

A GREAT PLACE TO START

Pro-Ject Elemental £150

FOR Cohesive, engaging sound; clever design; build

AGAINST Some may want a lid; needs care in placement



Pro-Ject has long been the master of great-value turntables - and the Elemental simply reinforces that fact.

This deck is about as plug-and-play as record player as we've come across. It comes with the arm and cartridge both already attached and pre-adjusted, right down to having the bias force and tracking weight set.

There isn't any means of levelling the deck, and it doesn't have suspension to isolate it from external vibrations, so you'll need an appropriately installed, low-resonance support. After that, just fit the drive belt, plug it in and off you go.

Those looking for an electronic speed change will be disappointed: changing from 33½ to 45rpm is a manual job that requires the user to move the drive belt from the smaller step on the motor pulley to the larger one. Most rivals require the same action though.

Thoughtful design

Pro-Ject has put plenty of thought into the engineering of this deck. The motor - a DC-type, for smoothness - main bearing and arm all sit in-line on a single piece of wood. To this slim plinth, the company has added a mass anchor below the main bearing in the form of an artificial stone base.

This base not only adds stability to the structure, but also acts as an energy sink for any noise generated by the bearing and motor. Its shape also makes for an intriguingly idiosyncratic design.

Arm and cartridge are ready-fitted, so all you have to do is fit the belt, plug in and play



The arm is a decently made unit with the right amount of bias force for the Ortofon cartridge designed in. Even the counterweight is fixed in place.

Build is relatively sturdy and finish is fine for the price. There are three colour options for the plinth: if the white of our review sample doesn't appeal you can have red or black instead. The MDF platter and felt mat on top of it are available only in black.

Something of a surprise

How does the Elemental perform? Once settled, it delivers a surprisingly capable and faithful sound. The deck has a tidy presentation - one that delivers a good amount of insight alongside a surefooted rhythmic structure. It's more than enough to embarrass a number of rivals.

Play Bob Marley's *Stir It Up* and this Pro-Ject delivers a convincing sound with a nicely agile bassline and well proportioned vocals.

There's plenty of detail in Marley's voice, and enough subtlety to make us forget we're listening to an entry-level turntable.

We're pleased with the player's fluid way with dynamics and its ability to tie instrumental strands together to form a well-organised whole.

When we switch to a different genre, Ravel's *Bolero* shows that the Elemental is capable of rendering a good soundstage. It's nicely layered and fairly large in scale.

The slow-build nature of Ravel's famous piece also reveals that this deck isn't easily fazed, the music sounding composed even when things get busy.

KEY FEATURES



Belt-drive turntable



Manual speed change

IN DETAIL...



In line with other Pro-Ject turntables, the Elemental uses an Ortofon cartridge



Platter speed is changed manually by shifting the belt from one step to the other

Strength in depth

While this record player isn't going to stun with authority or outright punch, in each area we think it delivers enough to satisfy with the kind of equipment it's likely to be partnered with.

Those who want a good-quality record player at an entry-level price should start here. They won't be disappointed.

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VERDICT The Elemental is yet another top-class budget deck from Pro-Ject. It's a fine first step on the vinyl ladder