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IN GREAT TRADITION

Dual's direct-drive turntables were among the elite of the 1970s and 1980s. The new CS 718Q picks up on this great tradition – and not only in name alone. Can it successfully carry on this legacy?

Text: Matthias Böde

Of course: A lot has changed and happened in the hi-fi scene over the past few decades. For example, standards have shifted dramatically due to a trend: ever-larger, more elaborate, more expensive. That's why the Dual CS 721, released in 1976 – considered a dream device and a benchmark by many vinyl enthusiasts at the time – would no longer hold the same status today.

However, if we set aside all the high-priced, high-end – or even „super“ – turntables and focus on the discerning audiophile segment, Dual's current top-of-the-line model, the CS 718Q – introduced exactly 50 years later – once again stands out with its impressive build quality and clever functionality.

Like its ancestor, this successor – which costs about 2,500 euros – features a quartz-controlled direct-drive system, which was

rather unusual for a turntable at the time, especially one from Germany, and caused quite a stir. To understand just how significant this was, one must remember that at that time, the vinyl record was the number-one medium for high-quality music. It would be another seven years before the CD – intended as its replacement – was introduced. The fact that the CD has now been displaced from many markets by streaming, while the vinyl record – once

declared dead by the late 1980s at the latest – has been steadily regaining importance for the past 15 years, can surely be seen as an irony of hi-fi history.

Nevertheless, following the CD's debut, the analog industry – whether equipment manufacturers or record pressing factories – had to weather a roughly 25-year period of hardship marked by a wide range of structural changes before things began to improve again. It is all the more gratifying to see that today's Dual GmbH, based in Fuchstal, Upper Bavaria – and led by Dual's former export manager, Dr. Josef Zellner, as managing director – is run by people who also were previously involved with the company. They know and understand their product, its traditional significance, and the technical philosophy behind it.



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playing warped records. The highlight here, however, is the tonearm's sliding height adjustment. This must be adjusted depending on the height of the cartridge. On the CS 718Q, this is accomplished via a cylinder fitted with a knurled screw at the top. To make the adjustment, a locking pin at the rear is loosened; the entire tonearm module then slides gently up or down – depending on the direction – by turning the smooth-running knurled nut.

This is done with such minimal vibration that it can be done while the record is playing; changes in the „Vertical Tracking Angle“ (VTA) can therefore be detected immediately. The best way to do this is from the listening position, with a second person gently moving the tonearm up and down. In addition to tonal changes –

if the tonearm base is positioned slightly higher, the sound tends to become crisper and more present, whereas, the other way round, it usually sounds slightly duller – differences in edge definition also become apparent, for example in central vocals, which are particularly easy to discern when listening through headphones.

RCA and XLR connections

This allows you to optimize the performance beyond the straight alignment of the tonearm with the record surface recommended by the cartridge manufacturers – an alignment that, of course, can also be adjusted with the same precision. Finally, simply tighten the silvery locking screw again – and you're done!

The CS 718Q, which comes without a cartridge, outputs the phono signals either through standard RCA sockets or, for a

Stiff sandwich tonearm

Visually, the modern CS 718Q reveals its heritage most of all through the U-shaped profile – typical for the Dual design – of the vertical bearing in the gimbal-type tonearm suspension. At its pivot points, tiny, extremely smooth-running pivot ball bearings ensure play-free movement with minimal friction. The anti-skating mechanism operates via a spring-loaded system.

The tonearm tube itself is a two-layer sandwich construction designed for maximum stability and low resonance, with a carbon layer placed over the inner aluminum tube. At the front, the angled headshell – also made of aluminum in the CS 718Q – is secured with a cap nut. It has a screw on the side that, once loosened, allows for azimuth adjustments, i.e., rotating the headshell.

As with its predecessor, the CS 721, the tracking force is applied without a gauge via a tension spring that is independent of gravity, which is designed to maintain constant pressure on the stylus even when



A notch in the front edge of the insertion gauge specifies the position of the diamond.



The CS 721 was considered a top turntable at the time and was an object of desire for listeners.

TEST DEVICES

Turntable: Transrotor Rondino nero with TRA9 tonearm and Figaro MC cartridge

Phono preamp: Brinkmann Edison Mk II, Pro-Ject DS3 B

Cartridges: Nagaoka MP-700, Ortofon 2M Black (MM), Ortofon MC X50 (MC)

Phono cables: Audioplan Maxwell A, Silent Wire NF5 Phono



The tonearm suspension is reminiscent of earlier Duals. A special spring was developed for the anti-skating adjustment on the right, as well as for the massless implementation of tracking force.

Photos: STEREO, manufacturer

TEST PLATTENSPIELER

three-pin „balanced“ connection, via a pair of XLR connectors. Since more and more phono preamps offer this option, Dual is keeping pace with this trend. When used with MC cartridges, this allows you to get even more sound out of the system. MM cartridges, which typically make contact with the tonearm mass, are often not suitable for balanced connections because this creates ground loops.

Essentially, the CS 718Q is a manual turntable whose 1.9-kilo platter, damped by rubber pads on the top and bottom, begins to spin as soon as you slide the tonearm over the record. If you set the „Auto Stop“ switch located at the rear to „On,“ you activate its convenient, touch-free auto-stop feature, which worked reliably during our tests even with LPs and singles that were cut well toward the center. After about four revolutions in the run-out

groove, the system lifted the tonearm off the record – with the lift lever moved by a motor – and the platter came to a stop.

The CS 718Q can be assembled quickly, thanks in our case also to the German-language, richly illustrated manual. Please note: Be sure to align the MDF frame straight using the feet, which are internally damped against impact noise and are also height-adjustable. Thanks to the included overhang gauge – which fits all CS Dual models and is therefore also sold separately – that determines the position of the stylus, installing a cartridge into the headshell is a breeze.

Then balance the arm using the rear weight – which can be further weighted down – and set the desired tracking force using the scale on the side. Once you’ve adjusted the anti-skating to the same target value, you’re ready to go.



After loosening the retaining bolt (arrow), the arm base can be moved vertically via the screw.

We listened to the Top-Dual – a fully automatic CS 629Q is scheduled for 2027 – primarily with two Ortofon cartridges, the 2M Black (MM) and the MC X50 (MC). Both are true all-rounders that – like virtually all of the cartridges suitable for this system – are a perfect match for the CS 718Q’s medium-weight tonearm.

TECH HIGHLIGHTS

Drive, tonearm bearing, tracking force: consistently solved on the CS 718Q.

Smooth operation in the form of consistent forward motion is ensured by the four iron-less coils in the Dual’s direct-drive system, which is designed for durability. This is intended to eliminate jerky movements and slight stuttering caused by „cogging“, the jerky or step-like torque response characteristic of permanent magnet motors. Fine speed control has been omitted here, as the quartz-based drive control maintains the speeds with great precision.

High-precision ball bearings at the pivots of the gimbal-style tonearm, combined with precision-ground bearing tips, ensure extremely low friction and a secure, play-free connection between all parts. Together with the rigid sandwich tube, this enhances the precision of the playback.

Dual is particularly proud of the complex mechanism for massless adjustment of the contact pressure (below). The spring (arrow) used for this, with a precisely defined number of coils and thickness, undergoes heat treatment to ensure optimal long-term stability and is designed to maintain the set value exactly in all positions.



The direct drive is designed for high smoothness and speed accuracy.



The arrangement of the bearing points around the tube is intended to reduce tilting.



Structure meets musicality

No matter which cartridge was playing at the moment, the new Dual – mains phase on the right! – surprised us with its explicitly relaxed yet vivid, three-dimensional rendition of the opener from Diana Krall’s „Live In Paris“ album, a track we’ve heard so many times. The layers of depth so skillfully captured in the recording were clearly rendered, while the Canadian artist’s voice was outlined with razor-sharp definition. At the same time, the bass track – which seemed to underlie the track almost imperceptibly – appeared to have a well-defined, angular structure. There was no hint of muddy indistinctness or the low frequencies bleeding into the mids.

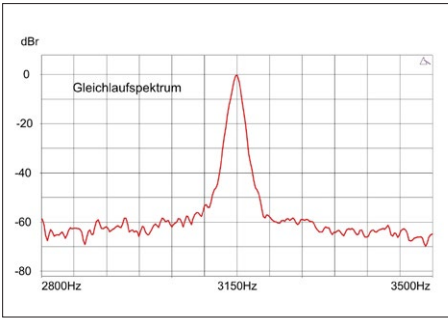
The CS 718Q delivered a distinctly clean and organized performance, yet at



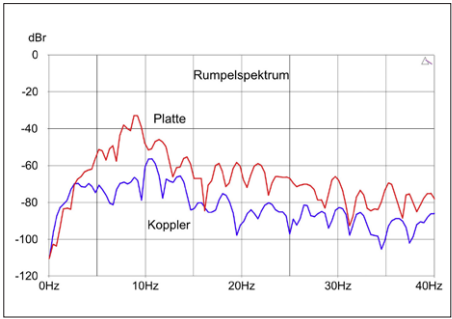
In addition to the usual 33 and 45, the CS 718Q even offers 78 rpm.



In addition to the RCA sockets, there are three-pin XLR contacts for the balanced connection.



Impeccable speed stability meets precisely maintained target speed thanks to quartz control.



Aside from a small peak at nine hertz, very low rumble, especially via the measurement coupler.

the same time presented its multi-layered soundscapes as if they were a single, seamless whole. There was no trace of the somewhat analytical, sober sound that was sometimes attributed to Dual turntables decades ago. The new model sounds rich and full-bodied without being too heavy, allowing even Nagaoka's open and light-sounding MP-700 to shine.

As if to counter that old (pre)conception, the CS 718Q – refreshingly resistant to external influences – allowed Fourplay's laid-back „Dream Come True“ to leap strikingly from the speakers, highlighting its tonal substance and Lee Ritenour's virtuosic guitar playing despite the dry drums. Bryan Ferry's bold and punchy „Kiss And Tell“ didn't veer into the superficial or even the harsh, even though the drums were presented with high dynamics.

Anyone who has experienced how smoothly – elegantly – the Sebastian Sternal Trio's melancholic jazz ballad „Les Adieux,“ complete with its delicately woven hi-hat patterns, flowed from the needle on this newcomer will recognize its remarkable musicality. There's no doubt about it: the CS 718Q is worthy of the great name Dual!



Whether in black or with walnut veneer (above): A dust cover is always included.

TEST RESULT: PROFOUND. CRITICAL. TRANSPARENT.	
DUAL CS 718 Q	
Product type	Turntable
Website	www.dual.de
Price in euros	2,498
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm	43.5 x 16 x 37
Weight in kg	10
Germany distributor / phone	Dual / +49 8191 9157770
Turntable type / drive principle	manual with or without end-of-side shutoff, direct
Bluetooth / connections	no / RCA and XLR
Integrated phono pre / cartridge included	no / no
MEASUREMENT VALUES 35 %	good 1.6
Rumble	good
Speed deviation (in percent)	very good (0.002)
Power consumption idle (in watts)	very good (1.8)
FEATURES 25 %	very good 1.0
Dust cover included	yes
Haptics and workmanship	very good
Tonearm cable replaceable	yes
Speeds in rpm	33, 45, 78
Fine speed adjustment or automatic regulation	yes, quartz control
Impact noise damping	yes, damped feet
Hard mains switch	yes
HANDLING AND OPERATION 40 %	very good 1.3
Speed switching	via rotary selector
Quality of the manual	good
Warranty (in years)	good (5)
Adjustability	tonearm height, foot height, azimuth / very good
Removable headshell	yes
Initial setup	very good
PRACTICAL MARK	very good 1.4
Sound description	explicitly ordered, expansive, colorful, and tonally substantial reproduction with pronounced musicality
SOUND SCORE	71 / 100