



EAT

## C-Sharp Turntable Review

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OVERVIEW

## PRICE

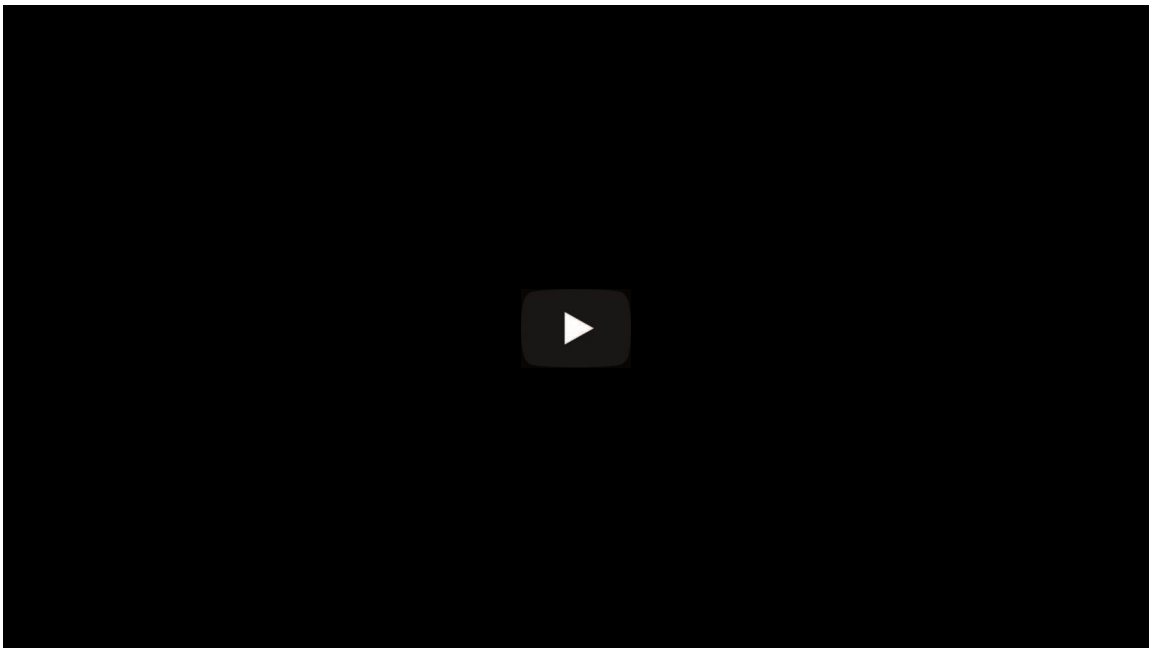
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\$3,495\_

## THE HIGH NOTES

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- Super Dense Resonant Damping Base
- Carbon Fiber Tonearm
- Outboard Speed Control



## Company & Product Overview

With vinyl sales the highest they've been in decades, there is certainly no shortage of turntables on the market to choose from. While roaming the halls of CES 2017, we came across a product lineup fairly new to the US that caught our attention for

it's very high build-quality and attention to detail. When we walked into their suite, EAT was a name we had heard for years, but we had never had the opportunity to take a hard look at their products. After hearing the history of the company, we knew we were in good hands.

**EAT is an acronym for European Audio Team.** In the 1990's demand for high-quality vacuum tubes was on the rise. A company called VAIC located in the Czech Republic was making waves for some amazing handbuilt tubes. Jozefina Lichtenegger was getting her MBA in Economics and interestingly enough, her sister was married to the owner of VAIC. She started helping out the family business and their reputation grew. After almost 16 years making tubes, VAIC faded away but Jozefina arranged a buyout of Tesla Vrsovice, a large tube maker in Prague, to continue with production of these great tubes. Soon after this, she designed a tube phono stage and tonearm and EAT was born.

This was followed by some very well made high-end turntables. In 2003, while Jozefina was looking for distributors, she met Heinz Lichtenegger, the director of Pro-Ject Audio Systems. **Pro-ject** is one of the largest high-performance audio manufacturers in the world today and their **Debut Carbon turntables** are legendary for their great performance and value. They have a huge factory in Prague.

They were soon married and quickly drew a line in the sand, agreeing not to create competing products and to run their businesses separately. EAT does benefit, however, from having the large-scale Pro-ject production facilities available to them. It really is a great story, and EAT today still hand blows some of the best vacuum tubes in the world.

While it's more of an entry model in their lineup, the **C-Sharp turntable**, which we will be reviewing today, is by no means an entry-level turntable. It's an extremely well-made manual turntable that even **comes with a \$1,000 Ortofon Quintet Black moving coil cartridge**. It is also the best-selling turntable in EAT's lineup of tables which run from \$1,495 all the way up to around \$20,000.

## **Design & Build Quality**

When we first looked at the **EAT turntables**, two things really impressed us — the **great looking design and the superb build quality**. They just exude European precision. Like many of our favorite turntables, the C-Sharp is a fully manual turntable. This means to operate it you'll turn it on, manually lower the tonearm using the damped cueing lever, then at the end of your record, use the cueing lever again to raise the arm. At Audio Advice we prefer manual tables for their simplicity. There's an argument to be made that the lack of mechanical parts also prevents issues such as resonance from affecting the tables great sound.

The look of the C-Sharp is quite stunning. Unlike many high-end turntables, the C-Sharp is **elegant and relatively low-profile**. The carbon fiber plinth sits in a high-gloss black base with a thin edge. The platter is much larger than a 12" record and tapers up to the high tech mat. A substantial record clamp is included in the box. The tonearm is also a work of art, **constructed from carbon fiber and highly-polished aluminum components**. The whole thing looks like something you would expect to find under the hood of a \$1m race car!

As soon as you begin to interact with the C-Sharp it quickly becomes clear that build quality it is second to none. This is to be expected for it's nearly \$3,500 price point, but it's just an incredibly well put together table.



## Features & Technology

The low profile base of the **C-Sharp** is made out of the highest density MDF available. The ultra-low-noise motor is mounted to the base along with **10 cone-shaped damping feet** made out of a new high tech energy absorbing material called **TPE (Thermoplastic Elastomer)**. The plinth constructed from a sandwich design of carbon fiber over MDF. The base has three adjustable feet, which allow you to get things perfectly leveled.

The main platter bearing sits on the carbon fiber plinth which is supported by the TPE columns. This makes for a **great isolation system**. If you gently push down on the plinth, you can even feel the spring of these columns. The combination of these features limits the amount of noise able to get back into the system, maximizing the sound quality.

**The turntable bearing is one of the most unique designs we have seen.** It is an oversized inverted design with a resonance-free ceramic ball bearing on top. The larger inner platter has a massive brass bearing which sits on top of the ball bearing and also extends above the inner platter to provide a perfect fit for the substantial outer platter. Everything fits together with incredible precision! Any vibration noise that does make its way through is just transferred out to the TPE columns. Quite a brilliant design.

The main outer platter is very heavy, coming in **just an ounce shy of 11 pounds!** When you flip it over, see why they made it larger than an LP. The outer perimeter is a weighted ring to give it a flywheel effect. The main platter itself is another sandwich-type design, this time with a very inert aluminum sandwiching some more TPE material. The part of the platter that contacts the record is constructed from recycled records! Topping the platter is a threaded spindle for the included heavy-duty machined record clamp.

To be honest, it's a little scary during the setup process, trying to center an 11-pound platter on the inner platter. It's a precision fit, so you've got to get it lined up just right. **Be careful not to mash your fingers as you lower it.** The good news is that it fits perfectly and you should really only have to do this the first time you set it up. We recommend you attach the clamp, screw it on firmly, and then gently lower it down while holding it by the clamp.

Even the belt is a bit exotic. It's constructed from a **special antistatic rub**, is round like many ultra-high-end turntable belts, and is polished for uniformity.

Like the rest of the turntable, **the tonearm also has a ton of great technology buried inside** of it. It's a combination of a unipivot tonearm and traditional pivot design with the middle bearing being a unipivot. When you move it around, you can't feel any play at all, which is something we look for. It also is virtually friction-free. The arm tube is made of carbon filled with a special silicone grease to damp out any resonances. This arm can fully support just about any type of high-end cartridge you would want to use, which our customers love.

The tonearm has **fully adjustable vertical tracking height.** You'll need a stylus pressure gauge to set the tracking force as it is all gravity and there are no markings on the counterweight. Fortunately, a very nice one is included with the table. The **anti-skating is a very clever gravity design** as well, but you'll need some pretty good eyesight to get it all set up properly. It has to screw into the side of the tonearm base, then wrap around. Once it's set up, there is no risk of it getting changed, like some gravity designs, but is just a little trickier to start with. Of course, **if you purchase your C-Sharp from Audio Advice, we will do all of this for you.**

**The external power supply is fully isolated and easily allows you to switch**

**between 33 and 45.** It has an AC generator built in for totally clean and stable power to the motor.

Finally, the package we are testing **comes fitted with an Ortofon Quintet Black.** When you consider the C-Sharp without a cartridge is \$2,995 and with the \$1,000 Quintet Black, it's \$3,495, you get a \$500 savings buying the package — an incredible value.

## Performance

We had recently set up a nice system to run our new Golden Ear Triton Reference using a PrimaLuna Dialogue integrated amp and the **Sutherland Duo phono stage**. We decided that this would be a fun rig to use to test out the EAT C-Sharp. First off, that combo sounds just amazing! The Tritons have a powered sub built in and the Prima Luna had no trouble driving them. **The system provided an incredibly warm, rich sound** — just as we would expect.

We set up the Sutherland for 100 ohms and set the gain to 60db and started spinning some vinyl. The first thing we noticed was the great deep bass extension. We had on a Norah Jones record with some acoustic bass. Not only was it deep and full, but you could hear all of the harmonics of the instruments. The way her voice floated dead center with such a great sense of effortlessness.

Dynamics were also outstanding, especially on an old Judds album, Why Not Me. This one was really fun to listen to. Changing over to some Miles Davis Kind of Blue was just stunning. Every instrument stood out in a huge soundstage, yet each one was the right size and precisely located, never wavering. We finally cued up one of our favorite LP's for rhythm and pacing, John Cougar's "Pink Houses" cut from his Uh-Huh album. The C-Sharp passed this test with flying colors as we had our feet tapping within the first few bars!

**Using the C-Sharp is a great experience as well.** You drop the weight on the center spindle and give the center portion a spin to lock it in. Push 33 or 45 on the speed control box, wait until the light stops flashing to indicate things are up to speed and then lower the tonearm. The Quintet makes cueing up songs very easy as its square body makes it easy to line up the groove you want to land in.

We just loved using the C-Sharp!

## Overall Recommendation

We sell turntables at all price points, so we certainly understand that a \$3,500 turntable isn't for everyone. With that being said, if you are serious about your vinyl and want something that has tons of great engineering, incredible sound, sleek,

elegant good looks, and is a real pleasure to use, the **EAT C-Sharp turntable** should be on your shortlist. Just remember to find a sturdy shelf to set it on, as the table weighs in at 30 pounds!

## **HIGH NOTES UNPACKED**



### **Super Dense Resonant Damping Base**

The European engineers at EAT designed a base made of dense MDF coupled with 10 thermoplastic elastomer dampers which virtually eliminates motor noise transfer and external vibrations.



### **Carbon Fiber Tonearm**

EAT's carbon fiber arm uses a unique combination of both uni-pivot and conventional bearings for great tracking. It matches perfectly with the \$1,000 Ortofon Quintet Black that is included with the table.





### **Outboard Speed Control**

Provides super clean power for the motor and makes switching between 33 and 45 as simple as pushing a button.