



Second coming

Two years after ELAC's return to turntable production comes its new Miracord 70 package. **Adam Smith** takes a listen

Vinyl's resurgence in the hi-fi market has proved interesting in a number of ways, particularly when it comes to turntable manufacturers. Naturally, well-established names such as Rega and Pro-Ject have seen their output rise dramatically and, unsurprisingly, more than a few new names have appeared on the block. What is fascinating, however, are

those manufacturers that made turntables in their past that are once again returning to their roots.

Interestingly, the first two names that spring to my mind in this respect are Perpetuum Ebner and ELAC, so maybe it's a German thing! Regardless, ELAC's new Miracord 70 has an illustrious line of forebears, as it is rumoured that ELAC, along with Perpetuum Ebner and Dual,

DETAILS

PRODUCT
ELAC Miracord 70

ORIGIN
Germany

TYPE
Belt-drive turntable

WEIGHT
11kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
465 x 140 x 365mm

FEATURES

- 33 & 45rpm
- 9in aluminium/steel tonearm
- Fitted with Audio-Technica AT-95E moving-magnet cartridge

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accounted for 90 percent of the world's turntable supply in the mid-fifties. Consequently, the Miracord 70 has a lot to live up to.

ELAC actually re-started its turntable production two years ago with the Miracord 90, named in honour of the company's 90th anniversary. Naturally, it hasn't managed to reverse the aging process; rather, the Miracord 70 celebrates another anniversary. This time marking 70 years since the first ELAC turntable, the PW1 autochanger, rolled off the production line.

One similarity with the 90 is that the Miracord 70 comes as a complete package including arm and cartridge. This time around, the cartridge that's been chosen is the evergreen Audio-Technica AT-95E (HFC 387), which I still maintain is one of hi-fi's great bargains and a fine starting point. This is pre-fitted into the tonearm, meaning setup is merely a matter of fitting belt and platter, balancing the arm and setting anti-skate, and you're good to go.

tonearm. This is J-shaped and has a lovely retro appearance. Fortunately, under the skin it is technologically bang up to date, being based around a carefully selected mixture of aluminium and steel materials to optimise its resonant behaviour. It also features multiple electrical grounding points to help combat unwanted noise and hum.

As mentioned, an Audio-Technica AT-95E cartridge is fitted as standard, but the arm seems good enough to warrant an even better transducer should the upgrade urge strike. During my review I try it with both

For a £1,000 deck this is an incredibly accomplished all round performance

Goldring's 2500 moving-magnet (HFC 389) and Audio-Technica's AT-F5 moving-coil designs and it performs very well indeed with each, ensuring that its beauty is definitely more than just skin deep.

There's no lid supplied with the Miracord 70, but it has both mounting points and screws fitted at the rear of the plinth ready to accept one. The instruction manual talks of an upcoming accessory section on the ELAC website from which a suitable cover can be ordered, which is a good thing – gloss black plinths and dust do not mix! Also at the rear of the plinth

are output phono sockets and a grounding terminal. The deck is provided with a good-quality interconnect lead, which is used throughout the review.

Sound quality

Careful placement of the Miracord 70 is a point worth taking care over, as the deck does not have adjustable feet. When properly positioned, though, it gives a remarkably good account of itself, even if it has me a little fooled initially. My first test track is Mark Ronson's *Bang Bang Bang* and I have a slight concern that the deck might be running fast. However, a stroboscope disc and precision LED light source quickly confirms that it is actually spinning at the right speed. It turns out that it locks onto rhythms like a terrier and does such a good job of following them that they seem to be skipping along even more enthusiastically than usual.

The Miracord 70's bass performance is an utterly fascinating experience. I also initially wonder if it might be a little lightweight at the very bottom end, and not be digging quite as deep as I would like, but a quick blast of Jazzanova's *Takes You Back* confirms my concerns are misplaced here as well. This track has some low bass notes capable of shifting furniture on the right system and the Miracord 70 powers them out without even breaking a sweat. It turns out it has a very clean, detailed and extended low end, but it is also tight, focused and

The ELAC is built around a solid MDF base with a high-gloss black finish and metallic trim that imparts a stylish appearance. The sub-platter rotates on a ceramic ball and has a hardened steel bearing shaft, spinning between two sintered bronze radial bearings. Sat on its upper surface are four rubber bumpers that support the main platter when in place.

Said platter weighs in at 2.6kg and is a solid piece of glass that is coated on its underside with a black ceramic paint and topped with a felt mat. The sub-platter is belt driven by a high-quality synchronous AC motor made by Premotec, which is topped with a twin-stepped pulley to provide 33 and 45rpm. The on/off switch is tucked discreetly under the front of the plinth, but – disappointingly – speed change is effected by physically moving the belt, which still seems somewhat draconian to me on a turntable in 2018 bearing a near four-figure price tag.

An important feature of the Miracord 70 is the in-house designed



Audio-Technica's AT-95E cartridge is pre-fitted, aligned and ready to play

Q&A

Nils Ehrnsberger

Turntable project manager, ELAC



AS: How much technology is shared between the Miracord 90 and the Miracord 70?

NE: The Miracord 90 uses a hardened steel axle on a ruby ball in sintered bronze bearings. We found that this combination works very well and adapted it for the Miracord 70, adjusting for the different dimensions and the lighter weight of the platter. We have a similar bushing, but we use silicon nitride instead of ruby and a different type of sub-platter. Ultimately, while the 90 inspired the 70, and the two packages on offer are similar on paper, the only identical part that you will find in both turntables is the brass thrust plate.

Did ELAC always intend to draw on the experience of its original turntable designers from the seventies? Would the projects still have gone ahead without them?

We engineers stayed in contact with Wilfried Werner (ELAC's turntable mechanical designer) after his retirement and when our management suggested launching a new turntable we immediately thought of him. He was very eager to start designing and so he started drawing what he called "his ultimate turntable", the Miracord 90. I think that we might possibly still have made turntables if Mr Werner declined, but they would have turned out very, very differently. And most likely not as pretty! What's certain is that his experience helped make the project possible in the first place.

How much of the Miracord 70 is made in-house by ELAC?

Unfortunately, we have sold the machines we used to make the turntables in the seventies. However, we have a very good network of high-grade suppliers, which we check and expand continuously. We take great pride in the quality control of both incoming parts and outgoing assemblies, which is why it takes around 45 minutes to adjust and inspect every finished turntable.

IN SIGHT



- 1 Premotec synchronous AC motor and manual speed change
- 2 9in J-shaped tonearm
- 3 Audio-Technica AT-95E cartridge
- 4 2.6kg glass platter with felt mat

has absolutely no overhang, wallow or bloat. As a result, it can appear to sound a little 'thin' at times, but when a proper bass note comes along, it becomes clear that it is actually missing nothing and not adding anything either. In fact, for a £1,000 deck, it is an incredibly accomplished all-round performance.

Fortunately, the rest of the frequency range is more than up to the high standards set by the ELAC's low-end performance. Across the midband, the Miracord 70 is fluid and detailed but does err on the slightly brighter end of the tonal palette. In its supplied configuration it can lack a little warmth and even very occasionally stray into upper midband harshness, but experimentation reveals that this is a characteristic of the tonearm and cartridge combination. The AT-95E cartridge does belie its budget origins a little here, and even though it is good in most areas, a change to the smoother-sounding Goldring 2500 works wonders in this respect and is never at the expense of atmosphere or detail. Michael Hedges' guitar work on *Aerial Boundaries* is expansive and located beautifully centre stage, with each pluck as perfectly outlined as I could hope for.

All things considered, the Audio-Technica is a good partner for the Miracord 70. At the top end, this cartridge can occasionally become a little hard and splashy but the ELAC deck makes its treble sound surprisingly couth and almost sophisticated. Cymbal strikes, meanwhile, are sharp and crisp but

blessed with a purity that makes them sound truly lifelike.

The other thing that is very obvious is the fine sense of precision within the soundstage that is usually the preserve of rather more costly designs than this one. The Miracord 70 sets up a very solid and well-defined image within the loudspeakers and extends nicely behind the speaker plane as well. As a result, performers are given plenty of space, which allows them to be easily located within the musical action.

Conclusion

This is a well-engineered and beautifully made turntable that offers a fine performance. The inclusion of a good-quality cartridge is a big plus and yet the Miracord 70 is more than capable of revealing the benefits of transducer upgrades, if desired. As plug-and-play combinations go, this is one of the best I've encountered ●



HOW IT COMPARES

The £999 price tag is a competitive one, and the ELAC is up against stalwarts from plenty of well-established names. The *Michell TechnoDec (HFC 309)* comes in at around this point, fitted with an OEM Rega tonearm, and Rega itself has a big-hitter in the form of the *Planar 6* with Neo power supply (*HFC 427*). *Pro-Ject* offers various flavours of *2 Xperience SB (HFC 397)*, *RPM 5 Carbon* and *The Classic (HFC 416)* models, all complete with cartridges. Even ELAC's old adversary, *Perpetuum Ebner*, has a stake in the game with the *£950 PE-800* package. All are worthy adversaries, but the sheer poise of the *Miracord 70* makes it an alluring prospect.

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Sophisticated bass; build quality; overall package at the price

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Manual speed change; lack of Perspex lid

BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



WE SAY: A super sounding, ready-to-play turntable package

OVERALL

