

The BPL-1 Turntable and its BTP-1 power supply along with the BP2 phono preamp and the PS3 power supply by Bryston

Listening to Great Emotional Moments

» By ADRIEN ROUAH



Just like me, many readers were surprised when learning that **Bryston**, a very adulated Canadian company, were currently introducing a turntable bearing its name. Even though we were hearing from the management of the company that chances were slim regarding the addition of a turntable to its products catalogue, **Bryston** has agreed to include it among its product range.

In the Italian manufacturer **Goldnote**, **Bryston** has chosen a skilled partner for the design and manufacturing of their turntable. **Mag@zine TED** had already chosen this component as the subject of a product review (Volume 22 issue 05 / October - November 2015). At the time, I took the initiative to review the different types of technologies and explain what any audiophile might meet within this range of product. I invite you to read or re-read this review which also gives a description of the *Valore* turntable by **Goldnote**.

Presentation and technique

The **Bryston BPL-1** turntable presents many aesthetic similarities found in the *Valore*, but I realized that **Bryston** had selected some of the options from other **Goldnote** turntables. For instance, the acrylic supports have been replaced by a tubular aluminium legs -feet which are adjustable in height on the *BPL-1*. The base of the turntable is *MDF* and includes circular slots near the axis of rotation of the platter that are intended to neutralize the residual vibrations of the motor which could be transmitted to the rotation system and especially to the ball bearing. The belt remains the same, which means that it starts from the motor shaft to reach the outskirts of the platter. This is the drive section and most importantly, we no longer need to change the position of the belt on the pulley, since speed variation is done electronically. The platter itself is made of *Delrin*® and its upper section is equipped with a thin layer of acrylic which serves (or replaces) the usual felt. *Delrin*® is a polymer from the family of polyacetals used here mainly for its similarities with metal, but also for its anti-resonant properties. The tone arm is delicate, pleasant to handle all while giving a clear impression of robustness. It is a tubular arm made of titanium consisting of seven segments of different sizes in order to neutralize vibrations. All friction areas are handled by ceramic ball bearings. I have installed on this tone arm an **Ortofon 2 M Bronze** cartridge which I know well, but each user will make his or her own choice, as **Bryston** suggest. To complete this *BPL-1* turntable, it needs to be fed – that is powered – and for this purpose, we give you the *BTP-1*. This power supply, which will ensure consistent and rigorously precise speeds for the *BLP-1*'s platter, converts the AC voltage into DC and then again into AC before feeding the motor. The stability and the consistency of the speeds will be rigorously controlled. For the preamplifier and power supply of the latter, **Bryston** proposes a package, which offers very high fidelity reproduction of vinyl sources, frankly without compromise. The cartridge adjustment possibilities are numerous and allow for a highly precise -and personal- setting for each cartridge. The gain stage uses discreet technology and



operates in class A. Immediately, we recognize the quality of manufacturing and the care given to each section as well as the very selective choice of all components, both for power -that of the platter or the preamp– to that of the preamplifier itself. This is expected, since **Bryston** gives its analog devices a 20-year warranty, nothing can be left to chance in manufacturing!

Installation and settings

The installation was easy as were the settings. Note that the settings have been made according to those advocated by **Bryston** in their instructions manual. The massive aluminium presser puck (*Clamp*) was installed for each audition; as well as the platter was left as is, i.e. without the addition of a felt mat. The *Plexiglas* cover remained open during all listening tests. It is in fact a sort of protocol that brings together most of the recommendations of turntable manufacturers and is similar for all of the turntables reviewed in the magazine. This protocol also follows what I usually do during my personal listening.

Listening Tests

This is the first time I'll use a **Bryston** branded phono preamp. I don't have any recent vinyl for the occasion, but rather a selection of LPs that I know very well. And, true to my formula (and a winning one at that – at least in my opinion!), I select four disparate choices, four choices of very different musical genres. Whether with digital media or analog vinyl, versatility is needed to understand that the component must never serve one type of music better than any other. For classical music, I went with **Ravel** directed by **Charles Dutoit**, followed by my perennial jazz-rock **Sweet Smoke** (so everyone laughs when I announce the title of the album *Just a poke!*) that I like both for its musical qualities as for its incredibly natural recording. With a prerequisite passage into pure jazz, **Wes Montgomery** and this warm voiced gentleman, **Jacques Bertin** complete the session and showcase how the **Bryston** components behave.

« *Wes Montgomery seduces with a very nervous and fast performance that is not short on delicacy. And that's exactly what it feels like when using **Bryston** duo to highlight this fabulous guitarist, whose playing speed enchants the listener without muddling nor understating the clear and melodious chords.* »



Listening session itself

I chose **Ravel's** *Bolero* as an introduction, with the conviction that the gradual rise of the music would allow me to start the sonic evaluation. **Charles Dutoit** lets you discover **Ravel** in an atypical way, since the melody is put forward rather than the repetitive rhythm. Therefore, I can easily identify the introduction of each instrument and recognize my usual listening patterns, in other words as with my own turntable. In a word, it is better than what I usually hear. Why? In my opinion, it's the **Bryston** electronics that give the playback more veracity, with more details that are pleasantly set in the foreground. The introduction of each instrument - particularly the organ - takes a very ample and natural dimension. The soundstage is quite generous and will confound the skeptics who think that analog is limited, especially in the final part of the *Bolero*, which is rather spectacularly dynamic. This **London** disc benefits of **DECCA** FFSS technology, which increases

bandwidth that, at the same time, increases the fidelity as well as the musical quality.

The quality of the recording of my *Sweet Smoke* album always surprises me, no matter which turntable I play it on. In evaluating the **Bryston** components, I must confess that the slight emphasis on delivery delighted me. A very nice and well-recorded album, one realizes that its quality is pleasing and a bit livelier. The high registers are well chiseled and dynamic with cymbals sounding real! And the flute, ah the flute! A scary instrument among others for audiophiles, the flute sees itself, here, shimmering and melodious. We follow every note with interest. No not one more prominent than another, and that's quite a compliment. With exaggerated stereo effects - the drums going from left to right and from right to left, gradually from one channel to the other, to give an impression of movement above the soundstage. In the case of the *BPL-1*, the effect is particularly

well rendered and the channel shift flows well between the two speakers.

After jazz-rock, a classic and melodic jazz. For many connoisseurs, *Wes Montgomery* seduces with a very nervous and fast performance that is not short on delicacy. And that's exactly what it feels like when using **Bryston** duo to highlight this fabulous guitarist, whose playing speed enchants the listener without muddling nor understating the clear and melodious chords. During the *West Coast Blues* track from the original *Riverside* album *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, I really feel like there's a race between the guitar and the piano, and the playback offered by **Bryston** illustrates well this race. But it is with *Gone with the Wind* that we really get to appreciate the intricacies and subtleties to be discovered.

Without a doubt, listening to **Jacques Bertin**, is a fantastic test for a product that we don't know. A simple and classical orchestra with life-size bass and the warm voice of the artist who, if the reproduction is of scale, will surprise immediately. And it is, of course, what happens with this **Bryston** turntable - something both majestic and gentle. The lyrics are perfectly intelligible, especially with *Menace*, which is spoken rather than sung. The double bass is subtly present and brings life to *Carnet*, in other words, the opposite of dullness. With the *BPL-1* turntable and its adjoining electronic equipment, we are far removed from a morose audition.

Conclusion

By name alone, we know immediately with whom/what we are dealing. If **Bryston**





chose this turntable and this Italian company for this achievement, the decision must not have been taken lightly. First, it is an impression of strength that emanates from this turntable, whose design is yet very simple while elegant. Easy to turn on and to handle, this pair of components is very attractive at first with performance becoming a given. I would recommend trying a few cartridges, according to your own tastes,

because the tonearm can team up very well with sophisticated systems. In my case, I was well served choosing an excellent **Ortofon** cartridge that I know well, which is also very handy when you have to make an audition for a review! I don't exactly know if **Bryston** had finding future customers in mind or if the Canadian company wanted to please its many admirers and users first. In either case, we can safely say *Mission Accomplished!* Here

then, is a realization that can be described as completely successful and giving great moments of listening emotion regardless of the type of music chosen. The electronic parts are beautiful, with small discrete cabinets that hide a lot of know-how and which are perfectly balanced during playback. Although one should never say never, and I'd say in this case, **Bryston** gave us quite a gift!

GENERAL INFORMATION

BPL-1 turntable and power supply

Price: \$3,995

Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor

BP-2 phono preamplifier

Price: \$1,750

Warranty: 20 years, parts and labor

PS3 phono preamp power supply

Price: \$1,000

Warranty: 20 years, parts and labor

Manufacturer: Bryston Limited, Phone:

1.705.742.5325 or 1.800.632.8217,

www.bryston.com

Musical Choices

Charles Dutoit / Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, *Ravel*, London, LDR, 71059

Sweet Smoke, *Just a Poke*, EMI Columbia, 2C 062 28 886

West Montgomery, *The Incredible Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, Riverside, 9320

Jacques Bertin, *Domaine de joie*, Le Chant du Monde, LDX, 74701