

**TURNTABLE**

**BLUENOTE  
PICCOLO + B-5 Mk II + BABEL**

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Beautiful! This turntable is really beautiful – delicate and at the same time competent. The usage of acrylic is quite common, companies like the German [Clearaudio](#) and the Austrian-Czech [Pro-Ject](#) use it often, but the Italian design is much more elegant. Because earlier I tested the player Stibbert for [„Audio”](#), and for our magazine the [Mini Koala](#), so I had an idea with what I will be dealing here. And I was not disappointed opening the box with the Piccolo – the same attention to detail and understanding, that an audio device is a significant element shaping our environment. And the rule is as follows: if we surround ourselves with trash – we take on something of that, and the other way round like with the Bluenote: valuable environment influences us in a positive way.



Piccolo is the cheapest turntable from this company with "rigid" suspension and was supplied to the test with a MC HO cartridge named Babel. As the listening test showed, it is worth to place it on a possibly stable surface, preferably heavy and rigid. Just after completion of the test we received a mail from the distributor, the Wrocław company [Moje Audio](#) (also Manley and Joseph Audio), where it was noted that this is the first turntable that was received, and the subsequent ones will have some elements improved:

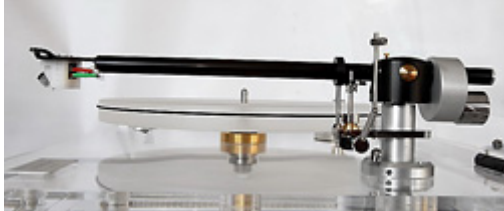
- better plugs on the signal cable;
- a disc clamp like in the Bellavista turntable;
- a blue dust cloth like the Stibbert.

The test was conducted without those, so the sound in the demo room might slightly differ (I assume it will be better) from what you can read.

**SOUND**

At the time I was testing the "small" Bluenote I had a dozen gramophone preamplifiers at home. I usually have a few in stock, but this time it happened that the sheer number could make one dizzy. So I used that for the best pairing the Piccolo with everything I could. It turned out, that I could just stay with my basic preamp, the Sensor Prelude IC [RCM Audio](#). The sound of the Italian turntable is quite easy to pick out. It can be even said that it is easy to tap with the fingers. I did not make any mistake. Although I did not get that from the very beginning, but even I had to notice, that I am shouting at full voice singing the songs from [Violator \(Depeche Mode, Mute, STUMM64, Limited Edition, 180 g LP\)](#) together with Dave Gahan. Actually I should coldly analyze the sound of this little sculpture, I should behave, but I don't care - this time my manners would just be an obstacle holding my head while I would nod rhythmically to the rhythm of the music...

I was shouting like crazy. My wife thought even, that there is something wrong with me, as I do not have a singer's voice, but when she came out of the room she closes herself in to not to listen to the same discs over and over, she heard that I am not shouting "Help!" but "The sweetest perfection..." from the piece with the same title, so she relaxed and took this with understanding. Mutual recognition is the most important thing in marriage, isn't it? Anyway, it was not possible not to get carried away by the music with the Piccolo. Rhythm, rhythm and rhythm once more, although when one would analyze the timbre this would be not so obvious, is the main advantage of this device, something like a joker in its sleeve. So just after the Violator I took the *Oceans Of Fantasy* Boney M. (Hansa, 200 888-320, LP). This is a disc recorded in the so called 5. composition, but here are pieces like *Bahama Mama*, or *Ribbons of Blue*, making it really good. No, I'm not ashamed; we have carnival, don't we? And this German group is perfect for this time. This is why the people had so much fun last New Year's Eve on the Krakow Market - there are recordings that never get old, regardless of who is performing them. And if somebody is not so happy with such a mix like this year in Krakow - then, for God's sake, this was just a big dance floor and one comes there just to have fun and not to cure his ego with intellectual playing. That is my opinion. Anyway, Boney M sounded as rhythmical as Depeche Mode a bit earlier.



And in the sound of the Bluenote there is no trace of aggression, no hardening of the attack, etc, things that often associate with outstanding pace and rhythm. Here it is so, that strong bass together with vivid midrange and slightly rounded, rather than vibrant, treble create something that should actually not be there. The turntable, like every turntable, has its own character and it can be described from many sides; but it does best the following: it communicates music through rhythm, and we are carried away, many times involuntarily, with the transmission. I mentioned that the midrange is vivid. Even very vivid, and every disc has a nice timbre in this frequency range. And there is no warming associated with that. Although in comparison with the [Transrotor La Rocca TMD](#) it can be immediately heard that the midrange is pushed to the front, but this is not a warming like for example in the [DPS Model 2](#) with the ZYX cartridge. But... At the occasion of the test I unpacked the re-edition of the disc *Blues Breakout* (Polskie Nagrania, SXL 0721/2007, LP). I think, that the CD edition was prepared much better than the vinyl one. In general the re-editions from the series "Black discs" is a brilliant idea. This is Jazz and similar music in world class edition. But as it usually happens in Poland the idea was flawed in the very beginning. Such "master" recordings should be characterized with beautiful typography, with a back and extra inlay, "heavy" vinyl 180g and special treatment of the source material. And we just got a repeat of what was in the years past - nothing more. And this happened while the "target" client for vinyl re-editions is easy to define. One can assume that many people will just buy the discs by pure sentiment. But who from the people that aren't music lovers and audiophiles still has a turntable? Audiophiles and DJ's are the biggest group of the owners of those constructions. And for us special editions must be prepared and not throwaways.. But to the point - I bought the disc and listened to it with pleasure. The instruments and voices were very well defined, the correctly planned stage worked in Piccolo's favor. If something was deeper on it then it was shown as such. And this without diminishing the volume, what usually happens when the instrument is deeper on the stage. This allowed also other discs to shine, on discs like *Love The Beatles* (Apple/EMI, 379 808 11, 2 x 180 g LP) the voices and guitars in a vivid, three dimensional way. The events in the middle of the stage, in front of us, got some additional "sphere", were shown in a well-thought, orderly way. This is why earlier the Breakout disc, although not the best sonically, was so involving.

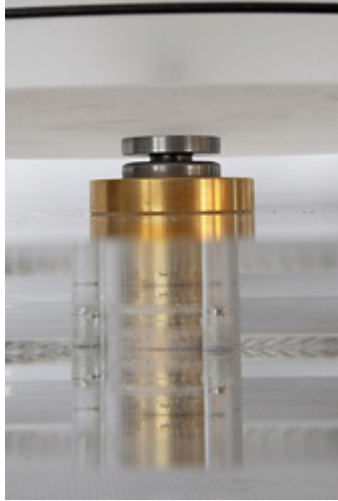


And this is how all the discs sounded. With the RCM preamplifier the sound was best, with the Cube Black Statement it was darker and not so rhythmical, with the [Pro-Ject Tube Box Mk II](#) it was clearer, more precise, but with a bit too strong treble. Actually the character of the Czech preamplifier suited well the Bluenote, because it raised the treble, that is a bit laid back with the turntable, behind the midrange, but - I think - such interference in the turntable's character was not that what I expected. Because the Piccolo also has weaknesses. The first and most important one is not related to the treble or the midrange, because for this price level those are very well tuned, but with the bass. This part of the sound spectrum is played strong by the turntable with the Babele cartridge, but not fully precise. The placement of the turntable turned out to be crucial for this. This is a "rigid" construction, very susceptible to external vibration. And this is not a heavy device like the mentioned Transrotor or Acoustic Signature Challenger I tested for ["Audio"](#) some time ago, and due to that the cartridge is even more prone to vibration. Thus by a heavier bass hit a loop occurred and the bass started to flow. So - you have to provide the turntable a really solid, stable placement, preferably a wall mounted shelf. Bass is then more disciplined, but still not fully dense. You have to take into account that the static on older discs will be better heard than with other cartridges, although the treble is not emphasized. Babele is a MC High Outut cartridge, but with a relatively simple cut of the diamond tip. So the comparison with the [Denon DL-103](#), I did not send back after a test some time ago was interesting. This is also a cartridge with spherical cut, but with higher pressure (Babele is only 1.4g!). It turned out that static is still audible, but less than in the Italian design. So before every listening session the disc has to be washed, or at least wiped clean.

## DESCRIPTION



The model Piccolo is the cheapest turntable from the Italian company [Bluenote](#). It has a classic "rigid" construction with belt drive. All components are prepared according to the company's design and only for it. The main material is acryl – transparent for the plinth and matte for the platter. The plinth is 15mm thick, the latter 20mm. The whole is placed on three acryl cones – two in the front and one on the back, that are also used to level the turntable. The reverse bearing comes directly from the more expensive Bluenote designs in the patented form called Split-Spindle. The main axis is made from hardened steel and bearing from graphite and Teflon. The whole is placed on the plinth by means by a brass ring. The synchronous motor is placed in one of the corners and decoupled by a rubber element. The lower part of it is made from brass. On the axis there is a pulley with patented shape called Tulipan, allowing for better speed adjustment.



The turntable is supplied with the B-5 MKII tonearm with 240mm effective length. In general it resembles the RB-250 from Rega, although it differs from it in a few details. This is a construction of the gimbaled type, with an aluminum tube made in one piece including the headshell. Also the element covering the bearings is from aluminum. The horizontal bearing is screwed with large brass screws. The back tube that the counterweight moves on is also from aluminum. The counterweight itself is made from chromed brass. Frankly speaking the problem of adjusting the counterweight to the weight of the cartridge. It is commonly known that the closer the counterweight to the point of suspension the better. With some cartridges one has to slide it far back on the tube and this influences the capabilities of the tonearm significantly. Here we have the possibility to screw smaller elements to the counterweight – one bigger (chromed) and one smaller (gold plated). Those can be screwed from below, what is also helpful, as the gravity point of the counterweight is as low as possible. Antiscating is set classically – with a thread and a weight. The signal from the tonearm goes through a 5 pin socket. This is like SME or Japanese companies like [Jelco](#) do. Those mentioned use a standard DIN socket, what allows for a specialist company interconnect to be used. Unfortunately Bluenote uses an incompatible socket! This means that we have to use the standard cable supplied by the company (awg36 Hyper Litz, shielded, 99.9999% OFC). In the tested unit this cable was not especially good, but according to the distributor it will be exchanged for a significantly better one. Also the RCA plugs are to be bettered. The arm is placed on a column from aluminum and Titanium. There is a possibility to change the VTA by a ring tightened with smack screws, but it is not very easy.

The turntable was tested with the cheapest cartridge Babele. This is a MC HO cartridge with 2mV output. Its body is made from a white material called Derlin – it is a polymer derived from Teflon, characterized with superb dampening characteristics. The needle placed on a magnesium alloy cantilever has a microspherical cut. It is worth to note the low pressure that is applied – only 1.4g.

| TECHNICAL DATA (according to manufacturer): |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Gramophone Piccolo</b>                   |                             |
| Wow & Flutter:                              | 0,04 %                      |
| Rumble:                                     | -77 dB                      |
| Rotational speed:                           | 33 1/3 and 45 rpm +/- 0,1 % |
| <b>Tone arm B-5 Mk II</b>                   |                             |
| Total length:                               | 275 mm                      |
| Effective length:                           | 240 mm                      |
| Effective mass:                             | 10 g                        |
| Weight:                                     | 450 g                       |
| <b>Cartridge Babele</b>                     |                             |
| Type:                                       | MC HO                       |
| Output voltage:                             | 2 mV                        |
| Frequency response:                         | 22 – 40 000 Hz              |
| Impedance:                                  | 280 Ω                       |
| Compliance:                                 | 8CUs                        |
| Channel separation:                         | >25 dB                      |
| Mass:                                       | 8 g                         |
| Suggested pressure:                         | 1,4 g +/- 0,2 g             |
| Cut:  | Micro Elliptical            |

## BLUENOTE Piccolo/B-5/Babele

Price: 6750zl

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