

# Perfect Balance...

## Clearaudio get it right with the Cartridge Weight Watcher

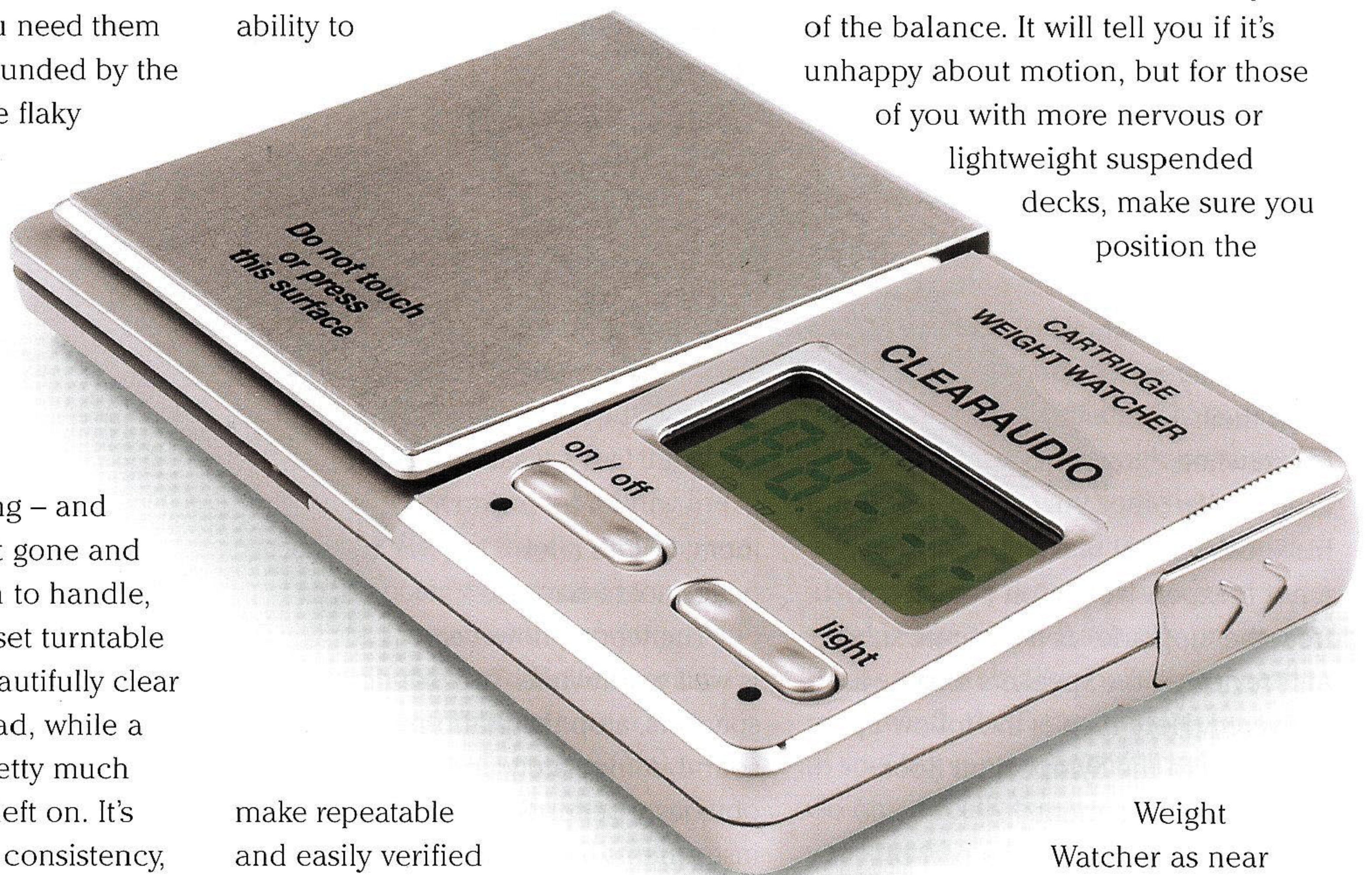
by Roy Gregory

Electronic stylus gauges are hardly new and could never be described as inexpensive. Nor are they without their foibles, operational intricacies and an incredibly irritating habit of running out of juice just when you need them most – a problem compounded by the fact that most of them use flaky rechargeable cells that you need to plug in overnight or watch batteries of a type so obscure you need to order them a week in advance.

Well, now we have Clearaudio's latest offering – and hallelujah! If they haven't gone and got it right. Large enough to handle, it's not so heavy as to upset turntable suspensions unduly. A beautifully clear LCD display is easy to read, while a blue backlight should pretty much ensure that it never gets left on. It's self-calibrating to ensure consistency, as a result measures accurately and repeatably to 100th g and does so as near as dammit at record surface level. The wide measuring platform ensures no problems with bizarre cartridge shapes or obscured styli. And best of all? It's cheaper than the competition and runs on a pair of good old AAAs available from garages and convenience stores everywhere – even in the outback or somewhere on the high veldt.

Of course, stylus down-force needs to be set by ear and varies from one cartridge to another, even within a

range of examples of a single model. Such is the joy of working with hand assembled micro engineering. But part of the process of optimizing any cartridge set-up is the ability to



make repeatable and easily verified steps, which is exactly where the Cartridge Weight Watcher comes in. And whilst an electronic balance might be considered frivolous outside the hands of a professional who regularly works with customers' decks, an accurate alternative is very hard to find. (Don't even think about suggesting the Shure, which is neither accurate nor repeatable!) Well, at £115 the Clearaudio offering is considerably cheaper than most of the competition whilst at least matching them operationally and trouncing them for

practicality. Anybody who sets up or fiddles with their own cartridges should consider it an essential tool.

One word of warning; accuracy depends on the level and stability of the balance. It will tell you if it's unhappy about motion, but for those of you with more nervous or lightweight suspended decks, make sure you position the

Weight Watcher as near the sub-chassis centre of balance as possible. Aside from that one caveat, this is about as near to the perfect product as you have any right to expect. ➤+

Price: £115

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