

Origin Live Aladdin moving iron cartridge

When the founder of Origin Live, Mark Baker, decided to introduce a cartridge into his range of turntables and tonearms, he approached Peter Lederman of SoundSmith in the USA about producing a special model made to Mark's exacting specifications. The end result was a cartridge designed around the SoundSmith Carmen cartridge, which is a moving iron design.

Moving iron cartridges, like moving magnet designs, utilise a static coil and can have a higher impedance than moving coil designs. This means that a standard moving magnet phono preamp can be used without the need for step-up transformers. Furthermore, with moving iron cartridges, both the magnet and the coils are stationary and a small piece of iron is attached to the cantilever, which moves within the fixed magnetic field and therefore produces a signal within the fixed coils. This means that there is a very low moving mass (Origin Live claims it is lower than that of most moving coils), which should offer excellent tracking ability.

Aladdin's cave

Externally, the Aladdin is housed in a flecked blue composition body, specified by Origin Live. It is finished off with a gold-coloured bar that runs across the front and sides of the body and is tapped underneath the mounting block to take the cartridge mounting screws. This provides a secure mounting for the cartridge and the composition body should also help damp resonances – highly desirable qualities. Moving onto the stylus, it is a good quality, nude elliptical single piece diamond stylus, which is fitted to an aluminium alloy cantilever.

The cartridge requires a 47kohm load and a load capacitance of 100-200 pF, which is typical for moving magnet/iron designs. It has a quoted stereo channel difference (balance) of <1.8dB, which seems a bit pessimistic by modern standards. Quoted frequency response is 20-20,000Hz, \pm 2.5dB, and a channel separation at 1kHz of >24dB. It's a medium compliance cartridge with a figure of 22 μ m/mN. The cartridge itself weighs 10.5g and requires a tracking force of 1.4g. I found it tracked well and there was no break-up during crescendos.

I had no trouble fitting the Aladdin to my RB1000 tonearm and, after careful setting up of the cartridge, I was ready to audition. Given the quoted channel balance figure, I paid particular attention to getting the azimuth alignment spot-on and I am pleased to report that I had no issues at all with channel imbalance with this cartridge.

Sound quality

First on the turntable was my copy of JS Bach *Partitas* by Trevor Pinnock (Archiv 415 493-1) on harpsichord. The performance was fast and engaging, without the harpsichord being too 'in your face'. Perhaps the harpsichord was a little more recessed within the sound

stage than I was used to with this recording, but it was nevertheless a very enjoyable listen.

Moving on to something rather more rousing, and my recording of Khachaturian's *Spartacus* with the composer conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on Decca SXL 6000 certainly didn't pull any punches! The performance was big, full and powerful. The drums resonated with commanding authority and you could almost visualise chariots racing around in your living room. Brass instruments were commanding, but not over-bright. Some of the detail in the percussion did not seem as pronounced as I had heard with other cartridges, but the strings were very clear without ever being harsh.

For a change of style, I moved onto a recently acquired copy of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in Jazz as performed by the Raymond Fol Big Band (Philips 842.125 1965 stereo recording in pristine condition). The allegros were reproduced with great excitement and energy and all the largos and adagios with smoothness and a captivating musicality – nice! Overall then, I found the Origin Live Aladdin to be a cartridge that feels comfortable across a wide range of musical styles. Some may find it a little on the smooth side, but others will fall in love with its easy and effortless performance. As such, the cartridge will partner well with bright systems and, at the price, it does represent great value for money and is certainly worth auditioning. **NR**



DETAILS

PRICE: £495
CONTACT:
02380 578877
WEBSITE:
ORIGINLIVE.COM

OUR VERDICT

