

## REVIEW: ELAC MIRACORD 70 TURNTABLE

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29th August, 2018

Reviews



The more affordable little brother to Elac's Miracord 90, it reflects important milestone's for Elac's rich heritage. So how does this sub-\$2000 turntable perform? Read on.

**Elac Miracord 70 Turntable \$1,999 RRP**



German loudspeaker brand, Elac celebrated the company's 90th birthday last year. But a loudspeaker did not mark the occasion.

Elac chose to commemorate this company milestone with a turntable called the Elac Miracord 90. Priced at \$4499, the Miracord 90's sound and build quality earned the reviewing fraternity's praise. They deem it a superb turntable at its price point.

Elac has lately followed up the release of the Miracord 90 with a new, more wallet-friendly turntable called the Miracord 70.

Why Elac chose the number 70 for this turntable is crystal clear to those who obsess about important dates in audio history.

Count back 70 years from 2018, and you arrive at 1948. A significant date for Elac, because it was the year this respected brand released its first turntable.

It's a historical fact that's sure to surprise anyone that shoehorns Elac into the category: speaker designer and manufacturer.

The rather beautifully built if minimalist styled Miracord 70, comes as no surprise to veteran audiophiles with a solid memory of audio as it evolved between say, 1962 and 1974.



Leaving aside legendary audiophile turntables such as Australia's Orpheus Silex, Britain's Garrard 301 and the German Thorens TD124, models that were awesomely expensive and deemed too tweaky for the middle-class music lover of the day, most that were sold were auto-changing, multi-record play models

Buying one of the audiophile turntables especially in the '60s entailed buying and installing an arm and cartridge. A process that deters the main street audio buyer today, as it did way back when.

The alternatives from '48 to the late '60s were the mass market, automatic turntable models that allowed you to stack LPs on an elongated spindle.

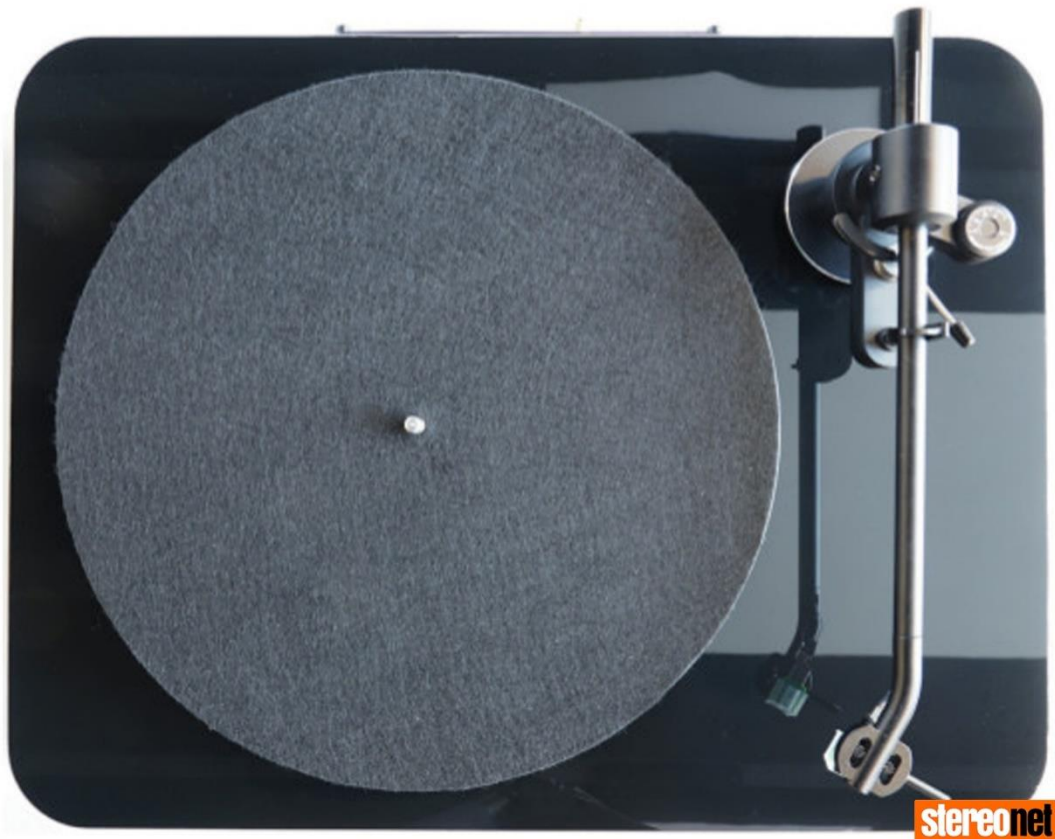
Some were cheap and cheerful, but many were built to keep on spinning vinyl forever. Moreover, some could be converted to single record, fully manual mode simply by lifting off the "auto" spindle and inserting the supplied shorter spindle and switching the turntable to "manual" mode.

If you were trawling the mass market for your new auto-changer turntable at that time, five brands loomed large.

The British contingent comprised the Garrard and BSR brands. Competing against them were the German trio of Perpetuum Ebner, Dual and Elac which was rebadged in the US as Benjamin Miracord because Benjamin was the importer.

Elac's share of the world market at that time? Oh, about 90 per cent ...

Ironically, these auto-changers were the “plug ‘n play” models of the day. Fast Forward and their equivalents range from Project’s Juke Box E with its preinstalled Ortofon OM5E cartridge, built-in phono stage, and a sacrilegious built-in Bluetooth receiver.



Today, a handful of reviewers have bundled the Miracord 70 into the “plug ‘n play” category. Which is dumb, and entirely misleading.

Yes, The Miracord 70 comes with a preinstalled tonearm and Audio-Technica's AT95E cartridge. And yes, its RRP of \$1999 puts it within the orbit of the top tier of quality savvy, first-time buyers.

But it’s natural home is within the living room of an audiophile who doesn’t want to invest a motser on a turntable, but doesn’t want to sacrifice sound quality either.

They won’t have to.

Having enjoyed the Miracord 70 the last couple of months my advice to anyone on the hunt for an audiophile standard turntable bargain is: dive in without a moment’s hesitation. The Miracord 70 is a sonic and visual stunner.

Put succinctly; you can buy this turntable in haste and enjoy it at your leisure.

Within its price point, it faces off against Rega's RP6 and Project’s 2-Xperience models. Both of these turntables are no sonic slouches and offer plenty of performance for \$2000.

The Miracord 70 edges ahead of this pair. It’s not as enthusiastic sounding as the RP6, but it has a more extended and even frequency response.

And compared to the Project 2-Xpression, the Miracord 70 has less tonal warmth, but more refined sound quality.

The final choice is always the buyer's, of course. Above all the choice is or should be system dependent. Synergy, above all else.

So if the rest of your gear has a laid-back quality, for example, head for the Rega RP6 to inject a bit of pizzazz. If it's tonally a bit thin and bright, the Project 2-Xpression will add some tonal warmth.

But if neutrality, refinement, an enjoyable sense of timing, precise imaging and a wide, deep soundstage are on your bucket list, the Miracord 70 is the go-to turntable at its \$1999 price point.



### Elac Miracord 70 Specs And Style

The Miracord 70's minimalist styling is more Scandinavian than Teutonic.

The slimline plinth with rounded corners, high glass black top plate finished with a silver surround, and metallic trim has a thoroughly modern visual appeal.

It looked a visual treat on my black and silver Solidsteel rack, and it never failed to attract praise from the usual horde of listeners to my listening room.

The composition of the plinth is solid MDF, so solid that with the platter installed the Miracord 70 weighs 11 kgs.

The Miracord's platter is made of glass and weighs 2.6 kg. Unlike most glass turntable platters that are typically little more than utilitarian accretions, Elac's is a sophisticated design coloured in a heavy soda-lime finish that looks quite dark because of the black ceramic coating applied to its underside. A coating designed to suppress unwanted resonances.

Elac supplies a black felt mat for the platter but no lid. One is available, but it's an optional extra and frankly shouldn't be at this price.

This platter spins on a sub-platter that moves effortlessly and silently on a ceramic ball. The bearing shaft built onto the sub-platter is made from hardened steel and is designed to spin between two sintered bronze radial bearings with minimum friction, noise or fuss.

The motor chosen for the Miracord 70 is a pedigree unit sourced from Premotec. On top is a nicely machined two-step pulley with guides for the Miracord's rubber drive belt. Moving the belt manually from one pulley guide to another changes speeds from 33 1/3 to 45 rpm.

The straight 9-inch arm supplied with the Miracord 70 has an aluminium , and the gimbal bearings are super smooth.

Tracking weight and anti-skate adjustments can be made on this tonearm; moreover, its fixed headshell has mounting screw slots long enough to make adequate overhang adjustments for anyone who wants to upgrade the supplied Audio Technica AT95 cartridge.



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On the rear of the Miracord 70 are two gold plated RCA connectors and a gold-plated earth connector. Elac supplies a decent quality RCA interconnect cable, but it's worthwhile experimenting with more expensive interconnects.

The power supply for the Miracord 70 comes in the shape of a small outboard unit. Powering the Miracord 70 is as simple as reaching under the front of the plinth and pressing the on/off switch.

The Miracord 70 is nicely compact and has quite a small footprint. It is 140mm high, 465 mm wide and just 365 mm deep.

### **Play And Tell**

The Miracord 70 was mated to my Elektra Audio Pnyx preamplifier, Audio Research Reference 75 amplifier and Wilson Audio Sasha speakers.

To keep things real it was also inserted in a system comprising a pair of Rogers LS35/A speakers driven by a Conrad Johnson PV10B preamplifier and MV55 power amplifier.

With the Miracord 70 in 45 rpm mode, I carefully placed a precious 1969 7-inch recording of **The Beatles' *Dear Prudence*** track performed by Doug Parkinson In Focus.

The Parkinson version reached Number 5 on the Go-Set National Top 40 chart at the time of its release. And in a measure of its continued popularity, this single is still available as a reissue.

Via the Miracord 70, the delicacy of the opening guitar riff arranged itself with scale and precision in my listening room. It's quietude smashed by the entry of Parkinson's powerful voice seconds later.

Each time the drummer punished his drum set, you could hear the pig skins complain as the sticks tested their tautness.

The In Focus band was reproduced with scale and presence. When Parkinson's voice accelerated gaining power, it was like an unstoppable force assailing the microphone's diaphragm.

For old time's sake, I dug out my well-used copy of The Beatles' 1968 White Album and gently lowered the stylus to track two, *Dear Prudence*.

The guitar intro was playing the same notes as played on the Parkinson cover version. But they were different. Very different.





The Parkinson version was more powerful but more earthbound. Strange to tell, the Beatles original was the opposite end of the spectrum, and if asked to describe its tone, I'd say it was transcendental.

Then the proverbial penny descended. Of course, it was more transcendental. Duh. Most of the songs were penned during March and April 1968 when the Fab Four were enjoying a Transcendental Meditation course in Rishikesh, India.

What the Miracord 70 ensured I also heard was the impact of the percussion on both wonderful versions. Clearly, this affordable model has a clean, clear and incisive sound quality.

What it gives up sonically compared to more expensive models are extended treble and bass frequencies. It also lacks the ability to uncover layer after layer of detail nor fill its vast and deep soundstage with performers and instruments that have perceptible weight and presence.

But we need to remember we're talking about a sub \$2000 turntable, not one priced at \$20K.

Encouraged by the immersive sound of the Miracord 70, I played *Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*, a sidelong track on **Dylan's** *Blonde On Blonde* Album and listened to the whole side.

Which is quite a grind on lesser-credentialed vinyl spinners that lack detail and flatten the track's dynamic ebbs and flows. But the same track is a real pleasure on models with a great sense of timing.

*Lady Of The Lowlands* is carried by the interplay of insistent percussion, repetitive organ dirge and Dylan's nasally vocals. Add into this mix, sweet rhythmic guitars and what you hear is a pop legend intoning one of his masterpieces. What the song means is anyone's guess.

With Dylan, the best approach is to surrender to the flow of the music, enjoy your emotional response and don't spoil the experience by over thinking the man's lyrics.

Encouraged by the Miracord 70's never less than pleasurable sense of timing, I reached for *Hats* by **The Blue Nile** and played back the track called *Over The Hillside*.

The impeccable timing and each clear, concise musical note also ensured I played the whole side of the album.



You can't want any more from a \$1999 turntable than clarity, refinement, good timing and a sense that what you're hearing is worth hearing.

A point emphasised when I played back an aging copy of **King Crimson's** Larks' Tongue In Aspic, a Robert Fripp Prog Rock album that seems to defy time.

This music pushed the limits of the Miracord's supplied Audio-Technica budget cartridge. It complained. I started to hear some treble, and upper mid band coarseness as the stylus struggled to decipher a moveable feast of grating static-filled guitar riffs, tolling bells, high-pitched bird sounds, softly spoken voices and violin riffs that range from the pastoral to those that are pure torture.

Replacing the Audio-Technica with an Ortofon 2M Bronze banished the upper-frequency brittleness. A cartridge switch proving the Miracord 70 has a natural upgrade path.

After a couple of months with the Miracord 70, I'm prepared to share that this is a value-laden model that rewards with a polished and incisive sound quality.

Essentially neutral throughout its reasonably wide frequency response and with an admirable level of pitch and timing, the Miracord 70 is going to be near impossible to pass over by anyone trawling through the hotly contested \$1499 to \$2500 turntable sector of the audio marketplace.

That's high praise, indeed.