



CLASSIC AND AFFORDABLE DUAL TURNTABLE

Dual is one of the few brands with a consistent tradition and a corresponding continuity in the model policy. So, when a new Dual appears, you can be sure that you are getting some good stuff.

Team Players

Cartridges:

- Ortofon 2M Red, 2M Blue

Phono Preamplifiers:

- Trigon Advance
- Quad Twentyfour-P

Amplifiers:

- Accuphase C-280 · Plinius

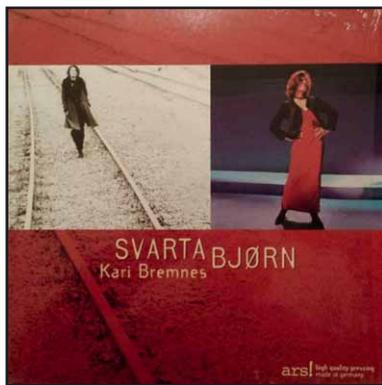
Loudspeakers:

- K+T Mini-Monitor TS
- Audio Physic Avantera III
- Spondor BC-1 aktiv

Competition

Turntables:

- Acoustic Solid 311
- Avid Ingenium Plug & Play



Music played

Kari Bremnes
Svarta Bjorn

Rolling Stones
Beggars Banquet

Massive Attack
Best of ...

A few memories and a confession at the beginning: I have always been a Thorens guy. Somehow it came about at the beginning of the 2000s that - at least in the German analog scene - you had to decide between Dual or Thorens. It was a bit like it used to be with Beatles or Rolling Stones at the time; you couldn't have both together. But if I think back even further, I have to admit that my very first contact was a Dual 1209, a fully automatic turntable and record changer on a drawer that could be pulled out behind a flap in my parents' living room closet. In addition, a SABA receiver and loudspeakers in the cupboard wall. It wasn't even half bad.

By the way, the Dual still runs from time to time when I feel like listening to shellac, only the mechanics have become very stiff, and the old chap needs a bit of help to start up, but don't we all feel that way?

In the 70s, Dual made a radical model change when they realized they could no longer score with the young audience with their somewhat rustic early models. At that time, the timeless and elegant flat Duals were created, of which individual models were to become perennial favorites for decades. I'm thinking here primarily of the CS 505 that saw the light of day in 1981 in its original form and is still sold today (!) as the 505-4.

The new CS 518, our test model, also follows this tradition. With a recommended retail price of EUR 649, it aims at ambitious beginners and old fans of the brand who have found their way back into the vinyl record camp after a long time and are looking for an uncomplicated device that can be easily connected to a modern system. And that's precisely the point of the CS 518 (and its little brother CS 418): The appropriate phono stage, at least for MM systems, is already built-in and can simply pass the already processed and amplified signal to any line input if required. There is no modern gadgetry like a USB output or Bluetooth. I honestly don't find that wrong because, if we are honest, playing music for listening is still the main task of such a device, and in 99.9 percent of all cases, the unit is placed so that a cable is sufficient for connection.

The DC motor is supplied with power via a plug-in power supply unit. The drive sits resonance-damped in the frame and drives the platter via a flat belt. At first glance, the platter is quite similar to the thermoformed part that the cheaper Duals have used in recent years. At a second glance, however, you can tell by the coloring that it is cast aluminum. The platter is also much sturdier, heavier, and simply more upscale. What has remained is the integrated subplate solution, where a second ridge is placed at about half the outer diameter, on which the belt then runs. By the way, putting this belt on the relatively small metal motor pulley is no problem at all thanks to the excellent preparation: The belt, which is already on the platter, is pulled over the pulley through the „service hole“ in the platter via a loop that is already in position. Then you can pull out the aid and put the mat on the platter, and you're done. By the way, the plate mat made of rubber is nice and thick and ensures absolute silence during playback.



The cast aluminum platter has an integrated running surface for the belt drive



Small switch and powerful tool: The CS 518 has an integrated phono preamplifier, which means you don't have to rely on external solutions for a start

The platter rests on the permanently mounted hardened stainless-steel bearing mandrel inserted in the brass bushing in the platter. The mandrel tapers towards the top so that the platter is always perfectly centered.

Three speeds are available so that even shellac lovers get their money's worth. Of course, they have the option to ALWAYS use the correct needle on the cartridge. It

fits perfectly that the already mounted 2M Red pickup system from Ortofon can also be equipped with a shellac needle. In general, the upgradeability is one of the significant advantages of such a cartridge family: The generator itself can remain geometrically correctly mounted in place, while you simply change the needle and, if necessary, just slightly readjust the tracking force and the anti-skating. And that brings us to the tonearm: this continues the grand tradi-



With the hood closed, the Dual exhibits the usual functional and straightforward elegance



The speeds are also in keeping with tradition: even 78 revolutions are available

arm tube to move without friction. The tonearm has an effective length of 9 inches and allows the mounting of systems weighing up to 9 grams. The tracking force is adjusted by the counterweight, while the anti-skating is controlled by spring force, using a corresponding dial on the side of the arm base. The smaller sister model CS-418 has a somewhat simpler arm, reflected in a 150 EUR lower price.

The electronics are housed in a flat frame made of MDF, which is not veneered but has a lovely polish - the black finish suits the Dual quite well. Thick feet made of a soft rubber compound provide the necessary decoupling from the surface. As usual with Dual, a sturdy cover is included, which is inserted into appropriate hinges, providing good protection against dust and other influences during playback. A small note in between, because I happened to pick this up from an acquaintance recently: There seems to be a faction of listeners who leave the hood open when playing records on

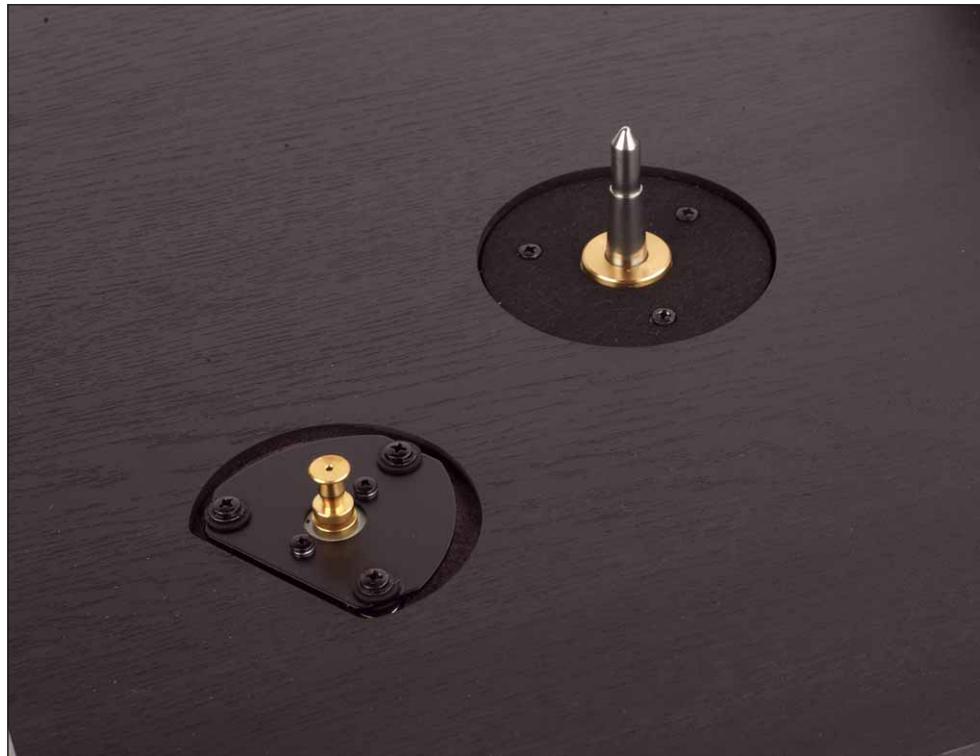
tion of Dual's famous ULM („Ultra Low Mass“) arms, but its look makes it stand out from the crowd of current turntables. It's two interlocking rings connected by high-precision ball bearings, allowing the



Dual is proud of the newly developed tonearm with precise gimbal bearings

such a device because it supposedly sounds better that way. That's utter nonsense: this way, you'll catch maximum interference through the loudspeakers. So: If you want to keep the hood, close it!

Back to the Dual: The CS 518 starts up quietly and quickly and then turns its rounds evenly at all three possible speeds. There's no comparison with my 50-year-old friction roller. Although also relatively light, the aluminum die-cast plate is clearly improved over the older sheet metal part. Especially in terms of quietness and clarity of the music played back, the Dual makes a clear statement in the direction of the competition in its price and weight class. It has structure, clarity, and defined edges; that's already very good. One is often inclined to assume that a flat and light platter thwarts a truly authoritative low-frequency reproduction, but the CS 518 does more than respectably here as well: perhaps the ultimate pull-through is lacking a bit in fast bass impulses, but depth and blackness are quite clearly there. And at the other end of the audible spectrum, it also goes way up, with the cartridge rather than the turntable or tonearm setting the limits. With a sharper needle, you still get the most out of it, just as with subtle dynamics resolution, which also benefits from the extended bandwidth. But even with the simple 2M Red, the CS 518, with its solid turntable and precisely working tonearm, is a real all-rounder that can play classical music just as well as rock and pop. The built-in phono pre-



The DC motor sits decoupled in the frame, in the center of which the proven dual platter bearing is mounted

amp works quite low-noise and fulfills its purpose – although I believe that one of the possible upgrade paths could be taken here, parallel to a higher-quality needle insert. For starters, however, the basic version is excellent for listening to music. Tuning can come later. In any case, the CS 518 is a sound basis for this, which goes a long way towards higher sound consecrations.

Thomas Schmidt



Dual CS 518

- Price: 649 Euro
- Distribution: Sintron Audio, Iffezheim
- Phone: 07229/182950
- Internet: www.sintron-audio.de
- Warranty: 2 years
- Dimensions (W x H x D): 435 x 145 x 367 mm
- Weight: 5,9 kilograms



» The Dual CS 518 offers a good-sounding overall package including a phono stage at an attractive price, which can still be upgraded significantly with little effort.