

Pro-Ject X2 B Turntable

This is a fine package, and I would certainly recommend this to anyone who has a slightly higher budget and is looking for a vinyl solution.



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PRO-JECT X2 B TURNTABLE

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I have had this Pro-Ject X2 B in various states with different setups and it is an all-around winner, in both performance and looks. This X2 B offers that step up from the ordinary in turntable aspects with the unique balanced output option to their matching phono stage.

Pro-Ject X2 B has a suspended motor for isolation



Design

This Pro-Ject X2 B is part of the X Line of turntables from Pro-Ject that represents a higher level of turntable performance in their collection. It is towards the higher end of the product range that culminates with the Signature range.

The turntable itself has three height-levelling aluminium feet under a substantial wooden 'heavy MDF' plinth that houses a suspended motor for isolation. This motor in turn pulls the belt that drives the 2kg 'resonance-free' acrylic platter. The turntable has a 9-inch-long carbon aluminium tonearm that is adjustable to your taste on azimuth and vertical tracking. The tonearm is held in place at rest with a magnet on the housing which is a delicate touch. The X2 B comes with an Ortofon Quintet Red moving coil cartridge that is factory aligned (if chosen).



THE X2 B COMES WITH AN ORTOFON QUINTET RED MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE THAT IS FACTORY ALIGNED (IF CHOSEN)



Quality

This turntable exudes longevity and its weight gives the confidence you're looking for in a turntable arrangement. Levelling is a simple matter with adjustable feet. The plinth itself has a super soft finish; I have the real wood walnut version. It is also available in a high gloss black or white and satin white.

The unit, Pro-Ject claims, is hand built in the EU. The dimensions are 460 x 150 x 340 mm (WxHxD), and it weighs 10kg. The X2 B is priced at £1,399 with Henley Audio at the time of writing. The Pro-Ject Phono Box S3 B is priced at £349, also available at Henley Audio.



Pro-Ject X2 B tonearm assembly detail and anti skate detail

Performance

Review Equipment

Fortunately, I still have the Nessie VinylCleaner here which is ensuring my vinyl is as crisp and clean as it can be. It is very easy to use indeed.

The turntable is set up, initially, with a modest Musical Fidelity MC phono stage feeding the Moor Amps preamplifier which is connected to the Angel 6 power amplifier via Tellurium Q Ultra Black II XLR cables. The Angel 6 is driving a pair of Kudos Titan 505s in the new liquid amber finish with Tellurium Q Ultra Black II speaker cable. It is a very intimate and revealing system and the X2 B is comfortably up to the job.

This arrangement is then improved by adding the Pro-Ject Phono Box S3 B which has the balanced input that this turntable will benefit from. It is hard to think the existing setup could be improved but we are in a world of marginal gains.



Pro-Ject Phono Box S3 B front and rear with balanced and unbalanced inputs

Setting up the turntable itself with the weight and anti-skate was a simple job with the pictorial guide provided by Pro-Ject and my sample had the cartridge factory aligned. It probably took me less than 10 minutes to get the turntable level and up and running.

The usual tonearm lever is a soft floating affair, and although the Ortofon Quintet Red moving coil cartridge is a bulky block it is actually very easy to cue up. With the arrival of the Pro-Ject Phono Box S3 B, the input impedance for the Ortofon Quintet Red is set to 50 ohms and the input gain is set at 60dB. The input capacitance, apparently, is not relevant for low-output moving coil cartridges.



Balanced and unbalanced output are available

Moor Amps

There is nothing for it but to make a cup of tea, fire up Nessie and clean a few albums, notably Arooj Aftab's delicate and powerful Vulture Prince (New Amsterdam), Ray Lamontagne's poetic Trouble (RCA/BMG) and Malcolm McClaren's eclectic and brilliant Waltz Darling (Epic).

On dropping the needle with a soft touchdown, there is little discernible noise through the Titans. I have a wonderful moment with Arooj Aftab's album as her track *Inayaat* drifts hauntingly along, the harp and then the flugelhorn are so clear it is mesmerising. The depth in the bass from the track *Last Night* is evident in the lovely snare vibration in the background of the soundstage. The room echo is lovely in this setup and the double bass is controlled and punchy. Indeed, this is everything you strive for in vinyl record playing, particularly after a nice clean.



Pro-Ject tonearm assembly

Ray Lamontagne's *Trouble* is poetic, and his voice has that degree of Mid-American weariness that comes over so well. My preferred track, *Jolene*, on side B is just so absolutely gentle on vinyl. The Titans are absolutely singing with the Angel 6 power amplifier.

Moor Amps with the balanced Pro-Ject phono stage

The Pro-Ject balanced phono stage should offer a more open, improved soundstage and a straight A-B comparison delivers the expected result with increased space in Ray Lamontagne's recordings. *Shelter*, in particular, has such delicacy and pace and in any case, it is such an amazing track.



Ortofon Quintet Red Moving Coil cartridge

HiFi Rose RA180

Using the HiFi Rose MC input on the RA180 is a slightly different affair and there is a more angular approach delivered, it is hard to put a finger on it but in the same way, I preferred reverting to the Naim NAP 250 in the review, I prefer the Moor amplification here too. The X2 B still delivers with poise and clarity but on reflection, the HiFi Rose may be a fraction brash for such subtleties offered by this graceful X2 B.



Pro-Ject X2 B speed controller button

Thoughts

Having just swapped out a Carbon EVO for the X2, there is an obvious step up in performance and musicality, with or without the balanced output, though I really appreciate what's going on with the Carbon EVO. The Pro-Ject X2 B is just making me spend time with my record collection, I must say Nessie is such a brilliant machine to have on hand too. They all remind you what a tactile, relaxing, and lovely experience vinyl is.

Obviously, you're in for the Phono Box S3 B if you want to gain the full benefit of this balanced turntable output with its clear improvements in soundstage and clarity in the noise floor.

Overall

I am bound to say this has been a lovely and very musical experience with the Pro-Ject X2 B and is going to be a bit of a wrench putting this one away. Obviously, you're in for the Phono Box S3 B too if you want to gain the full benefit of this balanced turntable output with its clear improvements in soundstage and clarity in the noise floor. This is a fine package, and I would certainly recommend this to anyone who has a slightly higher budget and is looking for a vinyl solution.

Love

Vinyl
Build
Accuracy
Phono Box S3 B MC/MM anyway

Like

Easy setup
Single-touch speed control
Real wood finish



Wish

I had the Phono Box S3 B anyway