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North America Premiere Review!

Oracle Audio Origine Turntable

My first foray into high-end turntables, with some assembly required.

Review By Dwayne Carter

It's not often a reviewer gets a chance to audition a world premiere product. When our Creative Director Steven R. Rochlin offered me the chance to review Oracle Audio's new turntable, the "Origine", *"No"* was not an option. Oracle Audio is best known for the award-winning flagship turntable, the **Delphi MK VI reviewed a while back** (pictured below). With the Delphi MK VI hovers in price at around $8500. This is not a turntable you will find in most homes today. This is also a shame. You would not *need to* spin the platter once, for it to qualify as a piece of art on its own. The question for nearly every manufacturer today is: How to get your products in as many hands as possible, yet maintain the quality and integrity you've worked so hard to build? We have seen time and time again; a manufacturer tries to expand the bottom line, but strays too far from their core values. The end result is a product that bares the builder's name, but hold not of their soul. Think of the Porsche 914.

The Origine turntable from Oracle Audio does not share this fate.

Like all successful (but less expensive) offspring, the Origine shares its parts and design from its famous siblings. The outline from the Delphi, the feet system from Oracles CD players, and the platter from the **Oracle Audio's Paris turntable**; all do their part to make the Origine, a visually stunning and sonically satisfying (affordable) turntable. To use Oracle Audio's own words, "the Origine was created to answer the historical demand for an affordable, quality built and long-lasting record player from Oracle Audio".

So, when asked to review the world premiere of such a creation, the only question was

What do I wear?

The Waiting is the Hardest Part

From first contact by Jacques (of Oracle Audio) and delivery of the Origine turntable, X months had passed. X months. It felt like a year. My life became a series of reminder emails to Oracle Audio.

Me: "Hey Jacques. Is she ready yet?"

Jacques of Oracle Audio: "No. Not yet. Still tweaking."

Me: "Ok... Ok... let me know."

Three weeks would pass.

Me: "Hey Jacques. Is she ready yet?"

Jacques of Oracle Audio: "No. Not yet. What color do you want the Plinth to be?"

Me: "Color? I get to choose? Blue. It's got to be a cool blue."

Jacques of Oracle Audio: "OK. I'll do a multiple insert blue for you."

Me: "Oh Man! I can't wait! How much longer?"

Jacques of Oracle Audio: "Soon. Just a little more testing...."

Respect

The passion and near obsession to get a product right garners nothing but very high respect from this reviewer. After waiting weeks for the Origine to arrive, Christmas time had finally arrived. I would have the Oracle Audio Origine turntable in my possession for over eight months. The Origine was snuggly and securely packed; shipped within a plain brown box. Nestled inside the protective foam outer layer, lay my long-awaited prize. It was in pieces. No. not broken, but there are many pieces; as in some assembly required.

Some of you are laughing, but my heart registered the panic. This was my first real foray into the high-end analog world of turntable separates; and it required assembly. My old Technics Direct Drive Automatic SL-D3 required a small amount of setup, as well as my Bang and Olufsen BeoGram 9000. Heck, even my daughters Cheetah Girls limited edition turntable required me to break out the tools, but this was not a laughing matter. A reviewer must revert to common sense when faced with task of this importance. To the manual I must go! Except there wasn't one, as this World Premiere review is one of the first production units, so close to being one away from a prototype, for this possible low production model. Thus the assembly manual hasn't been written, yet a draft version of the manual was sent to me just prior to this publication. At this point, most mortals would pop a Xanax and curl into the fetal position. This reviewer would not.

The Origine is an entry-level product, designed from the ground up, to transport a budding Analogophile, from the direct drive pretenders, to the separate drive compassionist. Rarely (unless you win the lottery) does one advance from a $130 fully automatic Audio-Technica to an $8500 fully-calibrated Delphi MK VI. There are usually many steps, and dare we admit many purchases, in between. When you go from amateur to professional, your learning curve must increase as well. Accepting this audiophile challenge, by carefully laying out each and every piece on a clean table; a pair of soft white gloves fall to the ground, as I empty the box. One critique for the fine folks at Oracle Audio?

Put the gloves on the very top. Make it mandatory to put on these gloves, *before* you touch the Origine. Even though I was careful, my fingerprints appear everywhere it seems. Out of disgust, the remainder of the unwrapping was accomplished wearing the supplied lint-free gloves. Post-assembly, my time was spent cleaning my prints from every surface. And dust. Lots of dust (more on this, later).

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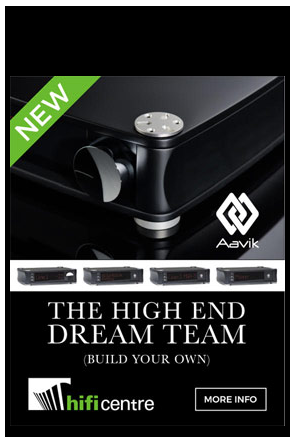

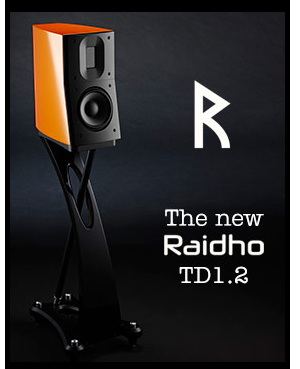

Layer Upon Layer...

Lying before me, are the basic parts to any fine turntable: Acrylic Plinth, Drive Module, Platter, Tone Arm, Cartridge and some fluids. These fluids being cleaner fluid and silicone spindle fluid (Teflon based Synthetic oil), complete with syringe. Within a separate box was the drive-belt. All of these parts can be a bit daunting, especially without a manual to guide you through. As a reviewer, we have the luxury of contacting the manufacturer directly. In most cases, we have direct access to the designer themselves. While I firmly believe Oracle Audio is willing to assist any and all of their clients, attempting to do this on my own was a goal for the day.

Since the Origine was designed from other Oracle Audio products, a look on their website revealed detailed instructions on the assembly of the Delphi MK VI Gen II turntable. It was easy to glean enough information from this manual to assist me in assembling the Origine. In viewing the Delphi manual, the Origine was a piece of cake to assemble, compared to the complication of assembling a Delphi MK VI Gen II turntable. When you can spend Delphi money on a turntable, you might consider spending a little more on professional assembly. Or perhaps not and consider this a wonderful learning experience. Following the spindle, the platter and tone arm were next. By the time I have the tone arm mounted, three hours had spun by. No worries as was taking my time as there was nothing else to do today.

My review unit came with the optional Ortofon 2M Blue phono cartridge already mounted. So a bit of time was saved in that final step. Carefully placing the assembled Origine in its semi-permanent spot, it was time to move to the drive module. The outboard synchronous AC motor drives the belt that is carefully placed around the platter. You switch from 33 and 45 rpm by moving the belt to the top of the pulley. The motor should be placed 5/8" from the base of the plinth for accurate speed. Without assistance, placing the belt correctly around the platter and motor requires some dexterity. It took me several tries before absolute perfection. A flick of the simple on/off switch at the top of the motor and you are ready to play music!

Well. Not quite yet.

Calibration

This was a task for some concern. Any turntable requires some setup and calibration. Obtaining the most accurate sound possible requires a lot of calibration. Anticipating the arrival of the Origine provided me time to collect various calibration tools and supplies. It didn't hurt that I had Oracle Audio's Jacques Riendeau, just a call or e-mail away. Using calibration tools from multiple sources, including our **free *Enjoy the Music.com* alignment tool**, plus some helpful hints from Jacques aided in my initial calibration session. This took no more than a few hours. While no manual was to be had, Jacques Riendeau of Oracle provided me with very helpful information to get started:

1. When installing the tone arm you must remove the little Orange color plastic cap which protects the tone arm pivot. This pivot is extremely sharp... handling carefully... and make sure you do not tap the point with the arm base when installing the arm over the pivot. (Note: In current production, the tip of the pivot has now been rounded with a 0.0072 radius. Thus it is not so sharp as it was originally.)

2. The Ortofon 2M Blue phono cartridge is factory installed and calibrated. The Azimuth is set with the ¼-20 set screw traveling across the tonearm head near the pivot point.

3. The Origine tonearm is a unipivot so the proper and very accurate leveling of the turntable is *a must!* The three feet below the turntable will provide all the necessary adjustment for leveling the turntable using the supplied spirit level.

4. The motor is a single speed AC synchronous motor with a two steps pulley driving the platter for the outside on the left side. The external power supply is 18 Volts AC.

5. The motor spacing from the plinth is about 5/8".

6. The Origine is supplied with a syringe of 5ml of oil. You pour the whole syringe into the bearing well.

7. The sliding weight on the arm tube (we call it the Olive) is used dampen the arm tube resonances. By changing the position of the Olive on the arm tube will also have an impact on the tonearm effective mass.

8. I did the calibration of the Olive for a high compliance cartridge

9. The tonearm internal wiring is from Cardas.

Admittedly, this reviewer is always in a rush to hear some music through my review gear. Get it unboxed. Get it setup. Get some music playing. For some reason, the Origine forced me to slow down. After the basic tracking was done, so was my first day with the turntable. Returning to the Origine took three days. Finally, it was time to listen to some music. Total time from unboxing to cable connection: four days, eight hours. It was heaven.

Connections from the Origine to my Parasound Zphono Phono Pre-amp was completed, with a pair of Audioquest Big Sir RCA cables (both into the phono pre-amp and out to various pre-amps). During this review, I was fortunate enough to have several pre-amps at my disposal. Initial testing was done using the **iFi Pro iCan**, which is an excellent and in some places an underappreciated headphone pre-amp. Having had the pleasure of reviewing this fine product, you should certainly consider just calling it a pre-amp. It's that good!

A few months later the **Rotel A12 integrated amplifier** took its place. Several months after that, with some luck at the slots, and the Origine found itself plugged in to my Audio Research LS27 tube driven line-stage. It's been a wonderful journey! My first record on the platter? As anti-climactic as it sounds, the first LP on the platter was my new calibration LP "The Ultimate Analogue Test LP" [Analogue Productions 200 gram]. As is the ritual of any serious analog lover, the cleaning of your vinyl is a must. For most of us, it is part of the process of playing a vinyl LP record. Some people will have none of it. The resurgence in album sales and turntables points to different data. People are taking their time and listening to their albums. Most of us clean them each time. Currently, my cleaning system consists of a bath in the **Spin Clean Record Cleaner** followed by a brush with the Audioquest Anti-Static Record Brush. Ideally, I'd like to first wash each LP with the Spin Clean Record Cleaner, followed by good vacuum with the **Nitty Gritty Record Cleaning System**. The Nitty Gritty Record Cleaning System hasn't found its way into my home, yet. Maybe Santa Clause will be good to me this year?

With the calibration LP now washed, I placed the LP on the platter and tighten down with the supplied record clamp / coupling device. It's was time for a final look-over, connection test, and then music.

But the Origine didn't look right. It didn't look like the pictures.

It's now 5pm in the early evening, so there's just enough time to spin an album to two before life interrupts. The Origine looks very dark even when everything has power. The turntable, phono pre-amp, pre-amp, and amp. All powered up, yet the Origine looks dark. Tracing my recent movements, my work light is nowhere to be found. Like many of you, age is catching up to me. My eyes require more light than normal. Whenever I work on any gear, my super-bright halogen lamp is plugged in. As I prepare to listen to music, I turn it off.

While we are all (rightly so) consumed about how a product sounds, most of us are somewhat concerned about how a product looks, as well. It may be just part of the sales and marketing tactic, but if a product looks good, we tend to (or hope) that it sounds good as well. My review Origine turntable looks good. Very good. The word stunning would not be out of place, as an accurate description of this turntable. The Origine comes in a black or white plinth. You have a choice of one or two-colored inserts. My review turntable has two, bright blue, acrylic inserts. Viewed under any strong light, they glow. No light... no glow. This was the first time seeing the Origine in natural (low) light. While this was extremely superficial, my disappointment was real. No, I'm not disappointed in Oracle Audio. The cost to adding some sort of LED light would be small, but the cost to sound quality would be very high (more on this later). For now, my want of the glowing blue inserts yet would have to wait. Note: Oracle Audio is currently working on a lighting option.

It's Time For Music!

Ordinarily, starting up my Demo playlist would take just moments. Open the Mac laptop, start AudirvanaPlus Software, select "Demo Playlist"; and done. Hours upon hours of Hi-Res Music (and some MP3) would flow through the review piece. But this is analog, baby! Slow down. You're going to have to work a little for this reward, and that's alright with me. Select the album, pull it out of the sleeve, wash the album, and finally dry the album. Take a lint-free cloth or anti-static brush to the album. Put the album on the platter. Tighten the record clamp. Turn on the motor. Carefully raise the uni-pivot tonearm. Inhale. Slowly rest (not drop) the needle onto the record's beginning groove. Exhale. At best speed, ten minutes from album selection to music. Who's not fine with that? Some people I guess.

That's ok because thousands of people are discovering, or re-discovering, analog music all over again. More and more record pressing plants are being opened or re-opened. Sadly, many plants are finding it hard to find or re-build the old pressing machines, as many were destroyed years ago. As of this writing, even Sony has announced plans to open its own record pressing plant to keep up with demand for Sony Music vinyl. That's fine by this reviewer. Bring it on!

Most of my record collection is from the 1980s and was abused in the most horrible ways you can imagine. CDs were new and expensive, so LPs were tossed to the side. Re-starting my analog journey last Christmas I purchased a few new LPs from Acoustic Sounds. It is no simple task, as rebuilding my music collection from scratch takes time (and a large chunk of money). Ordering Beth Hart's *37 Days* on 180 gram vinyl for my wife, with Bruce Hornsby and The Range *The Way It Is* for me [APRV 30118 and AEXH 44072 respectively]. This started my analog listening session on a high quality, high note; since both LP's are new 180 gram pressings.

As the first few notes bellowed from my Martin Logan Summit's, settling in for a listening session took a different level of concentration. Before me, was a bi-fold album cover, complete with song, artist, track, and recording information plus the coveted liner notes, jokes and tributes from the artist as well. Part of the lure of album ownership was the fantastic cover art and liner notes. Now you just download the cover art because your files are mostly FLAC, and iTunes won't download them for you.

As the music played, you realize that you are going to be listening to an entire piece, not just a digital file. Many artists spend (or did spend) a great deal of time assembling an album; struggling over the proper order of each track. Which song to start with? Which song to end with? The album was a story in itself. Do you remember the first time you listened to Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run* LP from beginning to end? Not just a track or a single? Many of us do, and was looking forward to that feeling again as stack upon stack of LP's lined up for cleaning and playing.

Over the next few days I was listening casually to over 15 LPs from classical to punk rock. Finally I was ready to do some serious listening. While not having a turntable of equal quality in my possession, I would use my old Technics SL-D3 with a new Grado Prestige Black 1 cartridge for some level of comparison. The Parasound Zphono phono preamplifier would be used as needed, and all connections from the turntable would be Audioquest Big Sur RCA cables. Depending on the pre-amp, connections to my Bryston 4B SST2 amplifier would be via Audioquest Big Sur RCA cables for unbalanced and Audioquest Mackenzie XLR cables for balanced. Output from the amplifier stage would use Audioquest Rocket 33, Audioquest Type 4 and Vermouth Audio Red Velvet and Black Pearl speaker cables (currently under review).

As stated, since the Origine was in my possession for over eight months, multiple setups were used. Oracle Audio Origine turntable was designed from the ground up to be an affordable analog force to be reckoned with. Built around the dense, one-piece acrylic platter derived from the Paris MkV and weighing in at about 15 lbs., the Origine features an AC synchronous outboard motor to belt drive the platter, external power supply, unipivot tonearm with adjustable mass, plus the optional and excellent Ortofon 2M Blue MM phono cartridge. Adjustable Delrin feet system keeps everything level while also reducing unwanted vibrations from reaching the need/LP interface. Most important of all, a full-sized optional dustcover is especially useful for those of you who live in high dust areas... or if you have cats.

And you need the dust cover. Oh yes. The Origine turntable attracts dust like a bargain-finder to an estate sale. Within two weeks of having the Origine in my Arizona home I was begging Oracle Audio's Jacques Riendeau to send me a dust cover. He thankfully complied. The Origine is truly unique in appearance and operation. This reminded me of one of the many conversations (verbal and via e-mail) I had with Jacques Riendeau. When asked about the genesis of the Origine, Jacques spoke passionately:

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Greg Weaver, Enjoy the Music.com, Nov 2020
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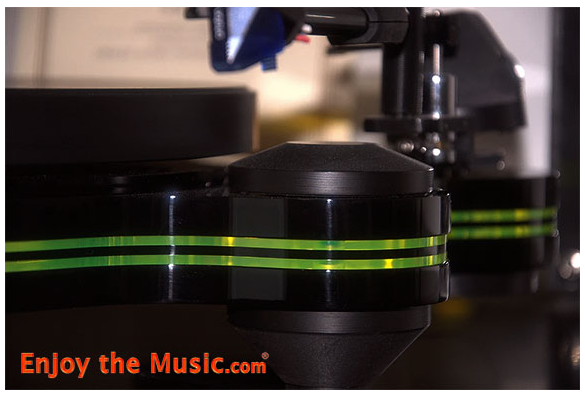
"When I started on the design of the Origine my first question was: Can I build a less expansive turntable that is able to proudly carry the Oracle name? Then there was a condition ... it had to be a true Oracle, one that was built in North America and at our Sherbrooke, Quebec Canada factory. The big difficulty was not really in the turntable itself ... it was the tonearm! I spun my wheels quite some time to get to the design we have but at the end of the day it is nice, simple and efficient. Quite simple to build and assemble but more importantly it sounds great."



We then discussed the unique appearance, and the ability for an owner to customize their Origine:

"The aesthetic design aspect of the product was also a key issue. Being at a more affordable price point we wanted to build a unit that was elegant but at the same time build a unit that would offer something that the user could personalize. This is where the 12 different 1/8-inch" inserts that sandwich between the two main 0.5" layers of black or white acrylic came into play. We offer crazy neon or solid colors that will give an accent of uniqueness to the Origine. People can even buy some extra inserts so if they get tired of the blue or yellow they can put on a red or neon gold layer and this changes the look of their Origine completely. It takes about 15 minutes to swap layers."

In discussing the colored acrylic layers, it was my chance to mention my surprise that the acrylic layers did not glow. The solution? A small LED reading light. It cannot be seen from the front or sides. Always a concern with turntables is unwanted noises. No sense in making it sexy if you introduced a bit of unwanted noise. The fix? Simple! You know that old Monster HTS power stage you have hidden in the closet (you know you do)? It now serves full-time duty, filtering any possible noise from a little 3W LED reading lamp. Yes, I turn it off during critical listening. And yes, I turn it on when company comes over to visit.

Cool is cool.

Oddly, Jacques only concern was the function of the tonearm and the cuing mechanism. He asked if I found the cuing mechanism frustrating. Because, for me, this had been the only tonearm of this type and my answer was "No, no problems at all". This was true. The uniqueness of the Origine's cuing mechanism is simple. You just need to do the exact opposite of what you are used to doing. Since my experience was dealing with automatic or very basic tonearm operations; the Origine's unique operation was the only way I knew how to operate this type of tonearm. The Origine's cuing mechanism allows the user (when you get used to it) to precisely raise the stylus off the record. It clears the surface by about 1/8". This allows the user to easily find the proper track and cue down precisely.

The Sound

Yes it looks great! It moves great too, yet how does it sound? Honestly, not knowing what to expect from the Origine my hopes were to begin my critical listening sessions ASAP. In the back of my mind I was assuming it was going to be better than my old Technics SL-D3 turntable. It cost more. A lot more. Yes, just because something cost more doesn't mean it will sound better. We all have example after example of price having nothing to do with sound quality, except in most cases (where it does). In my case, I was hoping that it would sound better than my Technics SL-D3, because I was really unhappy with the way my old Technics sounded a bit muddy to my ears.

Comparing a Corolla to Ferrari is not fair, so I did not want to waste time doing that. The bottom line for my initial review was simple. If playing a few songs on the Origine turntable, and then playing the same songs on my Technics SL-D3 turntable to see if it made an obvious difference to my musical enjoyment. And if so, then, why or why not. And finally, would it be worth the cost of obtain that level of enjoyment? Within 3:57 minutes I had my answer. Yes. Yes, it would! My very first critical listening session took place on Christmas day, 2016 (I told you I've had the Origine turntable for a long time). The holidays are a perfect time for listening to music, in my home. It's my time off. I don't do the holiday hassle that most people do. I just don't do it. Low-key family events, lots of food and booze; that's the holidays for me. And music. Always music.

I had given my wife the 180 gram Beth Heart album and we had nothing to do for hours (as the Prime Rib was just put into the oven). The last few weeks were spent casually listening to the Origine, calibrating a little more here, tweaking a little more there. Cleaning and re-cleaning an abused old fave album two or three times. Now we were sitting down, coffee in hand, ready to listen. Cueing up the first song *"Good as it Gets"* had me smiling from ear to ear within minutes.

Clarity, clear dialog, and breath. These are the notes scribbled in my pad that morning. I could clearly discern the details and hear Beth Heart breathing (or gasping) while her fingers played guitar or keyboards. For the sake of my wife, I did not stop the album and switch cables, nor did I tweak this or that at this point in time.

I Enjoyed The Music

It had been a while. The curse of a reviewer is that we always have the article in our mind. We make note of this sound or that phrase. It takes extreme effort to relax and just let the music flow over you. It was Christmas day. The fireplace was lit. The kittens were peacefully sleeping all around. Good music was flowing from this mass of acrylic and wires while roasting garlic filled the room. It was a good morning!

The obvious downfall to any LP listening experience; is that the mood will be broken (or suspended) every 30 minutes or so. You need to flip the album over. I remember doing so, very quickly and quietly. Not wanting to ruin the moment or break the spell. Beth Hearts *37 Days* album has four sides for a total of 17 tracks. So we had almost 75 minutes of this bliss, though do note that the 180 gram pressings have shorter playing time per side. Retrieving the 180 gram Bruce Hornsby and the Range *The Way It Is* album from its sleeve formally broke the spell. My wife isn't a fan, so she departed the area. They gave me license to do some testing. Eventually the first song from Beth Heart was playing on my old Technics SL-D3 turntable.

The results were a bit sickening and visceral. As a decade-long owner of the Technics SL-D3, describing the nuance differences between the two turntables would not be appropriate here. The Technics' muddy, muted sound ushered forth from my Martin Logan's. Gone was the clarity and spaciousness of before with the Oracle Origine. No longer could I hear the words as naturally, the fingertips, the breath... nearly gone was the excitement. They were just gone. And by the way who turned off the bass?

While I do enjoy a lot of bass during my movies, my SVS Ultra-13 subwoofer is calibrated to enhance my musical experience and thus not pound me over the head with 30Hz chest-thumpers! Bass, and the equally critical mid-bass within some music, was all but nonexistent with the Technics turntable. My enjoyment of the wide dynamic range, from highs to lows, was gone. The sound that remained had tempered my opinion of analog music for the past ten years. It was like listening to a compressed MP3 file. It was just kinda there. It was music, sorta of in retrospect, only in the description that people were singing and sound was being dispersed through the air. I could not switch back to the Oracle Origine quickly enough! Bruce Hornsby, followed by several other albums, finally washed the bad taste from my mouth (and ears). This began a flurry of album after album, punk to classical. It was not abnormal to launch into a two album set of The Fixx *Shuttered Room* and *Reach the Beach* followed by *Mozart: Complete Works for Horn & Orchestra* all in one sitting with the Origine. The later album collection had not been played for at least thirty years(!). My love of the 1980s came out spinning The Family, The Human League, Kate Bush, Tears For Fears, Prince, Peter Gordon, The Clash, The Cure, Information Society and Shriekback.

On all albums the Oracle Origine delivered an open soundscape no matter what configuration it was connected to. While your choice of individual components can have a direct effect on your sound quality, the Origine sounded good with hi-fi separates as well as integrated setups. Over several months, I had the pleasure of connecting the Origine through multiple pre-amps (iFi Audio Pro iCan, the Rotel A12 integrated amplifier and Audio Research LS27). I even connected it to my Denon AV receiver (it was fine... but don't. Just don't). My note pad had the same comments time after time. Clear. Music has an enormous depth, with impact, mid-bass presence and glorious treble response. Good decay too! I even compared the highs and mid-highs to my limited pressing of the 1986 Drum Corps International competition. As a drummer of old, we can tell about a lot about a component when it comes to cymbal crashes. Drum Corps used to have an entire line of cymbal players (I rocked the snare). Only the finest equipment can reproduce the crisp crash and decay of a real cymbal properly. The Origine did pretty well. The cymbal 'fuzz' was only heard at the peak of the attack, then once again during decay. Like a women's voice, reproduction can be quite telling.

Over the long course of the review, I became comfortable enough with the Origine (specifically the tonearm) to do a little tweaking. The Olive (the arm tube weight) is a critical part of the Oracle Origine's pivot/ needle makeup. I am not an expert on turntable setups, so I will not dive deep into the weeds. I can best describe the action of the relationship between the needle, the weight/counter-weight, and the Olive as a pendulum or seesaw. Moving one affects the other. Instantly. This trial and error can lead to disastrous results if you are not careful. This delicate balance left me in awe of the Oracle designers, and their ability to craft such a wonderful apparatus out of aluminum and Delrin. The tonearm literally sits on the head of a needle. This dense piece of engineering is somehow balance by counterweight adjustments in the rear; controlling the tracking force as well. This tonearm was silent. Zero resonance.

Then there's the cartridge. As mentioned, my review unit came with the well regarded Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge. Much has been written about the tonal aspects of the Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge, so I will not add to the din. It is a logical choice for the Oracle Origine, both in price point and sound qualities. Wanting to experiment a bit more with sound improvements; I asked Jacques Riendeau about the possibility of trying the Ortofon 2M Black on the Origine. Jacques response was classic designer/engineer:

"The option is with or without the Ortofon 2M Blue"

Well yes... but....

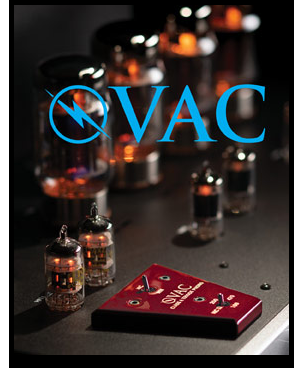
Outside of testing another cartridge, the only other curiosity was with my phono pre-amp. While the Parasound Zphono is no dime store freebie, it is a low-price point in comparison to the rest of my gear. Never thinking to upgrade to something more, as I was only used to hearing the sound quality from my Technics SL-D3. Were the Origine to find itself in my rack permanently, a new phono-preamp would be on the short list. I think a higher-quality phono pre-amp might pull a little more sound-space and depth out of the Origine turntable.

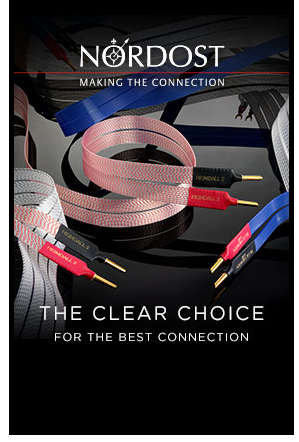
Also, several months in to the review Jacques contacted me with news of a new motor. He cited little change in the actual motor unit itself, but said there were "stunning sonic results". Sadly, I heard none. I mentioned this to him at **AXPONA 2017**, and he looked at me like I must look at my wife when she says she doesn't really care about Star Wars (we no longer discuss this subject). I felt the motor behaved in a smoother manner, and in part transferred that into a better sonic performance. Jacques just stared at me. I stopped talking.

My request for a finalized manual was never fulfilled, and as of this writing Oracle's website lists the manual is "coming soon". While this is a small matter for most experienced turntable enthusiast, I considered it a minor annoyance. If the Origine is designed as an entryway to the high-end turntable world, then a little time must be put into guiding a newbie into the proper setup and maintenance of their new, low four-figure investment. True, I could setup the Origine without too much effort, yet that will not be the case for some people. A manual helps those with their first introduction of the product to a new owner. Not a big deal, but they should just get this done and posted online soon.

Must We Go?

Is the Oracle Audio Origine the best turntable in the world? I doubt it and, frankly, I really don't know. Haven't had what you may believe to be the best turntable in the world for the past eight months. But I have had the Origine, by Oracle Audio. The Origine was designed from its Delrin feet up to represent forty years of experience and passion by the good folks of Oracle Audio. All at an affordable price too! They should be applauded for accomplishing such a challenging feat. To design and build most of this amazing sounding (and great looking) turntable in house during today's economy is no easy task. Oracle Audio's Stephane Nadeau (Jacque's business partner) deserves much credit for crafting the Oracle parts out in his CNC machines. He is a true craftsman and artist.





As a result, the Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge and the Cardas wiring are the only obvious imports. I'll take it! In a world of $6000 interconnects, the obvious question is bound to come up. Oracle's Origine is $2000 including the Origine tonearm and the Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge. As tested with a double layer Neon Bleu insert at an additional price of $130 per additional layer, and the optional dust cover at $300. And thus my review sample comes in at $2560. Is the Origine worth the price of admission? The answer is a resounding yes! This is one piece of audio gear this reviewer is going to fight hard to keep.

Gear Used During Review

Digital Sources: Apple iMac (2.7GHz Intel Core i5, 8GB RAM, 1TB SSD), Apple MacBook Pro (2.66GHz Intel Core 2 Duo, 8GB RAM, 512GB SSD) running OS 10.11.5, Audirvana Plus Software, iTunes 12, VLC, Synology DS516+ NAS Server, OPPO BDP-103 universal BD player, Oppo BDP-205 UHD BD player, Apple iPad Pro & iPhone 6, Questyle QP1R DAP

Analog Sources: Technics SL-D3 Automatic Turntable.

Digital Processors: Wadia Di322 DAC, Audioquest DragonFly Red DAC, iFi DSD-Black USB.

Pre-Amp: Audio Research LS27, iFi ProiCan, Rotel A12 Integrated Amplifier

Headphone Amplifier/Pre-Amp: iFi Pro iCan , iFi DSD-Black USB.

Phono Pre-Amp: Parasound Zphono

Power Amplifiers: Bryston 4B SST2, Bryston 3B ST.

AV Receivers: Denon AVR-X4300H, Integra DRX-5

Loudspeakers: Martin Logan Summit, Martin Logan Purity, Jamo Concert 8, Sonus Faber Chameleon B, M&K V1250THX Subwoofer, SVS Ultra-13 Subwoofer. Vermouth Audio, "Little Lucas" (under review)

Headphones: Oppo PM-1 (Balanced), Meze 99 Classics, Noble Audio K10 CIEM, Noble Audio 3 IEM.

Cables: USB: Audioquest Carbon, Audioquest Cinnamon. S/PDIF: Audioquest Optical Carbon, Audioquest Optical Cinnamon. Line level: Audioquest Red River, Audioquest Mackenzie (XLR), Audioquest Golden Gate, Audioquest Big Sir. Audioquest Irish Red, Audioquest Boxer.

Speaker cables: Audioquest Rocket 33, Audioquest Type 4.

Accessories: Dedicated 20A lines to dual Furman Elite ELITE-20 PF I surge protectors.

Tonality	♪♪♪♪
Sub–bass (10Hz – 60Hz)	♪♪♪♩
Mid–bass (80Hz – 200Hz)	♪♪♪♪♩
Midrange (200Hz – 3,000Hz)	♪♪♪♪♪
High Frequencies (3,000Hz On Up)	♪♪♪♪
Attack	♪♪♪♪♩
Decay	♪♪♪♪
Inner Resolution	♪♪♪♪
Soundscape Width Front	♪♪♪♪♩
Soundscape Width Rear	♪♪♪♪
Soundscape Depth Behind Speakers	♪♪♪♩
Soundscape Extension Into Room	♪♪♪♪♩
Imaging	♪♪♪♪
Fit And Finish	♪♪♪♪♪
Self Noise	♪♪♪♪♩
Value For The Money	♪♪♪♪♩

Specifications

Type: 33.3 and 45rpm vinyl LP turntable.
Drive: AC synchronous outboard motor, belt driven, external power supply.
Platter: One-piece acrylic platter derived from the Paris MkV.
Tonearm: Unipivot with adjustable effective mass to accommodate various phono cartridge compliances.
Phono cartridge: Ortofon 2M Blue (optional). Pre-installed and calibrated at the factory!
Dustcover: A full dustcover for the Origine is available as an option.
Feet: Adjustable Delrin feet system.
Tonearm effective length: 240 mm

Features:
- Belt drive turntable
- 33 / 45 two steps pulley
- Outboard AC synchronous motor
- Adjustable leveling feet system (Delrin).
- Urethane decoupling feet on the turntable and the motor
- Rigid coupling design, no suspension
- Bushing design spindle holder with Torlon thrust plate
- Single piece acrylic platter
- Single piece threaded record clamp
- Unipivot tonearm, with an arm tube moveable weight, called the Olive, allowing a variation of the effective mass to adapt to a wide variety of cartridge compliances.
- The tonearm pivot point is on the same plane as the stylus contact point on the record and the tracking force counterweigh stem.
- The anti-skating calibration is done through a set screw traveling across the width of the tonearm.
- The tonearm main body is made of Delrin and the pivot shaft is made of 6061T6 aluminum. There is no metallic contact which can generate noise or vibrations
- The tonearm tube is made of aluminum and is internally damped.
- We use Cardas for the tonearm wiring connecting to a termination box with RCA connectors.
- Extra tonearm heads can be purchased to offer the ability to use more than one phono cartridge.

Platter Spindle Center To Tonearm Mounting Hole Center: 223 mm
Power Supply: 18V AC
Dimensions: Without dustcover 19" x 14" x 5"
With dustcover 19.5" x 15" x 5.75" (WxDxH)
Weight: 17 lbs.
Price: $2000 including the Origine tonearm and the Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge.
As tested with a double layer Neon Bleu insert adds $130 per additional layer.
Optional dust cover is $300. Review sample in total is $2560.

Company Information

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