



A Flagship's New Spin

SME's Model 60 One of One Signature Edition will be limited to 75 examples—and no two will look alike.

In 1946, Alastair Robertson-Aikman started the Scale Model Equipment Company (SME) to build precision models for the engineering trade; by the 1950s, the U.K.-based operation was manufacturing scientific and aeronautical instruments, later diving into Formula 1. But it wasn't until Robertson-Aikman developed a tonearm for his personal, highly ambitious audio system that SME truly found its groove: Anyone old enough to remember when records, tapes, and FM radio were the only games in town will have coveted an SME tonearm, and it remains an enduring benchmark in LP playback.

To that end, SME also manufactures formidable turntables. The Model 30 has remained a reference component for more than three decades, and the more contemporary Model 60 has become the brand's ultimate statement piece. Now, commemorating its 75th anniversary in audio, SME has released the Model 60

One of One Signature Edition, a limited-production version offered in one of 75 colors. That hue, once selected by the client and created through a proprietary aluminum-anodizing process, is removed from SME's palette, never to be replicated.

The \$88,789 turntable is a technical tour de force—one could even consider it a bit of a deal, given that some comparable combinations of turntable and tonearm easily crest the \$500,000 mark. Vibration, the turntable's natural enemy when it comes to high-resolution sound reproduction, is damped here by decoupled adjustable feet and an optimized suspension setup, while the belt-driven platter uses a sophisticated drive system and an AC motor powered by a highly accurate speed-control unit. The new Series VA tonearm, available only on the Model 60, is CNC machined from an acoustically inert polymer-resin material that further reduces resonance and reverberation.

To test the sound, we auditioned the 106-pound Model 60 at Mike Rose's Excel Audio, in Newport Beach, Calif., with a system comprising a Koetsu moving-coil cartridge, an Audio Research Reference 3SE Phono Stage, a D'Agostino Progression Integrated Amplifier, and Wilson SabrinaX loudspeakers. A turntable that runs about what those other components cost combined might seem like overkill, but it amply demonstrated that a budget tipped in favor of an analog front end is not wasted. In fact, this system sounded better than two far more expensive configurations playing digital source material in an adjacent room, showcasing the elusive qualities of neutrality and balanced response across the frequency spectrum—and, beyond that, of silence and the ability to “hear between notes.” Sure, it can deliver sledgehammer bass that full-range loudspeakers will exploit to the fullest, but it's also capable of incredible finesse. **Robert Ross**

The SME Model 60 One of One Signature Edition's relatively compact form factor belies its 106-pound weight—and massive sonic presence.