

the absolute sound  
Golden Ear  
award '08

(ADVERTISEMENT)

## HP's Workshop

### Clearaudio Statement playback system and Goldfinger Version Two moving-coil cartridge

Nevertheless, the Clearaudio Statement is one of the most thrilling components I have encountered in the past 20 years. It is just awesome, and immediately so, from the first listen on.

It, along with the new version of the Goldfinger cartridge, represents a return to form for this German company after some years of dabbling in high-definition sounds—you know what I mean, forward, highly defined to the point of etched-ness, with thunderous bass and solid-state-sounding highs. Its superiority to ordinary turntables is evident from the moment the first disc lands on its 42-pound acrylic platter...

This was a five-year project, Suchy said, "to find out what is possible if you push everything to the theoretical limit." To my surprise, Suchy, when the Continuum Caliburn—its logical competitor was mentioned—paid it great respect, saying that, via the use of computers, its designers were attacking the same problems that Clearaudio was in, say, "analog as opposed to digital" fashion.



And so, how does it sound? And how does it not sound?

The very first thing you'll notice about the Statement, once the needle is on the disc, is how very quiet it is—everything is. It's almost supernatural, this effect. You just don't hear those things we take for granted in all LP playback...

The Statement magnetic-drive system is much more elaborate; perhaps it has to be given the sheer weight, solidity, and mass of the 'table. It outdoes the strengths of the other two 'tables, and goes further in reducing other forms of resonance—don't ask me, just yet, what they are—that cause smearing and blurring of transients, even down to the articulation of individual notes. And it achieves this with well-nigh perfect naturalness: There is no sense of edge or strain, or of any undue emphasis or "enhancement." It is a sense of ease at all playback levels I do not recall hearing until now.

For me, one of the more amazing things the Statement allowed our listeners to hear came during the last movement of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto [Janis, Dorati, Mercury]. Many folks consider this, as do I, to be "the" best of the many modern versions, in both performance and sound. It is a familiar standby here in Sea Cliff. But until the Statement/Goldfinger system I never heard all the individual notes articulated in the fiendishly difficult piano runs. It sounded, at times, as if Janis had three 112 June/July 2008 The Absolute Sound hands (really and truly). There was another and unexpected level of musical information unveiled from the recording. It's enough to give you a deeper appreciation of Janis' keyboard wizardry...

There is more to detail here. But, let me say, that until I return for Part II of this analysis, with the Statement I felt as if I were hearing mastertapes, not discs. Now, in fact, I have heard the mastertape of the Kije, thanks to Classic's Mike Hobson, at Bernie Grundman's studio in L.A., and so my comparison is no idle modern-day-reviewer's cliché. Let me put it another way: In many of these recordings, the Bartók for one, you don't have the sense that you are listening to an LP, a record. You can easily fool yourself into thinking you are listening to a performance of the music, not what it was like "live" but how it was, virtually, on the mastertape. For one thing, the bass dynamics alone will catch you by surprise, because they emerge from a velvet background of silence, and that can be startling. Supernatural is the word of choice for me at this moment...

I haven't heard any component that exceeds the Statement in defying ordinary analysis, because what it does is so new and so emotionally satisfying that it (temporarily, I hope) defies conventional criticism. That's how good it is.

Excerpts reprinted with permission from TAS Issue #182 June/July 2008



# Musical Surroundings

5662 Shattuck Avenue, Oakland, CA 94609 phone: 510.547.5006 fax: 510.547.5009 [www.musicalsurrroundings.com](http://www.musicalsurrroundings.com)