

HIGH FIDELITY

RC's guide to the gear that gets the best out of your vinyl, plus Paul Rigby's recommended sides

Serious kit

ORIGIN LIVE'S TECHNICS SL1200 UPGRADE KIT: ADVANCED POWER SUPPLY £295 [BLACK VERSION £347]; ULTRA POWER SUPPLY £460; UPGRADE TRANSFORMER WITH KIT £200; REPLACEMENT FEET AND DAMPING PADS £39.95; ARMBOARD £46; ORIGIN LIVE SILVER ARM £675; ORIGIN LIVE ALADDIN CARTRIDGE £495 & PLATTER MAT £39.95

The Technics SL1200 Mk2 might be a famed tool of the DJ – one that, in this digital day and age, has often been assigned to loft insulation duties and which has recently ceased production after 33 years of solid service. But it holds a shattering secret: the Technics SL1200 is an audiophile turntable. Well, underneath. Underneath the horrendous arm and the useless feet and the terrible cartridge and the ineffective slip-mat and...

The UK-based Origin Live was the first company to recognise the potential of the Technics after an almost accidental pairing of one of its award-



winning arms with the SL1200, which is now on offer with an OL armboard. From the armboard upgrade, the company developed an upgraded power supply (The Advanced) and then another, better, upgraded power supply (The Ultra, fitted with superior components) along with a transformer. A set of upgraded feet followed, a platter mat and, before it knew it, an upgrade kit had been born that effectively transformed the SL1200 into a species of water fowl that would have made Hans Christian Anderson proud.

The star of the show is, of all things, the power supply. Not just designed to deliver low noise, it has to cope with the terrific load from the motor, which means the instantaneous power delivery has to be exceptional with very low impedance. OL has produced a supply that produces supremely clean power, which is evident in the sound. It's extremely coherent, with a relative avalanche of incisive detail and an enormous soundstage. Bass was immensely enjoyable with a complete translation of every nuance within the lower registers. Midrange positively danced across the soundstage and over the rock-solid stereo image, which was a little wayward on the standard model. Mid-range attack was there in buckets, vocals were more focused and more determined. If you have a Technics SL1200 Mk.2, this OL kit is a great way to breathe new life into the venerable design and, because of the modular nature of the kit, you can steadily upgrade as your budget permits.

02380 578877 www.originlive.com

Next month, more about digitising your record collection.

AUDIOPHILE LP ROUND-UP

Derived from original mastertapes and appearing on 180gm vinyl, **BILLIE HOLIDAY's *Body And Soul* (★★★★ Speakers Corner)**, saw the singer at the end of her classic period: her voice on the wane but still capable of spine-chilling moments. This three-star 1957 audio recording, deserves an extra star for its reissue production values. A perfect replica, it holds no contemporary dating such as barcodes or brand names.



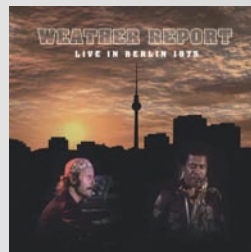
It's good to see **AL GREEN's classic *Let's Stay Together* (★★★ Simply Vinyl)** back in circulation, an album of strong material featuring the single of the same name. Although on this reissue, the upper mid-range is a little too rolled off and claustrophobic. I could have done with more bite, with extra air around the treble.

SHINKI CHEN was Japan's own Hendrix-a-like. In 1971's ***Shinki Chen & Friends* (★★★ Phoenix)**, he takes a psychedelic/blues approach to a krautrock vibe and it's packed with more spaced-out effects than *Avatar*. Although reportedly mastered at London's Abbey Road Studios, it lacks a little clarity. That said, this is a welcome reissue in any guise.



The only LP within their canon to feature Jimmy Page throughout, **THE YARDBIRDS' *Little Games* (★★★★ Sundazed)** is a transitional, originally US-only LP that moves from blues/rock to psychedelia and was unfortunately dominated by pop producer, Mickie Most. Audiophile fans will be delighted to see that this rare mono edition has been taken from the mono masters which, in itself, earns an extra star.

Drenched in Prince influences, but offering a smooth, melodious vibe, with some excellent Elton John-like song structures, **SATCHEL's** second LP, from 1996, ***The Family* (★★★★ Music On Vinyl)** features consistently strong songs. The first time on vinyl, it offers a quiet pressing plus a 12-page booklet.



Limited to 2,000 copies, **WEATHER REPORT's *Live In Berlin 1975* (★★★★★ MIG)** is an unreleased concert featuring Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter playing an array of peerless jazz funk. An essential performance and well mastered to boot.

Featuring a startling blend of early Manuel Göttsching-like 70s guitar ambience on one side, imaginative 80s minimal/synth noodlings on the other, **MAL's *The MAL Tapes* (★★★★ Vinyl On Demand)** is taken from a series of cassettes and two-track recordings mastered to a surprisingly high standard. This is always interesting and sometimes captivating.

