



EAT B-Sharp
Entry-level vinyl spinner
hits all the right notes

New wave
Audiofilia's standmount
tears up the rule book



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Issue No. 428

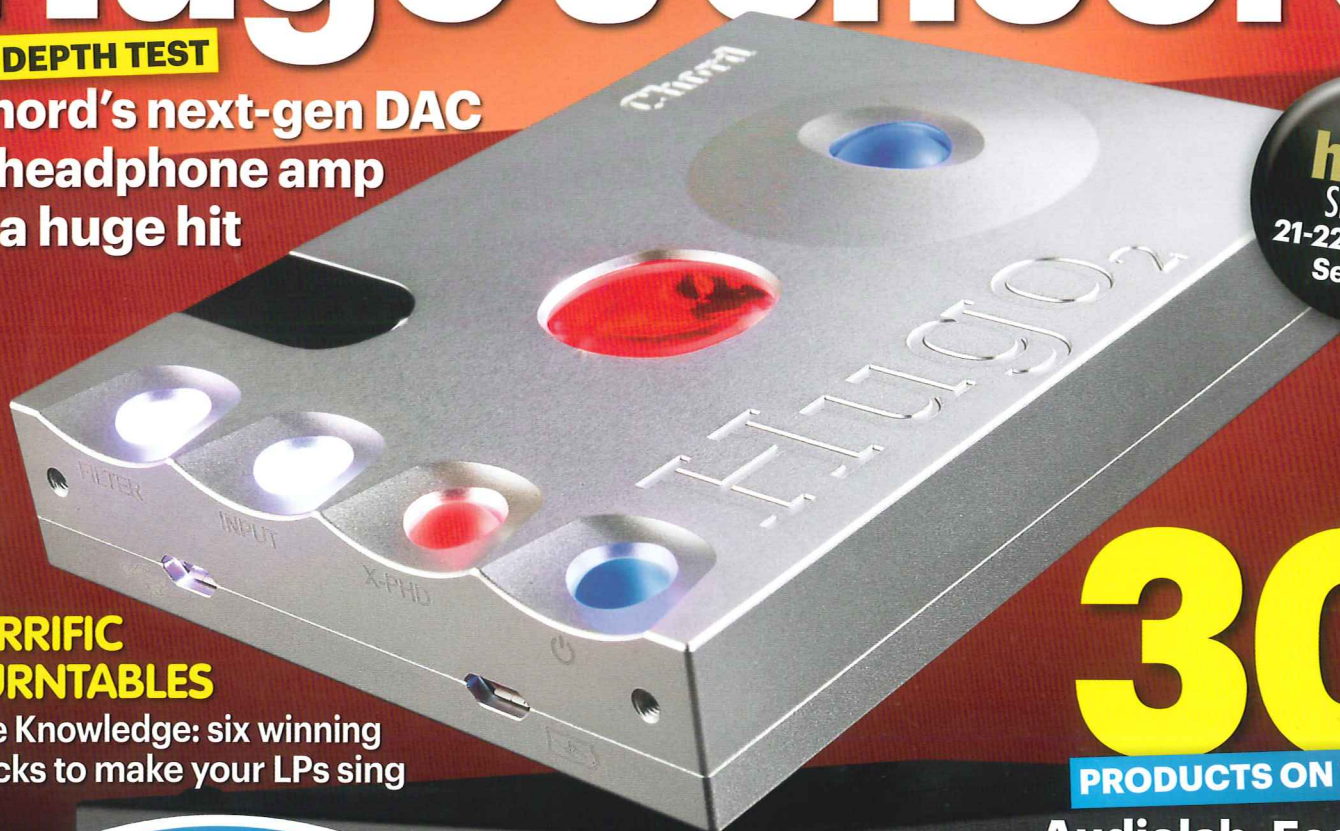
October 2017

Hugo's encore

IN-DEPTH TEST

**Chord's next-gen DAC
& headphone amp
is a huge hit**

**THE
hi-fi
SHOW Live**
21-22 October
Seep13



**TERRIFIC
TURNTABLES**

The Knowledge: six winning
decks to make your LPs sing

30

PRODUCTS ON TEST:

**Audiolab, Ecosse,
Goldring, iFi Audio,
Onkyo & Shanling**



Rockin' Rotel
15 Series integrated
puts the music first



GROUP TEST

Music marvels
Six hi-res portable
players for every pocket

9 770955 111113
OCTOBER 2017
10
5435



Sharp shooter

EAT's new B-Sharp turntable is a premium priced 'entry level' product that's designed for everyone, says **David Price**

European Audio Team has been going for a number of years now, initially with the manufacture of high-quality vacuum tubes, before moving on to high-end turntables such as the mighty Forte a decade or so ago. Run by Jozefína Krahulcová, it shares Pro-Ject's manufacturing facilities but has never set out to make budget turntables, unlike its sister company. Indeed, a spokesman

describes the relationship as being like that of Volkswagen and Porsche – Pro-Ject being a high-quality mid-market brand delivering high sales volume, whereas EAT delivers premium-level, high-end products

All well and good then, so why has the latter just announced a starter turntable that costs 'just' £1,298 including dustcover and EAT's 9in B-Note tonearm? There's also the option, as reviewed here, of the

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
EAT B-Sharp
Super Pack

ORIGIN
EU

TYPE
Belt-drive turntable

WEIGHT
8.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
460 x 142 x 352mm

FEATURES
● 33/45rpm
● EAT B-Note carbon fibre tonearm
● Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge

DISTRIBUTOR
Absolute
Sounds Ltd.

TELEPHONE
0208 9713909

WEBSITE
absolutesounds.com

ready-to-play Super Pack, which includes a pre-installed Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge (HFC 375) for £1,498. The idea is to make the cost of owning an EAT turntable more affordable, says the company. It's a range expander that may grab people's attention, and then they might be drawn to higher end decks in the range further down the line. This now comprises a total of six, with the (in ascending order) C-Major, C-Sharp, E-Flat, Forte S and Forte. These are sold in the UK via Absolute Sounds, a completely different route to market from Pro-Ject, which of course has been synonymous with Henley Audio for many years.

Think of the B-Sharp as a stripped-down C-Major turntable with the new B-Note tonearm. The deck itself doesn't use an independently sprung subchassis, instead employing a medium density fibreboard inner chassis, which sits on thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) isolators resting on the base itself. This in turn sits on adjustable levelling feet. It comes



Setup is a simple, but rewarding process



with a hinged dustcover, which is best removed for critical audiophile listening. The low-noise AC motor is mounted directly to the turntable's main chassis, and is governed by an AC frequency generator for better speed stability. Both tonearm and main bearing/platter sit on the inner section, and the latter has TPE damping and a felt mat; it sits on a separate inner platter, which connects the belt to the alloy motor pulley. The outer platter, says EAT, is made from an aluminium magnesium alloy and the main bearing is brass.

The supplied tonearm is EAT's new B-Note, which has a conical carbon fibre tube and non-detachable aluminium headshell. Its bearing housing sports ABEC7 ball races, and the counterweight is decoupled by a TPE damping pad. It's fully adjustable, with vertical tracking angle, stylus rake angle, bias, tracking force and azimuth all variable. As usual, the slotted headshell allows the user to change the overhang and offset angle. It feels really good to the touch, works nicely and is relatively easy to set up – although purchasers of the Super Pack won't have to bother as it comes with the aforementioned 2M Blue moving-magnet cartridge pre-installed.

The deck itself is straightforward enough to get up and running; you don't need to build it up from a kit of bits as with some. It's a case of unpacking, removing the transit screws, balancing the arm and putting the belt and outer platter on. The tonearm has phono and ground sockets underneath, so you'll need to plug the armleads in too, along with the power supply.

It's worth taking the time to level the EAT properly as this substantially improves sonics and general tracking. As with pretty much every turntable I have ever used, I find that it sounds best with the dustcover removed. The B-Sharp also responds well to a good turntable table and/or support; not having an independently sprung subchassis makes it that little bit more sensitive to where it is placed than sprung designs.

Sound quality

Give the cartridge a few minutes to truly warm up, and soon you find yourself in the sweet spot, so to speak. It's clear that the EAT B-Sharp is a fine performer, one that's way better than average at the price point. It has a naturally clean and smooth sound, just as you'd expect from a well-engineered turntable, and this makes listening enjoyable regardless

of the type of music you choose. The bass is supple and bouncy, and the midband is open, detailed and expansive. Treble is extended and smooth, and the turntable is well balanced and relaxed in its musical presentation. None of this comes as a surprise to me, having heard higher end EAT designs, and also observing that this particular turntable is built well with sound engineering practice.

I kick off with a limited edition pressing of Nu Era's *Oscar Styles*, a slice of retro techno from the 4hero stable. It's not an audiophile recording by any stretch of the imagination, but has infectious rhythms and the B-Sharp really gets a grip of them. The music shuffles along in an imperious way, highly detailed and controlled yet free enough to give a real sense of fun. This is the joy of vinyl; done properly it seems far less regimented and constrained than CD. Often, though, you get unwanted artefacts – colouration, wow and

Bass is supple and bouncy, while the midband is detailed and expansive

flutter, etc. – which spoils the party. The B-Sharp, however, proves itself good enough to avoid such issues by a good long way. It's a stable-sounding product at the price all right, although in fairness it can't quite match the rock-solid presentation of Technics' SL-1200GR price rival (*HFC* 426). What the EAT turntable does do well is give a really even, balanced and natural sound.

Indeed, turn to Neil Young's classic *Harvest* album and this becomes ever more apparent. On the title track, I soon appreciate that the B-Sharp has a fine tonality – another of the great aspects of good-quality vinyl replay. Young's voice sounds very open and immediate, as if he's right in the room with you. The natural spaciousness allied to the excellent tonearm and strong cartridge supplied with the B-Sharp, show just how open and organic things can be. Other decks can introduce quite a bit of their own sonic flavour, but the EAT is largely neutral. The piano work sounds very natural, without any artificial glare or harshness.

Time for some more powerful rock music, and Saxon's *747 (Strangers In The Night)* shows the B-Sharp to have a strong, lyrical bass. It's not quite as commanding as some at the price, but it's certainly able to mete out large