



## AVID INGENIUM PLUG&PLAY TURNTABLE REVIEW

### CONCLUSION

The Speaker Shack awards the AVID Ingenium turntable with the Editors' Choice award as we simply love it..

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## AVID Ingenium Turntable Review

So as I closed out 2024, we welcomed another year in with more great HiFi and my first review for 2025. I had the pleasure of Conrad Mas the owner of AVID HiFi dropping off a whole AVID system for me to listen to over the Christmas period which included the incredible Accent Integrated amplifier, EVO Four speakers, and what I was looking forward to the most was listening to the Ingenium plug n play turntable which will be my first review of 2025.

This will be my first review of one of their turntables, although I have listened to the stunning Acutus in the Reference system, which I listened to extensively at Studio AV last year. AVID has a rich history with vinyl, which is how AVID HiFi started. Along with Conrad's pursuit of perfection and passion for HiFi, he designed the Acutus turntable to be the benchmark. Like everything they do, they build from the top down so that their lower-priced models inherit the same DNA as their flagship products.

This is a special year for AVID as they hit their 30th anniversary since starting in 1995 with the first Acutus turntable arriving in 1999. Since then, they have gone from strength to strength, producing some of the finest turntables available today and being highly regarded amongst the audiophile community. I was amazed at how good the Acutus sounded with the music's incredible resolution and how much information and detail the Acutus turntable retrieved and resolved through the Reference system.



### **Build Quality and Features**

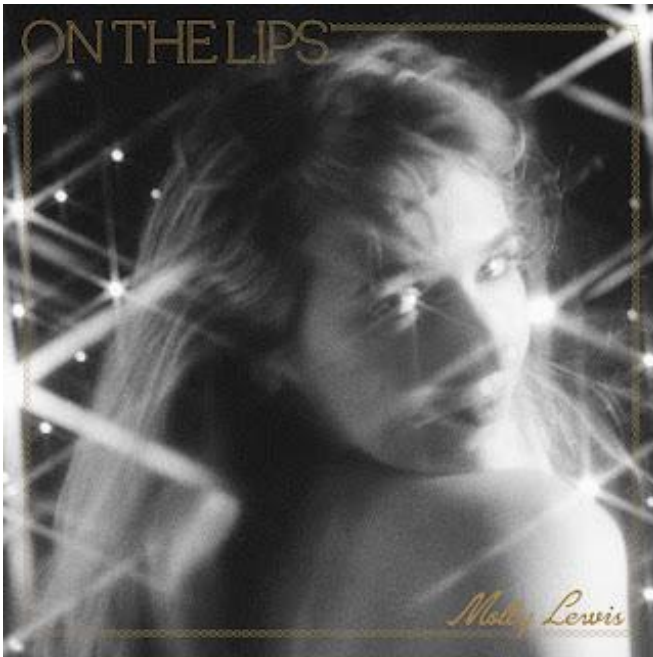
Having had quite a few of their products over the past year the one thing that always strikes me is the stunning build quality, whether it be their speakers, amplifiers, and now the Ingenium turntable. This is the most reasonably priced turntable but nothing is lacking about the build quality and engineering of this beautiful turntable. The main chassis of the turntable is made from a solid piece of aluminium and the simplicity of this and its look is one of the most striking features that I love about the Ingenium, form follows function as they say and this is certainly the case with the Ingenium, it is built precisely with precision engineering at its core. The main goal is to stop unwanted vibrations causing coloration to the sound, they solve this with some great features like the Vibration Transfer Clamp, and the Sapphire Jewel Bearing and assembly which manages to channel unwanted vibrations down the chassis and away from the record and then the Sorbothane Isolation Feet which together allow for greater resolution of the music being played. It looks like a piece of art sitting on my AV rack as it is as beautiful to look at as it is to listen to. Like most AVID products, they have the "A" logo embossed into the aluminium chassis just below where the tonearm sits, which defines their products. Speaking with Conrad Mas the tonearm and cartridge are supplied by Rega under an OEM agreement for them to use and this is how they manage to keep the price lower and certainly leaves customers with a clear upgrade path if they want to improve later on down the line. The real proof is how well this tonearm and cartridge perform when partnered with the Ingenium. With AVID's expertise in engineering and design of the main chassis and its drive unit, platter, and bearing assembly they manage to channel unwanted vibrations down and away from the Rega-sourced tonearm and cartridge, this will allow for better resolution of the music and therefore improve their performance.



The motor system for the Ingenium is completely free of the main chassis of the turntable with the power button built into the cord featuring a straightforward on/off switch it needs to be positioned next to the turntable and then the belt attached, the main motor has 2 pulley grooves, one larger for the 45.0 RPM and a slightly smaller one above it for 33.3 RPM, doing away with the need for any switches to be incorporated into the turntable, so it makes it a very manual task to change but like everything with vinyl it needs some care and attention to change it over, while some may see this as a problem I see it as a positive way of fine-tuning your turntable and the majority of the records I play are for 33.3 RPM. I have the Ingenium supplied with the upgraded aluminium platter, I also have the standard one so it will be fitting to see how much of an upgrade it makes.

The beauty of this turntable is with setting up as all the hard work is already done for you, the tonearm and cartridge have already been fitted and it is literally the case of fitting the counterweight to the arm and off you go with no need to set the weight level for the cartridge and the anti-skate tracking force is already set too, this makes it a breeze to set up. The motor just needed the drive belt connected to the platter and then connecting the phono cables and grounding cables to your amplifier and you're done. Curious, I checked the RPM with the brilliant RPM App on my phone. It was bang on 33.3 RPM so I was amazed at the time it took to get up and running as it is exactly what it says on the tin, a plug-and-play turntable with a satisfying high-end look and feel, the weight of this TT is also satisfyingly heavy which is always reassuring, of course, the proof is in the sound quality which is what AVID is renowned for especially with vinyl.

I have the Accent Integrated amplifier and stand-mount EVO Four speakers for use with this turntable. Conrad supplied me with AVID speaker cables and interconnects to take full advantage of this system's quality, and even one of their isolation platforms to place underneath the Ingenium. When I reviewed the Montaudio Isolation rack last year I really did find out how vibrations can affect your system's performance just like noise does when in your system and if isolated properly it can make quite the difference in performance. The Speaker Shack has reviewed both the EVO Four speakers and Accent amplifier (links above) so I already knew how good these particular products are from AVID. I have spent months listening to them and absolutely loved the stunning sound and music that they make, the Accent has the beautiful Pellar phono-stage built into the amplifier and it really did excel when I used it with my Denon DP400 turntable, so I expected great things with the Ingenium turntable connected. This really is a full AVID system!



### **Sound Quality and Performance**

For this review, I am using a variety of music on vinyl, some new and some older albums that I own that I have listened to on multiple systems over the years. For my first album, I am listening to a new artist which I found on Qobuz, and her new release which I liked so much that I bought both the vinyl and digital high-resolution editions of her album *On The Lips* by Molly Lewis. I fell in love with her quirky yet hypnotic music and found it intoxicating to listen to through the AVID system.

From the introduction of track 1 *On The Lips* Molly Lewis narrates what the album is about and that is the only time you hear her voice as the unique and most certainly different music is with her whistling to the music in an utterly captivating way and the AVID Ingenium translates this perfectly vibrantly and vividly. This leads on to track 2 *Lounge Lizard* which has some wonderful percussion and an amazingly widespread soundstage that offers great depth to the image presented in front of me, her whistling to the music is unique but she has such a soft way / almost smooth way of presenting it that it never sounds harsh or off-putting but just sounds so right with the Ingenium managing to capture it perfectly, when I compared this to the high-resolution version of the same music I preferred this analogue vinyl pressing as it has a much more pleasing and enjoyable sound allowing you to feel the emotion of this music with a better dynamic range which has more snap from the drums and percussion, the treble feels more vibrant in its delivery but never overbearing. It is amazing how much information the Ingenium can actually pull out of the vinyl grooves in this recording. The instruments also have an excellent spatial context within the soundstage which is presented by an extremely wide stereo image from the EVO Four speakers, when the Saxophone comes in it sounds so natural and has such a beautifully mellow overtone that takes centre stage.

My favourite track of this album is on side 2 and the track is Silhouette which is such a satisfying listen and takes you into the Molly Lewis world of music presented by this Australian artist and her take on how she wants you to hear it, I have to say it is utterly intoxicating listen through the AVID system and simply superb through the Ingenium turntable allowing all of the emotion and feeling of this beautiful music to shine through, the last track The Crying Game is a stunning rendition with the big drums echoing out in the background with such impact and her whistling draws you into the music accompanied by the backing vocals, the Ingenium does show what a talented performer it really is through its excellent design allowing such a vivid and vibrant sound with such amazing clarity to the music.

My next album is by the legendary David Bowie and his 1972 masterpiece that is The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders From Mars which I listened to when I visited the KEF Music Gallery in London and sounded superb through the KEF Muon speakers, this album also sounds incredible on vinyl and is such a great recording. I do love that some of these recordings that I own are at least 50 years old but do sound better than a lot of the music that is produced today and this exemplifies the genius that was Bowie and his enormous talent for music and his performances. I love nearly all the tracks on this album but track 3 on Side 1 Moonage Daydream is a fine example of his musical prowess and genius. The music is presented with stunning clarity and paints such a vivid picture of the music from the Ingenium turntable, the dynamics from this recording sound superb with the piano notes hitting hard and defined so well through the recording which has such a crisp sound and lots of bite but with nicely rounded off edges, the drums have great attack and pace with Bowie's vocals which sound simply sublime. The soundstage presented is huge and spans across my room but it also with amazing depth to the image, (this was something that I really noticed when I listened to the Acutus in the Reference system at Studio AV, so it clearly inherits the same quality) each instrument has great separation with its own space within the soundstage. Track 4 on Side 1 is my favourite and the iconic track Starman which sounds utterly brilliant in all its vinyl glory and has huge amounts of foot-tapping-induced music that you just can't help yourself getting sucked into this musical journey that I would say is more like a rock opera telling the story of Ziggy Stardust. The Ingenium manages to extract every last detail from this recording perfectly and the stunning synergy between the components of the Accent amplifier and EVO Four speakers makes this one of the most enjoyable listens that I have had here in my room from vinyl.



For my final album I am listening to an old favourite which is the stunning 2013 release from London Grammar *If You Wait* which has always impressed and is such a beautiful 45.0 RPM recording from this vinyl pressing which sounds so good, bass is always something that has impressed me on both the vinyl and digital copies that I own but I was impressed at how much bass the Ingenium turntable managed to dig out from this track *Hey Now* which sounds simply sublime, prodigious amounts of low end is produced which the EVO Four speakers absolutely love, the EVO Fours are exceptional in this department and one of the best stand mounts available today especially when it comes to the delivery of bass, anyway the point I am trying to make is I have not heard this vinyl pressing sound as good as it has done until I tried it through the Ingenium which has managed to portray and play this track perfectly, it's not just the bass but the whole recording, Hannah Reid's beautiful vocals also sound exquisite which are powerfully projected into my room with a startling clarity as well the precise imaging which really does open out into my room.

At this point in the review, it was a good chance for me to change out the aluminium upgraded platter with the standard HDF one supplied as standard to see how much of an improvement it makes. It only takes a minute to change over as it is such a simple task, one thing to note is that with the aluminium platter, you need to be careful when mounting it to the main chassis as the sheer weight is quite considerable compared to the standard HDF (High-Density Fibreboard) version and if dropped too quickly it can shatter the sapphire bearing in the main assembly, with this in mind it is not the case with the standard one as it is nowhere near as weighty, one of the reasons it is meant as a step up and upgrade to the standard model adding the extra weight will improve the performance but by how much.

I put on the track *Hey Now* from London Grammar which has some of the best low-end from any of the recordings that I own and it is one of my favourite pieces of music to test out the bass capability of a pair of speakers, with the upgraded platter it offered some prodigious amounts of low-end bass delivery, with the HDF platter in place it is still excellent but does not offer the same impact with its performance, the upgraded platter clearly allows the turntable to resolve the bass with more authority and impact, it's not just the bass that is improved but the treble and top end does not have the same bite and clarity that the upgraded platter offers, it is most certainly noticeable with this particular track.

I also tried the Molly Lewis album and the track *The Crying Game* as it has some big bass drums towards the end of the track which I wanted to test out and see if I could hear the same from that piece of music. Again it loses some of the impact that I heard with the upgraded platter, in fact, I had to change it back, and immediately the track lit up, and what I had lost was back again, it is clear that it makes quite a difference to what you are hearing and therefore a worthy upgrade to what is already a stunning turntable, the top end also has that extra bite and clarity is improved, more subtle with the top end but still a worthy improvement.



It's clear to me that the Ingenium inherits the same excellent performance and DNA from its higher-performing AVID products, the quality that this turntable has brought to my listening space has been quite the experience and when partnered with the stunning EVO Four speakers and Accent Integrated amplifier you end up with one seriously high performance 2 channel system, with an incredible synergy which becomes infectious when listening to vinyl wanting me to find more music to listen to on this system.

### **Conclusions and Final Thoughts**

I have had so much fun listening to my records on the AVID Ingenium, it may be their entry-level starting point but what it buys you into is some of the best performance you can expect from an analogue system at this price point, and with the upgraded platter which proved to be a worthy upgrade. It gets you into the world of AVID HiFi which offers some incredible precision engineering and technology, certainly the best of British HiFi which all translates into stunning musicality.

I now know what my next turntable will be, and I will most certainly add a Pellar phono stage to it, as they provide one of the best analogue experiences I have had here at The Speaker Shack.

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