



History



Throughout our forty year history, we have strived to offer the very best products and service to our customers. Right from our very humble beginnings, we have set out to design and build products that offer true innovation to the audio world whilst still retaining the personal touch that was instilled into the company by our founder – the late John Michell.



John began his engineering career when he served an apprenticeship with Finchley Autos in the early fifties. Deciding to start his own business, he set up in his garden shed and quickly moved to a small industrial unit in North London. Working as a jobbing engineering company, he soon outgrew the premises so, during the mid '60's, moved to Borehamwood, which is where the company is still based today. Although very much an engineering company, John also made scale models and it was during this time that he met Stanley Kubrick and built the space ship 'Discovery' for the film 2001 – Space Odyssey, later to become the inspiration for the GyroDec.



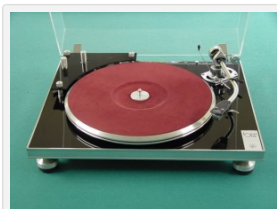
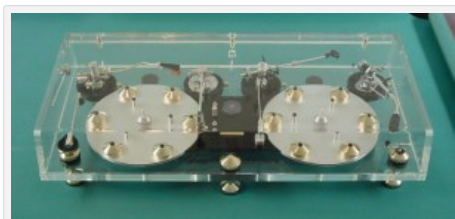
In the late 60's, the company started to make parts for Transcriptors who subsequently re-located to the Michell premises. At this time, Michell were still supplying other local firms as well as working directly with the film studios making models and component parts for films such as Star Wars. When in 1973 Transcriptors re-located to Ireland, Michell took over the manufacturing under licence of the Hydraulic Reference turntable. These products are recognisable by their 'By J.A. Michell Eng. Ltd' name badges.



1977 saw the development of the first true Michell Engineering turntable – the Michell Reference Electronic. Offered in either a coloured mirror finish or marble plinth, both of these models are extremely rare these days. This was followed by the more upmarket Prisma, which was the first Michell product to be manufactured totally from the thick transparent acrylic material that was to become synonymous with all later Michell designs. Initially the LP record was supported by six pods only, as per the Reference, to reduce electrostatic charging of the vinyl. A later version of the Prisma added a glass platter on top, onto which the record was to be clamped.



Being such a personable company and always willing to satisfy where possible, it was at this time that Michell also started to make certain 'special orders' for customers and distributors. A rare example is the Double Prisma. Mainly sold on the German market, the deck featured two platters working from the same drive system. A total of four arms could also be fitted.



With sales growing steadily, it was decided to introduce an entry-level product so that the Michell brand could reach out to a wider audience. The Focus One consisted of a simple plinth suspended on sprung feet. The improved 'S' version followed quickly and was fitted with an improved drive system and heavy aluminium platter. At the same time, the Focus Tonearm was also introduced. A uni-pivot design, the Focus Tonearm has a layered-dampened arm tube and precision side weights for azimuth control.



The early '80's saw the introduction of the GyroDec – surely one of the most

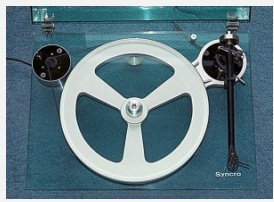
iconic turntable designs of all time. Developed to be used with an A.C. synchronous motor and two drive belts, the original GyroDec featured a heavy aluminium platter fitted with a rubber mat and the signature gold platter weights mounted below. Over the next three decades, the



GyroDec has continued to be the company's bestselling and most popular product. Key to this success has been the numerous developments to bring it to the level of performance offered today. These include the now famous inverted oil-pumping bearing; an ingenious design that dramatically reduces the amount of friction and wear resulting in low noise and rumble. Being the modular design that it is, the company is still able to offer all of the upgrades to bring an original deck right up to current spec.



It was at this time that the understanding of power supplies and how they could affect a turntable's performance started to become an issue. As an upgrade, Michell introduced the Gyropower – a passive device with a transformer and extensive RLC filtering of the motor voltage. Designed to power the original Papst synchronous motor in the GyroDec, the Gyropower paved the way for future power supply development.



Inspired by the design of the GyroDec, the Syncro became the entry-level model in the early '80's. An inverted-pendulum suspension design, the Syncro featured a glass platter. Later versions had a squarer plinth and a full hinged acrylic cover. The Syncro was superseded by the Mycro, which used the same plinth yet added the GyroDec MkII acrylic platter and a smaller version of the unique inverted bearing. The Mycro stayed in production until the launch of the Gyro SE in 2005.



1989 saw a small departure for the company as it moved into the electronics field. Designed by Tom Evans, the Iso Phonostage and Argo linestage pre-amplifier was launched and matched to the Graham Fowler designed Alecto MOSFET mono and stereo power amplifiers. Industrial design was by John Michell and matched the design of the GyroDec.



The Alecto was later replaced with a Mk11 version while Graham Fowler designed a whole new phonostage and remote-controlled linestage pre-amplifier – the Delphini and the Orca. Although universally acclaimed for their performance, Michell Engineering ceased manufacture in 2001 when John fell ill. Manufacture was passed on in its entirety to **Trichord Research** – Graham Fowler's own company – where they continued to produce the product for years to come.



In 1993, the Gyropower was replaced with the much more advanced Gyropower QC. This was a fully-active power supply, synthesising two sine waves with precise phase relationship, which were buffered by two power amplifiers before driving the motor coils. The QC was an option for the GyroDec and Gyro SE and became standard for the Orbe (see below) when it was introduced in 1995. The design of the QC's housing was derived from the Michell Alecto MOSFET

power amplifiers.

Following on from the success of the **GyroDec** and from demands for a higher end product from its customers, Michell Engineering launched the flagship **Orbe** in 1995. Developed as a true high-end performance turntable, the Orbe features significant engineering improvements over the GyroDec. Still the company's flagship turntable, the Orbe has undergone refinements over the years and now offers a performance way beyond its price bracket.

In 2000, John Michell was struck by a sudden illness but still continued at the helm of the company on a daily basis. Although given the all clear at the end of the year, the illness returned with a vengeance in October 2002 and he was no longer able to take part in the day-to-day running of his beloved company. He handed over the running of the company to other members of the family and, with the support of long serving staff, the company continued to thrive. This allowed John to continue at home with his main passion of design and during this period Michell Engineering introduced the current entry-level **TechnoDec** turntable, the **Techno Arm "A"**, **Techno Weight** and the **HR Power Supply**.

Sadly John passed away on 23rd October 2003 after a huge battle with his illness. His legacy continues as the company is still very much run in the manner to which he would have expected – professional, personable and still offering products that offer customers staggering performance combined with real value for money. With the recent launch of the **Gyro Seduction**, Michell Engineering goes from strength to strength and through great support from customers, distributors and suppliers, continues to be one of Britain's iconic HiFi marques.

Michell Engineering would like to thank Don Sellers for supplying many of the photographs and allowing them to be published on this site.