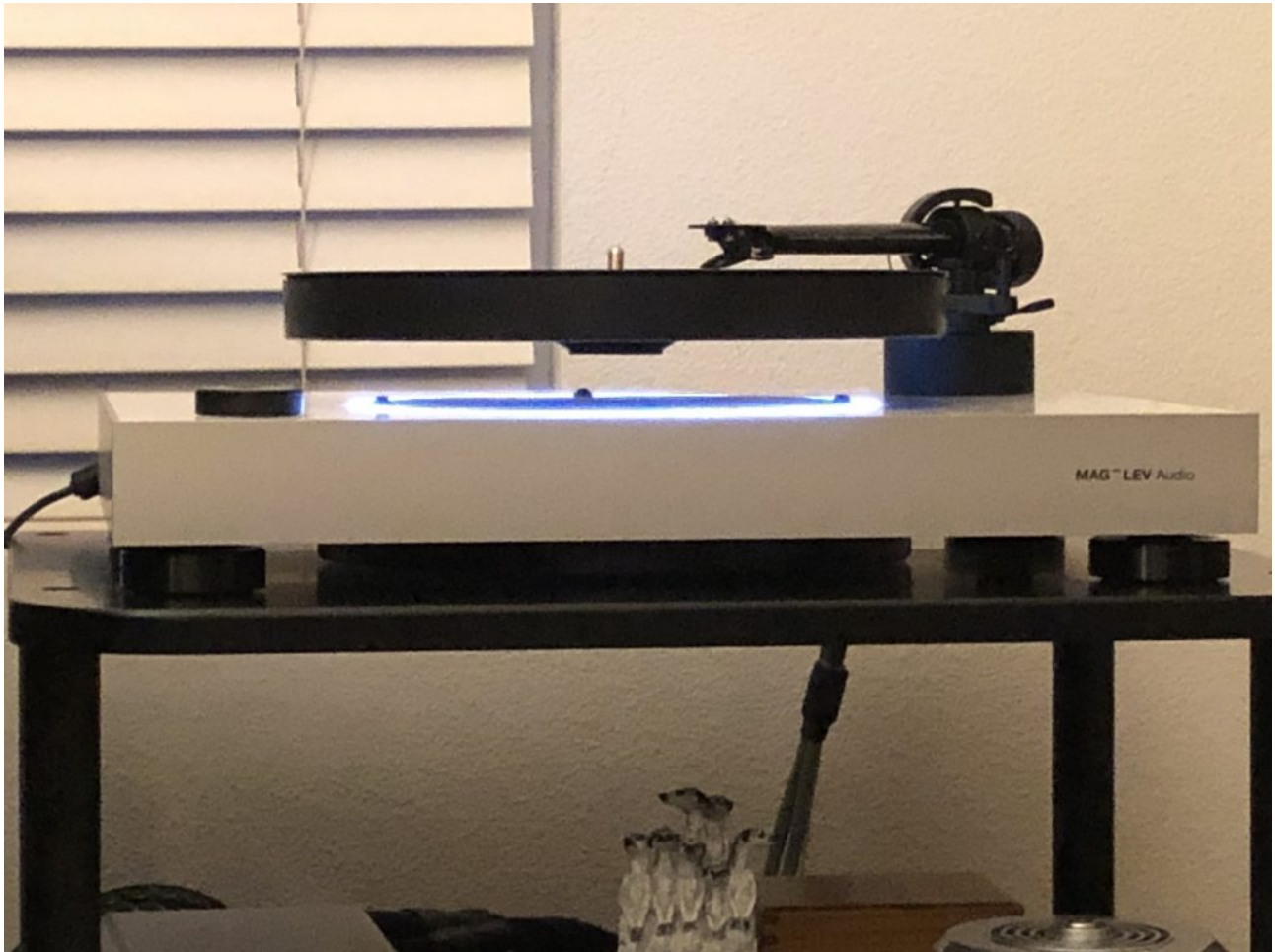
MAG - LEV Audio ML1 Levitating Turntable: U.S. Premiere Review

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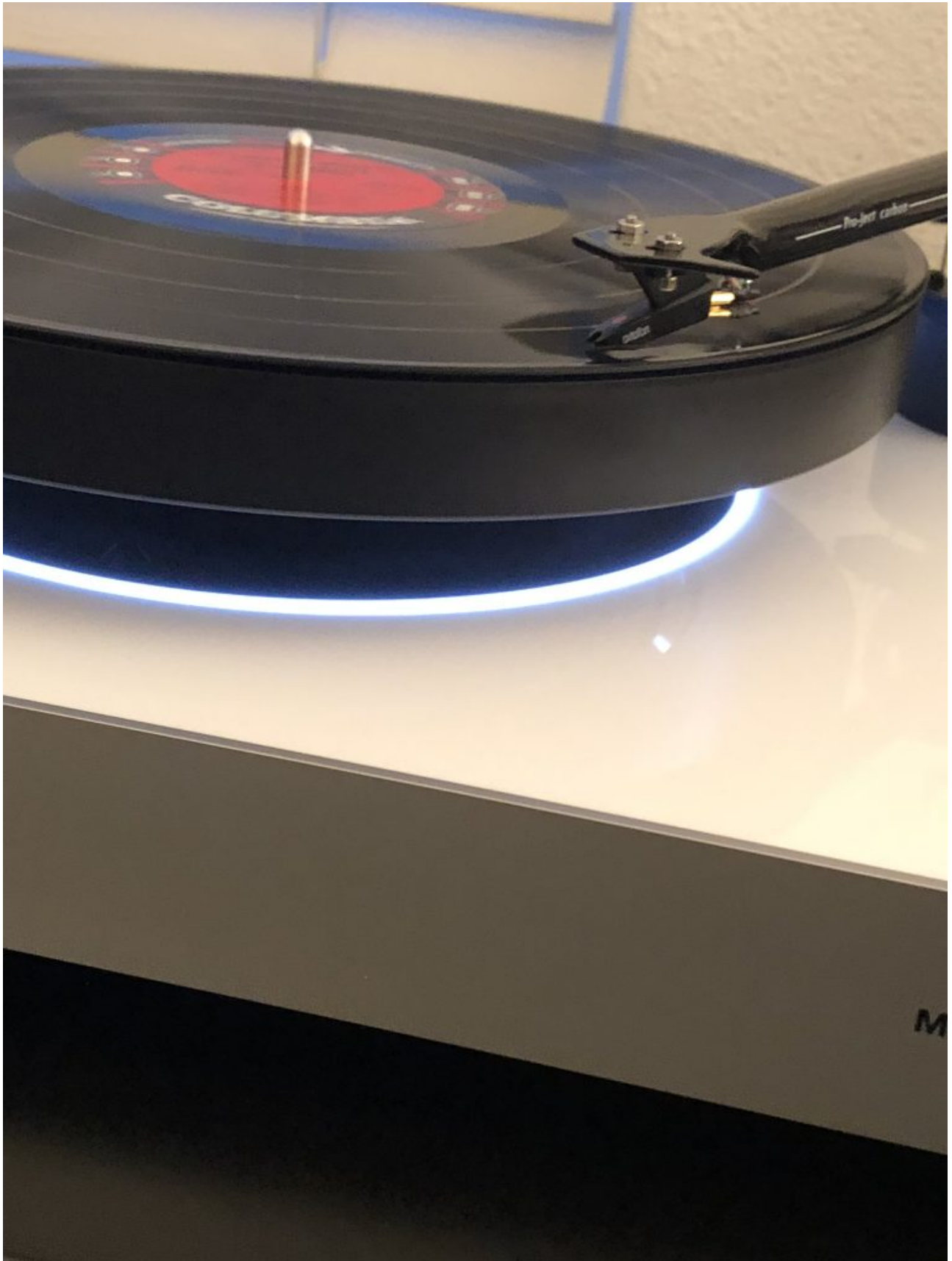


Disruptor!

The MAG - LEV Audio ML1 Levitating Turntable is a disruptor! Are you surprised? I own one of six Paravicini magnetic drive turntables in America. It does not levitate, but it is quiet and astonishingly open and life-like. ML1 as delivered: Signal to noise ratio -73dB! Way better than your turntable? Why? It has no motor! It uses magnetic coil drive and that is as quiet as outer space.



Wow and flutter...less than .17%. Weight is 9.8kg all in! Four sensors, two magnetic and two optical to maintain precise speed and stability. The ML1 is delivered beautifully packaged and pristine, with all tools and cables to perform like a breakthrough and super cool turntable should sound. As an audiophile of 55 years, I then turned it into GODZILLA!



Delivered with a carbon fiber super-adjustable Project 9cc Tonearm with anti-skate, you are in great shape compared to the test arm I saw on this table just two years ago. It adjusts in every tangent and is just the right mass for the ML1. It is delivered with the fun and flexible Ortofon OM10 MM Cartridge...very good for \$80. Interconnects worth at least

\$25 are included with the \$6 power cord. The position of the RCA connectors are perfectly exposed for easy swapping, as is the ground wire. The arm is one of the few low mass, high compliance arms made today; as a result, one is limited to MM or MI cartridges that are best suited for this tonearm. Don't despair: There are more out there than you think, with Grado, Soundsmith, Ortofon, and Hana all in the mix! The tonearm is also fully integrated into several cool features in both play and stop mode on the Mag-Lev, so this is your only choice of tonearm right now.

With the OM10 Cartridge as Delivered

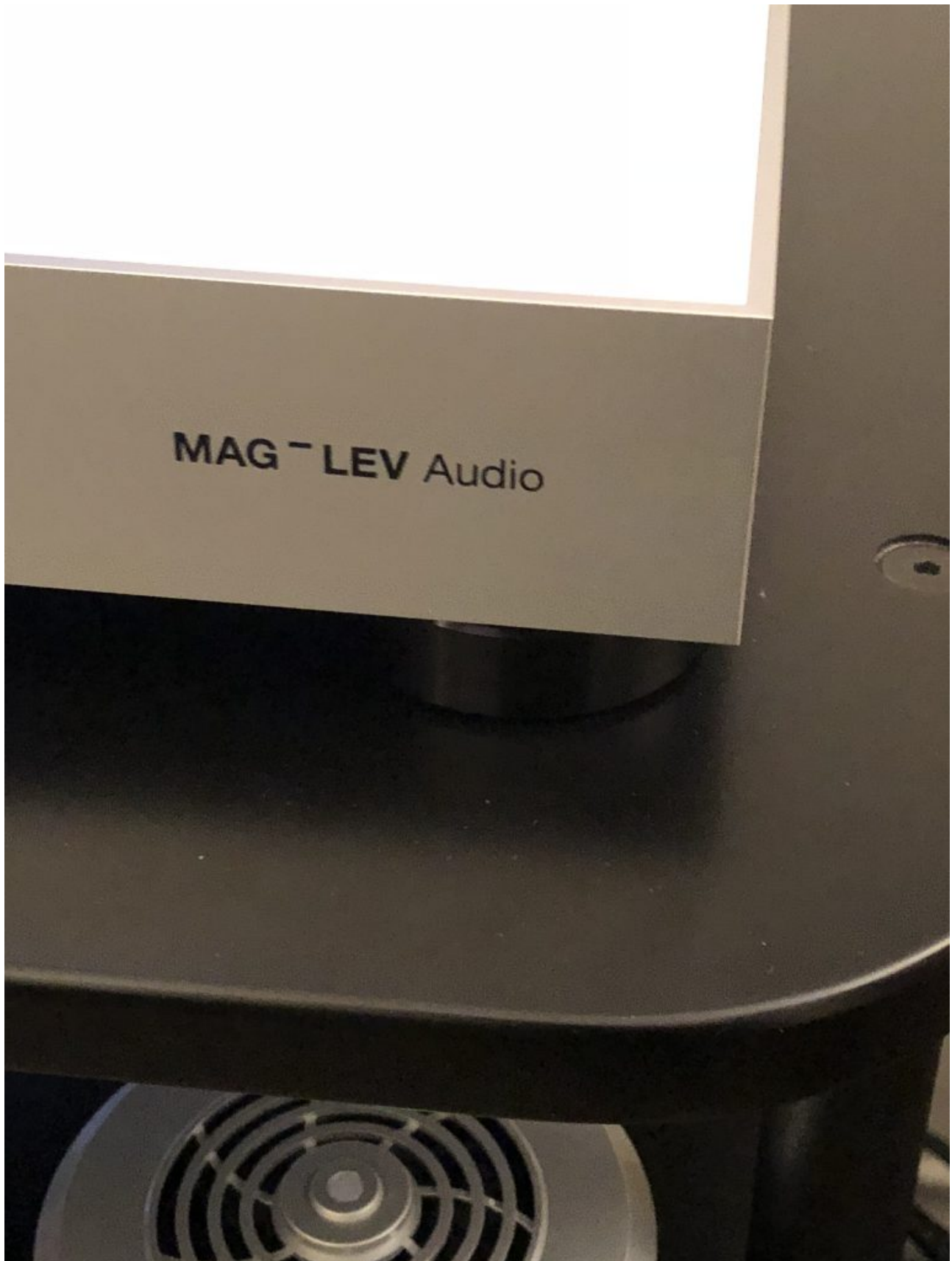
I was shocked by the beauty of tone and openness of this inexpensive rig...as delivered at about \$2900. It tracked everything at 1.6 grams and never faltered. All of the features worked, and worked smoothly. The depth of the sound field was extraordinary, and the imaging was rock solid. (By this time I had already tossed the included interconnects, which you shouldn't bother with. More about this below.)



I was aware of a bit too much turntable wobble during levitational operation and, though it was inaudible, it made me nervous. The sight takes some getting used to! I also made the usual mistake of removing the LP while the turntable was cycling down. You will only do this once folks! No harm done, but the results were startling, and not fun.

By this time, I was beginning to notice a thinness to the sound of the OM10 cartridge, and a bit more haze than I thought should be there, so it was time to roll out the heavy guns!

Godzilla Arrives



That cables that come with the Mag-Lev are generic stocking stuffers, and just get in the way of what this turntable can do. So I did the right thing: Goodbye provided cables, and hello WyWire Silver Phono Cables! That doubled the definition right there! Goodbye standard appropriate phono section and hello E.A.R. 324 Phono Preamp, with many terrific adjustments for MM and MI carts. Goodbye generic power cord, and hello to the new UITaudio Power Cord with computer filtering for perfect AC control and lowest distortion. Finally, goodbye OM10 and hello Ortofon topper MM 2M Black. Note: 1.6 grams for the tracking force is more balanced and dynamic with higher definition than the Ortofon suggested 1.5 grams on the 2M Black, an easy fix. (The 9cc Arm would not function properly with any of my MC cartridges that I have here...and believe me, I tried...so forget about it.)



The ML1 setup instructions talk about preparing the surface of your rack for a level ML1 installation. In America we level the table to the surface! But the ML1 does not have adjustable feet, so out came my trusty deck of cards, and I leveled the ML1 to perfection with a spirit level placed on the felt mat extended into the play position. This *is* the ticket! The table ceased wobbling, the woofers stopped moving, and all was rock solid and more open by far.

The ML1 Audiophile Turntable Emerges



With a touch lower VTA than the OM10, it was time for serious listening with the 2M Black. Espana, Direct to Disk, exploded in all its glory on my system! The vocals floated in space. Imaging is breathtaking. Depth of field is endless. Timbres are spot on realistic.

I did not tell you about a feature of the Mag-Lev that I really like. One puts the stylus over the outer groove of the LP and lowers the lift. This starts the table, but does not lower the arm until exactly 33 or 45 is achieved. Then the arm lowers and the music begins. Meanwhile, you are seated and ready to listen...no racing back to your seat. The arm also rises at the end of the LP, but does not return to start.

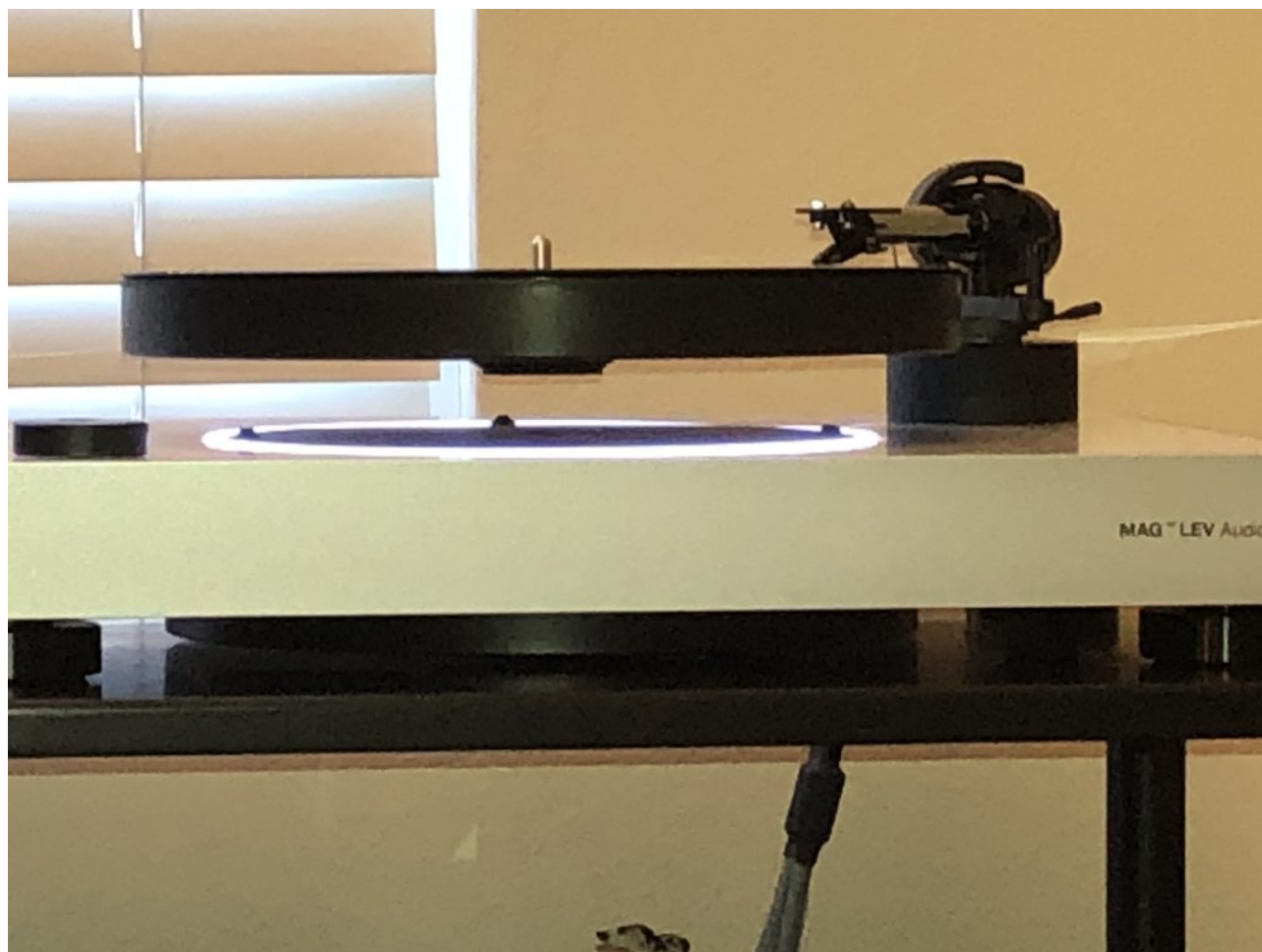


My ultimate reference LP these days is the new Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society's limited edition 25th Anniversary Greensleeves LP from IMPEX. The Society Edition of course is in RED. You will experience dynamics like a master tape was playing.

No ticks, no pops, no nothing, just intense clarity is revealed with the ML1. And that imaging, take away the noise and reveal a truly black background, and the music pops into place. Amazing!



I read a number of ML1 reviews in EU and Australian publications. None of them tried any tweaking, and just went for stock play with ordinary ancillaries. Their conclusions were often laughable. I want to hear what is possible, not what \$25 interconnects sound like. My phono stage is \$6500, and I have no idea what its sonic signature may be. I am reporting on the ML1 as a unique new idea which may or may not have legs. I cannot judge it if there is poor connectivity, amplification, or setup flaws hampering the performance.



I also know companies around the world are looking at upgrades for the ML1 and the engineers at Maglevaudio.com are also working late hours to improve performance.

Me, I vote on a more flexible tonearm like the Helius Omega integrated in the mix. Adjustable feet for the ML1 would be handy; a braking system to slow the platter more quickly; a remote control for further convenience; and a superior felt mat—all would be excellent improvements to the current model.

Summary



MAG-LEV Audio's ML1 Levitating Turntable has finally reached the market after several years of development with improvements galore and opportunities for some obvious tweaks, which you as the buyer can do yourself. If you go to the max and not wimp out with eBay stuff, that extra dough will bring you a scary improvement to what you may

consider high-end. My ultra-reference setup of the EAT Forte S, 12 inch arm, and Grado Epoch Cartridge have only just one year ago shown me true LP playback silence and its enormous benefits. You will hear a big portion of that blackness and openness from the ML1 if your system is up to the task. If not, the ML1 is one hell of a light show and a crowd pleaser, even if it only plays your used 70s LPs.

But folks, the ML1 is not a toy, but a bona fide joy of an audio invention that I thought I would never see in my lifetime! Congratulations Klemen, and many thanks to your top notch technical team for an amazing turntable.

Disruptor, indeed!

(Immediately after publication of this review, Bob Levi sent along some VERY IMPORTANT SAFETY REMINDERS for the ML1. Due to the unique nature of the powerful magnetic fields used to suspend the platter, there are serious cautions that our readers should be aware of before purchasing, using, or coming into close proximity to the ML1.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAUTIONS VERY CAREFULLY!

Dr. David W. Robinson, Editor-in-Chief)

SAFETY ADDENDUM, by Bob Levi

Addendum: The ML1 is a new product designed for experienced adults with unique and original scientific applications. The Manual clearly details all concerns, but a summary of the most important safety instructions are as follows:

Do not expose any parts of this apparatus to any magnets.

Children are not allowed to use the apparatus, to avoid risk to hands, fingers, and other body parts due to strong magnets in the product.

Do not insert any parts of the body between the turntable body and the levitating platter when turned on.

When handling the platter, do not place it near or on any metal parts in the vicinity, to avoid the magnets sticking to any metal parts.

When handling the platter, do not come closer than 4 cm to the body of the turntable or the height of the platter feet. If coming closer than the previous mentioned distance the force of the magnets becomes too strong to handle.

The risk of physical injury when handling this product due to strong force of magnets can damage your fingers and skin that gets caught between the magnets and metal.

People with heart pacemakers are not allowed to handle the apparatus or operate the platter.

Magnets can influence the heart pacemaker and heart defibrillator:

heart pacemaker may switch to test mode causing improper functioning.

heart defibrillator may stop working.

do not come closer than one meter to the turntable.

warn others, who are wearing such devices, not to come closer than one meter from the apparatus.

If the levitating platter falls down from platter feet or from a levitating position onto the turntable body, it sticks to the surface due to the strong magnets. When removing the platter after it has fallen, be sure to be in a stable position and carefully pull it away from the turntable body, strongly gripping the body.

Make sure the mounting table, cabinet, or surface has no metal parts that interact with magnets. A wood surface is best.

ONLY PLACE, CLEAN, SWITCH, AND TURN THE VINYL RECORDS WHEN THE LEVITATING PLATTER IS RESTING ON PLATTER FEET. (Appears in all caps in the manual.)

Additionally, if you have MC cartridges, keep them away from the ML1.

Finally, for our readers who have reel-to-reel (or even cassette) tapes, please keep all tapes as far away as possible from the ML1. In fact, magnetic media of all kinds should be kept **at a safe distance** from this turntable.

ML1 Levitating Turntable

Price: USD \$2900, including Ortofon OM10

MAG-LEV Audio d.o.o.

ITALIAN DISTRIBUTION

HIFI4MUSIC www.ayonitaly.com

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