

Pro-Ject 1 Xpression

Is this new deck another wallet-friendly wonder?



Pro-Ject 1 Xpression

PRICE	£210
SUPPLIER	Henley Designs
CONTACT	01235 511166
WEBSITE	www.project-audio.com

The 1 Xpression is the latest in a growing range of disc-spinners from Austro-Czech company Pro-Ject Audio Systems. Priced at £210, the deck consists of a MDF plinth topped by a conventional thermo-plastic hinged lid with the on/off switch hidden under the plinth on the extreme left hand side. Meanwhile, a felt mat sits on top of a 2.2kg cast aluminium platter that rotates on a closely toleranced chromium-plated stainless-steel axle that in turn runs on a polished ball bearing in a brass housing. As for the tonearm, this has an effective length of

218.5mm and is unusual in this price-bracket in that it's made of woven carbon-fibre. The arm bearings are inverted hardened stainless steel points running on sapphire thrust pads and the unit comes pre-fitted with an Ortofon OM5E cartridge, which retails separately for £25.

On unboxing the deck the only tasks you need to perform are the installation of the counter and anti-skating weights, the fitting of the drive belt to the inner pulley, the fitting of the outer platter, the plugging in of the 16V wall-mounted power supply, and the plugging in of the pre-fitted signal lead into a suitable moving-magnet phono stage.

The cartridge is the same as that supplied with the Pro-Ject Debut range and, although it gives a good enough account of itself in those decks, it was surprising just how much better the OM5E sounded attached to the carbon-fibre arm of the 1 Xpression. The presentation was more spacious and airy than I had expected, with unusual bass

weight for such a modest source. The noise floor was low, and surface noise was minimal, unless a really rough record was being played.

Despite the strengths of the OM5E I would recommend discussing a cartridge upgrade when purchasing this deck. Ortofon's £140 MC15 FL would be my choice, the combination producing a fast, detailed and pleasantly insightful sound.

Playing my way through my usual motley collection of musical genres I was impressed by the even-handed way that this package handled the differing demands of classical, jazz and modern electronica. However, full-scale classical did strain things a little, there being a slight feeling of compression during crescendos while the overall dynamic range of the music couldn't rival that offered by some more expensive decks. Nevertheless, I must admit that the 1 Xpression's performance was closer to that of the £400 RPM6 than I would have expected. Less complex



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sound patterns fared well. Vocalists accompanied by a backing group enjoyed a reasonably three-dimensional presence, while there was a good sense of space between performers, all presented on a soundstage that proved moderately deep. As for the sonic spatial games played by Apex Twin on his *Selected Ambient Works Vol II* (Warp Records WARPLP21LTD), these were laid out in an undemanding and flowing way that particularly suited the electronic sounds used.

The 1 Xpression is a good record player. It isn't perfect by any means, but at the price I feel it offers very good performance allied to solid build quality. In short, it represents excellent value for money. It copes with most musical genres comfortably, although if you like playing Mahler and Wagner then expect the presentation to sound slightly held back. Otherwise I feel confident in recommending this record deck as a very capable, musical and well-behaved performer. ■

Tony Bolton



Technology

The plinth measures 1118 x 415 x 334mm (hwd) and the deck weighs 6.3kg in total. The fitted OM5E cartridge tracks at 1.75g and has an output of 4mV. The motor, which is suspended on rubber bands, produces speed stability of $\pm 0.5\%$ and a wow and flutter figure of $\pm 0.1\%$. Signal-to-noise ratio is quoted as being -70dB.

The counterweight is designed to take cartridges weighing up to 6.5g, and an optional counterweight is available for cartridges weighing up to 9g.

Features

- Wave carbon-fibre tonearm
- Fitted cartridge; deck ready to play
- Detailed, spacious and rhythmic sound