

Vertere Dynamic Groove DG-1

THE NEW ENTRY-LEVEL RECORD PLAYER FROM VERTERE COMES COMPLETE WITH AN INNOVATIVE ARM AND A CARTRIDGE, MAKING THIS STRIKING-LOOKING MODEL VIRTUALLY PLUG AND PLAY. CHRIS KELLY LIKES WHAT HE HEARS



Way back in 2019 (the good old days as they will doubtless become known in due course), I played host to a Vertere Magic Groove turntable (also known as the MG-1), and thoroughly enjoyed its impressive presence on the top shelf of my rack. Vertere is the most recent venture of Touraj Moghaddan, the well-known and widely respected audio engineer behind the Roksan brand, who designed and brought to market turntables such as the Xerxes and TMS series.

Fast forward to the beginning of the new decade and I was offered the opportunity to hear the new 'entry-level' Vertere product. The Dynamic Groove (DG-1) turntable, or record player as Moghaddan would have it, is sold as a bundle with its own 'Groove Runner' tonearm and a Vertere-branded moving magnet cartridge, based on an Audio Technica design. In the world of turntables that's as close to 'fit and forget' as it's possible to get.

The courier duly arrived with the Vertere box, which was a lot lighter than that which had housed the MG-1, and unboxing and set up was very straightforward, with clear instructions and nothing to frighten even those of very modest technical

skills, of whom I am definitely one! The plinth, which comprises three layers of acrylic – two black layers sandwiching a clear one – has three adjustable feet for levelling the player, which comes with a dinky little circular spirit level, the platter was placed on the spindle and the clear belt hung around the drive pulley and the platter.

This pulley moves around a lot when the player's at idle, but as soon as the platter starts spinning it tightens up to give excellent rotational stability. The platter is much less substantial than that of the MG-1 but is finished in a similar high gloss black and looks, at least to my eyes, very classy indeed. The belt is clear and tubular rather than flat. However,

REVIEW



the overall visual impression of the DG-1 is very favourable, in part at least because it is more compact than its more expensive stablemate.

Connection to my GoldNote PH10 phono stage was made using the supplied Vertere RCA cables and the earthing wire. Besides turntables, Vertere is producing an ever-growing range of cables and the ones I have heard work really well. Certainly, the ones supplied with the DG-1 are more than capable and I never felt the need to try anything more exotic in their place.

Tracking weight was set (a digital scale dedicated to the task is a relatively inexpensive purchase, and ought to be in every vinyl user's tool kit), the feet slightly adjusted to get the bubble in the level in exactly the centre, the wall-wart power supply was plugged in and we were pretty much ready to play. As soon as power reached the player a white LED shone through the clear layer of the plinth.

Firmware updates

On this early review sample the light stays on all the time, but I am told that in the latest firmware – yes, even turntables are subject to firmware updates these days! – the user can now opt to have the light on or off when the power is connected, which would finitely have been my recommendation. There is also a clear lid packed in the shipping box with the DG-1 (hooray!), which will be welcome news to many: use of the hinges supplied is optional, so the cover can just be lifted off and set aside during playing sessions.

Before moving on to the listening experience, let me say a little more about the DG-1's construction and shape. The plinth is actually two separate pieces, with the central part – which houses the main bearing and the platter and is shaped rather like the plan form of a very large aubergine (or eggplant if you are west of Greenland) – sitting inside a more traditionally oblong outer section. Touraj has devoted a lot of time and effort into ensuring that there is perfect damping and suspension between the inner and outer plinth.

On the right of the outer plinth sits the Groove Runner tonearm, which as you will see is very different from the more common tube design found on the majority of arms, including Touraj's own designs. It has a flat cross-section, in which a PCB is sandwiched to create the wiring from cartridge to output, and reminded me of a piece of Meccano more than anything else.

“My usual practice is to let a player warm up before settling down to any critical listening, but from the first time the stylus hit the surface of the first record on my play pile I realised that this was going to be an extremely enjoyable experience

When at rest it slides into a notch in the armrest, as opposed to the more usual post and clip arrangement of tube-style arms, this design meaning a transit screw can be put into the arm when needed; when removed, this can be kept safely in the armrest itself. Extremely ingenious, and typical of the way Touraj finds elegant solutions to small operational challenges.

To start the platter spinning, there is a small clear acrylic button on the left-hand side of the plinth. One press turns the light to green for 33rpm play. A second push turns the light to red for 45rpm. To stop the platter, one presses and holds the button. In fact, operationally it works in exactly the same way as my Lingo 4-powered Linn Sondek LP12.

My only real criticism of the DG-1 was in the placement of that button: It sits almost directly under the path of the drive belt and it's impossible, at least with my stubby digits, to press the button without touching the belt. Over time I suppose that grease from my skin would find its way onto the belt and that can't be a good thing. However, as we went to press, I was told that Vertere is addressing this matter, moving the switch slightly to the left to avoid the problem.

My usual practice is to let a player warm up before settling down to any critical listening, but from the first time the stylus hit the surface of the first record on my play pile I realised that this was going to be an extremely enjoyable experience. The first thing I selected was my original copy of *Dark Side of the Moon* (SHVL804), Pink Floyd's 1973 album that catapulted the band into years of album chart presence around the world.

It's easy to take for granted albums like this which have helped create the soundtrack to so many lives, but hearing it again on the DG-1 made me sit up and listen intently again. I was hooked from the opening heartbeats of 'Breathe' and by the time I turned the record over I could not wait to hear how it delivered 'Money' – it really was that good.

From then on, whatever I chose to play had the same effect on me: it made for compelling listening. I have some staples in my reviewing list, because I find it helpful to compare how different components replay music which I know well. These include several Mobile Fidelity pressings including Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*, Love's *Forever Changes*, Frank Sinatra's *At the Sands*, the Allman Brothers Band's *Live at the Fillmore East* as well as





HIFICRITIC
AUDIO EXCELLENCE

other favourites like Osibisa's *Woyaya*, Stephen Stills' *Manassas* and whatever else takes my fancy.

I also play some classical music, usually including some Christopher Hogwood/Academy of Ancient Music on Decca's *L'Oiseau Lyre*: this demands a lightness of touch from the record player and the DG-1 most certainly offers that, Emma Kirkby's beautiful soprano voice being conveyed in a wonderful way. I also played some modern pop music, like Lana del Rey's rather excellent *NFR*, and the DG-1 made this extremely convincing. In fact, I've not found any musical genre or even individual album which the Vertere has failed to convey with verve and real musicality.

The bass output is powerful yet tuneful, the mid-range is just 'right' and the top end has an airiness and sparkle which would be the envy of some significantly more expensive turntables. And all this is achieved with a reworked AudioTechnica MM cartridge. It is an amazing feat of audio engineering and execution. The timing is spot-on and the 'boogie factor' – by which we LP12 owners set such store – is palpably present through the DG-1.

I'd go so far as to say that if I was starting out again on my hi-fi odyssey I would certainly listen to other vinyl replay offerings at this price point – we're spoiled for choice these days –, but I think I'd struggle to find anything that appealed to my ear more than this Vertere combination.

Specification Vertere DG-1

Type	Record player (turntable/arm/cartridge package)
Price	£2750 (£2850 with Vertere Magneto MM cartridge)
Motor	24-pole synchronous, axially decoupled, with microprocessor control
Drive	Bespoke silicone rubber belt, aluminium alloy pulley, 45 and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm (electronically selectable)
Bearing	Stainless steel spindle/tungsten carbide ball/brass housing
Plinth	Three-layer acrylic, four-point isolation, steel chassis, three adjustable feet
Platter	Aluminium alloy with PETG bonded mat, and resonance control disc on underside
Arm	Fixed axis bearing using twisted nylon thread, aluminium/polymer sandwich arm-beam, effective length 240mm, overhang 17.5mm, offset angle 22.9°, gold-plated internal wiring, one-piece from cartridge to sockets
Power supply	Wall adapter type
Dimensions (WxHxD)	469x130x384mm (including supplied dust cover)

www.vertereacoustics.com