



Pro-Ject The Classic Evo **£1,250**



Pro-Ject decks target style, engineering and value, and this one has a good measure of all three

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Pro-Ject Audio
The Classic Evo

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
Belt-drive turntable

WEIGHT
10.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
462 x 131 x 351mm

FEATURES
● 33/45/78rpm
● 9in carbon/aluminium tonearm
● Ortofon Quintet Red MC cartridge

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Pro-Ject's original The Classic was a knowing nod to mid-priced suspended-chassis designs of the seventies, exhibiting more than a hint of Thorens TD160 BC. It aimed to offer a sound that was unambiguously better than entry-level fare but without the phone call to the bank manager.

Pro-Ject fitted six Thermo Plastic Elastomer (TPE) balls between the wood plinth and main chassis plate for isolation and still does but, as the Evo epithet suggests, there are tweaks in other areas. Retired is the Ortofon 2M Silver MM cartridge, replaced by the superior and considerably more expensive Quintet Red MC.

Unlike some of this group's bonier, skinned-back designs, The Classic Evo is built for comfort with a real wood plinth – walnut or eucalyptus – and smart brushed metal top plate. It looks and feels reassuringly expensive despite being this gathering's joint least costly contender.

There are two more key mods under the Evo heading. Replacing the original design's plastic sub-platter is a more substantial metal equivalent said to be diamond-cut from the same aluminium alloy as the beefy, TPE-damped main platter it supports and it rests on a steel/bronze/Teflon main bearing. The electronically governed AC motor flips between 33 and 45rpm at the touch of a couple of buttons and 78rpm is also supported.

Also upgraded is the distinctive original Classic's carbon-wrapped aluminium one-piece tonearm, which gets a chunkier and more impressive-looking bearing housing. For owners who want to explore other cartridges, the tonearm has azimuth and height adjustment and, like almost every Pro-Ject turntable before it, uses a fiddly thread-and-weight system for bias correction. The slightly blingy counterweight is damped with TPE, which is also used in the plinth's three rather shallow but adjustable feet.

IN SIGHT

- 1 TPE-damped aluminium platter
- 2 TPE-damped counterweight
- 3 9in carbon/aluminium tonearm and Ortofon MC cartridge

Sound quality

The Classic Evo could be said to have two natural advantages. First, an effective form of suspension to filter out any vibration. And second, a very fine moving-coil cartridge. Most accept that, when you get right down to brass tacks, it's the cartridge (fitted to an appropriately capable tonearm) that has the biggest influence on sound quality and that, in the round, moving coils have the drop on moving magnets when it comes to sweetness and finesse.

It doesn't take long to realise that, thus endowed, the Pro-Ject is a class act with a sound that, in some respects, recalls that of an earlier era – a wholesome, mildly rose-tinted presentation perhaps less concerned about being conspicuously crisp, fast and focused, but easy to relax into and enjoy. Metheny, Mays and co. sound suitably chilled, smooth and spaced out as they jog and sprint their way through *Are You Going With Me?*, just pipping the Rega and MoFi for ambience and soundstage depth.

Grace Jones' moody monotone on *Nightclubbing* sounds subtly fuller bodied and more rounded than it does on most of the other decks, too – especially the lean and clean Rega. I suspect there's a small tendency to butter things up at work here. It doesn't mean that whatever you plop on the platter is tickled into submission with good intentions. Straying outside our four-track playlist, a spot of full-bore Muse proves that the deck covers a good deal of the distance between balmy and brutal without tripping up ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Old-school style; build; warm, inviting sound quality

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Fiddly anti-skate thread and weight system

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A lot of deck for the money with appealing style and sound to boot

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★