



Pro-Ject E1 BT £370

Continuing Heinz Lichtenegger's quest to make a turntable for every occasion comes the E1 BT

This is a pared-down version of Pro-Ject's more expensive decks that still boasts a built-in phono preamp and Bluetooth transmitter. It's very cleanly designed and well specified, but is a fully manual design. Only the fully automatic Rekkord – a sister company to Pro-Ject – has a complete answer for those wanting all-out convenience.

While the F110P is made for ease of use, the E1 BT is effectively a proper hi-fi deck that's 'shrunk in the wash' so to speak, with some convenience features added. This makes it conceptually similar to the Rega Planar 1 Plus – it has the look and feel of a price-cut version of a more expensive audiophile design. It's the only deck here with an Ortofon OM-5E moving-magnet cartridge, which is of comparable quality with the Audio-Technica cartridge fitted to most others here. It comes pre-fitted, aligned and bias is preset too. The Pro-Ject gets a bonus point for its electronic speed control – unlike the

Rega there's no need to take the platter off to move the belt.

Build quality isn't the most solid, but is still decent and close to the Rega overall. The slim composite fibre plinth comes in a choice of high gloss black, satin white or walnut finishes, and the 8.6in aluminium tube with

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plastic headshell and fingerlift is nice but not quite as nice as the Planar 1 Plus. The 300mm platter is made from polymer, and the dustcover is a plastic affair. Vibration-absorbing feet complete the package. The phono stage is commendably quiet in operation and you get the latest aptX Bluetooth functionality. It is easy to set up from out of the box; even the counterweight comes pre-installed.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Pro-Ject E1 BT

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
Belt-drive turntable

WEIGHT
3.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
420 x 112 x 330mm

FEATURES

- 33, 45rpm
- 8.6in aluminium tube tonearm
- Audio-Technica AT3600L cartridge

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio Ltd.

Sound quality

For the money, this is a very good-sounding turntable that's second only to the impressive Kestrel and Rega. It is fundamentally an enjoyable listen, with a smooth, open and gentle sound that makes everything sound pleasant enough. It exudes a fair bit of energy too, coming across as far more dynamic than the laid-back Lenco and Rekkord, for example. Yet it's not quite as detailed as the very best in the group and lacks their general tidiness, order and subtlety too. Its Bluetooth performance is good for a deck at this price point, but the conventional wired connection is naturally better.

Cue up the punchy indie rock track that is R.E.M.'s *Welcome To The Occupation* and the Pro-Ject delivers the goods. It tracks securely and serves up plenty of detail, albeit not as much as its Rega rival. There's a nice tone to the guitars and vocals, and treble is smooth but a little lacking in bite. At the opposite end of the frequency range, bass is enjoyably fulsome although a tad less well controlled than some here. It's certainly one of the better performing designs in the group, though, and has an endearingly musical character. For the type of buyer seeking such a thing, it will surely please.

The pounding Nineties techno of Jinny's *I Need Your Love* is nothing less than enormous fun. There are no prizes for rifle-bolt precision here, as the sound is a tad soft and rounded, but it's still very charming in a way that even quite basic vinyl players tend to be. The song just bounds along with lots of drive and energy. Indeed, it has the same approach with all of our test tracks; the relaxed disco groove of Change's *A Lover's Holiday* just sashays along in a carefree manner. Though not quite the best performer here, it's still a thoroughly likeable and pleasing little turntable offering all the same ●



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Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★

LIKE: Fine sound; build; Bluetooth
DISLIKE: Nothing at the price
WESAY: Seriously good for the money

OVERALL

★★★★★

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