

COMFORT WITHOUT CRISIS



Dual is back with a different approach, presenting the new CS 529 automatic turntable. It offers fresh ideas, including a Bluetooth control app.

Matthias Böde

Does the Dual's complete convenience lead to a sound crisis? On the contrary!

Turntables with remote control are nothing new, albeit uncommon. However, little has happened in this field since a few attempts by Japanese manufacturers a long time ago, especially as the manual turntables commonly used in the hi-fi sector hardly offer any starting points for this. The little that can be adjusted there is gladly done by hand.

This is however a bit different with the CS 529, coming from the tradition-rich name Dual. It is a fully automatic turntable, of which there are not many to be found, at least in the high end sector. Place the record on the turntable, press the right-hand button, which is also used to select the correct speed

indicated by tiny blue LEDs, and the platter, which weighs 840 grams including the thick rubber mat, starts to move, the tonearm swivels over the groove and slowly lowers itself onto it. At the end of the record or after another press of the button, the stylus is lifted out of the groove and returned to its starting position, whereupon the platter stops.

Apart from an audible clicking sound at the start of this sequence, when a larger gear wheel engages with the drive, all of this happens relatively quietly. Of course, the gear only maintains contact during the automatic processes and is stationary while playing music.

As is typical for Dual, the CS 529 has a switch on the front of the tonearm board for setting the record diameter. This allows the speeds and record sizes to be combined as desired. Do you have an LP-like maxi single with 45 RPM? No problem!

The special features: the CS 529 also comes with a free, modern app that can be



The control panel includes the button for the automatic functions and the speeds plus buttons for repeat and Bluetooth.

downloaded to a smartphone or tablet, which then acts as a remote control. On/off, speed – in addition to 33 and 45, even 78 RPM are available – and up to ten repetitions of the record side can be easily selected from your chair. Moreover, the Dual does not need to be integrated into a network for this. The connection is established via Bluetooth.

High Quality MM Pickup

In practical use, this worked straight away and without any obstacles. And, yes, the turntable also establishes wireless Bluetooth contact with appropriately equipped amplifiers or active speakers. However, the Dual does not offer a digital output with USB interface, which is popular for digitizing vinyl collections. If you decide to do without the convenience of remote control, you can, of course, control everything directly on the device. Except the app-exclusive snooze function, which can be set to several levels and, of course, completely deactivated.

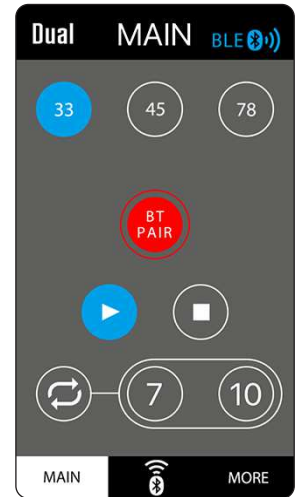
Another plus of the CS 529 is its integrated, switchable phono MM preamp, which is necessary for signal equalization according to the RIAA curve for Bluetooth playback. Of course, the appropriately treated and pre-amplified signal can also be routed out via a pair of RCA sockets and fed to an amplifier without a phono input. The turntable can then be connected to this like a

CD player, streamer or any other so-called high-level source. In this case, it is not even necessary to make the otherwise essential ground connection, which would otherwise be connected to the „GND“ screw on the rear connection panel.

If you have an amp with a phono input, you can try out which solution works better: the internal preamp of the Dual or the amplifier-side solution. It should be noted that the built-in phono preamp has been precisely matched to the MM cartridge included in the delivery. This is not a cheap fit, but Ortofon's already sophisticated entry-level model from the popular „2M“ series: the 2M Red with elliptical stylus, which costs around 100 euros on its own.

Indeed, the adjustment goes so far that Dual even corrects the pickup's small high-frequency resonance so that the frequency response is very smooth when the phono preamp is activated. Its amplification factor of 37 decibels, also determined by our test laboratory, is also appropriate. Especially as the Ortofon MM is of the „louder“ variety, i.e. has an above-average output voltage, which is also appreciated by third-party preamps.

If you want to place the tonearm yourself – after putting the record on – with the help of the lift, simply push it over the record, whereupon the die-cast aluminium



BLUE HOUR

Once the record is on the platter, the Dual can be conveniently operated via Bluetooth from a phone or tablet. The wireless connection to amp and co. can also be activated thus. A maximum of ten repeat cycles can be preset.



1 The two contact points for LPs and singles are precisely pre-adjusted at the factory. **2** The CS 529 uses a light source and a grooved tachometer disk on the motor pulley to determine its speed. **3** At the press of a button or via the Bluetooth app, the switch-on or switch-off mechanism is set in motion.

TEST TURNTABLE



AFFORDABLE

At around €1,000, the black foiled basic version of the CS 529 costs exactly 100 euros less than the veneered version. The cover is included in the delivery.

platter starts rotating. It is kept in motion by a ground flat belt that wraps around an inner edge as well as the pulley of the vibration-damped motor. To maintain the correct speed, it is fitted with an externally ribbed pulley plus a small light source. This opto-electrical control ensures accuracy and eliminates the need for manual fine adjustment.

Quality and attention to detail also prevail in places normally hidden to the eye. For example, the platter bearing made of a hardened steel axle and low-tolerance brass bushing, the quality of which is confirmed by the flawless rumble values.

Quick Assembly

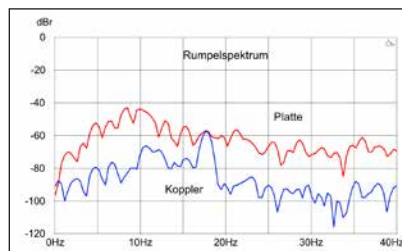
Typical for Dual, the arm is fully cardanically suspended using four extremely smooth-running pivot ball bearings. The anti-skating is spring-loaded and is adjusted using a wheel on the right-hand side of the arm base. The headshell is held in place by a nut and can be easily removed after loosening it. This is ideal if you want to keep several

pre-adjusted pickups ready to go, each of which only requires the tracking force to be readjusted. They only ought to have relatively equal heights, as Dual does not provide a height adjustment.

Although the stable MDF frame does not represent a sub-chassis

in the classic sense, the platter and arm are preprotected against external vibrations and any motor noise via rubber dampers.

The CS 529 is quickly assembled. As the Ortofon MM has already been fully pre-adjusted at the factory, there is little more to do than put the platter on, pull the belt over the pulley and adjust the tracking force and anti-skating – that's it. The phono cable supplied is of the simpler variety. Replacing it with a better one makes sense in the long term.



MEASURING

Especially when using the measuring coupler (blue line), the Dual's drive reveals first-class rumble values, and not just for its price.



If the small switch on the left is set to „Line“, the internal phono preamp is activated; Bluetooth audio only works in this position.



The cardanic tonearm suspension is reminiscent of earlier times. It is very precise. This also applies to the counterweight; anti-skating by spring balancer.

The new Dual delivered an impressive performance from the very first note. It may well be that fully automatic turntables are frowned upon or even despised within the more puristic audiophile community, where any effort to provide comfort is suspected of coming at the expense of sound quality. However, these concerns are unfounded with the CS 529. On the contrary, it delivers an exceptionally „grown-up“, organized and musical performance and easily plays on a level with purely manual turntables from other manufacturers at the same price.

What's more, while Ortofon's 2M Red often seems a little stiff and slender, it plays exceptionally sonorous and colorful in the Dual. This can be seen, for example, in the jazzy interpretation of popular bossa nova pieces by Antonio Carlos Jobim's „From Scratch“ formation. These immediately lose some of their Brazilian feel if the connection to the bass and fundamental tones is disturbed or the whole thing doesn't swing freely. Neither was an issue with the Dual. You'll be more than happy to press the „repeat“ button.

Big Performance of the 2M Red

The newcomer performed not only these gems brilliantly, but did the same with the test songs from our STEREO „Best of“ listening test LP, which we have heard many times. It performed superbly, even with our reference system, which usually features models of a different caliber. In fact, we have hardly ever heard the 2M Red play better

than on the comfortable Dual. The wish for tuning did never arise. However, if you want or need to do that – because the needle is defective or worn out –, you should consider replacing it with the larger 2M Blue. With its „naked“ diamond, which is placed directly on the aluminum cantilever instead of via a weighted cone, it achieves even more fine detail and smoothness. At almost 170 euros, however, the Blue costs significantly more than a whole Red.

But we didn't miss anything here, even in the basic configuration. The listener can sit back and relax, so to speak, press the start button on their Bluetooth-activated phone or tablet and leave everything else to the Dual record player. The integrated phono preamp proved to be fully adequate. Most of the amplifiers that the CS 529 is connected to in reality are hardly of a higher quality. If in doubt, simply try it out and take the superior path in each case.

And if you want to do avoid connection cables altogether, Bluetooth aptX is a fully-fledged alternative. With other Bluetooth turntables, we have already observed

TEST DEVICES

Turntables:

Pro-Ject X1,
Sonoro Platinum SE,
Thorens TD204

Phono Preamps:

Brinkmann Edison MKII,
Musical Fidelity MX-VNYL

Integrated Amplifier:

Symphonic Line RG14
Edition MK5S

Pre-/Power Amp:

Audio Research REF6SE/
Krell KSA-i400

Loudspeakers:

B&W 801 D4,
DALI Epicon 6

Phono Cable:

Silent Wire NF5 Phono

IN TRUSTED HANDS

Taking a look at the history of Dual quickly becomes complex. In the 1980s and 1990s, illustrious German names such as Thomson, Karstadt and Schneider appeared, using the name introduced almost 90 years ago for their products. There are currently three brand owners worldwide with very different orientations. But in the future, record players will only be available from the new Dual Deutschland GmbH, whose Managing Director is Dr. Josef Zellner (right). Dr. Zellner is an old name in hi-fi and has been associated with Dual for a long time. In the mid-1990s, he was the local export manager for the brand at Schneider. In 2018, Zellner and DGC bought the company once founded by Schneider colleagues to manage the Dual legacy. He subsequently teamed up with developers and produced new models such as the Dual Maximus, which was presented at IFA 2019 and has been distributed by Sintron Distribution since 2021 in Germany.

However, the company is now taking over distribution itself. Dual is active in more than 30 countries and continues to grow. In Germany, the focus will be on specialist hi-fi retailers. Although there is the particularly affordable „DT“ line for large retailers, you won't find the „CS“ turntables there. Stability is more important to Zellner than a quick deal. His motto: „We want to bring Dual back to where the brand used to be!“





SOUND HEAD

The headshell of the tonearm is removable – practical when changing the pickup or if you want to quickly switch to an alternative cartridge pre-adjusted in the additional head.

something that also applies to the new Dual: wirelessly, there is at most a negligible loss of quality – if at all! As a result, Dual owners hardly need to worry about all the other details, but can devote themselves entirely to their records.

Convenience without Remorse

That’s exactly what we did and, of course, we also played Diana Krall’s „Paris“ concert album – always a fascinating favorite among our test records. And the CS 529 revealed its rhythmic sensitivity with it. Whether it was the furious, upbeat opening „I Love Being Here With You“ or „The Look Of Love“, which is characterized by a calm, reflective flow as well as by a worn mood – the turntable always played with the correct emotion, appearing tidy and overlooking the musical events, but by no means coming across as sterile or distant. No question: even if you are used to much higher-quality analog devices, it is a pleasure to listen to the Dual, which plays music as dedicated as it does with subtlety.

It is obvious that we enjoyed the service of the fully automatic turntable less than its sonic qualities. On the other hand, everyone was amazed when the Dual started up as if by magic. No one had ever seen Bluetooth control for a record player before. And this ease of use is even available without a sound crisis! ■

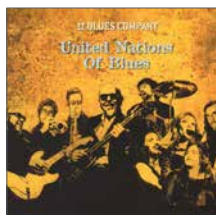
WHAT WE’VE HEARD

Joan Armatrading:
Joan Armatrading



The reissue of the British singer’s successful album offers beautiful songs in perfect sound quality.

Blues Company:
United Nations Of Blues



The concert recording conveys a high degree of live atmosphere and authentic feeling.



The small lever at the front of the tonearm board is typical for dual automatic turntables and is used to set the device to LPs or singles.

Dual CS 529

Price: from €1,000 (black foiled, with walnut veneer around €1,100)

Warranty: 5 years

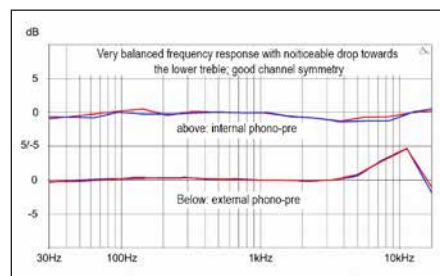
Contact: Dual Deutschland

Tel.: +49 8191 9157770

www.dual.de

With this record player, Dual proves that convenience and sound quality are not mutually exclusive. This turntable offers a rich equipment package. There is even room for an app-controlled Bluetooth operating option in the well-implemented concept of the CS 529. Above all, however, it offers homogeneous, differentiated and spatial reproduction of music, which makes it interesting for discerning listeners with a taste for luxury.

Measurement Results



Recommended tracking force: 19 mN

Deviation from target speed: +0,39 %

Lab Comment

Especially when using the internal phono pre, the frequency response is very linear and also with good channel balance. According to Dual, each pickup is checked by measurement. The target speed is maintained rather precisely. Despite the relatively light platter, the Dual masters the synchronization test without any anomalies.

Features

External power supply, integrated switchable phono MM preamp, Bluetooth connectivity plus control, cover, replaceable headshell, manual

STEREO -TEST	
SOUND LEVEL	62%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	
OUTSTANDING	