



Pro-Ject Debut Carbon Esprit SB

This model sits atop the three-strong Debut range and improves on the £325 Debut Carbon by adding an acrylic platter and electronic speed change between 33 and 45rpm (78rpm is manually selected).

Even in standard guise, the Debut Carbon sports Pro-Ject's 8.6CC one-piece carbon fibre tonearm (with line and weight anti-skate) and an £85 Ortofon 2M Red MM cartridge, which are both carried over to the SB model under review.

It also features an external 15V DC wall-wart PSU to drive its AC motor, which is mounted to a horizontally suspended tensioned rubber band. The Pro-Ject motor is also screwed to the plinth through two small rubber pads that give the motor a more rigid mounting. Additionally, there's a phono cable junction box at the rear, so that you can upgrade the supplied interconnects at a later date should you wish. Isolation is further aided by four Ortofon isolation feet that support the deck's 28mm MDF plinth.

The electronic speed control lets you jump between 33 and 45rpm speeds, which are indicated by corresponding blue LEDs that flash while the platter gets up to speed. A longer push on this button turns the deck on/off. For 78rpm fans there's

good and bad news, as this deck does facilitate this speed, but you'll have to manually move the belt to a bigger cog on the pulley (when the Carbon Esprit SB is in 45rpm mode) to make this happen.

Sound quality

The Pro-Ject's acrylic platter is designed to be used without a mat and that's how it's tested. Though there's almost £100 between them, the supplied 2M Red cartridge isn't leagues behind the 2M Blue we're using as our reference, and the Red offers a clean treble with well extended bass, so you should get plenty of enjoyment out of it before the necessity to upgrade becomes a genuine concern.

DETAILS

PRICE
£425

ORIGIN
Austria

WEIGHT
4.9kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
415 x 118 x 320mm

FEATURES

- Auto speed 33 and 45rpm
- Carbon fibre tonearm
- Ortofon 2M Red cartridge supplied
- Acrylic platter
- Includes dust cover

DISTRIBUTOR
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REVIEWED
HFC 385

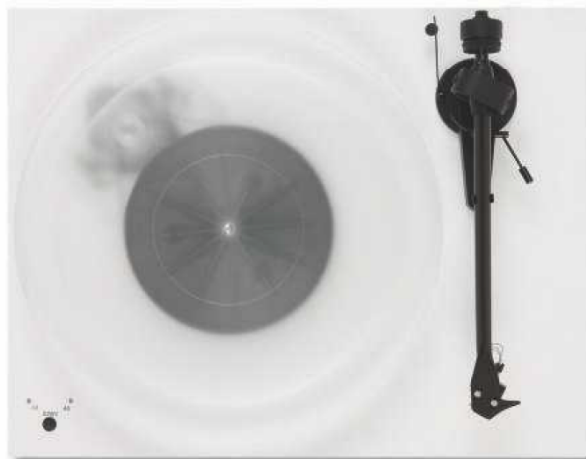
The Blue improves on the Red by offering a more refined bass, better fine detail retrieval and a smoother midband, which can clearly be heard on Goldfrapp's *Clay*.

With The Doors' *L.A. Woman*, Jim Morrison's performance has plenty of attitude thanks to how the SB manages to retain a degree of bite without sounding too hard edged. The SB's soundstage is pretty wide, and while the instruments may not have all the energy of the very best at this price, it has decent separation.

The midrange is also very well balanced. Again, it's not quite as analogue-like and rich as some or as forward, but it's a very smooth and detailed affair with just the right amount of presence to ensure that the music remains even. While sounding strong, Nick Drake's voice is carefully presented in *Three Hours* and we can hear the delicacy with which he holds the ends of each note.

Conclusion

At the price this Pro-Ject deck screams outstanding value, but what really sells it is the way it's brimming with musical detail ●



OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Smooth sound with bags of detail; quality cartridge; top-class arm

DISLIKE: Nothing at the price

WESAY: A super bargain that's easy to use and has a well balanced class-leading sound to it