



THE DUAL WITH THE Q

Okay, James Bond's mastermind 'Q' was not involved in the development of the Dual CS 618 Q, which contains clever ideas. The letter rather represents the continuation of the brand's direct drive tradition.

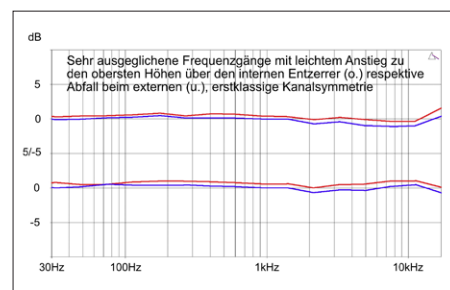
Text: Matthias Böde

Well? Does it work or not? Yes, it works! After reaching the end of the record's locked groove, Dual's CS 618 Q, delivered including a cover, lifts the cartridge from the vinyl, with the tonearm lift automatically switching, and stops the platter. This process however takes a few seconds to start, which is why one eagerly observes it the first few times. But don't worry, everything works reliably!

This small service, which lovers of purely manual operation can switch off at the back, is a special feature on the large Dual model, which thus makes listening to records a bit more comfortable. But this is by no means the only special feature of the approximately 7.5 kilogram turntable,

which is available in matte black, lacquer black, or in our test device's perfectly applied walnut veneer.

Experts on Dual history of course know: The Q in the name once stood



Whether with the internal (above) or an external phono-pre: The frequency response is very linear.

for the „Quartz“-controlled direct drive of Dual's former top models CS 714 Q or CS 731 Q. The also quartz-controlled, brushless motor block of the CS 618 Q, which lets the record spin at up to 78 RPM, was modified for Dual and comes from the Taiwanese manufacturer that also produces the brand's modern turntables. Contrary to possible prejudices against Asian products, it is indeed a little gem that impresses with exemplary silence, synchronization, and precision – see our lab measurements.

Committed to tradition

In fact, there is hardly any other hi-fi brand with such a long history that still has as many employees – albeit close to retirement age – from its golden age as Dual.

And Dr. Josef Zellner, the former sales manager from the late 1980s, is the current owner and managing director. That's what you call keeping tradition alive.

There is no need to attach a belt to the CS 618 Q. The die-cast aluminum platter with its 2.5 millimetre thick rubber mat weighs a good 1.5 kilos and is simply placed on the center axle.

In addition to the counterweight with its scale, which in our opinion moves a slight bit too easily, the scope of delivery includes a cartridge that is already moun-



Matthias Böde
STEREO-Editor

**»ONLY THOSE WHO
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TO THEMSELVES. DUAL
UNDERSTANDS THIS.«**

ted in the removable headshell. Therefore, it only needs to be fixed to the front end of the tonearm with a clamp and then balanced or adjusted to the correct tracking force of around 18 millinewtons.

Even inexperienced customers can do all of this quickly and easily. And once the CS 618 Q is placed on a stable surface and powered by the external PSU, you're almost ready to go. But wait: don't forget the phono cable connection to the next audio

device! One with standard RCA plugs is also included in the box.

We are using such a general term because this does not have to be a normal hi-fi amp with a specialized phono input. As the CS 618 Q has an integrated equalizer/preamplifier, as the technical term goes, it can be connected to a boom box, table radio or any other potential playing partner, just like a CD player or other so-called high-level components.

The slider switch next to the output sockets is used to make a selection: "Phono" means that the Dual outputs the unprocessed signal for an external phono preamp. If the slider is set to "Line", the internal phono stage is used. Incidentally, this is of such high quality and also relieves the tiny voltages of the pickup from "stressful" longer paths that it will probably be superior to most phono sections in cheaper amplifiers. It is therefore anything but an emergency solution. If you have an amp with a phono section, you should try out for yourself which mode you prefer.

Progressive Anti-Skating

The very smooth-running, but not height-adjustable tonearm used on many dual turntables is mounted on gimbals without play and progressively compensates for the skating force using a special spring. This means that it counteracts more on the outside than on the inside of the record. At its tip, the arm carries Ortofon's MM cartridge 2M Blue as standard. Its elliptically cut diamond sits "naked", i.e. without a weighting solder or adhesive cone, on the aluminum rod that forms the cantilever.

A very good choice, as the 2M Blue, which already costs 168 euros on its own, is superior in sound to the smaller 2M



The exploded view shows the dual-gimbal suspension of the tonearm bearing.

Red, which is also often used by Dual. The Blue sounds smoother and more mature overall, especially in the upper registers. It should therefore do even more justice to the aspirations of the CS 618 Q. The Ortofon also underlined its class in our STEREO lab with a very linear frequency response (see diagram) with exemplary channel symmetry. We know from other tests: This is not a positive outlier!

If you turn the knob on the front right from the "Off" position to one of the three speeds, what happens is: nothing! However, there is no defect. The platter only starts to rotate when you move the arm over the record from its resting position. You have to lower the needle yourself. As mentioned at the beginning, you can then choose between automatic stop without tonearm return or completely manual operation.

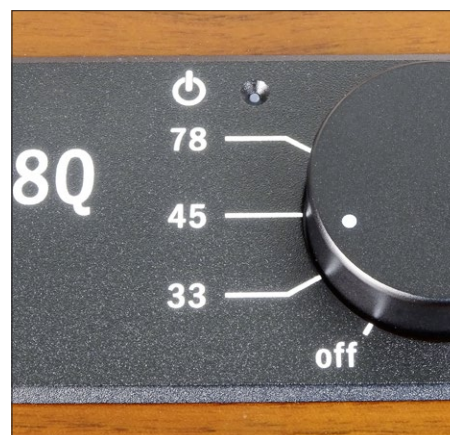
The difference between those two options played no role in our extensive listening test. One by one, the records were placed on the platter of the CS 618 Q. It showed the casual perfection of the expert



The dual-gimbal suspension of the tonearm is based on earlier Dual turntables.



The anti-skating force via spring changes progressively across the record side.



Besides 33 and 45 RPM, 78 RPM is also available for old shellac records.

Photos: STEREO, Manufacturer

TEST TURNTABLE



The auto stop function can be deactivated (above). A switch selects the playback mode.



After a few seconds in the locked groove, the stylus lifts, and the motor stops.



The brushless direct drive is as quiet as it is precise and additionally very low in rumble.

throughout. Susan Wong's relaxed-swinging version of "Dancing In The Moonlight" did indeed convey the intended cheerful, laid-back atmosphere of a relaxed evening party with friends.

Excellent Phono Preamp on Board

By the way, it made no difference for this impression whether we were listening via the internal phono preamp or, in this case, gave the naturally untreated MM signal to Pro-Ject's fine DS3 B phono box, which costs around 600 euros. All right, the Dual sounded a little tidier and more structured through the latter, but the differences were surprisingly small, so you can confidently trust the capabilities of the built-in preamplifier. It would be better to invest a few euros in replacing the included, rather simple, phono cable with a higher quality one.

Apart from its easygoing nature, what we particularly liked about the Dual

CS 618 Q, which does full justice to its price class, is the colorfulness of its performance. It's not just voices that come across cleanly, but not at all cold. The bass range, which connects seamlessly to the mids downwards, has a pleasant fullness and contour at the same time. The Dual has clearly outgrown the entry-level turntables, which sometimes sound rather lean at the bottom and/or tend to sound silvery to harsh in the higher registers, not only in terms of price, but above all in terms of sound.

And the Dual turntable not only takes care of tonal homogeneity and uniformity in energy management, but also dedicates itself to fine structures. For example, the delicately nuanced hi-hat playing in the enchanting "Les Adieux" by the Sebastian Sternal Trio, while the acoustic bass provides the gnarled foundation in the low frequency range and the natur-

ally captured grand piano, positioned between these poles, contributes the sentimental melody of the track. The CS 618 Q ensures that this little show of skill appears to be quite simple and the smooth operation of the direct drive supports the velvety flow of the ballad, making it easier for the listener to emotionally connect with this audiophile gem.

In comparison to other turntables, the large Dual showed a tendency towards explicitness, placing Diana Krall, for example, strikingly outlined in the broad spectrum of her Paris live record, while lending grip to the album's rumbling bass. Even without the antics of Bond's inventive genius, Dual's top model combines clever solutions and sophisticated parts to create a coherent overall concept. In this review, we therefore learned what the "Q" in the CS 618 also stands for: quality! ■

AN MC PICKUP ON THE DUAL

Instead of the 2M Blue, we installed Ortofon's MC Quintet Black S.

Don't get us wrong: The Ortofon-MM 2M Blue supplied with the CS 618 Q is an excellent match in every respect. But since we had a second headshell, we wanted to see how far the turntable could be pushed in terms of sound quality and whether its tonearm could cope with a high-quality MC cartridge.

For this purpose, we installed Ortofon's MC Quintet Black S (L), which costs around 900 euros, onto this headshell, readjusted the tracking force and put it to the test. Of course, we only used external

phono preamps, as the Dual's internal one is made exclusively for MM signals.

With the Quintet Black S on the arm, the CS 618 Q showed a different character, playing fresher, bolder and grittier. This was clearly audible on James Taylor's bass-heavy "Her Town Too", for example. Via the MC pickup, the powerful lower registers came across, if not fuller, then more edgy and contoured. In the mid-range, the Dual lost some of the charm it had shown in combination with the 2M Blue pickup, but played a nuance clearer. Conclusion: The CS 618 Q can easily be upgraded.

TEST DEVICES

Turntables: Pro-Ject X1, Sonoro Platinum Automatic EAS, Music Hall Stealth

Cartridge: Ortofon 2M Red

Phono Preamps: Brinkmann Edison MK II, Pro-Ject Phono Box DS3 B

Integrated Amplifiers: Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 600.2, Symphonic Line RG14 Edition MK5 S

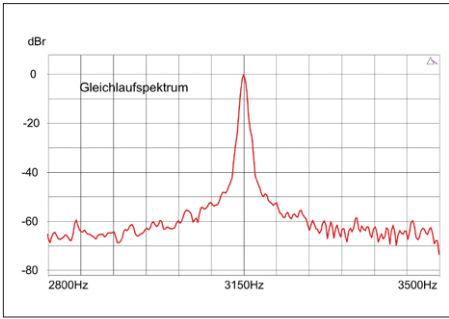
Speakers: B&W 801 D4, DALI Epikore 3

Phono Cables: Silent Wire NF5 Phono

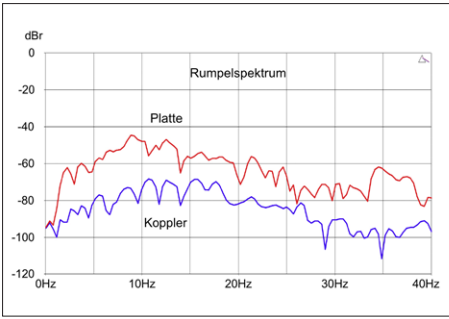


For detailed info about test devices, scan the QR code.





The synchronization diagram is flawless! Additionally, the speed is virtually perfect.



The low rumble, especially with the coupler, attests to the quality of the platter bearing.

DUAL CS 618 Q		
Product Type / Price Range	Turntable / 500 to 1,500 Euros	
Website	www.dual.de	
Price in Euros	from 1,198 (black; high-gloss black and walnut veneer 1,298 Euros)	
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm	43.5 x 37 x 14.5	
Weight in kg	7.5	
German Distributor / Phone	Dual Germany / +49 8191 9157770	
Turntable Type / Drive Principle	manual with auto stop / direct drive	
Bluetooth / Connections	no / RCA	
Integrated Phono Pre / Cartridge included	yes / yes (Ortofon 2M Blue)	
SOUND	60 %	very good 1.3
Sound Quality	colorful, expressive sound with pronounced clarity thanks to precise spatial transparency	
MEASUREMENTS	15 %	very good 1.5
Rumble	good	
Speed Deviation (in percent)	very good (0.06)	
Power Consumption Idling (in Watts)	very good (2.6)	
EQUIPMENT	10 %	good 1.6
Cover Included	yes	
Haptics & Workmanship	very good	
Interchangeable Tonearm Cable	yes	
Speeds in RPM	33, 45, 78	
Speed Fine Tuning or Automatic Control	automatic control	
Impact noise damping	yes (rubber feet)	
Hard Power Switch	no	
HANDLING & OPERATION	15 %	good 2.5
Speed Switching	very good (rotary knob)	
Manual Quality	very detailed and richly illustrated	
Warranty in Years	5	
Adjustability	no adjustability	
Removable Headshell	yes	
Initial Setup	good	
Adjustment Comfort	good	
STEREO TEST RESULT	very good 1.5	