

THE DECK WITH BLUETOOTH

Pro-Ject Juke Box E £370

FOR Convenience; even-handed sound; good features

AGAINST Could do with more power; baffling remote control



Place a record on the platter, strap on some speakers and the Juke Box E is ready to go



Our first thought when we saw Pro-Ject's new Juke Box E turntable was along the lines of "we haven't seen a music centre in years". Of course, this isn't a music centre in the mid-to-late 20th century sense - it's a lot more brand new and retro than that. What Pro-Ject has done with the Juke Box E is to have one of those ideas that is so simple and obvious - once someone else has had it.

Here's a record player - based on Pro-Ject's Primary turntable - that's tricked out with an Ortofon OM 5E cartridge, amplification (25W per channel into 8 ohms) and Bluetooth receiver. Pro-Ject has had the idea before - the Juke Box was a turntable/amp/phono stage - but the concept has been thoroughly updated.

Sonic signature

Round the back, you'll find stereo RCA outputs at line level and pre-amp/phono level, plus a corresponding stereo RCA line-level input. There are also left/right speaker outputs and an aerial socket for the Bluetooth receiver. At the front are a dial for input selection and an IR receiver for the remote control. Strap on a pair of speakers and you're good to go.

We place Brian Eno's *Another Green World* on the turntable and a pair of Mission LX-2 speakers at the back end. Right from the off, this is recognisably a Pro-Ject turntable, carrying the brand's sonic signature as surely as some sports brands carry three stripes.

In essence, that signature is one of easy-going fidelity - the Juke Box E establishes a decently spacious soundstage and positions instruments upon it securely in their own space even as they integrate and interact together.

Tonally, the JBE is on the warmish side of neutral. It has reasonable shine and brilliance at the top end; its midrange reproduction is detailed enough to make Eno's vocals sound endearingly earnest.

Playing The Pharcyde's *Bizarre Ride II* shines a little light on the JBE's only significant shortcoming. It gives reasonable weight to low frequencies but not quite the solidity we'd like. Bass sounds don't so much punch as shove.

It's not enough to make the Pro-Ject anything less than enjoyable to listen to, but it's worth bearing in mind. Matching it with sympathetic speakers is a much surer way of getting low-frequency solidity than deploying the remote's 'loudness' button, which skews the

KEY FEATURES



Dimensions (hwd):
12 x 42 x 33cm



Weight: 5kg



Bluetooth 2.1

Pro-Ject's tonal balance for the worse. The Juke Box E isn't the loudest system we've heard, so give proper consideration to speaker sensitivity too.

The overall quality of sound remains constant no matter how you use the JBE. A Tidal-derived stream of Smog's *Dress Sexy At My Funeral* using the Bluetooth input, or a CD of GoGo Penguin's *A Humdrum Star* via the line-level input, retain the Pro-Ject's balance, even though the warmth and timing prowess is diluted somewhat.

In essence, the Pro-Ject Juke Box E is a rarity - an all-in-one system that demands few compromises, given its price. It's also an all-in-one system that we can't easily argue against in favour of separates. This level of functionality is difficult to replicate using individual components at this sort of money.

Plus it's extremely convenient. So if space is at a premium, or funds are (relatively) tight - or both - you should cast your glance in this direction.

IN DETAIL...



The Juke Box E has a small LCD screen with basic information such as volume



The turntable bit of this music centre is based on the Pro-Ject Primary

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VERDICT A just-add-speakers system that's less compromised than expected, the Juke Box E makes a genuine case for itself