



Origin Live Resolution Modern turntable and Encounter tonearm

British firm Origin Live maintains a low profile Stateside, but its extensive line of turntables and tonearms generates plenty of heat. Over There (www.originlive.com). Now, having spent a few months with their midline 'table (\$2970) and third-from-the-top tonearm (\$1495), I know why.

While the instructions say they're "written for people with no previous experience of turntables" and that the Resolution Modern is "simple to set up," that's being optimistic. Even I had trouble, until I better understood certain aspects of Modern's unique design, which is the product of the brain of designer Mark Baker.

The photos in the manual are dark and the instructions are oddly ordered—especially if you do as you're told. For instance, at the end of the "Fit the Arm" section, you're told, "Once the arm is in position, fit the belt over the motor pulley and sub-platter, then fit the platter." That's what I did. Under the next heading, "Fit the Sub-Platter & Platter," it says, "With the syringe supplied, run approx 5 drops of oil into the top of the bearing housing." Guess what that requires you to do. Right.

Such quibbles aside, the Resolution Modern actually *was* easy to set up...once I understood its unique design and gave the directions some leeway. If Origin Live really wants the 'table to be easy for a novice to set up, they need to revise the instructions.

The plinthless Resolution Modern has a complex, single-spring, semi-suspended dual subchassis. A single bolt connects a pivotable, boomerang-shaped subchassis containing the single compressed-spring support and the two nonspring contact pods. A second, oblong sub-



PHOTOS: MICHAEL FREMER

Origin Live Resolution Modern with Encounter tonearm and Lyra Helikon SL cartridge.

chassis supports the main bearing housing on one end, the armboard on the other. The two nonspring contact pods are fitted with small rounded points that sit in small indents on the attractively sculpted base, which is finished in piano-black lacquer and sits on three damped feet. The single spring is centered between bearing and armboard, but because of a cutout and the dual-subchassis design, the spring and its adjuster mechanism are entirely isolated from the subchassis that holds the bearing and armboard. Very compact, very low-mass, and very ingenious.

Once the arm and platter assembly were in place, I leveled the 'table by adjusting the height of the single spring-suspended point. Because both the freestanding motor assembly and the main bearing assembly fit through holes in the base, the subchassis sits low in the saddle. The subplatter-and-bearing-spindle assembly is made of relatively low-mass plastic

of some sort, fitted with a long, narrow bearing of hardened steel that superficially resembles the one that comes with Pro-Ject's Perspective turntable. A precision-ground flat belt drives the subplatter via a cogless DC motor fitted with a crowned pulley of brass with nickel electroplating. A full-size platter of ribbed acrylic sits on small damping pads atop the subplatter. The speed is electronically adjustable; I had no trouble getting the Resolution Modern to run at precisely 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ and 45rpm...once I'd replaced the battery in the Clearaudio strobe light.

Origin Live's least expensive tonearms are modifications of Rega's OEM RB250 model. But while the Encounter reminds me of a Rega, and it's possible the bearings have Rega origins, it appears to be an original design. In any case, for the time being, Origin Live and Rega tonearms are the only drop-in arm options for Origin Live 'tables.

The Encounter has a large-diameter tapered armtube, milled from a billet of aircraft aluminum alloy, that fits into a sleeve near the bearing housing. The "decoupled" headshell appears to be bolted to the tube. Wiring is one of Origin Live's original claims to fame—the Encounter has high-grade Teflon-insulated silver-plated headshell wires, and connectors of copper beryllium with internal Litz wire. There's nothing radical or new going on here, just attention to detail and the right combination of high-quality parts. VTA is continuously adjustable, though not during play. The antiskating system is thread-and-weight.

Overall, the Encounter's look, feel, and fit'n'finish are exceptionally high for its modest price of \$1495.

Spectacular Sound: I'm a fan of plinthless turntables, unless the damping is Herculean, as in the SME 30 or Rockport System III Sirius. Less plinth equals reduced energy storage and release, and fewer opportunities for drum-like resonances. So I had high hopes when I began listening to the plinthless Origin Live Resolution Modern and Encounter.

I was not disappointed. In fact, this \$4465 arm-table combo is one of the finest performers I've heard at any price. It was so good that, when I mounted a low-output Lyra Helikon SL cartridge on the Encounter tonearm and compared it to the combo of Simon Yorke S7 turntable, Kuzma Air Line linear-tracking arm, and Lyra Titan cartridge, all sitting atop my Sounds of Silence Vibraplane active isolation platform, I could make a case for preferring the \$4465 spread to the +\$20,000 variety. The Origin Live combo didn't better the more expensive rig in any given parameter; instead, its synergy of attributes combined to create one of the most satisfying performances I've heard from a turntable and tonearm.

The Origins combined the airy, light-on-their-feet performance of the best sprung designs with the rock-solid stability of mass-loaded designs. Sprung tables can sound a bit soft and ill-focused compared to mass-loaded designs, and the latter can sound too "literal" and hard, especially in their less expensive incarnations. The moderately priced Origin Live rig integrated the best qualities of both designs. Resolution of inner detail and the overall delicacy of the presentation were exceptional. The words that kept coming to mind were *effervescent*—fast without being edgy and hard, graceful and lush without being soft—and *dead quiet*. While the Yorke-Kuzma-Lyra setup was ultimately more powerful and solid and had a richer midrange, the Origin combo's performance was sufficiently dynamic, detailed, and quiet to keep me happy—permanently. Music emerged from dead silence to create coherent, delicate sound.

I could happily live with this 'table-arm combo because it had no obvious weaknesses. It was especially fine rhythmically, and bass pitch and definition were excellent—perhaps a bit more lithe than my reference, if not quite as solid. When comparisons to a far more expensive front-end result in a balancing of sets of tradeoffs, that's saying something.

When I played my usual LP suspects, I was never disappointed. Nor did it hurt that the power amplifiers were the \$350,000 Wavacs, but that did nothing to change the Origin's impressive performance when compared to my reference analog setup. Particularly noteworthy was the naturalness of transient articulation: neither edgy and tight nor soft and obscured. Usually, moderately priced analog front-ends err on one side or the other. But acoustic guitars sounded natural, and cymbals had plenty of crunch and shimmer. When I played Classic Records' 45rpm edition of the Weavers' *Reunion at Carnegie Hall 1963*, I was pleasantly surprised to hear a clearly defined sense of space: the hall appeared well behind the singers, who were presented with convincing delicacy and transparency.

There were negatives. Despite the spring suspension—which really isn't a suspension and can't possibly have a low enough resonant frequency to provide any real isolation—the outside world can rather easily impinge on the Origin Live. Tapping on the Resolution Modern's base, or on the shelf on which it rested, produced loud drumming sounds through the speakers. If you don't have a good stand and a solid floor, proceed with caution.

Origin Live's Resolution Modern turntable and Encounter tonearm were designed by one man, who listened carefully and fastidiously, tuned and tinkered, and came up with a truly original design. Although some of that design is unorthodox, the Resolution Modern works brilliantly, is well-built, and its price is right. But regardless of price, this is one of the truly special products I've reviewed in the past 18 years.

In Heavy Rotation

- 1) Ella Fitzgerald, *The Duke Ellington SongBook*, Verve/Speakers Corner 180gm LPs (4)
- 2) Alison Krauss & Union Station, *So Long So Wrong*, Rounder/Mobile Fidelity 180gm LPs (2)
- 3) John Fahey, +, *Revenant Company/Runt* limited-edition LP
- 4) Warren Zevon, *The Wind*, Artemis LP
- 5) Roy Orbison, *The All Time Greatest Hits*, S&P 180gm LPs (2)
- 6) Sonny Rollins, *Saxophone Colossus*, Analogue Productions 45rpm 180gm LPs (2)
- 7) Dolly Varden, *The Dumbest Magnets*, Diverse 180gm LP
- 8) Mission of Burma, *ONoffON*, Matador LPs (2)
- 9) Roy Orbison, *Crying*, Monument/Classic 200gm LP (mono, stereo)
- 10) The Yardbirds, *Live! Blueswailing July '64*, Sundazed 180gm LP

Visit www.musicangle.com for full reviews.

Manufacturers' Comments



Origin Live Resolution & Encounter

Editor:

Thank you for a great review of the Resolution and Encounter. All we would want to say is that we have significantly improved the instructions since the time of the review. They are now a lot easier to follow.

Mark Baker
Origin Live

Origin Live

Unit 5 362B
Spring Road, Sholing,
Southampton, UK, SO19 2PB

tel/fax: +44(0)2380 578877
originlive@originlive.com