



Double decker

David Vivian wonders if a smaller, more affordable version of MF's double-plinth flagship turntable sounds as good as it looks

For a company that makes no fewer than eight phono preamps ranging in price from £175 to £10,000, Musical Fidelity's history as a purveyor of turntables is rather sparse and, it must be said, unfulfilled. True, 2002's M1 was a mighty opening gambit and statement of intent cooked up by company founder Anthony Michaelson and then distributor, now proprietor, Heinz Lichtenegger – all crystalline acrylic magnificence and resonance-defying layer-cake construction that made a Linn Sondek LP12 look about as sexy as a filing cabinet. Mostly, it sounded the business, too, though come the tricky second turntable there followed many years of radio silence.

Finally, in 2015, a budget/mid-priced vinyl spinner called the Roundtable debuted as part of a compact, affordable MF separates system, the Merlin 1 (geddit?), but despite being decent – and somewhat ahead of its time as a one-carton bundle – it failed to put rival decks from Rega and Pro-Ject to the sword. Although still available in some markets as a fade-out product, the Roundtable hasn't been sold in the UK for a number of years. And, once again, that might have been that. In 2023, however, Musical Fidelity roared back to its vinyl roots with a new £8,250, 32kg flagship, not just reviving but sprucing up the M1's look and design principles for the modern high-end generation. Named

DETAILS
PRODUCT
 Musical Fidelity M6xTT
ORIGIN
 Austria/Czech Republic
TYPE
 Belt-drive turntable
WEIGHT
 19.1kg
DIMENSIONS
 (WxHxD)
 480 x 210 x 370mm
FEATURES
 • 33 and 45rpm electronic speed control
 • 9in Musical Fidelity aluminium tonearm
 • Double acrylic plinth
DISTRIBUTOR
 Henley Audio
WEBSITE
 musicalfidelity.com
 henleyaudio.co.uk

M8xTT and slotting into the top tier of MF's model range hierarchy, it's a rack-busting beast of a record player by any reckoning and, no doubt, huge and handsome is the way potential customers like it.

Indeed, if you're going to engineer some balance into your phono stage-heavy vinyl portfolio, it makes sense to start at the top with a best-game deck and scale elements down to lower price points over time. As a first move, that's exactly what we have here in the M6xTT – essentially a slightly smaller, lighter and stripped-back version of the M8xTT at an appropriately lower price point. We've heard of plans to take this downsizing M.O. further with still more affordable turntables, possibly one to go with every range tier, though nothing is as yet confirmed.

Back to the M6xTT. Like its heavier, larger sibling, it's a belt-drive design with a two-part acrylic plinth, the idea being to isolate the tonearm and bearing assembly from the motor. Also carried over from the M8xTT is the promise of enhanced stability and additional resonance management provided by four height-adjustable decoupling magnetic feet with Teflon spacer damping. The 6.6kg aluminium platter is damped with thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) and dressed with a leather mat and chunky aluminium record puck, while

the motor can run at either 33 or 45rpm at the push of a button. The very shiny, low-resonance, 9in tonearm has a fixed headshell and conical aluminium tube (10in for the M8xTT), but the same eye-catching acrylic bearing ring and is fully adjustable for azimuth and VTA. The supplied semi-balanced 5P-to-RCA interconnect cable fits to the turntable's DIN socket and looks to be of good quality, though even more premium cable upgrades are, of course, possible. Two TPE-damped tonearm counterweights are supplied to cater for different weights of cartridge, on which score the choice is yours. Distributor Henley Audio kindly pre-fits one from its own client catalogue for us: an Ortofon Cadenza Blue low-output moving coil.

The top acrylic plinth supports the main bearing spindle and the tonearm mount, leaving the bottom plinth free to accommodate the standalone drive motor sitting on a special foam material, isolation assured. The motor itself houses a DC-driven AC generator, which avoids the need for an external power supply by generating the frequency and voltage feed from scratch within the motor assembly. It drives the 6.6kg platter via a single external belt that's been manufactured to be as smooth as possible by not having any glue joints. A clear acrylic dust cover is also available separately.

Sound quality

Open box to stylus drop? About 30 minutes if you're not in a rush. Assembly isn't hugely complicated, but we're not in tumbling off timber territory here. Then again, if you really want to bond with your high-end purchase, donning the provided white gloves and handling the immaculately made individual parts as they go together does engender a kind of lasting satisfaction to weigh against the impatience gratifying fix of plug 'n' play. Job



If you're shopping in the £3k-£5k price bracket, it's hard not to be tempted by the world's most famous premium turntable: Linn's legendary Sondek LP12, available in its most basic form as the Majik LP12/Krane for £3,500. This version comes with a Clearaudio-manufactured tonearm and Linn's Adikt MM cartridge. The result is a big, confident and enjoyable sound that, like the M6xTT's, is a little on the warm side but with great rhythmic swing. A compelling alternative for sure.



done, a moment to stand back and admire is mandatory because, by any standard, this is a sight to behold.

Served by a stunningly resolute and transparent Tom Evans Groove+ SRX Mk2.5 (HFC 482) phono preamp, our daily vinyl spinners – a Rega Planar 6 with Ania Pro MC (HFC 466) cart and, when we're feeling strong enough to lift it onto the kit rack, an Acoustic Signature Double X Neo with MCX3 MC cartridge – are intentionally very different. It's a case of lean, lithe and pacy sonic athleticism meets richer, weightier, extended bandwidth

It never drops its control, despite its ability to convey power and slam

opulence. The M6xTT/Cadenza Blue (tracking securely at a hair under 2g) sits somewhere between the two, probably a little closer to the substantial German turntable's darker, plusher presentation, but also achieving a compromise that potentially delivers the very best elements of both contrasting presentational styles.

Playing Steely Dan's ever-rewarding *Aja*, there's more than a suggestion of Rega-esque timing precision and seeming freedom from inertia during Steve Gadd's legendary drum licks. It's a talent that bestows an attractive spring in the step and fluency without the Musical Fidelity ever quite matching the Planar 6's remarkable speed and snap in these areas. But then this is all integrated into a fullness, sense of image solidity and deep, sumptuous bass often cited as an appealing feature of high-mass decks. A warmed-up balance and

mildly pimped sense of tonal richness? Works a treat, and why not? Even with an energy explosion like The The's *Mind Bomb* on the platter, the M6xTT never quite drops its innate couch and control, despite its undoubted ability to convey power and slam. By the same token, the album's magnificently disturbing *Armageddon Days (Are Here Again)* has the requisite dynamic contrasts, rock, shock and awe without ever sounding uncomfortably relentless and ragged. Unless relentless and ragged is what you crave, it's a virtuoso rendition.

Conclusion

Without an M8xTT on hand for a direct comparison, we can't tell you how much sonic goodness you forego for a £3,450 saving, but we'd be surprised if the M6xTT deviates in core character, and that's something to celebrate as it strikes an elegant balance between excitement and poise that serves nearly every musical genre well and does so with a winning mix of warmth, weight and refinement. A turntable that sounds every bit as classy as it looks ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
 ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY
 ★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY
 ★★★★★
EASE OF DRIVE
 ★★★★★

LIKE: Stunning aesthetic; build; superbly rounded sound quality
DISLIKE: Assembly takes a while
WE SAY: MF might not be a standout name in premium turntables, but the M6xTT isn't one to overlook

OVERALL

