New Sophistication in Lenco Turntable

The Equipment: Lenco L-85, a two-speed (33 and 45) single-play turntable, with integral tone arm, in wood case. Dimensions: 18 by 14¼ by 5½ inches. Price: $179.95; hinged dust cover, $19.95. Manufacturer: Lenco, Switzerland; U.S. distributor: Benjamin Electronic Sound Corp., 40 Smith St., Farmingdale, N. Y. 11735.

Comment: This is a Lenco all right, but minus the feature for which Lenco turntables are best known: the continuously variable speed adjustment working off a tapered drive shaft and idler. Instead the L-85 combines a synchronous motor, a belt drive, a vernier speed adjustment with built-in strobe, and an automatic shut-off feature. All told it is the most luxurious and sophisticated Lenco to date.

At the right of the top plate are "on" and "off" but-

tons, a speed selector knob (33 or 45), and the speed vernier which has an "off" position. We tended to use the "off" as the normal setting. CBS Labs measured 33 rpm as 0.9% fast and 45 rpm as 1.0% fast with the vernier turned off, but variations in AC line voltage did not measurably alter speed in this mode. The circuitry of the electronic vernier control, together with the strobe system, makes absolute speed accuracy possible, of course; but as the accompanying table demonstrates, it also introduces some change in speed with variations in line voltage. The vernier provides an adjustment range measured in the lab at −6% to +3% for either speed—more flexible than the ±3% claimed by Lenco.

The arm is basically similar to that on the L-75 (HF test reports, October 1971), though it has been handsomely restyled. The antiskating system retains the choice of suspended weights and notch positions of the earlier arm, though the design is different and it is easier to set. Measured antiskating forces proved to be close to optimum. Arm friction remains unmeasurably low. Tracking force settings now are made by moving a sleeve along the arm, which has calibrations for every whole-gram setting from 0 to 4 grams. These calibrations proved to be off by 20%: The 1-gram position results in a 1.2-gram tracking force, the 2-gram position in 2.4 grams, and so on. Since many users tend to set an arm for the cartridge manufacturer's minimum recommendation, rather than for a force somewhat higher to provide a safety margin, this inaccuracy may actually be something of an advantage. Arm resonance, measured with the Shure V-15 Type II Improved cartridge, is a 9-dB rise at 6.4 Hz—typical figures for today's better turntable units.

The plug-in shell on the tone arm will accept any standard cartridge and has provision for overhang adjustment, using a template supplied for the purpose by Lenco. A single-play large-hole adapter for 45s also is provided, as is a little tone-arm clip that is used in cueing. A protrusion on the clip fits into three detents in the cueing support and aligns the stylus above the lead-in grooves of 12-, 10-, and 7-inch discs respectively. When this cueing feature is not wanted, the clip simply is slid out of the way along the tone arm. The upper surface of the cueing support now has an antiskid surface treatment that eliminates the side drift that might be encountered with previous Lencos. And the appearance and feel of the cueing lever and its associated damping system have been improved.

Predictably the belt drive improves performance significantly by contrast to the Lenco variable-speed idler system. Flutter averages 0.04% with NAB weighting, 0.03% with ANSI weighting; the ARLL rumble measurement was −63 dB. The platter weighs 3 pounds 6 ounces and supports the full width of a 12-inch record; the strobe markings are built into a flange at the outer edge and are illuminated at the front by a small strobe light.

One particularly nice feature is the automatic shutoff. When the stylus reaches the final groove the cueing lever is automatically tripped, raising the arm, and the unit is then switched to "off." When you press the "on" button once again to play the next record the start-up time is about a second—much faster than on the variable-speed models. Though those older models have unique virtues, they are virtues for the specialist—for instance, the collector of early acoustic records whose speeds varied from the 78-rpm standard. In contrast, the L-85 is aimed squarely (and successfully) at that broader audience interested in a modern turntable for playing modern recordings.

Lenco L-85 Vernier Speed Accuracy

33 rpm	set exact at 120 VAC 0.1% slow at 105 VAC 0.1% fast at 127 VAC
45 rpm	set exact at 120 VAC 0.4% slow at 105 VAC 0.1% fast at 127 VAC