

The Next Turntable Boom

Advances in technology and a hot market make now a great time to buy your next model. Here are four options to fit any budget

BY JESSE WILL

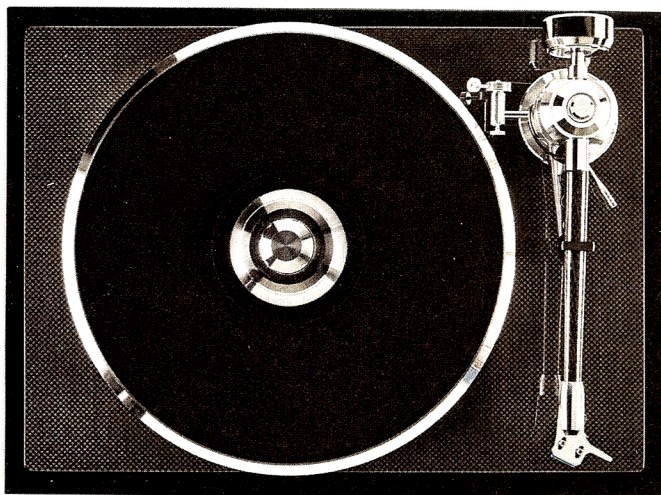
As the CD faces extinction, listeners looking for a tactile experience have increasingly turned to vinyl. Almost every major release is available in LP form, and sales have shot up 260 percent since 2009. The vinyl renaissance has, in turn, led to better turntables: High-end manufacturers are zeroing in on new materials that minimize distortion, while a growing array of entry-level units offers stellar, skip-free sound for less than \$200.

EAT C-Major

\$2,495

audioadvisor.com

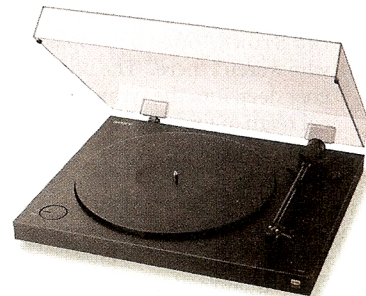
A true audiophile choice. The glossy carbon-fiber chassis would suit a Ferrari, but the material is more than decorative: It provides an ultrarigid platform, which, combined with a damped suspension system, isolates the tonearm from vibration. (Most turntables that do this look like wedding cakes compared with the low-slung EAT.) The result is unforced, perfectly natural sound; when spinning the Stones' "Tops," we could almost hear the air in Jimmy Miller's drums.



Sony PS-HX500

\$600 sony.com

The matte finish and minimalist design of Sony's latest midrange model hide a flashy feature: Connect a USB cable and use the included app to rip tracks from your vinyl in high-res digital audio (that way, you can listen to your lovingly worn-down copy of *Blonde on Blonde* on the go). As for turntable basics, the PS-HX500 has you covered there, too. The build is solid, and the sound is wide and dimensional, making this a great investment for audiophiles on a budget.



Rega Planar 3 2016

\$1,145 turntablelab.com

The new redesign of this classic features a glass platter and improved output from a more precise tonearm and quieter motor. Familiar records sound fuller on it.

U-Turn Orbit Basic

\$179 uturnaudio.com

If you're looking for an entry-level deck, skip that cheapo Crosley unit in the store. Too many low-cost models use onboard speakers and counterweight-free tonearms, but Massachusetts startup U-Turn focuses on the basics: a smooth-sounding Audio-Technica cartridge paired with a dependable manual belt drive.



Make Records Great Again

Bring your dusty thrift-store vinyl back to life with a record-cleaning machine

Okki Nokki RCM II **\$499** okkinokkiusa.com

The high price of new LPs – \$30 for most major-label reissues – is making used vinyl an ever more attractive option. But what to do when that Buzzcocks first pressing you found is so dusty it looks as if it's been sitting on a windowsill since 1978? Buy it – then restore it to almost new with a record cleaner. As with anything in



the hi-fi world, prices for cleaners vary wildly, but the Okki Nokki finds a happy medium and actually makes more financial sense the more you use it. It combines a rotating platter and a tonearm-like vacuum-cleaner tube that sucks up microscopic debris to remove clicks and pops and (as long as you're dealing with dust and not deep scratches) brings back lush analog greatness. **J.W.**