

## Luxman PD-191A Turntable

Next Level Elegance.

\$12,495  
luxmanamerica.com  
luxman.com


Listening to Squeeze's *East Side Story*, on the PD-191A turntable with Luxman's LMC-5 MC cartridge is one of the most pleasant to use \$15k turntable/cartridge combinations going. I don't mean to be the least bit flip about the pricing, it's an excellent sweet spot for a lot of record lovers taking their obsession to the next level. The PD-191A looks and sounds beautiful - built with a level of care rarely found at this price.

With so much chatter on the internet about six-figure turntables, who do you know that actually owns a 500 thousand dollar turntable, or better yet, someone that paid close to retail for it? I don't. I see a lot of enormous record collections out there, but few equally high-end turntable setups to go with.

It's easy as a reviewer to be nonchalant about million dollar cars, 100 thousand dollar watches, and 500 thousand dollar turntables, when we have no means of actually owning any of that stuff, telling you that said item is a "must buy." Our readers have been telling us for nearly 20 years they usually progress from their first turntable to something in the \$2,000 - \$5,000 range, where there are a lot of excellent choices. Then, if they don't move horizontally to one or two more turntables, something in the \$10,000 - \$20,000 (table, arm and cartridge) is usually the end point.







**S**ome make a further leap of analog faith, but the PD-191A is right in the middle of the sweet spot as far as destination turntables go.

**You work hard for your money  
(so we better treat you right)**

Again, from what most of you have told us, this is a serious purchase and a \$15k-ish turntable is rarely an impulse buy. You may even have a cartridge you are already satisfied with, perhaps you've even mounted it to the table you have, in anticipation of moving up the ladder. More often than not, you're moving up from a \$5k-ish table with the hope of extracting more music from your discs. The PD-191A also adds an additional speed, 78 r.p.m. to access even more music.

At this price, you can expect a substantial leap in information retrieval from your record collection and better overall build quality. The PD-191 delivers this and more. For years, the SME 20 has been a benchmark for engineering and manufacturing execution, but the 20 has moved markedly upscale, now running over \$30k with tonearm. That's a different movie altogether. \$15k isn't small potatoes, but it's not something that can't be attained, especially if you have a piece or two to trade in.

**No matter how many  
Luxman products we  
get in for review, you  
never tire of the care  
and respect with  
which they package  
their components.**

Unboxing a Luxman product always feels like it costs about three times what they charge, but that's what you learn and refine in nearly 95 years of building audio gear.



## Lineup Change

Jelco, who was the OEM supplier for the earlier PD-171A turntable (read our review here <https://www.tonepublications.com/analogaholic/the-luxman-pd-171a-turntable/>) exited the tonearm business a while back, so the 171 was discontinued in favor of the lower priced 151, using an all new tonearm designed by Luxman and Japanese manufacturer SEAC – the LTA309 and now the 191, with a more advanced design designated LTA 710. In addition to the knife edged bearing configuration used with the PD-151, the 191 sports a 10-inch effective arm length, which when optimized, does a better job at tracking than most shorter arms, without the weight penalty a 12-inch arm brings to the setup.

Every aspect of the 191A is upgraded, with increased performance, from the suspension to the main bearing from the already fantastic 171A. A high-quality DIN to RCA tonearm cable is included, but this does allow for further upgrades to increase performance. A quick swap to the Tellurium Q Black Diamond phono cable on hand reveals more low-level information and transient attack, however it is fairly spendy at almost \$5,000. You might save this update for the day you mount a mega cartridge to your PD-191A or get really used to the sound and just want more performance without a turntable upgrade.

Should you already have a tonearm you love, this table is available as the PD-191AL (arm-less) with a wide selection of arm boards. There is even a blank board available to have machined to match the arm of your choice. Though tempted to pester the always affable Jeff Sigmund for an extra arm board, I held the line on working with the PD-191A as is. The beauty of the PD-191A is the level of analog performance it delivers *as-is*.





**R**ather than start down the rabbit hole, I suggest using it as a system right from the box. It's worth noting that if you need a 12-inch tonearm, Luxman even supplies an external arm board (and second tonearm position location) for that as well. Making the PD-191A a two-arm table increases its value even further.

The supplied counterweight works well with the cartridges I have on hand, though there is a heavier one available, should you need it, and the dust cover is extra. At \$895, it's nice that Luxman makes this an add on, because many of us, put our turntable on a rack and just file the dustcover away. More money to spend on records, right? Those of you humble bragging about how your "housekeeper trashed your cartridge again" (and we all know you did it, so fess up) should make the investment in the (luxurious cam/spring support hinged) dust cover. Just saying.

(Dust cover is optional, \$895) – also not the standard cover: 4mm thick acrylic cover fixes to the table via custom spring loaded hinges with internal cams that allow it to remain open at almost any height above the hairline finished chassis, while assisting smooth closure.)

### Change partners

The Pass Labs XP-27 phono and Backert Labs XPhono 1.1 were used for reference to get a bit of a feel with tubes and transistors. The Backert tips the scale at \$7,500 and the Pass at about \$12k, so again I suspect this level of performance, regardless of your choice will probably be about where you land with this table. Though we didn't have it here at the time, Luxman also makes the excellent three-input EQ-500 tube phono stage for \$6,495. Another ploy for more than one turntable or tonearm, but we'll save that for later.

Thanks to the easily removable headshell, swapping in the award-winning Umami Blue and Red cartridges from Hana, as well as the Clearaudio Jubilee MM was a lot of fun, and this is one aspect of turntable design to keep in mind. Some claim you lose a slight bit of low frequency information because the arm is not a single piece, yet the tiny bit you might lose

here is more than offset by the ability to easily change cartridges. I even mounted a vintage Shure V-15 III with Jico stylus and had incredible results. (This is not a bad setup for playing less than pristine discs, or when friends are near the turntable – yeah, I still don't trust anyone around my table!)

(Ed. Note: the PD-191A actually comes with the silver "Luxman" head shell in the individual tonearm photo. Because I'm always jumpy when moving cartridges it was left on the black headshell for a few of the photos you see here.)





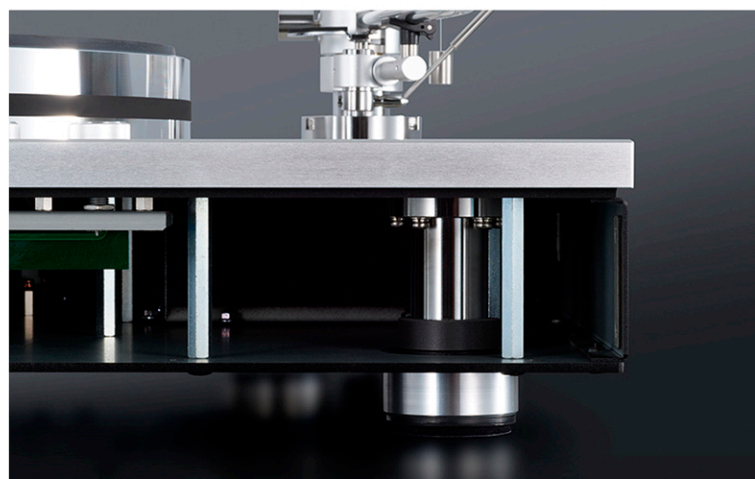
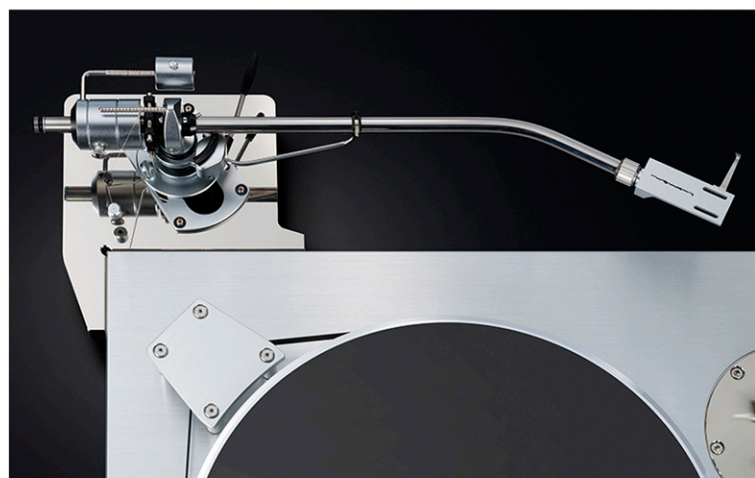
**K**ee in mind Keep in mind the PD-191A offers a 78 r.p.m. speed option. It comes in handy should you have (or want to build) a collection of 78s. To achieve maximum stylus to groove interface, a dedicated 78 cartridge is a must, and they are not terribly expensive. The Ortofon 2M 78 cartridge that is usually used with my Technics 1200 for playing my handful of 78s works wonders on the Luxman table, and Ella Fitzgerald never sounded better. And, all three available speeds have individual +/- 6% fine pitch adjustment.

Setup is quick and straightforward, taking less time than it does to gently unbox the PD-191A. Be extra careful and use the supplied handles that screw into the platter when installing it. They allow you to easily lower the platter on to the spindle assembly, so you don't damage the bearing or any of the other machined surfaces. Another nice touch. Use gloves to install the belt, so no skin oil can get on the surface, put the mat down, and you're off to tonearm setup.

Luxman packs everything you need, but be aware of the tiny hex wrenches that allow VTA adjustment and the height of the armrest. The latter required a slight adjustment to achieve maximum range of movement up and down, but this only takes a second. While the aforementioned cartridges were used to investigate variations on the theme, nearly all of the critical listening was done with the Luxman LMC-5 MC cartridge.

If you don't want to worry about compliance, resonance, and other compatibility issues, I highly suggest using the Luxman MC, and call it a day. The synergy of the whole package is tough to ignore, and the overall sound is very musical. Using the Analog Magik tools and a new Weight Watcher digital scale from Clearaudio, the table takes about 20-40 minutes to set up to perfection.

As an experiment, because of the weight scale on the back of the tonearm's counterweight, I set the PD 191A up eyeballing everything, just to see how that would play out. (pun intended) While this used to work in the early 80s when I was selling Technics SL-1200mk.2s and 50-dollar cartridges, invest, borrow, or hire someone with the right tools to set your PD 191A up right. Eyeballing it, reveals about 70% of the turntable's performance, so it's almost like just throwing a pair of speakers in the room without taking care to set them up. This is a precision instrument, and you feel it the minute you lift the tonearm. The supplied protractor will get you closer, but this table warrants being precise on the setup!



## More Listening

Beautiful as the PD-191A is, it sounds even better. Many old school analog vets swear by tonearms with knife-edge bearings to track the most delicate nuances in the record, and this table does not disappoint.

Thanks to its internal suspension (you can read more here at the Luxman site: <https://www.luxman.com/product/detail.php?id=44>) vibration control is excellent, and I've got a six pack of REL subs. There was no trouble with acoustic feedback, even at higher than prudent listening levels.

Exactly like Luxman's amplification, the PD-191A has an excellent (I'd even say perfect, at least for my taste) balance of revealing a high degree of musical information, offering an extra bit of tonal saturation that is their signature sound, yet never losing the musical pace.

Another aspect of this table that comes to mind instantly and was noticed by a few audiophile friends stopping by for a listen was the quality of the bass response delivered. Where some tables can sound overdamped, and others perhaps a little lean in the lower registers, when listening to bass heavy music, it's easy to hear the detail of Stanley Clarke sliding his fingers across the strings and the associated sonic signature of the stand up bass, yet still fast enough to listen to him pluck and slam the strings on an electric bass.

By comparison, the less expensive Linn Basik at \$5k has a much smaller and less defined sound, and the \$4,495 Technics SL-1210G less definition at the top and not as much of a sense of pace. However, if your musical taste is more to the hip hop, techno/electonica, and the heaviest of rock records, the direct drive table gets a slight edge here, with a bit more slam on tap.

But in the end, I can't think of a \$15k table, tonearm, and cartridge I'd rather own than the Luxman PD-191A and LMC-5 cartridge, especially in terms of how painless this makes putting a mega table on top of your equipment rack. Very highly recommended.

