

The Amazon Audio Components Model 2 Turntable

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About fifteen years ago, I jumped into the LP/CD debate with both feet. It was raging at the time, as the CD exponents (me, included) challenged the embattled LP diehards for the fidelity high ground. In those early days, as a younger and even less tolerant audiophile, I protected my digital turf vehemently, while in denial about the rumblings of deceit I was hearing concerning the 'Perfect Sound Forever' crowd.

It was during this time that I stumbled onto a fine audio store in Toronto. At Metropoli Sound, the eloquent



Gary Parm gave me a lesson in both high-end audio and humility. Those lessons came in the shape of his passionate words and the smashing sound of a Rega Planar 3 turntable. My curiosity was aroused and my wallet was lighter. Thanks to Gary's edification, I never looked back.

Since that time, my listening room has been filled with analog and digital, both cohabiting without too much fuss and bother. And on a happy note, the debate is now somewhat moot with the vast improvement in digital technology and the almost embarrassment of riches in the vinyl world. In the analog world, Germany, Britain, and the US have been a triumvirate of excellence, producing amazing platforms upon which to spin LPs. Audiophilia writers have auditioned several from Britain and the US, and it has been my particular pleasure recently to review two 'tables from Germany.

My many months with the Clearaudio Level 2 turntable were truly invigorating and musical, and the past couple with the equally Teutonic Amazon Audio Components Model 2 turntable has been even more so. Both 'tables support huge, acrylic platters (50mm thick on the Model 2) on a plinth of the utmost quality and finish -- it is this mass (in conjunction with a fine arm) that leads to an almost silent playback and very little, if any, inner groove noise. With zero hash to gum up the soundstage, LPs via both systems had a CD 'blackness' to them, allowing the pure enjoyment of their considerable analog qualities to the fore.

Construction of the Model 2 is absolutely first class. Amazon uses an inverted bearing that it suggests is '...the finest available today...'. The bearing is made of hardened steel and a ceramic ball, resting on a Teflon™ support. Amazon continues: ...'the ceramic ball used is ideal, since it has an extremely smooth surface and is actually harder than metal in that small a size. The ball rests on top of a stationary axle. A precision-machined sleeve is placed over the axle/ball assembly. An oil pan at the bottom keeps it lubricated through capillary action...'.



The Model 2's DC regulated motor is integrated with the chassis, with 33/45 adjustable speeds and the power supply outboard. The Model 2's larger and more expensive sibling, the Model 1, has its motor assembly completely outboard. I am a great proponent of outboard motors, but even on extended listening, the 2's integrated motor was silent and deadly. Connecting the motor to the platter is the flimsiest blue rubber belt. Initially, I thought it was a mistake. Wrong! It works a treat. No over engineering here. Everything does its job, as it should.

No man is an island, no turntable, either. A fine balance is required to get the best out of the analog's six dynamic inputs - table, arm and cartridge, not forgetting the phono cable, phono stage and support. Happily, the distributor's analog specialist selected a compatible group and set them up superbly. The arm was the Amazon-suggested, Danish made [Moerch](#) UP-4. At first glance, this super unipivot, looked like a flimsy little thing, until closer scrutiny revealed workmanship par excellence, and the sound, or lack thereof, revealed a near-total lack of coloration. Hanging off the front of the Moerch was the newest version of the highly regarded Benz Micro L04 (reviewed in its early form in *Audiophilia*). This briarwood beauty was non-fatiguing, detailed, airy, balanced, and packed a mighty wallop when called upon. Cabling was by Cardas and the phono stage duty was accepted by Audio Research.

The immediate differences between the Clearaudio and Amazon tables were in the width and depth of the soundstage and in the bass register. To be more precise, and with the ever present proviso that the Amazon had a much better arm than the supercharged Rega on the Clearaudio, the Amazon soundstage had much more air and the bass was slightly better defined. On its own merits, the Amazon 'table threw a huge, all-encompassing soundstage, with enough air for the listener to hyperventilate! On first hearing, I thought the bass sounded light (a good old Kingsway/LSO/Martinon/RCA *Shostakovich One* 'subway rumbler' always helps to define bass parameters). After many hours, it was the clarity of presentation that made the bass only 'seem' light. When compared, the Moerch/Amazon pairing clarified the bass right down to the lowest level. The Rega/Clearaudio's bass was slightly bloated by comparison. This bass definition was heard on many LPs, including subtle differences during a playoff between an original and reissue of the LSO/Maag/Mendelssohn *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Decca SXL 2060) in case you were wondering, the original won.

Musical images were as tight as a snare skin. Instruments were caught truthfully in their assigned seating and vocal solos floated accurately in a specific place in the soundstage. During 'image testing', I always get out the Spaniards. The flutes and castanets in Massenet's *Le Cid* (HMV ESD 7040) were as clear as I have heard in the horribly overblown acoustic of Birmingham's Town Hall. This recording can be problematic under certain conditions (back to bloat) and my Greensleeve EMI/HMV is not the best advert for the recording. However, when treated to the excellence provided by Messrs. Amazon, Moerch, and Benz, the loving adornment was palpable. Only in the huge tuttis did the clarity escape the Euro crew. Mind you, said clarity

has escaped setups from VPI, Clearaudio, Wilson-Benesch, Rega, and Project. The reissue of de Falla's *The Three Cornered Hat* (Decca SXL 2296) fared much better, largely because of the Ansermet's fantastic interpretation and the consistently brilliant recording from Geneva's Victoria Hall. The orchestra shouts were explosive followed by Teresa Berganza's ethereal mezzo placed squarely at the back of the hall. Near perfection here. The sound of Berganza's voice floated around the hall like a fine red wine swirled in Waterford.

After all the refulgence of Spain, I wanted to hear how the Amazon would handle a good old Dime Store buy. Too accurately, it would seem. After some years of searching, I finally found Hubert Laws' *Wild Flower* (Atlantic SD 1624). And for a buck, I was one happy flutist! In the '70s, Laws had been the doyen of flutists, adept at playing classical as he was jazz. Live, his sound was warm, flexible, and perfectly in tune. It was records like *Wild Flower* (and a million by Jean-Pierre Rampal) that inspired me to pursue a career in music. Jump 30 years (Oh Lord!), and the sound was a shock. Laws was still his peerless best, but the recording was early '70s at its worst - all compartmentalized and poorly amplified. Ugh! The accompanying orchestra sounded anemic, each player sounding happy as a lark in his own four by four 'recording space'! As such, the Amazon Model 2 turntable is like all high-end thoroughbreds: feed it well and everything will be fine. Tamper with excellence, and it'll bite back.

Hearing the Amazon Model 2 in my system for two months was pleasure upon pleasure. For the first two weeks, I used the 'table without the optional Amazon Record Weight clamp, and though the sound was still wonderful, the clamp synthesized the 'spirit essence' of this fine turntable. As a result, forget the 'optional', the Record Weight is essential. You'll hear the soundstage even clearer as minute details emerge ever so delicately. Well worth the extra outlay.

The German designers have got the Model 2 right. It addresses all analog audiophile requirements, is reasonably priced for a high-end turntable, and looks great. Classy Clearaudio has owned the German analog market for years, and now will have to move a little to accommodate the wonderful turntables from Amazon Audio Components. Highly recommended.

Amazon Audio Components Model 2 turntable

Manufactured by Amazon Audio Components

Price CDN\$5500.00 -- price includes Moerch UP-4 arm (cartridge extra)

Source of review sample: [Canadian Distributor](#)

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