

## MOBILE FIDELITY STUDIODECK TURNTABLE WITH STUDIOTRACKER CARTRIDGE

[Buzz Hughes](#) May 22, 2018



It seems like every time you leave the grocery store these days you find yourself looking in your shopping bags on the way home thinking, "I certainly didn't get much for that £100 did I?" Yes your precious dollars, euros, and pounds have to keep reaching further and further to buy what they used to in all facets of daily life. Thankfully though when you return to your humble abode, put away those groceries, and enter your hi-fi listening room you might just find that the inflationary trends you are seeing outside your listening room doors have been stopped cold in their tracks and have been sent packing. As your long-time economist chum Adam Smith and his invisible hand would attest, the free market competition in entry level analogue has soared in recent years. If there is any clear market direction lately regarding the entry level it is that you are now getting more performance and quality for your hard-earned dollars when it comes turntables. Now Adam if you don't mind, feet off the coffee table please!



Mobile Fidelity is the latest outfit to join this value themed analogue soirée with their newest offering; the Studiodeck with Studiotracker cartridge combination (£1,200 or \$1,200 for the pair). “Mobile Fidelity?” you might be saying, “aren’t those the guys in the lab coats that make those nice audiophile grade half-speed mastered records?” Well yes, Mobile Fidelity is in fact the company that has made its sterling reputation on carefully recreating some of our most beloved vinyl and SACD classic titles. Holding a Mo-Fi vinyl reissue is the audiophile equivalent of a sigh of relief, knowing that the product they hold in their hand makes a point to exceed and surpass the typical corner-cutting LP reissue bonanza. Mobile Fidelity is coming from years (five decades if you’re counting) of hard won credibility as they have made the decision to enter the front-end game and they are happy to be able to bring a little something extra to the party, a nice dose of star-power. Mobile Fidelity adroitly enlisted Allen Perkins of Spiral Groove fame, who is said to have designed and overseen all aspects of production with Mobile Fidelity Studiodeck. For those readers who might truly be new entry level buyers researching tables for the first time, this collaboration with Mr. Perkins should be interpreted as a big deal. Spiral Groove’s well reviewed and fabulous looking turntables routinely soar into the tens of thousands and legitimately have staked out their own corner of the ultra high-end echelon. One can see why Mobile Fidelity felt they had landed big fish, so to speak, when they empowered Mr. Perkins to see what can be accomplished using his wits at the £1,000 price point.

The results of this star-studded venture are impressive. When the Studiodeck is set up on your rack an understated but sleek aesthetic is revealed. Measuring at a few ticks under 51x36cm and weighing 8.62kg, the ‘deck’ descriptor in the Studiodeck’s title is appropriate. Aluminium rules the day with a wide plate of the material bonded to MDF plywood to form the plinth of the table and the appears again in the 10” gimbaled bearing tone arm. The aluminium provides added mass dampening in the plinth and rigidity in the tonearm and judging by similar choices made in high dollar Spiral Groove tables are a good indication that Studiodeck’s design is coming from a higher plane of existence. The Studiodeck is run by a decoupled 300RPM AC motor and you will find a ¾” platter and pulley system made Delrin™ material. Delrin™ is a proprietary polymer material developed by the DuPont Corporation, the crystalline structure of which is thought by Mobile Fidelity to be ideal in effectively shielding the stylus from unwanted motor noise or vibration. If you were looking to reinforce your entry level turntable purchase decision, it doesn’t get much bigger than DuPont corporation, now does it? The Studiodeck’s inverted bearing is comprised of a combination of Teflon, steel, and bronze normally associated with more expensive tables that prize silent rotational stability. A packing note included with the Studiodeck remarks that some patience may be required over several hours as the platter and bearing find their synergy together, but to my ears there was no noticeable degradation of sound due to lack of a break in period. Mobile Fidelity rounds out your hard-working turntable expenditure with a set of anti-vibration feet designed by Harmonic Resolution Systems to further separate any unwanted vibrations from your playback. HRS is yet another highly thought of name in the industry that Mobile Fidelity enlisted to go ahead and get the Studiodeck right the first time around. The build quality and feel clearly exceed most anything you are going to find at the £1,200 price point and coupled with the muted colours and included well-lined dust-cover the Studiodeck looks like it could easily be Darth Vader’s turntable of choice in the latest Star Wars flick. That is a compliment even if they were the bad guys; the Empire certainly had style, didn’t they?



The sound produced by the Studiodeck would best be described as up close and personal. When it comes time for your first listen you had better just go ahead and buckle up tight and get ready because Studiodeck is ready to make some noise. My first vinyl audition with new equipment inevitably seems to be Mazzy Star's mysterious third LP *Among my Swan* [Capitol] for good reason. Dropping the needle on the first track 'Disappear', you will hear a brief wash of sludge guitar swilling the bottom of the midrange that is quickly joined by chiming bells in the high frequencies that will often tell you everything you will need to know about how well your equipment will be able to organize sound. Playing 'Disappear' through the Studiodeck, the opening guitar had an extremely satisfying power punch and had me immediately trying to think of another table that I had heard that had such a forward leaning presentation. Listening to the Studiodeck you won't be looking forward with your head pointed at the speakers, as I had been accustomed to doing with my Clearaudio Concept table via Cambridge Audio Azur 540a Integrated amp and ELAC Debut B6 loudspeakers. The Studiodeck seemed to be ready to do all the heavy lifting and was intent on delivering the sound right to my ears. The instruments were bursting with detail and the sound spilled into the listening room with a presence I was not expecting from an entry level table. Hope Sandoval's haunting vocals were pleasantly crisp and clear as her voice jumped right out of the speakers, complemented by David Roback's weighty guitar that was presented accurately with the feel of a heavy anchor descending to the bottom of the ocean. My Clearaudio Concept with the Concept MM cartridge had the edge for blacker background on this same piece of music, but the significantly less expensive Studiodeck performed admirably and kept Mazzy Star's half-asleep half-awake vibe intact as I felt immersed in the music.

After listening to *Among my Swan* it was clear that while the treble and bass were present and accounted for, it was well proportioned midrange that was the forte of the Studiodeck. It was time to pick up the pace and see what was possible when the Studiodeck was in its comfort zone. The Bar Keys 1976 runaway Funkenstien monster 'Too Hot to Stop' [Mercury] seemed to be an ideal choice to illuminate the rhythm, pace, and timing of a table that seemed to feel the need for speed. I hope someone already had the beer on ice because when the Bar Keys title track got its shot with the

elliptical shaped moving magnet Studiotracker stylus the party was in full swing. The pure energy the Bar Kays radiated back in 1976 was mainlined right through Studiodeck and Studiotracker like defibrillator shocking me back to life. The electric pacing and timing the Studiodeck provided to the Bar Kays uptempo funk had me dancing before I even had time to take a seat on the way back to the couch after dropping the needle. The pounding drums, horns, and the wah wah guitar were crackling in a white-hot fire that was simply intoxicating. Entry level or not, the Studiodeck brought the pop and fizz across the board to my deep funk vinyl collection that had me greedily thinking about my next LP selection instead of what I might be missing out on with a more expensive turntable.

The build quality of the Studiodeck and Studiotracker cartridge are on point with their competition, and it was clear after a short stint with the table that this is a high-quality design, high calibre performing table that has quite a bit to offer those of us who need to remain price conscious. At an extremely reasonable entry level price, the Studiodeck's sonic strength seemed to be a well illuminated and well rounded mid-range that was able to faithfully deliver an analogue experience that exceeded my expectations given its modest price. If you are looking for a laid back easy listening presentation look elsewhere. But if your music preferences tend towards faster-paced, higher-energy music of any variety I would think the Studiodeck is right up your alley.



Highly recommended for those about to Rock.

#### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

##### **Turntable**

Type: 300 RPM AC Synchronous

Rotational Speeds: 33 1/3 RPM, 45 RPM

Supported Tonearm Length(s): 10-inch

Drive Mechanism: Belt driven via decoupled AC motor and pulley assembly

Speed Control: Pulley controlled

Platter Type: ¾" Delrin

Bearing Type: Inverted

Plinth Configuration: Full-floating, top-suspended plinth system

Tonearm type: Aluminum gimbaled bearing design

Tonearm Length: 10"

Offset Angle: 22.8 degrees

Dimensions (H×W×D):

50×13.7×36.2cm

Weight: 8.66kgs

Price: £1,000

### **Phono Cartridge**

Type: High Output Moving Magnet

Stylus/Cantilever: Elliptical

Tracking Force: 1.8-2.2g (2.0g preferred)

Load: 47kOhm

Output : 3.5 mv

Weight: 6.4g

Price: £200

Manufacturer: Mobile Fidelity

URL: [mofielectronics.com](http://mofielectronics.com)

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