



Pro-Ject VC-S3 £500

Turntable giant Pro-Ject knows how to get the most out of vinyl and the same goes for its premium RCM

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Pro-Ject VC-S3

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
Turntable-based suction RCM

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
415 x 325 x 272mm

FEATURES
• Water tank: 2.5l
• Cleaning liquid: alcohol free

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio Ltd.

What has the VC-S3 got that the others haven't? A brand name that's synonymous with turntables and the continuing march of vinyl, that's what. Surely that must count for something? And looking at the simple elegance of the VC-S3, that would seem to be very much the case. Pro-Ject says its RCMs – there's a cheaper VC-S2 model – are designed to motivate more and more people to buy both new and used records, expanding collections around the world. Of course it does – that's how you sell more turntables. So, they'd better be good.

Out of the box, the first impressions are positive. Apart from the neat, logical design, time spent between unpacking unit and cleaning a record

is thankfully brief and uncomplicated. Pro-Ject says the VC-S3 has been designed for advanced users with big record collections and represents a significant advance on its VC-E and VC-S2 predecessors launched back in 2016. Certainly, the styling is sleeker, featuring rounded, fluted extruded aluminium corners to give the enclosure a softer appearance.

The new machine's rigidity also benefits from the 5mm-thick aluminium composite chassis, its working stability further supported by the magnetic record clamp, improved motors and new vacuum arm strips to improve the bond between it and the record. Also in the box is Pro-Ject's 'eco-friendly', pre-mixed, alcohol-free Wash it 2 cleaning fluid.

Pro-Ject explains that the new magnetic clamp is not only designed to seal and protect the record label from excess cleaning fluid to avoid damage, but it also speeds up the whole process. The platter and clamp are made from plastic with four magnets embedded in each. As with some turntable designs, you don't have to screw the clamp into place, it's simply a case of dropping it over the record label. With a claimed drying time of just two platter rotations and a big 2.5 litre tank for containing used cleaning liquid, the omens for a relaxed relationship are decidedly promising.



In action

Set up isn't too taxing, mostly a matter of fitting and optimising the height of the vacuum arm mount with the supplied Allen key, acquainting arm with mount and, finally, holding down the record to be cleaned with the chunky magnetic clamp.

Up and running, it's a classic MO requiring the cleaning fluid (approx. 3ml) to be poured onto a clamped, rotating record and spread evenly over the surface with the brush. The direction of rotation can be reversed if needed to tackle stubborn dirty areas, again with the help of the brush. Nothing fancy about this or spinning up the platter again for the metal vacuum arm to do its stuff. Pro-Ject says the improved arm focuses all its suction power directly onto the record surface, hence the lickety-split drying time.

It does, too, but the claimed two-rotation dry time is ambitious. Add at least another 30 seconds for the last traces of fluid to be sucked up. A further minute or two drying time before popping an LP back in its sleeve is probably a good idea as well.

The time between unpacking and cleaning is brief and uncomplicated

The least grubby of my charity shop LPs, *Fragile* by Yes, has plenty of room for improvement and that's what the VC-S3 delivers. Although excess surface wear noise isn't completely vanquished, it is reduced, allowing Jon Anderson's vertiginous vocals to soar with crisper clarity and tonal texture. There are easily heard gains in stereo separation and bass weight, too. Post-clean reductions in crackles and pops are on a par with the other wash 'n' vac RCMs, only the ultrasonic Degritter showing a clear advantage ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Simple, functional design; works thoroughly

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Nothing of note at the price

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: Pro-Ject's high-value proposition is a great does-exactly-what-it-says-on-the-tin vinyl cleaning product

FEATURES



OVERALL

