

hardware review

Michell Gyro: a turntable icon is reborn

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Michell Gyro turntable, arm & cartridge

Tradition (inasmuch as anything involving the internet has been around long enough to be described as 'tradition') is to kick off an online review by saying 'Product X is a such and such' because it aids search engine optimisation. Such is the current decrepitude of search engines (Google would *far* rather you chatted to AI about such things) I'm not sure of its worth and with the device you see here, there is a pretty robust argument that if you are on The Ear, you know what it is already.

The Michell Gyrodec is one of a handful of hifi products that have achieved some sort of public consciousness outside of the industry. It is an iconic piece of industrial design that cemented its fame by appearing in the background of a photo taken by Diana Walker for *Time* Magazine in 1982. Steve Jobs, Apple Maverick had divested himself of almost everything to improve his focus but had retained his Gyrodec. Any device, turntable or otherwise that had maintained its place in Jobs' life under those circumstances had something going for it.

The other element of the Gyrodec's fame was that it existed for as long as it did. While it was never a living fossil type device that didn't change in its lengthy run but the Gyrodec nevertheless chalked up over forty years of continuous production which is a milestone that very few devices manage. And then, one drizzly October last year, we were informed that things were changing – Gyrodec was to become Gyro and not only was the name changing, the entire turntable was too.

The Gyro (no dec) is a root and branch revision of the original Gyrodec that manages to look the same as its ancestor (we'll come back to this) while almost every single part of it has changed. Something that Michell is keen to stress is that the principles of the original design have not been changed; they simply benefit from a degree of measurement and analysis that

was impossible when the original was developed alongside access to materials that were also unlikely to feature in turntable construction in the early eighties.

At its core, the Gyro is still a suspended design with a subchassis with three points of suspension supports the main chassis, platter and arm. The motor is separate from the rest of the turntable, sitting inside an aperture in the left hand side that allows you to place it correctly without it coming into contact with the chassis. If you have owned or used a Gyro SE (and Michell is insistent there will be no full plinth version of the Gyro), nothing about the new Gyro is terribly alarming.

What the new turntable does though, is methodically seek to correct issues that have come to light in the original turntable's lengthy production run. From the ground upward, the Gyro rings the changes. It uses the same feet we saw on the [Revolv](#) (themselves an evolution of the Tecnodec feet). They incorporate six independent Sorbothane isolation nodes, beefed up for the new Gyro's greater mass and structural characteristics. The six nodes compress independently, distributing the load more evenly while reducing the transmission of unwanted vibration from the supporting surface. Michell won't be drawn on whether the Levi maglev feet will be made available for the new Gyro but it seems like a reasonable assumption based on the effort that went into their design.



The feet are attached to a machined 12 mm aluminium tooling plate that is substantially more robust than before. By placing additional material where it contributes most effectively (such as the curve at the front) it improves structural stability and provides the intended mass distribution and loading characteristics for the suspension and isolation system. With this rigid underpinning in place, Michell has then proceeded to correct what was probably the single biggest issue that affected the original Gyrodec.

Once the Gyrodec is 'under load' with the suspension bearing the weight of the turntable and rotational force being applied to the platter, it had a tendency to oscillate slightly. In the new Gyro each suspension tower incorporates three polymer stabilising push rods positioned at 120-degree intervals around the central suspension pillar – equivalent to the 1, 5 and 9 o'clock positions. Each incorporates an independently adjustable spring assembly that regulates lateral movement and torsional forces while allowing the suspension to remain compliant in the vertical plane. Together with a revised resonance frequency of 3.5Hz, the new suspension is better at letting the cartridge do its thing.

With this in place Michell has gone to work on the main chassis which supports the arm base and suspension towers. Like the subchassis, it is thicker than before but in addition to this, it incorporates precision-machined brass inserts of carefully selected size and position. These help the chassis control resonance and dissipate energy better than before. Energy is not damped out of existence but guided away from the stylus. Lift the new chassis next to an old one and the weight difference is considerable.

At the centre of this is an example of Michell's inverted helix bearing, now a double helix but sufficiently right from the first outing that it is little changed. The platter is Delrin engineering



plastic with brass weights to add mass and give the Gyro its iconic appearance but, where the original had an indent for the belt, the new version does without to allow the belt to find its natural level (which on test was very close to the lower edge of the platter indeed). Doing so is addresses a point where the new Gyro works to combat the older model's tendency to oscillate. Records are clamped in place by the same clamp we saw on the Revolv which is still nowhere near as nice to use as the older optional threaded clamp. Power comes courtesy of the same immensely solid PSU with speed control that we saw on the Revolv.

Where Michell has been both diligent and pragmatic is that the new Gyro is broadly speaking identical to the older Gyrodec. Put simply, you don't go about changing one of the most aesthetically pleasing turntables available at any price without good reason and Michell has avoided doing so. When I reviewed the Revolv, I noted that the Gyro has an easier route into the world because these aesthetics partially shield how radically different it is from its predecessor. That Michell has achieved this while making the changes that they have is no small achievement.

Like its predecessor, the Gyro can be ordered with no arm, a setup that will cost you £5,995 (as I noted in the Revolv review, that is more closely priced as a replacement for the old Gyro SE). Then there are three factory fit arm options; the T2 (which seems to be an evolution of the Rega RB220, the T8 tonearm (a largely 'as is' Rega RB880, identical to its recent showing on the Revolv) or their Tecnoarm 2 which is a more extensively modified Rega unit with drilled out armtube and heavily revised counterweight. Any of these factory fitted arms can in turn be fitted with any of the Cusis range of cartridges. This particular sample showed up with Tecnoarm 2 and a range topping Cusis M cartridge that takes the grand total to £9,795.

Of course, in the spirit of the original Gyro, this is not the only way you can go. The arm mount has a detachable board which can be changed for different mountings to accommodate most 9 inch arms. Losing this ability would have significantly affected one of the cornerstones of what made the Gyrodec as flexible as it was. Even though I suspect most Gyros will mount Michell arms, being able to go beyond those choices is a key part of what made the Gyrodec such a popular choice for as long as it was.

The price rise that the new Gyro commands over the outgoing model is significant but once you unbox and interact with one, you can see where some of the cost has been incurred. It would be a nonsense to describe the older model as anything other than stoutly constructed but the quality of detail finish is a significant step forward. For a few people reading this, the ideological construct of a ten grand Gyro will be one they struggle with but I think Michell has put the effort in to carry it off.

Sound quality

Of course, even if the deck does qualify as art, it still serves a musical purpose and it's here where those revisions are intended to make the difference. It's also where things get quite interesting for me. I own a Gyrodec and I have done for nearly twenty years. Moreover, the example I have has been retrofitted with the splendidly named Gert Pedersen kit which

Michell Gyro

attempted to resolve the oscillation issue on the original. In short, I am both familiar with the original and also with measures taken to do what the new version has been engineered to eliminate. My Gyro also enjoys the benefit of an Audio Origami PU8 tonearm which is the price of the new Gyro in its own right. Running both into a Cyrus Classic Phono Stage, I felt it would be fairly close.



What was immediately notable is that the new boy is still undoubtedly a Michell Gyro(dec). With the vast, shimmering opening of Dead Can Dance's *Spiritchaser*, both decks generate a stereo image that doesn't so much unfold in front of you as it does immerse you in it. It's an audio Imax and it is something that the Gyrodec can still do better than the resident Vertere and indeed most turntables that visit for review.

The Gyro loses none of this epic scale but it does a better job of fixing performers and detail in place within this space. It's still a vast presentation but one where everything in it is better defined; like looking through cleaner glass. Like the Revolv, the most impressive facet of this performance is that when the music being played isn't that large in itself, the effect isn't one of it being given unnecessary scale, simply that there is air and space around the performance that helps it breathe.

Focus on the performance itself and the Gyro reveals that it is capable of resolving information more clearly and through more congested sections than the older Gyrodec. Even possessed of that remarkably capable Audio Origami, there are points in The Comet is Coming's gently beserk *Channel the Spirits* where the older turntable is beginning to lose its grip on what is being presented and the Gyro simply keeps resolving and pushing on. It's not a night and day difference between them but the effect of the Gyro's composure makes this a more pleasurable listening experience.

Don't for one moment think that the result is some joyless and forensic device that is to music what a blast furnace is to cookery. There is an effortless ability to capture the emotional content to what is being played that means that when it gets stuck into the joyous rendition of Helicopter on Bloc Party's *Silent Alarm Live*, the palpable delight of Kele singing in front of a few thousand people that know all the words is stitched into the sound from top to bottom. There is absolutely no question that the Cusis M is playing a significant role in this; it's the first time I've used the big Cusis and I have come away enormously impressed, but the deck it is supported by understands the brief implicitly too.

In fact, the more time I have spent with the Gyro, the more I have come to appreciate exactly what Michell has achieved here. Any Gyrodec owner on the planet could be issued the new turntable and the relevant board for their arm and cart combination and they'd find themselves both familiar with what the new model does but absolutely aware that it's a step forward. In some ways, the recent visit of the Linn Klimax LP12 has framed the Gyro quite

neatly. This is in some ways a 'Klimax Gyro' where the relationship to the original is the same but, because Michell took the plunge and decided to make the new model a clean sheet rather than something upgraded in parts, it is a huge amount more cost effective.

Conclusion

So where does this leave you if you are an original Gyrodec owner? For me, it's a fairly simple equation. I have retained my example even after a notionally more capable turntable arrived because selling it felt rather like shooting a family pet in the face and the arrival of this new model does little to change that. I suspect that many owners will feel the same way too; unlike the Linn approach, I don't think that too many existing Gyrodec users will change over.

For people looking for their *next* turntable though, the calculation is rather different. I noted when I reviewed the Revolv that it had abilities with regard to bass in particular that were beyond my own Gyrodec to match. The Gyro builds on these abilities and arrives in the market able to take the fight to devices like the Rega Naia and Vertere MG-1 MkII. It's not better than either –like the Revolv and its rivals at that price, you have to decide what matters to you – but the flexibility of being able to choose your arm and cartridge should you want to and that immortal aesthetic it offers are as appealing now as they have ever been. Michell's most iconic product is refreshed, invigorated and better than ever.

Pros

- Retains the Gyrodec's iconic design while updating almost every component underneath
- Resolves the original's tendency to oscillate under load
- Noticeably better resolution and image focus than the outgoing Gyrodec
- Stiffer, better-damped chassis (thicker plate, brass inserts) and more robust feet/isolation improve detail retrieval
- Keeps the flexibility that made the original popular: a detachable arm board lets you fit most 9" arms
- Noticeably higher build/finish quality than before
- Comparable in spirit to a budget Klimax LP12 upgrade

Cons

- Significant price increase over the outgoing Gyrodec/Gyro SE
- Supplied record clamp is inferior to the old optional threaded clamp
- No full plinth version will be offered
- Improvement over the old Gyrodec is real but incremental
- Cost of top model may put off buyers uneasy with a ten grand turntable

