Antique Ultraphon Tabletop Gramophone With Dual Acoustic Tonearms. Germany, Circa 1927



3 800 EUR

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Description

Watch the video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/CLiAG-1d2sM Antique German Ultraphon gramophone, a remarkable mechanical phonograph manufactured around 1927 and equipped with one of the most original sound reproduction systems of the 1920s. Its most distinctive feature is the presence of two independent acoustic tonearms, each fitted with its own original soundbox, allowing the same record to be heard through two separate sound outlets. This ingenious mechanism was designed to create a fuller, more spacious sound through a mechanical spatial effect, long before the introduction of modern stereophonic systems. This example retains its two original Ultraphon soundboxes, its distinctive wooden tonearms and a mechanism in perfect working order. The

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gramophone features a striking cylindrical tabletop cabinet finished in glossy black lacquer. Its design differs considerably from conventional models, with a compact structure concealing the internal acoustic channels responsible for transmitting and amplifying the sound. Two large oval acoustic outlets are positioned around the lower part of the cabinet, facing in different directions and projecting the sound from each soundbox separately. The cabinet rests on small spherical feet and has a broad hinged lid which, when raised, reveals a particularly attractive interior. The warm tones of the wood contrast beautifully with the red covering of the turntable and the metal components of the mechanism. The two acoustic tonearms are particularly noteworthy, being made entirely of wood and fully removable. This construction is unusual, as gramophone tonearms of the period were generally made of metal. Both have an elegant curved shape and are fitted with their corresponding original Ultraphon soundboxes, or acoustic reproducers, which retain their factory identification markings. Each tonearm directs the sound into one of the two internal acoustic channels, a distinctive arrangement that illustrates the unusual operating principle of this phonograph. To use the dual-soundbox reproduction system, both needles must be placed manually in the same groove of the record, with a small distance between them. This operation must be carried out with the turntable completely stationary, and the motor should only be started once both soundboxes have been correctly positioned. Attempting to place both needles accurately in the same groove while the record is rotating is practically impossible. During playback, the slight difference in timing between the sounds emerging from the two outlets creates a fuller, more spacious listening effect. Although this is not true stereophonic sound, it represents an interesting mechanical approach to spatial music reproduction. The difficulty of positioning both soundboxes correctly may well

have been one of the reasons that limited the Ultraphon's commercial success. Operating the system required a degree of skill that was unnecessary with conventional gramophones. Nevertheless, the instrument can also operate perfectly with a single tonearm and soundbox, playing records in the traditional manner without the dual-sound effect. This makes it possible to enjoy the machine as a conventional acoustic phonograph, while reserving its unusual dual-reproducer system for occasions when one wishes to experiment with it. On the exterior, beside the winding handle, are two small levers. One operates the mechanical start/stop brake, while the other controls internal acoustic shutters that regulate the volume of sound. This system allows the playback volume to be increased or reduced entirely mechanically. Both controls work perfectly, as do the spring-driven motor and the two original soundboxes. The gramophone also retains its speed regulator, positioned inside the cabinet beside the turntable. Another interesting feature is its interior lighting system, designed to illuminate the compartment when the lid is raised and make it easier to position records and needles. It retains its original-style small light bulb and the older elements of its electrical installation, although the power supply has been adapted to use a modern replacement battery housed in an internal compartment. This practical modification does not affect the playback mechanism, which continues to operate entirely mechanically. The gramophone retains its original Ultraphon identification markings. Inside the lid is the company's emblem, accompanied by its well-known German slogan, "Ultraphon spiegelt den Ton", which may be translated as "Ultraphon reflects the sound". It also retains the plate relating to the apparatus's patents and sales restrictions, together with the original markings on both soundboxes. These details provide evidence of its German manufacture and the distinctive history of the brand. The overall condition is good, with a particularly

well-preserved interior and a mechanism in perfect working order. The exterior black lacquer retains an attractive sheen, although it shows scratches, small chips and minor surface wear resulting from use and the passage of time, as visible in the photographs. Both wooden tonearms, the original soundboxes and the regulating mechanisms are very well preserved, allowing the gramophone's unusual capabilities to be fully enjoyed. This Ultraphon will particularly appeal to collectors who appreciate antique gramophones, mechanical phonographs and the earliest innovations in recorded sound. Beyond its distinctive design, it offers the pleasure of listening to records through an ingenious acoustic system developed almost a century ago. Its unusual dual-soundbox arrangement makes every demonstration an opportunity to experience a fascinating chapter in the evolution of sound reproduction. A remarkable working machine to enjoy, appreciate and preserve as part of the history of mechanical music. Measurements: Diameter: 50 cm (19.69 in). Height: 38 cm (15 in). History of Ultraphon gramophones and their innovative spatial sound system: The history of Ultraphon is closely linked to the German inventor Heinrich J. Küchenmeister, who, during the early 1920s, developed an innovative music reproduction system intended to achieve greater sonic breadth and a sense of acoustic depth. His invention led to the establishment of Deutsche Ultraphon AG, founded in Berlin in August 1925. That same year, he publicly presented the Ultraphon gramophone at the prestigious Hotel Esplanade in Berlin, introducing a concept very different from the traditional acoustic phonographs of the period. The innovation consisted of reproducing the same record simultaneously using two needles positioned a short distance apart. Each transmitted sound through an independent acoustic channel, so that the two reproductions reached the listener with a slight difference in timing. The result was a

distinctive impression of greater fullness and spatial depth, achieved without electricity or amplifiers. This effect is commonly described as mechanical pseudo-stereo and represented one of the earliest attempts to create a spatial sound effect using a gramophone. Ultraphon machines also attracted attention for their distinctive cylindrical cabinets, which concealed the horns inside and directed sound through two large external openings. Their design reflected the enthusiasm of the 1920s for technical innovation and modern forms. The company adopted the advertising slogan "Ultraphon spiegelt den Ton", a direct reference to its reproduction system. Despite its qualities, the complicated process of correctly positioning both soundboxes may have contributed to these gramophones' limited commercial success. Towards the end of the decade, the company began concentrating much of its activity on the record industry, developing an extensive catalogue of recordings under the Ultraphon name. Financial difficulties in the early 1930s eventually led to the disappearance of the German company. Its original dual-tonearm gramophones remain a fascinating reminder of the search for new ways of listening to music, when manufacturers were experimenting with mechanical solutions that anticipated some of the possibilities of later sound reproduction systems.

The recording heard in our video: "Toda una vida" ("A Whole Lifetime"), by Antonio Machín, 1946. In the video accompanying our description, we hear the celebrated bolero "Toda una vida" ("A Whole Lifetime"), performed by Antonio Machín and his ensemble. The record played is a Spanish edition issued by Odeon, manufactured in Barcelona and dated to 1946 in discographical records, with its distinctive blue-green and gold label. It is one of Antonio Machín's best-known interpretations, and his warm, expressive voice helped establish the song as one of the great classics of romantic bolero in Spain. "Toda una vida" was composed in 1943 by Cuban musician and songwriter Osvaldo

Farrés (1902-1985), who wrote both its music and lyrics. The song celebrates enduring love, expressed with a simplicity and emotional intensity that help explain much of its popularity. Its romantic melody and heartfelt lyrics brought it considerable success, and it became part of the repertoire of numerous performers. Farrés also wrote other well-known songs, including "Quizás, quizás, quizás" ("Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps") and "Madrecita" ("Dear Mother"), which helped establish his reputation in Latin American popular music. Antonio Machín (1903-1977) was born in Sagua la Grande, Cuba, and became one of the most popular bolero singers of the 20th century. After developing part of his career in Cuba and the United States, he settled in Spain in 1939, where he achieved enormous fame through his distinctive interpretation of romantic songs. Among his best-remembered hits are "Dos gardenias" ("Two Gardenias"), "Angelitos negros" ("Little Black Angels"), "Madrecita" ("Dear Mother"), "El manisero" ("The Peanut Vendor") and "Toda una vida" ("A Whole Lifetime"). His unmistakable voice and the emotion he conveyed through his singing made him one of the most beloved artists among several generations of Spanish listeners. In this recording from the mid-1940s, we can enjoy one of his most representative performances through our Ultraphon gramophone from circa 1927, with the distinctive sound of its original acoustic system. We are professional antique dealers. To see more photos of this item, Please click on this link: https://www.antiguedades.es/en/antique-gramophones/5576-antique-ultraphon-tabletop-gramophone-with-two-acoustic-tonearms-germany-circa-1927.html