



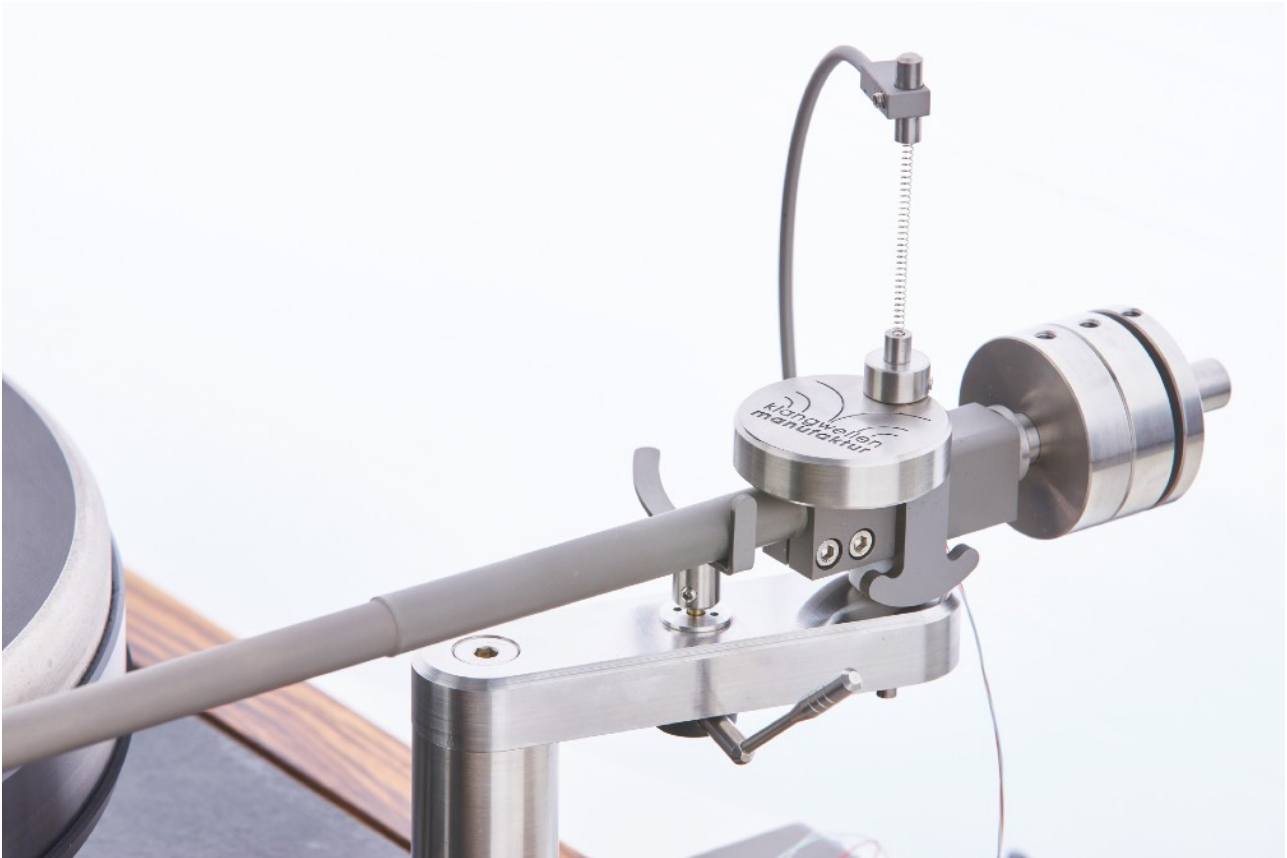
We have already had the pleasure. In May 2013 Dirk Sommer already described the Cantano turntable and tonearm from the KlangWellenManufaktur in Berlin in great detail. Now we have more reasons to again consider and listen to the Cantano.

There have since been changes. These are of least significance to the eyes and ears; it is instead worth knowing that CEO Oliver von Zedlitz has since put the name KlangWellenManufaktur into the background. You don't need much imagination to see how this name could fall into a phonetic trap in languages other than German. The pronunciation debacle turned out to be an unnecessary obstacle to the global demand generated by positive press and, particularly, by demonstrations given at the pertinent audio trade shows. The name Cantano, which has now been pushed to the forefront, is the brand of CNC-Fertigung Gronemann GmbH. The deck itself has been christened the Cantano W, and the tonearm the Cantano T. Oliver von Zedlitz sees the Cantano as a complete turntable, but does allow both components to be purchased separately. In my review, I would like to focus on the manufacturer's idea and to again consider the Cantano as a whole. Getting acquainted with the equipment was simplified for me, as Mr. von Zedlitz personally came by to deliver and set up his turntable.



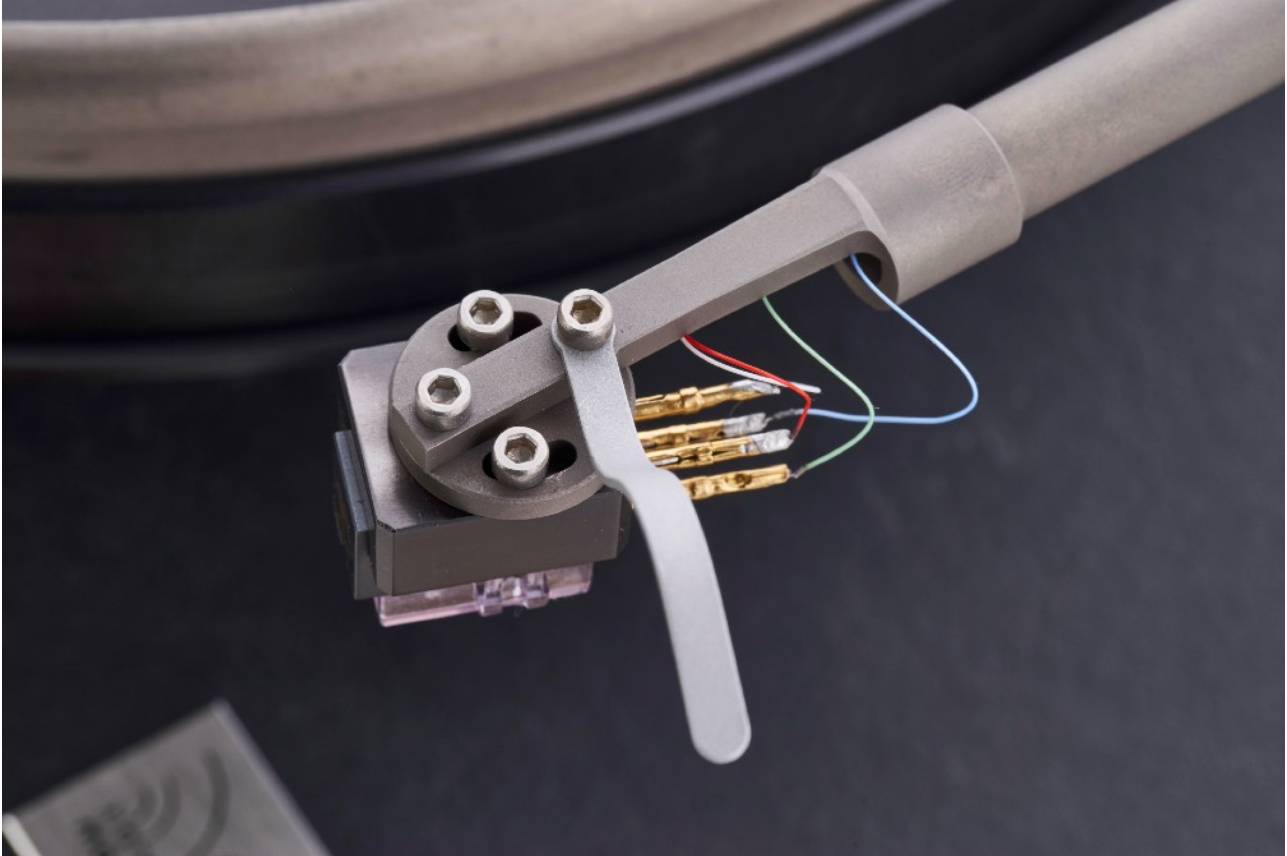


The nameplate is now no longer flaunted on the classic wooden framing around the natural slate base. An owner has a choice between various types of wood. My test device is framed by a strongly grained zebrawood. When looking at it from the front, the wave-like structure of the wood lends an interesting irritation to the entire composition of the turntable. It looks as if the base were not entirely level, as the grain evidently disrupts its rigid plane. The other available woods are more decent and there should be one among them to satisfy all tastes. The nameplate can now be found on the right front edge of the slate base and can only be seen from above. This detail is an advantage to the delicate overall look of the Cantano, even if without much relevance in terms of sound. But things change when considering it in its spatial context.



Since surely not every owner of this aesthetically-pleasing turntable has a perfect base at their disposal, three SSC instrument feet onto which the actual tapered feet are placed are included in the delivery package. According to Oliver von Zedlitz, the SSC ensure a clear improvement in tone should you not already have an excellent base on hand, in which case the SSC pucks are not necessary. This logically creates a height differential for the external motor cylinder. The drive with the Sinus motor, along with the corresponding control unit, are still manufactured by Klein Technik in Offenburg, Germany. To get the motor cylinder at the proper height at which to run the new square rubber drive belt as desired, an equally high stainless steel base for the motor tower is included to compensate for the height difference created by the SSC pucks. The base is simply placed beneath it.

To test it, I placed the Cantano on a d.C.d. base from Audo Exklusiv that was very befitting. Still, I did not go against Oliver von Zedlitz's wishes to attach the SSC pucks and listened closely to his explanations of the device. The man is an enthusiast and knows what he's doing. He was able to explain and justify every detail that makes the Cantano special as though it were a matter of course. Hence why he finds the new square rubber drive belt musically more coherent and easier to handle than the earlier filament threads. It doesn't slip through when accelerating, but instead quickly applies the power from the motor pulley to the plate. The motor tower should be as close as possible to the wood-frame slate base. The three stainless steel feet are height-adjustable and can be locked into their desired position by tightening them with an Allen wrench. To prevent the screw threads from getting damaged, a small, custom-fit brass part is pressed into them with an Allen wrench. Great value is placed on these sorts of details.



An important change has been the optimization of the platter bearing, though its basic concept remains the same. Mr. von Zedlitz explains that these innovations have greatly improved the low-frequency playback, bringing out a clear, exact, and deep low-reaching bass. The platter bearing axle, made of solid carbide, now runs through the high-alloyed bronze bearing bush on the sapphire ball with an improved lubrication system. The customary spiral oil groove is not used. The five vertical oil grooves leave an even film in the new bearing. Additionally, an aluminum O-ring is embedded horizontally in the precision bearing, which generates a minute, intentionally defined frictional resistance for the motor. After undertaking a number of extensive hearing tests, those at Cantano have arrived at the opinion that an additional magnetic support is of no use. There are no advantages either sonically or in terms of the life-span of the bearing or, in particular, of the sapphire ball. Thus the standard Cantano is equipped with a pure sapphire bearing. For non-believers, Oliver von Zedlitz does offer the additional magnetic support at a premium of around 400 euros.





A more visible change can be seen in the much nicer-looking bolting used to attach to the lower aluminum turntable to the graphite platter. The Allen screws, which were earlier visible from above, didn't look as tasteful as the current solution. Now both platters are screwed together from below and the three polished metal surfaces can be seen from above — these are the undersides of the threaded bush in the graphite surface. Even the support weight, which presses the vinyl firmly to the Cantano's graphite surface, has been reworked. The weight, which was previously made only of polished stainless steel, now possesses a wooden inner core for an improved resonance frequency. This should yield yet another small tonal gain.

Both the deck and tonearm have undergone some changes in detail. The nine-inch drill point in the base of the deck makes it possible to use other tonearms. The cartridge for the Cantano tonearm is noticeably larger than it was three years ago. Height is adjusted by means of two, rather than one, fixed Allens in the base. Even the lift has been redesigned. The surface of the tonearm cartridge is slightly rough to ensure that the Titan tonearm is held securely in the horizontal position. Besides, the tonearm itself has been optimized in an important place: indeed, they have installed an additional Titan tube piece for stabilization at the sensitive point of insertion, there where the tonearm passes over in the bearing block of the refined, anchor-braced single-point bearing. The headshell has also been redesigned. There is now significantly more space and clearance there for a cable connection and system components. It is no longer constricted and the four sensitive ends of the new Teflon-coated, silver-plated internal wiring can now be handled comfortably and securely. All Cantano T head pieces will soon be adjusted to ensure that the tip of the needle aligns with Titan tube, this way even bulkier cartridges interact perfectly with the tonearm, and the force developed

when using heavier cartridges that have less needle flexibility is also taken into account. This ensures optimal torsion balance. My test version doesn't yet have this improvement, but it will be standard starting in January 2017 on all models. These are quite a few changes in detail.



As Mr. von Zedlitz was setting up the Cantano for me, he installed an AirTight-PC-1 cartridge for a neat 6,000 euros. Dirk Sommer had used the still high-quality PC 1 Supreme cartridge during his test. The combination sounded unbelievably good on mine. It is the best analog audio source I have ever heard in my own home. I sat spellbound before the system, putting on record after record with rapture. My favorite Bardo with the Musical Life Conductor tonearm and the aged Clearaudio DaVinci didn't have a chance. This may sound drastic and unbelievable, but the combination Cantano-AirTight makes mesmerizing music. I felt the fact that such magnificent sound quality could go hand in hand with such high definition and precise dynamics especially thrilling. However, we must be clear on who takes primary responsibility for this excellent result. How much did the AirTight PC 1 contribute? It seems that in order to reach the truth, the DaVinci must be installed. I find this task much more interesting: what can the Cantano get out of my Audio Technica AT33PTG/II for under 500 euros? This cartridge has good musical genes and, in its timbre and character, is not dissimilar to the AirTight, even if at a much lower standard.



Converting it was not all-too difficult. It did take some time until I could adjust everything using the various gauges and use the three weights to find the optimal two-pond bearing pressure. The brilliant, original anti-skating device, which lends itself excellently to adjustments, is great. It's strange that no one else has applied this principle. The spring, only slightly taut, can be easily turned inwards in order to apply the desired force to counteract skating. Straightaway the AT system reads clean at 80 microns, and nearly clean at 90 microns. The self-resonance lies pretty low, at six to ten hertz, **but is very weak**. To warm it up, I put side one of the new Stones album on the graphite turntable and weigh it down with the stainless-steel puck. And what is this? I've never heard this not-very-audiophile work this colorful, clean, steady, and dynamic before. I sit down and listen to all four sides. This is impossible — with this cartridge! Other LPs follow. The phenomenon remains the same. The Cantano lifts the AT system to a level I could have never imagined.





I happily make my way through familiar and long-unheard LPs. Gregory Porter sings the songs off his album *Water* so clearly, so physically, and with such fine vocal articulation, along with details that I had never even heard. On the Passport album *Looking Thru*, the instruments positively explode into the room and the tones shimmer. First I wanted to put on the current and very well produced LP from Latin Quarter, *Imagination Of Thieves*, but decided instead on their masterpiece from 1985, *Modern Times*, which is sound-wise less perfect, yet impressive because of its political lyrics — such as in “America For Beginners,” with the timely line: “What’s keeping the White House white, is it chalk, is it fog, is it fear?” Even if the lyrics were at the forefront of this listening experience, the grandiose definition and remarkable stability of the voices and instruments were simply enthralling. Each instrument is given room and sounds sculptural in convincing timbres. The Cantano brings out the music with rhythm and tact. The sensitive balance between a velocity that maintains clarity and the volume as it satisfies each instrument is a strength some other deck-tonearm combinations do not have. Monty Alexander’s MPS new release *Live at Montreux* burst into fireworks. But what really blew me away was the Decca recoding of Richard Strauss’ “Also sprach Zarathustra” with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Zubin Mehta. Here, the initial deep bass expands continuously and subtly into my room, the following flourishes and tympani resonate clean and not overblown, and the entire orchestra follows with power and splendor – fantastic. I am really impressed with this turntable and have whispered into the ears of my piggybank what the future holds.





For all those among us who hesitate to invest thousands of euros into a superb-sounding wear and tear cartridge, the Cantano may be a lucky break. Next to its ability to show off with this inexpensive AT-33, the Cantano is a feast for the eyes with an attention value that is not to be underestimated. Should you treat yourself to a high-quality cartridge like the AirTight PC 1 or perhaps a Lyra, then it gets even better. Furthermore, I would dare to suggest that it is probably among the few audio components of stable value around.

#### STATEMENT

The Cantano is hard to beat in terms of its outstanding tonal capacities in relation to its price. It is a masterpiece of precise workmanship and, with its attractive appearance, rises above the majority of the established, top-class turntables. The Cantano is a harmonic whole, the deck and tonearm function flawlessly. You are probably eager to see what it can coax out of your cartridge.