



In a spin

Neville Roberts polishes up his vinyl collection and settles down to listen to Pro-Ject's 2 Xperience SB DC package

Right from the outset, I find myself impressed with the look and feel of the top-of-the-range model from Pro-Ject's Xperience turntables. It has an air of classic elegance and refinement. In particular, the lovely matt finish of the walnut wood veneer is a perfect complement to the black of the platter and the Pro-Ject 9CC Evolution carbon-fibre tonearm. This arm is fitted with an Ortofon 2M Silver moving magnet cartridge, which has already been fully aligned at the factory. As well as the walnut wood veneer, the 2 Xperience SB DC is available in mahogany or olive wood or in a gloss piano black finish.

The turntable has some great design features. The plinth is made from a special non-resonant MDF, which uses a combination of high density and lower density MDF in its construction. It is also fitted with three high-quality metal cone feet, each of which incorporates an acoustically damped coupling mechanism that sits between the foot and the plinth. These screw onto the underside of the plinth and can be adjusted to enable levelling of the turntable. The platter is also of a special sandwich construction to minimise resonances and provide an excellent acoustic match. Pro-Ject recommends that the record is placed directly on the platter *sans* mat.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Pro-Ject 2
Xperience SB DC

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
Belt-drive turntable

WEIGHT
7.7kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
460 x 160 x 360mm

FEATURES
● 9CC Evolution carbon-fibre tonearm
● New DC-powered synchronous turntable motor with electronic speed control
● Ortofon 2M Silver moving magnet cartridge

DISTRIBUTOR
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The new motor has electronic control of playback speed and the ability to switch between 33 and 45rpm at the push of a button. It is a 9V AC synchronous motor. The control circuit, which is built into the turntable, takes the 15V DC input from the external power supply and generates a high-purity sine wave of a frequency to drive the motor at the chosen speed. A single press of the power button turns the motor on to 33rpm and the left-hand blue LED flashes while the turntable gets up to speed and then stops flashing when it is ready, and remains lit. Another press of the button switches to 45rpm and the right blue LED is lit. Pressing the button again switches back to 33rpm. You press and hold the button for three seconds to turn the deck off.

Not hiding its light under a bushel, the motor is situated out in the open on the top left of the plinth. From there, the drive is taken from the motor pulley to the outer rim of the platter via a circular cross-section drive belt. The motor itself is suspended in its recess by another small rubber belt to effectively isolate it from the plinth.

The top of the spindle is threaded to accommodate a screw-on metal record clamp that is provided with the platter. The clamp is quite lightweight, weighing only 85g, but as it screws onto the spindle, it nevertheless holds the record firmly in position on the platter.

Moving to the business end, the arm is Pro-Ject's 9CC Evolution carbon-fibre 9in offering, which has been designed to lead vibrations away from the cartridge into the mounting board. The headshell, finger-lift and armtube are fashioned from a single piece of carbon-fibre and the armtube itself is slightly tapered along its length to minimise standing wave reflections. The arm bearing housing is a heavy solid ring that supports an inverted bearing design with four ABEC7 specification ballraces. The counterbalance weight is Sorbothane damped and supported on a pillar that extends from the bottom of the armtube in order to lower the centre of mass and thus reduce unwanted forces on the cantilever. It should be noted that, even though the headshell is fixed, the armtube is clamped by a single screw to allow rotation should

any adjustment of needle azimuth be required. Bias adjustment is by a small weight suspended from a wire hoop in a nylon thread, which is connected to the arm by looping the end of the thread over a little pillar that has three grooves on it, with each corresponding to different stylus forces.

At the sharp end of the arm is a factory-fitted Ortofon 2M Silver moving magnet cartridge. This is based on the Ortofon 2M Red, but the internal generator coils are made from silver wire. The signal from this cartridge is taken to a block on the rear underside of the deck that is fitted with a pair of RCA phono sockets and an earth binding post. A set of dual phono leads with a separate earth wire is also included.

The only adjustment required is to set the stylus force after the counterbalance weight has been fitted. The instructions describe how to set the tracking force using the markings on the counterweight, but I prefer to use a digital stylus force balance to do this as it is far more accurate. I check the azimuth and VTA and, as expected, I find these to be spot on.

First thing's first and I check out the tracking ability and arm/cartridge resonance with my copy of the Vinyl Essentials test record. Its a little bit irritating that I have to screw and

unscrew the record clamp every time I change the record, but its a routine you'll quickly get used to and it's good to see the clamp included. Anyway, the arm and cartridge tracks well up to 80 microns and the resonance is at 12Hz, which is great.

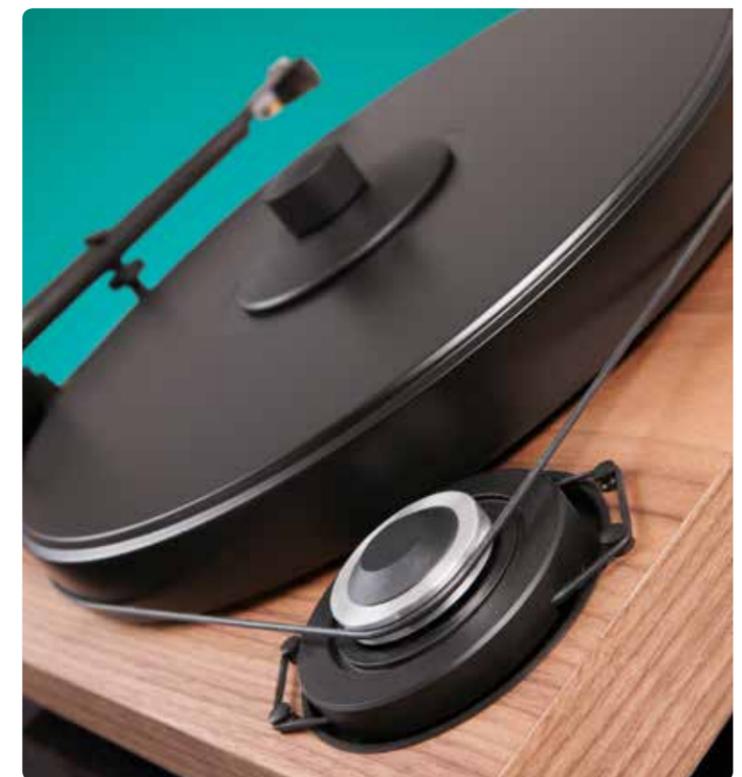
Sound quality

Starting off with the overture from Purcell's *Abdelazer Suite* played by the Virtuosi of England – the stately allegro overture immediately commands my attention and draws me into the music. I am struck by the clear musicality of the performance

Delivers a superb sonic backdrop with an excellent dynamic range

– the orchestra is both full and yet well controlled with no audible peaks across the sonic spectrum, which supports the measured performance mentioned previously.

The deep and extended drum roll during the opening sequence of Stravinsky's *The Firebird Suite* performed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is beautifully clean, tight and well controlled. Further into the recording, the twittering of the strings is clear and crisp – I can almost



The design is typical of Pro-Ject's understated simplicity

Q&A

Laurence Armstrong
MD, Henley Designs Ltd



NR: There is no facility for the user to calibrate the turntable speed. Obviously the AC generator is calibrated in the factory, but is it likely to require any adjustment in the long term?

LA: No, speed stability remains extremely accurate over the life span of the turntable due to the crystal-lock method employed on the AC generator. It will retain the speed *ad infinitum*.

What is the reason for the choice of a screw-on record clamp as opposed to a weightier option that's held by gravity?

Partly it's an effort to keep the cost so competitive, and partly it's due to the high mass of the platter. The clamp gives superb record adhesion without any extra mass loaded on to the main bearing.

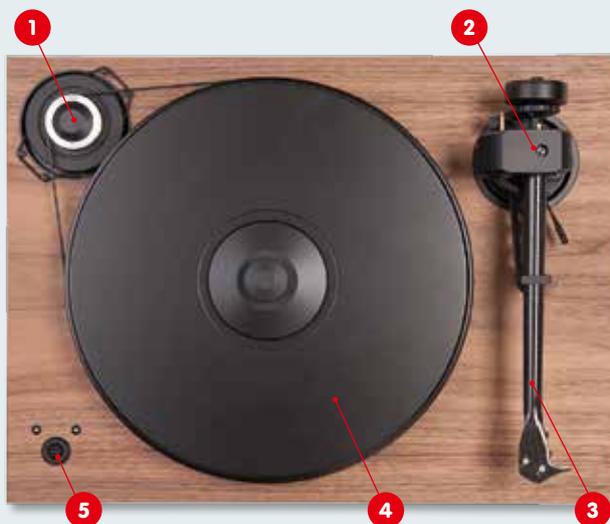
Can you reveal a bit more about the materials used in the sandwich construction of the platter?

It's a composite of heavy, non-resonant MDF topped with re-moulded vinyl records. The use of a vinyl surface is not very common, but what it provides is a surface that perfectly matches the make up of the playing record. This removes the need for any mat or additional material that can colour the sound, and instead just lets the record do the talking.

The platter of the review sample tested had three small holes drilled around the outer edge of the underside. Are these part of the manufacturing process to ensure that it is perfectly balanced?

Yes, in the same way that a tyre is dynamically balanced, the platter on the 2 Xperience SB is precision-balanced to create the perfect playback platform.

IN SIGHT



- 1 9V AC synchronous motor
- 2 Solid ring arm bearing housing
- 3 One-piece carbon-fibre arm tube and headshell
- 4 Sandwich-constructed solid platter
- 5 Turntable speed indicator LEDs and power button

identify the individual violins as separate instruments, rather than being one general sound.

For more contemporary electronic music, I turn to a track from Jean Michel Jarre's *Equinoxe*. The last track on side one (imaginatively called *Part 4*) gently introduces me to the pumping bass line that builds up through the piece. The Pro-Ject delivers a superb sonic backdrop with an excellent dynamic range, particularly in the lower registers. The deck carries off to perfection all the complexities of the music and the energetic enthusiasm is captivating.

The King's Singers rendition of *With You On My Mind* from their album *Out Of The Blue* shows off the excellent imaging of the 2 Xperience SB DC. Each singer occupies his own space across the soundstage and the rhythm accompaniment is correctly positioned behind the singers. The rich tonal colours of each individual singer that emerge from my speakers are very addictive.

George Malcolm's playing on a Decca Eclipse recording of Scarlatti sonatas on a harpsichord is tuneful and energetic. The Pro-Ject manages to extract a considerable amount of complexity and detail from the single harpsichord, and at times it is difficult to believe that there is only one instrument playing.

Finally, for a bit of rock, I turn to the legendary Mobile Fidelity half-cut master (ie the master disc is cut at half speed) recording of *Money* from *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. The bass guitar is reproduced with exceptional musicality and the cash registers in the opening section glitter with clarity, causing me to instinctively

reach for my wallet. As with the King's Singers recording, the lyrics are clear and the slight raspiness of Pink Floyd's vocals is perfectly reproduced.

Conclusion

The Pro-Ject 2 Xperience SB DC turntable certainly turns in a performance that complements its looks – one of elegance and refinement. I never get the feeling that it is looking down its nose at me and it is certainly ready to let its hair down when asked.

The combination of the Ortofon 2M Silver cartridge and the 9CC Evolution tonearm is a marriage made in heaven and I find no reason to break up this happy partnership. Their performance together is one of control and harmony, combined with freedom of expression that simply allows the music to flow.

As a complete package, the 2 Xperience SB DC is a serious turntable that will certainly let you fully appreciate everything that your vinyl collection has to offer ●



HOW IT COMPARES

Comparing the Pro-Ject 2 Xperience SB DC with the similarly priced Rega RP6 (HFC 358) with the Exact moving magnet cartridge, both have electronic speed control, an external PSU and use a composition plinth, but the Rega is fitted with basic rubber feet and the Pro-Ject has proper cone isolators. The Rega has a glass platter compared with the composition platter of the Pro-Ject. The Pro-Ject has a new 9CC Evolution carbon-fibre arm fitted with an Ortofon 2M Silver and the RP6 has the RB303 tonearm with the Exact cartridge. Although the RB303 has a great reputation, the 9CC/Ortofon is a winning combination, offering more refinement.

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



LIKE: Great build quality, superb tonearm/cartridge combination

DISLIKE: The screw-on record clamp

WE SAY: Classic elegance combined with modern tech results in a superb-sounding turntable