



Houston's, it also has plenty of power, with a good-sized orchestra playing along.

The Well Tempered did it justice, and then some. Her voice was clear and gorgeous, and we could hear everything

in both the high-energy and quieter passages. Rhythm was rock-steady. "It's like training a magnifying glass on every nuance of the music," said Steve. Added Toby, "Toward the end she sings some ornamentations, and I could feel her joy in singing them."

Was there a flaw? Yes, but it was hardly the fault of the turntable and arm. This is a commercial recording, after all, and the engineers did use compression to keep the loudest peaks from overloading the record cutter. We could hear even the compression more clearly with this remarkable turntable.

As noted, the Versalex is the flagship in the Well Tempered line. We know what flagship turntables and arms usually cost, and by comparison this one looks like a bargain. We wish it were easier to set up, and we wish Bill Firebaugh would hire someone to write and illustrate his instruction manual. Having online help wouldn't exactly hurt either.

We have to admit that we were initially worried, uncertain whether we had set the Versalex up the way it should be, and whether we could expect optimum performance from it. Listening reassured us. This is the way a top turntable and arm should sound.

Which is to say that they sound like... music.



CROSTALK

I like to imagine words and music at the same time. So when I saw the name Versalex and then heard it perform, the concept of versatility felt like a good fit.

It got to the heart of every piece. It was light and transparent when needed, deep and rich when the music called for it. Rhythm and pace were always absolutely excellent, and detailed sounds of every variety were spread through the entire sound stage. All in all, this table went head-to-head with the reference and came out shining.

Serious vinyl lovers should give this table an even more serious consideration.

—Steve Bourke

This turntable and arm have a disconcertingly home-made look, and the instruction manual, which is nothing short of essential with such a product, isn't even *that*

good. If I hadn't heard, and even reviewed, Bill Firebaugh's products before, I would have feared the worst right there.

But if you stick your nose to the grindstone, or at least if your dealer does, you'll be rewarded. Bill thinks this is the best turntable he has ever made, and I'm prepared to agree wholeheartedly. Never mind the small details, some of which could be rethought; what you want to know is whether this device makes music.

It does. Using the same cartridge as on our Alpha reference turntable, we got superior results. This is a wonderful table and arm for music lovers. Does that include you? I suspected as much.

—Gerard Rejskind

I can't find a better word than Gerard's for the special sonic signature of this turn-

table. The word is "clean." I haven't heard them all by any means, but this is the one that had the least sonic fudge, mistiness around vocals, clouds in the highs, turgid bass. Bill Firebaugh has created something wonderful. According to my notes, where the reference provided some depth on *Laudate*, the Versalex provided an actual room space. The "s" sounds were clearer and silkier, more like the real thing.

Also, the table is stable. The rhythm on Dolly Parton's song just wouldn't quit. And the long, carolling ornament she sings had a joy that I hadn't heard the first time. I'd like to think that joy is *why* she sings.

If you can get past the setup stage — and you have every interest in having a dealer do that for you — you will be rewarded not merely with sound, but with music.

—Toby Earp