

# VPI Scout 1.1 Turntable Simply put, one of the best values in audio today! Review By Alfred Fredel

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**World Premiere!**  
**VPI Scout 1.1 Turntable**  
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**Ten Years In The Making**



Many things can happen over the course of a decade. Regimes can rise and fall, styles can come and go and technologies can change and grow. Ten years ago, I was ordering parts for my VPI turntable when I happened to speak to a very nice lady who advised me of a new table that would be significantly better than my current table. Thanked her of course and told her I would consider it when it was available. Well, ten years ago there were many projects on my plate and that little piece of advice slipped my mind until I actually got a chance to hear what I had missed several years later. That was the first chance to feast my eyes on the VPI Scout.

Ten years later, VPI has taken what was one of the most celebrated turntables in audio and had the nerve to improve it while keeping the unit reasonably priced. This time, I was not going to miss my chance to take this new improved Scout for a spin and see for myself why this turntable has endured the test of time and captured the attention of so many music lovers.

So I contacted Mathew Weisfeld at VPI (seen right) to see if I could get a review sample of the new Scout. Ever excited about the prospect of having something new in my hands to review, I waited patiently until the new Scout 1.1 arrived on my proverbial doorstep. Upon picking it up, one thing ran through my mind,... "man, this thing is heavy!". It was a significant foreshadowing of what was to come in terms of the quality and build of this product.

As I opened the box, it was amazing to see the care that was placed in packing the turntable. Each component of the unit was neatly placed in padded compartments and everything was logical located to securely ship the unit. The Scout's impressive chassis is made from 1 1/8" thick MDF bonded to a 12 gauge steel plate giving the unit rock solid stability and excellent dampening qualities. In a separate but equally sturdy housing, VPI supplies a 600 RPM AC synchronous motor that is both powerful and smooth. Also included with the Scout 1.1 is the JMW-9 tonearm, a beautiful unipivot design made out of solid stainless steel. One clear advantage to the VPI design that this reviewer likes is the ability to remove the armwand in mere seconds, allowing for multiple armwands to accommodate different cartridges. An RCA junction box is provided to allow for the listener's choice of RCA-terminated interconnects to be used. VPI does not supply a cartridge with the turntable but they can provide selected cartridges that they will mount for you at an additional cost.



There are two significant improvements to the new Scout 1.1 that have made a big difference. First, the good folks at VPI have opted to replace the acrylic platter from the previous generation with an aluminum platter. The new platter adds significant mass and the company's founder and designer believes that it just sounds better. The second improvement is a new bearing that was first developed for the Traveler turntable, which is now being incorporated on the Scout 1.1 offering smoother operation. The new oil bath bearing was intended to be part of the original Scout's design, but ten years ago they could not accurately produce the component. Ten years later, you have a bearing that works flawlessly and takes the table to a new level.

Setting up the turntable was an interesting exercise and I would have loved to use two armwands to mount both of my cartridges. These eyes are not as good as they used to be, so it was a bit of work to get each one mounted correctly on the tonearm. For this review, I chose a Goldring 1022GX as my moving magnet cartridge and an Audio Technica OC9 ML as the moving coil cartridge. The phono preamplifier is a unit produced by Tokyo Sound and all cables are from the UltraConductor 2 series by JPS Labs. For amplification, I chose the new Hercules tube power amplifier from Audio Electronics (review to come) as well as a Rotel 960 solid-state unit. My preamplifier is a passive unit that I built several years ago that always does the trick to add absolutely nothing to the signal. My loudspeaker choices were my Totem Arro columns and a pair of Mistral BOW 3 bookshelf units from Napa Acoustic. Once everything was hooked up and ready to go, I turned my attention to getting the Scout 1.1 up and running.

After putting all the components together on the Scout1.1, I made sure that the turntable was level, the tonearm geometry was correct and that the cartridge was aligned. This took me quite some time due to my obsessive-compulsive nature that drives the ongoing belief that everything must be perfect. About an hour after coaxing the best sound I could out of the Scout 1.1, I was ready to sit down and actually listen to some music.

### **Spinning Some Tunes On The Scout 1.1**

The first cartridge to be mounted on the Scout 1.1 was the Goldring 1022GX high output moving magnet. It is noted to be a warm and fairly dynamic British cartridge. The JMW 9t tonearm is a work of art and presented one of the most musical performances that I have ever heard. To many that have never used this tonearm, it may seem that it is a bit unstable. It may take a bit of getting used to its natural motion because of its unique unipivot design but rest assured that the rewards are substantial. I have never heard the Goldring cartridge sound as good it did on any other arm. The sound coming from the Scout 1.1 was rich, detailed and almost sexy. I sat for hours listening with a new appreciation for my record collection. When I played *The Grand Illusion* by Styx, "Come Sail Away" was almost magical with

incredible detail and punch that I had not heard before from this record. The electric guitars hit me with the force of a hurricane giving me a significant "wow" reaction. Al Green was next on my list with the classic tune "Let's Stay Together", the title track of the album. Al entered my living room and preached the gospel of love to me via the Scout 1.1 convincingly with a smooth delivery that had great pace and rhythm. On Tom Petty's *Full Moon Fever*, the acoustic guitars and hard driving electric guitars sounded very real and natural on "Runnin' Down a Dream", one of my favorite Petty songs. It was a solid thumbs up for the Scout 1.1 and Goldring combination. Off came the armwand and back I went to my workbench to mount the Audio Technica cartridge.

After another hour of mounting and adjusting, I was ready to give this moving coil a shot at the Scout 1.1 turntable. The Audio Technica OC9 ML is noted to be a low output moving coil cartridge that is both refined and detailed while having very tight and respectable bass response. It has a tracking weight that is less than the Goldring cartridge and is an excellent tracker. I assumed it would be a good match for the JMW-9, which is also a fantastic tracking tonearm. This combination of turntable and cartridge presented a totally different yet inviting picture. Where the Goldring was more aggressive and warm; the Audio Technica combination was more subtle and reserved. The Scout 1.1 reflected the character of each cartridge with ease and it was a pleasure to note the differences.


*Maiden Voyage* by Herbie Hancock was my starting choice. The title track is an exercise in space and harmony that has an otherworldly vibe. The Scout 1.1 allowed for the tune to breath and expand with clean wide-open space and little noise, a truly enjoyable experience. The instruments seemed just to appear from nowhere and just disappear into nothingness, all with excellent timing. Next, I dug up one of my favorite albums pressed on 180 gram vinyl from Miles Davis. *Kind of Blue* is a classic album that should be on every jazz lover's shelf. My favorite tune on this album is "So What" and the Scout 1.1 did not disappoint me. It gave me the smoothest performance I have heard with great flow and dynamics, capturing every bit of information that was hiding in the grooves. It was very impressive indeed. Of course listened to classical, jazz, rock and blues and the one thing that kept coming to mind was that the Scout 1.1 was consistently good at reproducing music, drawing the listener deeply into whatever was spinning on the platter.
















The last thing on the list was an album by a guitarist who like Jimi Hendrix left us way too soon. Stevie Ray Vaughan was one of the most gifted blues guitarists to hit the stage. His album *Texas Flood* demonstrates his virtuosic abilities particularly on the title track. The Scout 1.1 was able to recapture the magic of Stevie's guitar and place it squarely in the room with commanding realism. I greatly enjoyed my time with the new Scout 1.1 and this is another success for VPI and Harry Weisfeld.



### Summing It Up

When you initially look at the Scout 1.1, it does not scream, "watch out, I'm hot stuff!" Rather, it quietly lets you know that it means business. All parts on the Scout 1.1 are of top quality and the unique tonearm alone is worth the modest price. Include the high quality plinth, platter, bearing and motor and you have a real winner. Additionally, it is good to know that this awesome product is made in America with American materials. It is absolutely one of the best values in audio today and I would venture to say that this turntable bests others costing thousands of dollars more! With its simple straightforward design, it will be sure to offer years of satisfaction. Run to your VPI dealer and audition this turntable. You simply will not do better for \$2000, a small price to pay to enjoy the music for years to come.

Tonality	
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Sub-bass (10Hz - 60Hz)	
Mid-bass (80Hz - 200Hz)	
Midrange (200Hz - 3,000Hz)	
High Frequencies (3,000Hz On Up)	
Attack	
Decay	
Inner Resolution	
Soundscape Width Front	
Soundscape Width Rear	
Soundscape Depth Behind Speakers	
Soundscape Extension Into Room	
Imaging	
Fit And Finish	
Self Noise	
Value For The Money	

### Specifications

Type: Analog turntable with tonearm

Speed ranges: 33.3 and 45 rpm

Drive Unit: 600 RPM AC synchronous motor

Tonearm: JMW-9 tonearm

Tapered armtube

Markings to set VTA (Vertical Tracking Angle)

Low friction bearing

Mounted on solid stainless steel

Bearing: Oil bath

Platter: Aluminum

Wow And Flutter: Less than 0.02%

Speed Accuracy: Within 0.1%

Connections: RCA jack

Feet: Tip toe feet

Weight: 43 lbs.

Dimensions: 19" x 14" x 6" (WxDxH)

Warranty: Two Years  
Price: \$2000 (as tested)

**Company Information**

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