

The EAT B-Sharp Turntable

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By Jeff Dorgay



It's an exciting time to be an analog enthusiast. There have never been more great choices and just like in the world of racing, competition improves the breed. The EAT B-Sharp table you see here only costs \$1,595 and brings a lot to the party.

Built to the same high standards of the rest of the line, this baby features a suspended chassis, an exquisite tonearm (with a carbon fiber wand) and a pre-installed Ortofon 2M Blue MM cartridge that is accurately set up.

Everything you need is in the box, and the EAT manual is not only precise but features some decent photos and illustrations to talk even a novice turntablist through the procedure. Install the belt, the anti-skate weight, affix the counterweight and you're almost ready to rock. Ortofon specifies a tracking weight of 1.8 grams, which after a bit of experimentation, proves spot on, so don't bother. A quick check of azimuth and VTA reveals correct setup from the factory, so I suggest just setting the counterweight and getting down to business. A spiffy pair of interconnects are also supplied along with a 16-volt wall wart – so don't lose it! Radio Shack won't be able to bail you out if you do.

The plinth on the B-Sharp is standard MDF, unlike the coolio carbon fiber item on the C-Major we reviewed here, along with a few other obvious corners cut, but for nearly \$900 less, this is an amazingly good table for anyone bit by the vinyl bug looking for an upgrade from their starter turntable.

The Ortofon 2M Blue is an excellent cartridge choice, and a \$236 value on its own. This cartridge has received fantastic reviews world-wide, and it checks all the bases. It's a competent tracker, has smooth frequency response and will work with any phono input you can plug it into.

Let's roll!

Plugging the B-Sharp into the main rig with the Pass Labs XS Phono is pretty much overkill, but an easy way to cut to the chase and determine what this table is capable of. Even in the context of a six-figure reference system, the core sound of the B-Sharp shines through. The B-Sharp is a solid table, offering sonic performance at the top of its class in all areas.

A quick check of platter speed reveals everything up to snuff. The anti-skate adjusts with a threaded weight (just like my SME 3009) and is easy to nail down, along with the other adjustments, making fine-tuning, should you choose to install your cartridge.

Gliding through some acoustic recordings reveals general tonality and musical pace to be solid through the B-Sharp. There is an overall "rightness" about this table in a higher dose than you get in a budget \$300 – \$500 table. Comparing the B-Sharp to a few budget models with the same Ortofon 2M Blue, it underlines my theory that money is always better spent on a better turntable/cartridge combination than putting a mega cartridge on a cheapie turntable. The drum track in Bowie's "Fashion" is rock solid and well-defined in the middle of multiple vocal overdubs, synth riffs, and Robert Fripp's screaming guitar. No small feat for a reasonably priced turntable, and no doubt a result of successful implementation of the suspended subplatter.

Listening to the recent remaster of Joe Jackson's I'm The Man shows off the sheer spatial ability of the B-Sharp; painting a large soundstage in all three dimensions. This is what you want from analog, but don't get from budget tables. Finally, the tonearm/cartridge interface is superb, with the 2M Blue turning in one of the best performances I've heard. Joni Mitchell's "Jericho," the last track on side one is notoriously tough to track through, yet the B-Sharp handles it easily.

Attention to details

While they might not all contribute to sonics, the build quality of the B-Sharp is excellent throughout, and this is a table you'll love having on your equipment rack, or wherever you choose to place it. The plinth has a lovely gloss black finish, and the tonearm is a work of industrial art. I particularly like the small magnet in the middle of the tonearm wand that holds the arm solidly in place when not being used instead of the spindly clamp used on most turntables. (not just budget models)

For those that can't leave well enough alone and love to upgrade, the B-Sharp offers standard RCA outputs rather than locking you into a budget tonearm cable, ultimately limiting the table's performance. While the B-Sharp is supplied with a decent cable, swapping it out for a \$200 Nordost White Lightning cable, extracts even more music from this combination, offering a boost in clarity and dynamic jump. It's thoughtful of EAT to give you an upgrade option.

The 2M Blue is a great all-rounder, but swapping the 2M Blue for a 2M Black (\$749) provides a significant upswing as well, underlining just how good this table/arm package is. Whether you just leave it stock or plan on upgrading your B-Sharp, this is a great little table that can take you a long way down the analog path, providing a clear upgrade path as your enthusiasm and available funds grow.

Sweet spot

Priced as it is, the B-Sharp offers a high level of performance at a level that is cost effective for music enthusiasts with even a modest record collection. If you've even bought 100 records, you've invested more than a B-Sharp, and your records deserve to be treated well. It proves to be an excellent performer with current and vintage gear and considering the cost of a great vintage receiver these days, not out of the budget. I had just as much fun with the B-Sharp, and the new Rega Brio integrated as I did a recently rebuilt Marantz 2245.

One of the toughest parts of participating in the wacky world of analog is agonizing over cartridge choice, and equally so, cartridge setup. That US Importer VANA handles this tough choice for you is not only welcome, but a great way to get you listening to records right now, rather than sweating the rest.



The EAT B-Sharp
\$1,595 with Ortofon 2M Blue (installed)
www.vanaltd.com

The B-Sharp Turntable from EAT is now available from VANA LTD.

It's belt-drive, suspended chassis design is compact enough to fit in any system.

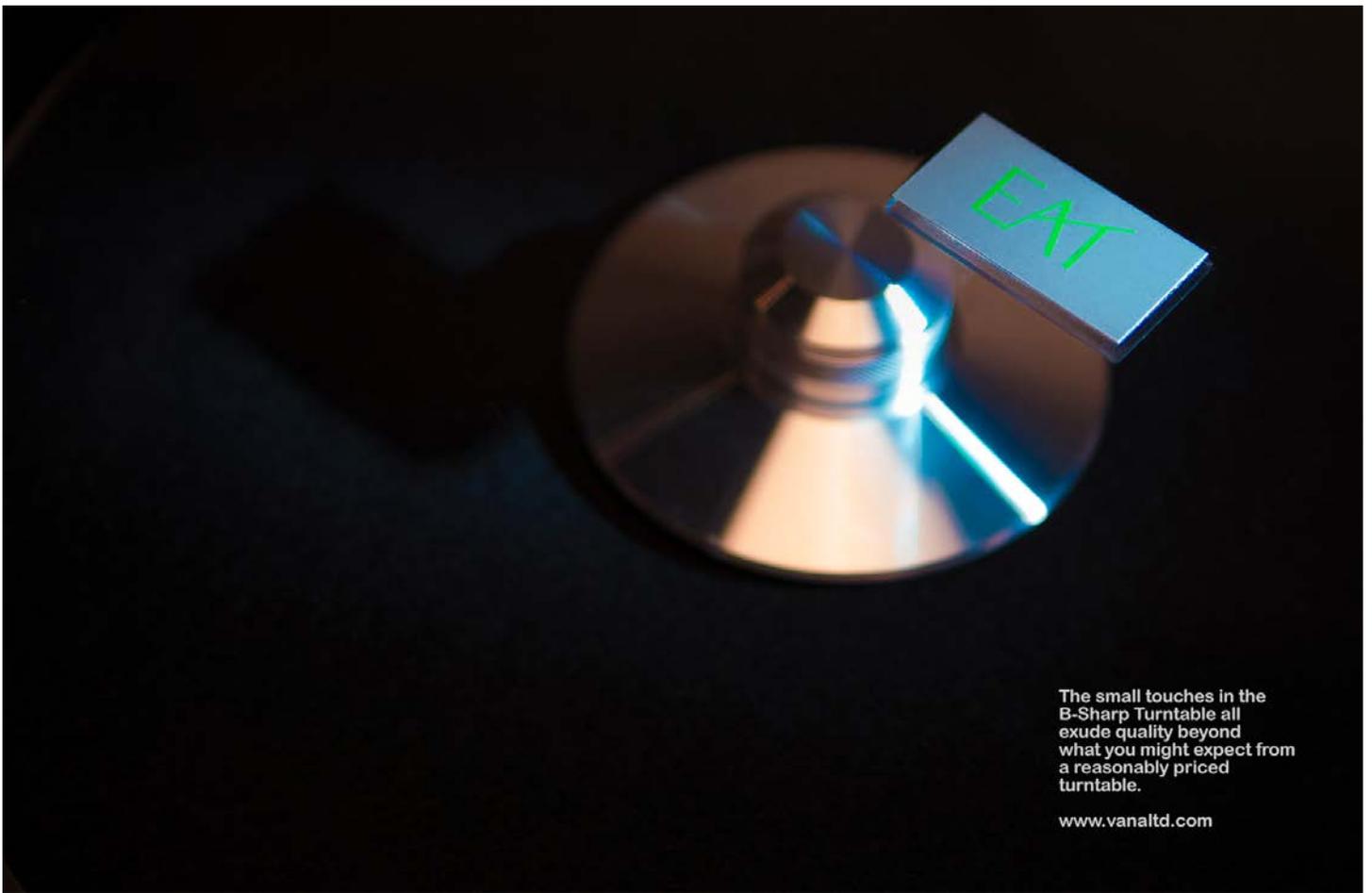
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The small touches in the B-Sharp Turntable all exude quality beyond what you might expect from a reasonably priced turntable.

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The B-Sharp's tonearm tube is made from carbon fiber, just like their top models.

A full range of adjustments are available to accommodate any phono cartridge at your disposal. An additional counterweight is available for heavy cartridges.

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This see-through view of the B-Sharp illustrates the suspended sub chassis, which adds to the sonic purity of the table.

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