



you feel dragged into the action that's going on. Bass is good, a huge improvement over the stock Technics; it isn't the tightest I've ever heard, and doesn't knock the Bastin Garrard off its perch – it's ever so slightly bloated – but not unpleasantly so. In the last movement, when the basses and cellos accompany the solo line, the plucked notes last significantly longer than they did on the Feickert Woodpecker (£3,345), for example.

This has the effect of giving more 'voice' to the bass line, and is an issue of personal preference. For me, while this increases the general sense of euphony it isn't correct, and not what you'd hear at most concert halls. The tone of the solo clarinet is a touch less rounded than I have heard on other albeit more expensive decks, it sounds less sophisticated and complex than I would like. Yet these are small details in what overall has an *exceptionally* captivating energy, especially from the violin section, which displays a wonderful mixture of drive and conviction.

Listening to Britten's 'Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra', the percussion variation shows the deck at its best, the tambourine's sound is totally lifelike, the kettle drum shakes the room, and the sense of a massive symphony orchestra is extremely well portrayed. Absolutely incredible for a tweaked turntable costing £90, or one that until recently was available new for under £400...

Oddly, I get a very different result when listening to the next track on the disc, the Britten 'Variations on a theme by Frank Bridge'. The violin section which I have heard so many times on a

Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace (£2,400) that has body and depth, here sounds a bit pinched, and lacking the depth I am used to. I can't sense the weight and texture of sixteen or so violins playing. There is a slight graininess to the texture of sound, which isn't organic. It should however be remembered that the cost of the deck is over £1,000 less than the Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace, and £1,600 less than the Feickert Woodpecker, yet in no way does the Origin Live Technics deck disgrace itself.

The last movement of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra is a great orchestral showpiece, it is a whirling Perpetuum mobile, written in 1943. On the Solti recording – vintage Decca – the opening fugue, starting far in the distance and coming to the fore is gripping. It is fast and furious, like a roller coaster ride, almost out of control, but not quite!

The opening of Mahler's Resurrection Symphony (Haitink on Philips) shows another major difference to my norm of a good belt drive. The opening of the first movement bristles with angst, the strings doing rapid, sharply accented *tremolando* (rapidly repeated bows on the same note), with unison cellos and basses playing the tune. This passage sounds so much more exciting on my CD of Simon Rattle with the CBSO, and inappropriately relaxed on a belt drive. The Technics turns this on its head: suddenly I'm sitting on the edge of my seat, gripped by the action. I tried the wall wart and the entry level power supply, and whilst still an improvement on the Technics supply, the opening of the Symphony lacked the exciting sparkle that existed with the more sophisticated power supply and transformer.

A pattern is emerging in terms of what the Origin Live Technics does well. For a recording with a soggy midrange, the deck sprinkles magic dust on this part of the audio spectrum and brings it to life. One of the qualities of a good turntable for me is the ability to make sense of a not-so-good recording, as most competent decks can make a great recording sound good. It certainly scores well here. For a good, clean, golden-age Decca recording, or a sixties/seventies CBS affair, which has a flat or bright midrange, the Technics will energise the midrange, but can produce a sound which spotlights the grain.

I think that the components used here have been extremely intelligently assembled to maximise the potential of the deck at this modest price.

The Encounter arm has a creamy midrange, which helps to remove some of the grain inherent elsewhere in the deck; it's a surprisingly fine synergistic partner. It also does well in the bass department which helps to cover the inherent mildness of the deck's bass slam.

I also tried to tweak the platter mat, so swapped the Origin Live ones with the SoundDeadSteel Isoplat mat, which is 2.2mm thick, and sits on top of the Technics own platter. I then laid a thin foam mat on this. There was a clear deepening of the soundstage, a slight widening too, but more excitingly a reduction in the midrange grain that can curse the deck. Not totally gone, but a real improvement, and in my books easily worth the £90 it costs. There was a sense when listening to the old CBS recording of Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue', played and conducted by Lenny Bernstein, of the orchestral seating plan used for the recording. The instruments were now in 3D space, as if the mat had significantly added this dimensionality. All the energy of this great recording coming across in spades, bustling in detail. The Origin Live mat combination is a good value starter, but I'd specify the SoundDeadSteel mat given half the chance.



## CONCLUSION

There is absolutely no question that the power supply makes a great difference to the sound of the deck; it transforms it from a product with potential to a masterpiece of sorts, which represents superb value for money, and punches way above its weight. Upgrading the mat further improves its performance and with this careful choice of arm and cartridge the SL-1210 gives a taste of the high-end at a rock-bottom price.

Sadly, the last turntable has just been manufactured and readers may need to be resourceful or lucky to get their hands on a new one, but there's no shortage of older ones and they're exceptionally hardy. If you can get one that hasn't been DJ'd, the chances are it will be working pretty much as good as a new one. Overall then, thumbs firmly aloft for Origin Live's take on the Technics; it sounds absolutely lovely and is far from exorbitantly priced.

