

Hey presto!

Magic man **Neville Roberts** swaps his tried and trusted tonearm for the Wand Plus to find out what it can conjure up

The latest rabbit to be pulled from the hat of New Zealand-based company, Design Build Listen, is the Wand Plus upgraded unipivot tonearm. Following on from the success of the Wand Classic tonearm that was launched in 2011, the Wand Plus promises a significant number of refinements and upgrades.

As with the Classic, the Plus makes use of a black carbon fibre arm tube. Although very light, the arm tube is by design much wider than the norm because rigidity increases significantly with diameter. The counterweight sits as close as possible to the pivot to reduce angular momentum and as the carbon fibre arm tube is very light, most of the mass is around the pivot.

The unipivot is made by the counterweight sitting on a vertical spindle and is held in place by gravity. Coarse adjustment of the tracking force is achieved by adding or removing balance plates to the counterweight and fine adjustment is effected by turning a small additional weight that screws in at the back. Bias adjustment is provided via a fine nylon thread with a loop at one end and hanging weights at the other.

One of the big improvements in the Wand Plus is a more elegant vertical pivot arrangement and a proper arm lift mechanism, which is absent on the Classic model. The Plus also features an arm tube clip to lock it in the parked position when not in use.

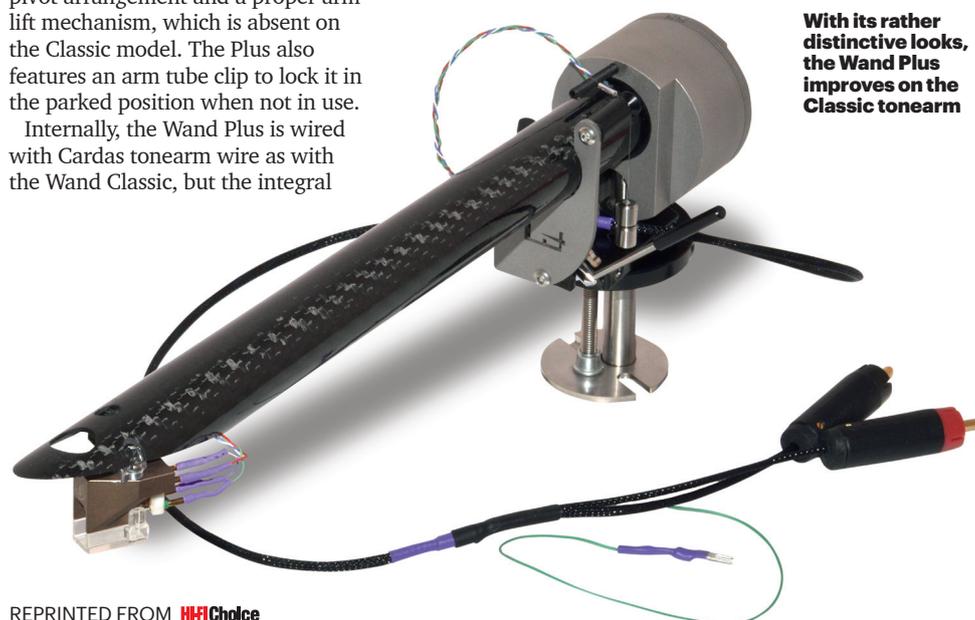
Internally, the Wand Plus is wired with Cardas tonearm wire as with the Wand Classic, but the integral

interconnects are terminated in Eichmann ETI phono plugs. The Cardas arm wire is taken straight to the phono plugs in a continuous length to improve sound quality, but this does make the integral interconnect leads a little fragile.

The Wand Plus 9in arm is designed around the standard Rega geometry with a tonearm pivot to spindle distance of 222mm. A 12in model is also available and an SME mount can be purchased as an optional extra. In addition to the usual array of mounting hardware and accessories, the arm is supplied with a high-quality stainless steel tool that is a combined spanner, height gauge and alignment protractor, as well as a template for drilling plinths if required.

The headshell is fashioned from the tapered end of the arm tube, giving the whole arm a fairly chunky appearance. Cueing is undertaken using the tip of the arm or via the damped arm-lift mechanism.

The Wand Plus has been designed around the Baerwald alignment system and the cartridge is set at a fixed angle. This means the arm cannot be adjusted to a different geometry, such as Löfgren or Stevenson. I have always used



DETAILS

PRODUCT
Design Build Listen
The Wand Plus

ORIGIN
New Zealand

TYPE
Tonearm

WEIGHT
500g

FEATURES
● Unipivot tonearm
● Carbon fibre
arm tube

DISTRIBUTOR
Design Build Listen

WEBSITE
designbuildlisten.
com

Baerwald as I find this gives the best compromise across the entire record, so this is not a problem as far as I am concerned. Also thoughtfully supplied is an Ortofon stylus balance for adjustment of the tracking force.

Sound quality

Once I install my Lyra Clavis DC moving coil cartridge in the arm, it is time to do some testing. At 12.5g effective mass, the Wand Plus is a mid-mass tonearm and should, therefore, work well with most moving magnet and moving coil cartridges. Using my Vinyl Essentials test record, I measure the arm and cartridge resonant frequency at a comfortable 12Hz, which is below the low audio frequencies of the recording, such as low organ notes, and above the point where harmonics can intrude into the audible spectrum. Tracking ability is 70 microns with this cartridge, which is also very satisfactory. Time now to unleash it on some music!

A favourite test record of mine is an excellent recording of Vivaldi *Op.7* by I Musici because it has a good range of solo instruments as well as a full orchestra. Violins can be tricky things to reproduce well, either sounding harsh at one extreme or too recessed at the other. The Wand Plus gets the balance just right, with a rounded performance that is sprightly, yet easy on the ears. My only negative comment is that the front-to-back sound stage is a little on the shallow side, but this is a very minor criticism. The left to right imaging is absolutely spot on and instrument placement is rigid and does not drift if you move your head a little side to side.

Conclusion

The Wand Plus scores over the Classic in terms of features and refinement. The engineering is top class and this arm will certainly impart some magic to your recordings ●



With its rather distinctive looks, the Wand Plus improves on the Classic tonearm

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Unique styling and superbly engineered

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Fragile interconnect wiring

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: The arm delivers a well balanced sound quality with excellent imaging

FEATURES



OVERALL

