



King of convenience

Looking to make your life easier when it comes to your vinyl replay? **Ed Selley** thinks Dual might have the answer

On all the excitement around the burgeoning number of turntables available at every price, it's easy to miss that practically all of them require the arm to be lifted on and off the record yourself. For those that don't want to have to leave their chair, Dual has created the automatic CS 429. The basic spec is in keeping with rivals at this sort of price. It is unsuspended and the motor acts on the platter via a belt. Speed selection is electronic and offers a choice of 33, 45 and 78rpm. The arm is a straight aluminium tube with a detachable offset headshell to which an Ortofon 2M Red cart is pre-fitted (ensuring that the change to a superior 2M Blue is a simple stylus change away).

The Dual can handle 7 and 12in records (any 10in vinyl will need you to get hands on) It's usefully quiet and unobtrusive in operation and, thanks to the presence of a thick rubber mat on the platter, doesn't seem to result in unwanted noise at the playing surface. It's harder to

ascertain what the effect on the arm is but, when cued manually, the Dual feels smooth and in keeping with similarly priced rivals.

Dual also includes an internal moving-magnet phono stage, which can be switched out of the circuit and output is via RCA connectors rather than captive lead. The power supply is a wall-wart type, but seems to work well enough in practise.

Sound quality

My copy of Daft Punk's *Alive 1997*, which has the longest playing side of any record I own, can be played to the end without the arm lifting and proves fuss-free in use. The presence of all of the hardware required to make the arm work does mean that, compared with Pro-Ject's fearsomely competent Debut Carbon SB (which can be had for £150 less so long as you are content to manually operate it), the Dual lacks some of the bass extension and detail retrieval. What is surprising, however, is just how close the CS 429 gets in other areas.

Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden* is an entirely satisfying experience. There's enough space in the presentation to let the ephemeral nature of the performances open out into something three dimensional and tangible, and the tonal realism is commendably good (and further improved when I try a 2M Blue stylus). The sparse sounds and simple percussion lines are handled in a way that brings everything together into a cohesive listening experience.

This isn't the most ballistic-sounding turntable you can buy, but there is a commendable level of flow and co-ordination to how it handles the rhythmically complex *Africa Brasil* by Jorge Ben with a welcome blend of composure and engagement. The absence of any out-and-out ballistic edge also means that gentler, less rhythm-driven material sounds fluid and unforced. The limits to the bass extension also don't make themselves felt so seriously that the Dual ever sounds thin or lightweight.

One slight curiosity of the CS 429 is that the performance via the internal phono stage doesn't seem to be easily bettered by more expensive dedicated models. Whether it has been designed with a view to working effectively with the extra mechanical noise that the internal mechanism generates or that it is turned off rather than truly bypassed when switched out of the circuit is unclear, but there are not huge reserves of untapped performance to be extracted from the turntable by using better-quality ancillaries.

Conclusion

In some ways, though, this rather misses the point. The CS 429 offers a reassurance that notionally more talented manual rivals cannot easily match. If automatic functionality is important to you, this is one of the best examples on the market and one that can hold its own against some precocious manual rivals ●

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Dual CS 429
ORIGIN
Germany/China
TYPE
Unsuspended, automatic belt-drive turntable
WEIGHT
6.2kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
367 x 145 x 435mm
FEATURES
● 9in tonearm with detachable headshell
● On board switchable phono stage
● Ortofon 2M cartridge supplied
DISTRIBUTOR
Decent Audio
WEBSITE
hifi.dual.de/en
decentaudio.co.uk

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Smooth and engaging sound; convenient; well made

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not as talented as manual rivals; limited development stretch

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** An automatic turntable that keeps simpler rivals honest, this is an engaging deck

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

