



Talking 'bout a Revolution

The Revolv is the first new Michell turntable in over two decades. **Ed Selley** finds out if it's been worth the wait

When Michell announced late last year that it would be releasing not one but two new turntables, the news was greeted with no small degree of astonishment. Prior to this, you had to look all the way back to 2003 and the TecnoDec for the last time this happened. Naturally, a great deal of attention was focused on the Gyro; a root-and-branch redesign of the iconic GyroDec, but in some ways it's the more affordable Revolv that is the braver of the two. The Gyro is able to use the iconic lines of its ancestor to ease you into its existence. The Revolv is both new and is not replacing anything; it has to be judged fresh and for what it is.

Perhaps because of this, the Revolv is a combination of elements from the TecnoDec and Gyro, emphasising its location in the range. The design and form factor closely follows the smaller deck. The main chassis is a single section that mounts the bearing and the armboard. Where the TecnoDec uses acrylic, the Revolv is machined

from a single section of 19mm aluminium in the manner of a Gyro – making it feel more substantial.

The chassis mounts an example of the patented Michell helix bearing, which uses Archimedes' principles to draw oil up from a reservoir to lubricate the bearing. This is a single helix rather than the double one used in the Gyro, but it still works well. The platter it rotates is made of Delrin and is now flat-sided with no indent for the belt as this allows for the belt to self-level after a few turns. The underside of the platter features cut down versions of the brass weights that have marked the GyroDec out for the bulk of its existence. These perform the same function as they do on the Gyro, but it's not an accident that they also visually firm up the family link between the two products.

The motor is free-standing and sits in a crescent-shaped alcove on the left hand side of the chassis, which is extremely similar (if not identical) to the one used on the Gyro. It takes power from a separate regulated PSU

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Michell Revolv
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Belt-drive turntable
WEIGHT
9kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD) with cover
500 x 150 x 355mm
PSU:
75 x 55 x 230mm
FEATURES
• 33 & 45rpm
• Delrin platter
• Separate AC motor
• Choice of tonearms
• Shielded PSU
DISTRIBUTOR
Michell Engineering
WEBSITE
michellaudio.com

that is electromagnetically shielded and grounded to prevent interference. This PSU includes an electronic speed control, but the start/stop is still a button on the motor itself in the Michell tradition. Once the belt is attached, the idea is to pull the motor out slightly to create an isolating gap between it and the chassis.

The Revolv can be ordered without an arm for £4,000 but our test sample arrives with a T8 arm (effectively a Rega RB880) and an example of the Cusis E/H high-output moving-coil cartridge for a package price of £5,500. As an inveterate tweaker, I am delighted that the Revolv can be used with a variety of arms – giving it an advantage over key rivals – but I suspect that the majority of units sold will have factory-fitted arms and carts.

When I first lay eyes on the Revolv, I subconsciously perceive it as a burlier TecnoDec. In use, however, the experience is far closer to the Gyro and it does a good job of feeling worth the asking price. This is helped by a level of fit and finish that is truly exceptional. Aluminium is a medium that Michell excels in and all of that expertise is plain to see here. Pretty much my only gripes are that the supplied clamp is a little fiddly and the supplied Unicover doesn't afford as much protection as an actual lid, but these are rarer and rarer things on new turntables.

Sound quality

Setup is logical and self-explanatory, and the Revolv is far less concerned about placement than some other designs at the price, thanks to its excellent Sorbothane terminated feet. It also comes straight out of the

blocks delivering a performance that immediately confirms it's a Michell. The opening *Jenny Was A Friend Of Mine* on The Killers' *Hot Fuss* begins in a swirl of helicopter blades and sirens. On the Revolv, this effect is vast to the point of immersive. When the opening guitar riff emerges from this original 'pre-bombast' Killers, though, it's locked to the centre with the rest of the band formed around it in a way that is utterly logical and thoroughly believable to listen to.

The really clever bit about this space is that it's every bit as effective with small-scale material as it is with bigger productions. Nick Drake's legendary *Pink Moon* doesn't need to be turned into a stadium filler as that would completely destroy its intimacy. What the Revolv does astonishingly well is maintain this intimacy while

It uses its expansive soundstage to give everything the space it needs

pulling the studio it was recorded in around you. It is a party piece that turntables many times the price can't repeat and I enjoy it immensely.

It's tonally excellent too. I tested the Cusis E in its low-output form back in *HFC* 469 and its admirable showing makes the transition to this high-output version. Tonality is a happy blend of compelling realism and enough sweetness to make sure that Air's *Moon Safari* is delivered with its trademark lushness with Beth Hirsch's sublime turn in *All I Need* sounding truly lovely. Michell has done an excellent job with the Cusis models and the result is a very happy partnership here.

The selection of Michell qualities extends to how the Revolv handles



Ordered from the factory with the Apheta 3 cartridge, Rega's Planar 10 (HFC 477) is £195 cheaper than the configuration of the Revolv on test here. It boasts a higher spec arm and notionally more sophisticated cartridge. Sonically, the Planar 10 is the more propulsive and immediate of the two and it has some dynamic attributes the Michell can't match. However, the Revolv has a more spacious presentation, better bass and arguably offers a sweeter tonal balance. It's also more flexible. There is nothing stopping you ordering a Revolv with an RB3000 arm from a Planar 10 or indeed a huge spread of other options. As a deck to buy in a system with further upgrades planned, the Michell has more scope to grow with your system.



different tempos. This is not an urgent-sounding turntable, but it is somewhat deceptive in this regard. With the gentle and considered *Pause* by Poppy Ackroyd, the Revolv does a fine job of capturing the tempos and using its expansive soundstage to give everything the space it needs. Give it the entirely ballistic *Need Some Mo* by Ko Ko Mo and the Revolv doesn't necessarily step up the urgency in the manner of some rivals, but neither does it sound anything other than entirely with it, timing wise.

And in one specific area, it shows an advantage over pretty much anything else I've tested at the price. The bass extension is truly outstanding with the blistering low end of *Telephasic Workshop* by Boards Of Canada managing to combine a speed and definition that is genuinely impressive. Some side-by-side tests with my own GyroDec suggest that, even with the older deck benefitting from an Audio Origami arm that costs more than this complete £5,500 package does on its own, the Revolv picks out better bass. This might be the equivalent price of the outgoing

Gyro SE, but it's a far better performer with it.

Conclusion

Of course, there is no shortage of sublimely talented turntables contesting this price point, but Michell's new arrival is able to trade blows with all of them and it delivers a huge chunk of the qualities that made its forebears so successful. The weight of expectation on the Revolv is considerable, but it meets it in fine style ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★
FEATURES
★★★★★
OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Exceptional sonic performance; superbly made; flexible in use
DISLIKE: Fiddly clamp
WE SAY: The Revolv arrives in a busy sector, but makes its mark with a sublime blend of great performance and classy design

