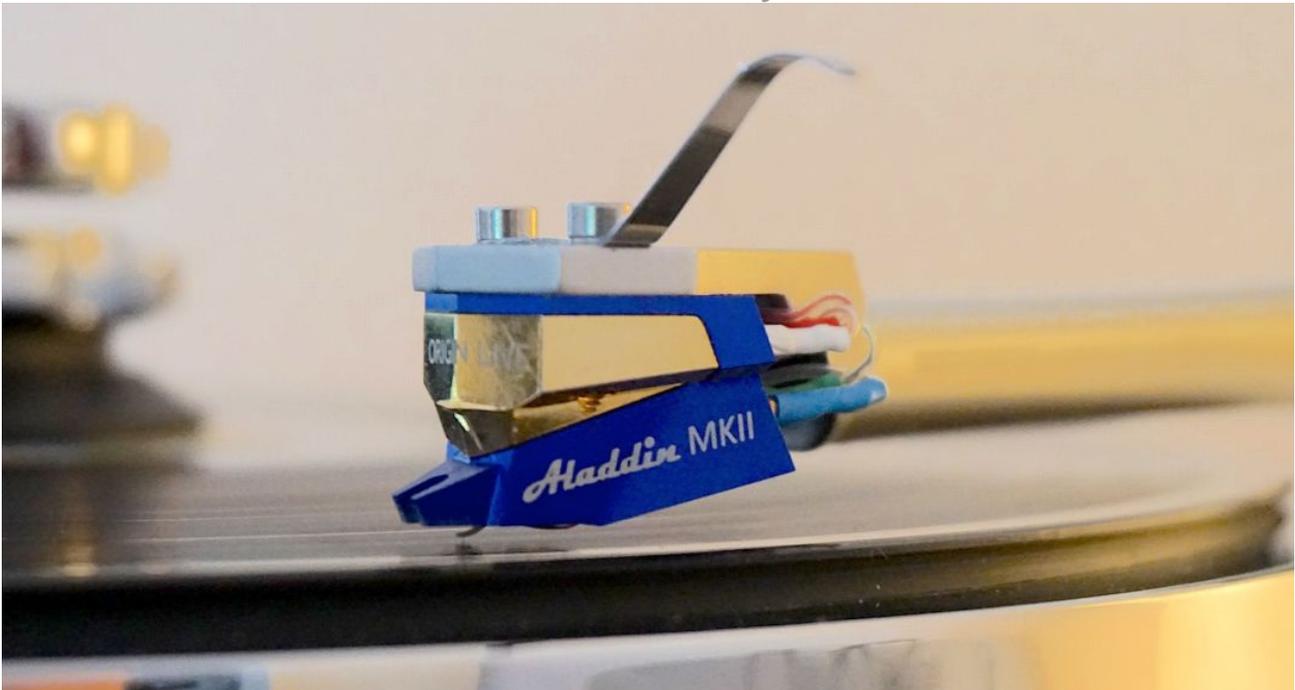


CARTRIDGE & ARM REVIEW HEADLINE

ALADDIN MK.II CARTRIDGE FROM ORIGIN LIVE

Posted on 14th July 2020

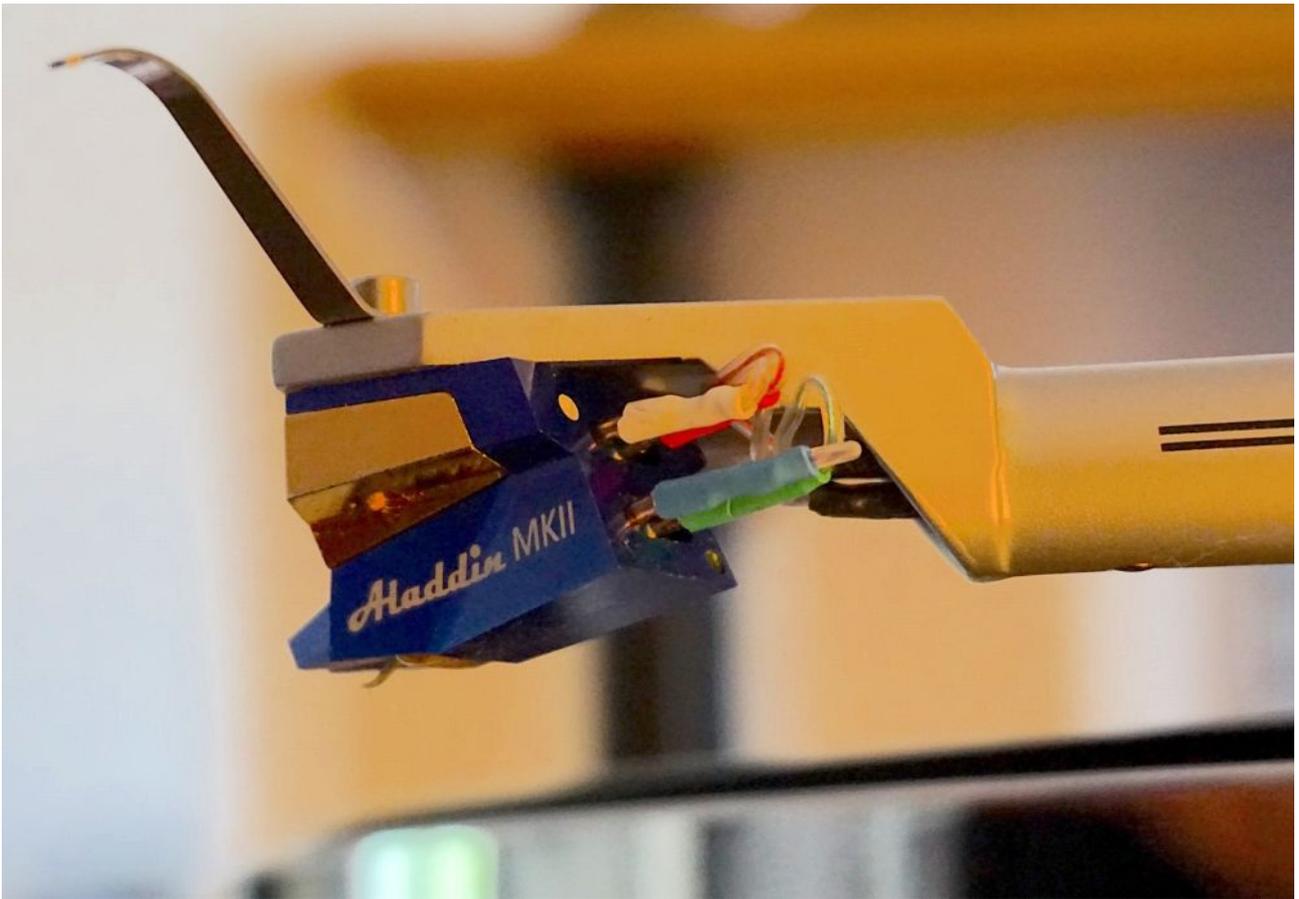


A new variant of this moving iron design has hit the shelves, Paul Rigby adds the grooves

So if this is a Mk.II, there should've been a Mk.I then, right? Absolutely. In fact, you can read a review of there [HERE](#). Most importantly though, you should realise that moving iron cartridges work like a moving magnet design, set at a 47k Ohm load. They're a sort of halfway house, in some respects, promising the performance of a moving coil with the convenience and ease of set up of a moving magnet.

The cartridge itself has been manufactured by Soundsmith in the USA and is derived from their Zephyr design.

The main change here from the earlier Mk.I is the introduction of an aluminium alloy cantilever, the same one that you can find on the latest Soundsmith Paua (check out the review of that one [HERE](#)).



And what does this new cantilever bring to the party? Stiffness, basically. But targeted at, "...the most critical parts of the sonic spectrum," said the company. Hanging off the end of the cantilever is a "low mass High Profile" contact line diamond which apparently has been developed specifically for a new generation of cartridges including the Aladdin Mk.II.

When setting up a cartridge, the one element that really irritates me is the hated, fiddly screw/nut combos that fit the chassis to the arm. Well, I'm not a fan, put it that way. Hence, I heartily welcome the addition of screw threads within the Aladdin Mk.II chassis. So I can shout, "Nuts!" to nuts.

Other technologies include a Dynamic Energy Management System (DEMS) developed by SoundSmith initially for the high-end Sussurro Cartridge. DEMS is all about ridding the cartridge of vibrations out of the composite body shell.

Weighing in at 10.25g, the Mk.II Aladdin offers a higher tracking force of 2g, over and above the Mk.I's 1.4g.

So how does this new cartridge sound?

SOUND TESTS

Sound tests began with Gryphon's self-titled album on Transatlantic from 1973. This was before the band had a keyboard player and before they rushed into proper prog rock, spouting folk or folk-rock at best.

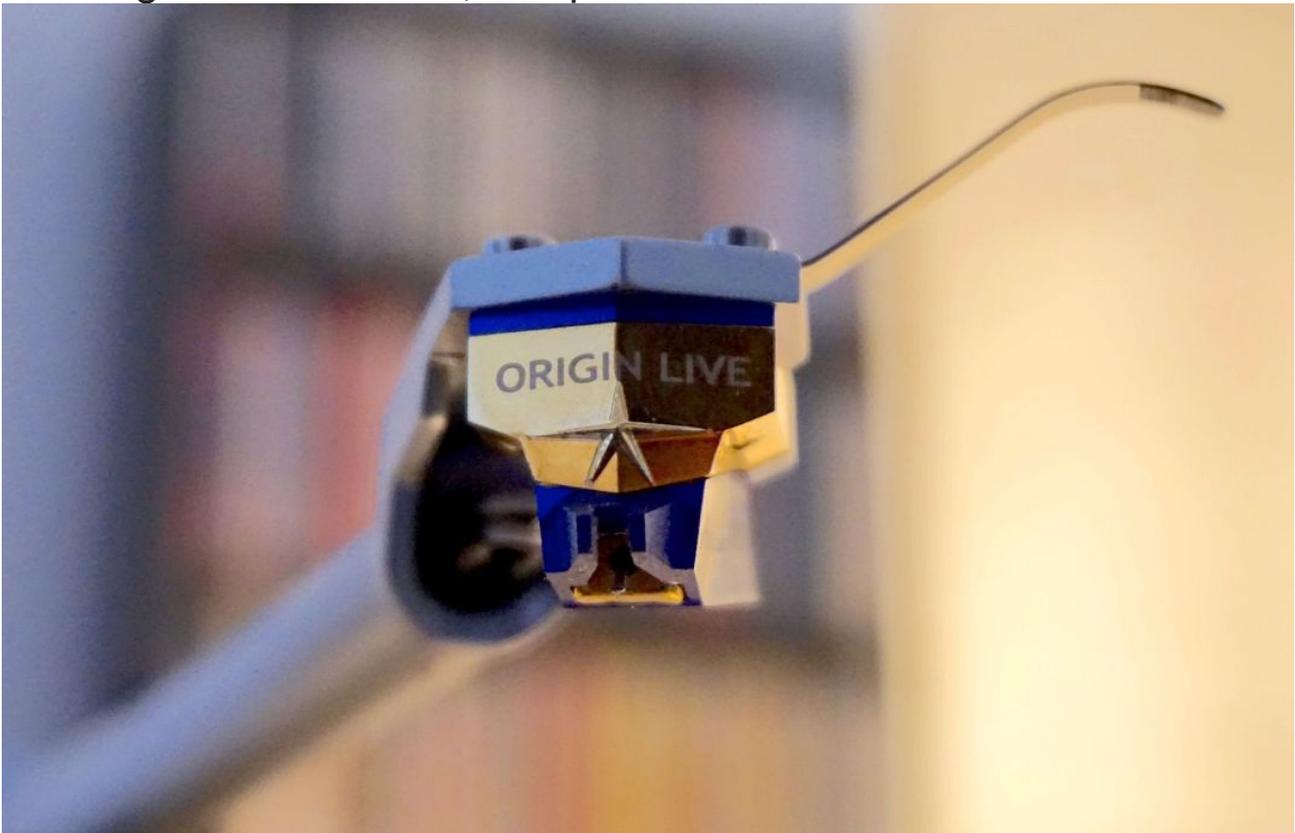
As a reviewing tool, it's ideal though because it's packed with varying instruments, different tones and resonances that emanated from the likes of bassoons, varying percussion, recorders, mandolins and the mighty crumhorn.



In play, I found the sonic response quite fascinating and intriguing because the Aladdin Mk.II was supremely focused and on the ball in how it presented music.

There wasn't, as you sometimes find with some decent cartridges, a noticeable infusion of air and space in this music. With some cartridges, it sounds like the band has moved out into the garden instead of being stuck in the studio and there's nothing wrong with that. But the Aladdin Mk.II didn't offer such a presentation. I

wondered if that might hamper dynamic reach at all but, after listening for two minutes, that proved not to be the case.



For example, on the first track there is a subtly hit gong or gong-like instrument of indeterminate parentage. On the Aladdin Mk.II, the after effects of the gong strike not only extended to its expected length but...it carried on. Hence, the gong hit, there was pause, other instruments took up the reigns and ploughed on and yet I could still hear that same gong hit decaying in the background. That one effect made my sound test. For that, I was glad I'd paid for my ticket. If I had heard that in a demo room, I'd have had my wallet out there and then.

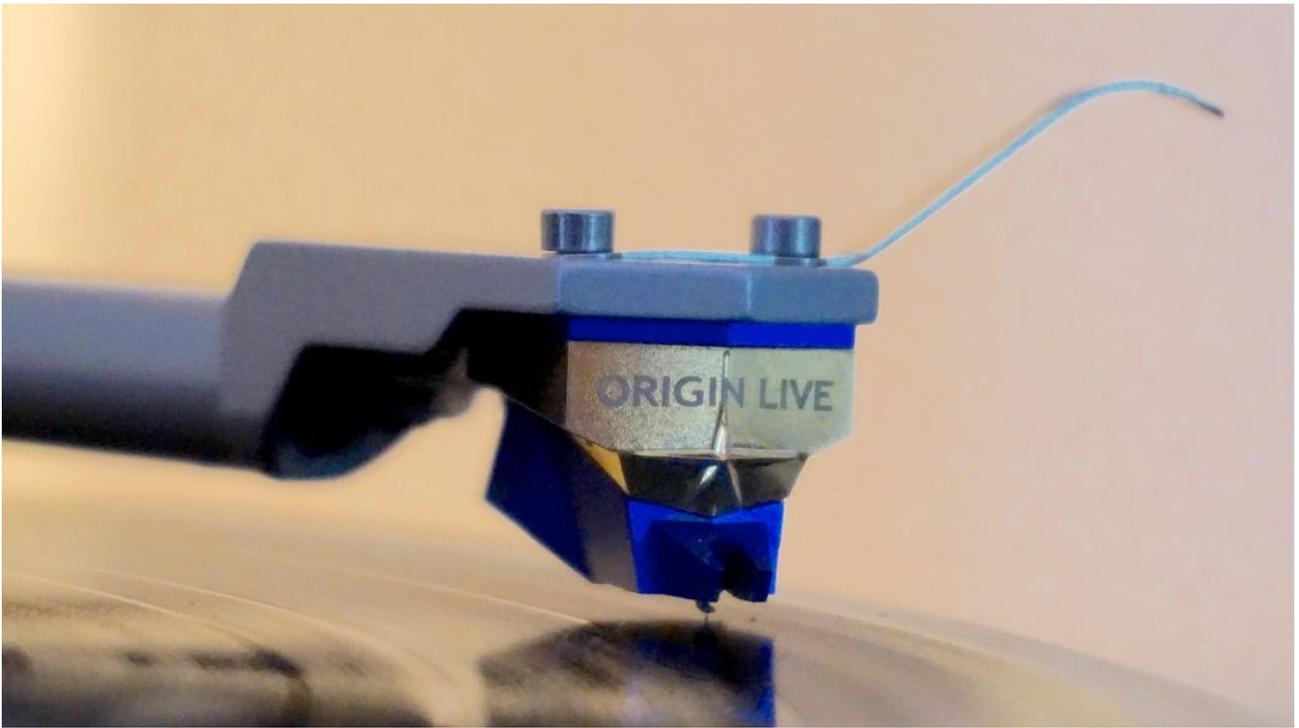
So, there was air and space but set within a more realistic – as I found out later – space. One that the studio created and one that was not infused by any cartridge, in a second-hand manner. Realism, therefore, seemed heightened here.



As did focus. My goodness, the instruments here were prim, proper, neat, tidy and quite nimble on their feet. The effects were to provide music that was trim and fleet of foot. Nothing dragged, the mids were on point here without any smearing. Yet dynamic reach was extended and impressive.

Noise was also noticeable for being low. I had to up the gain on my preamp just a touch but two clicks that the *Mk.I* wouldn't and couldn't have warranted.

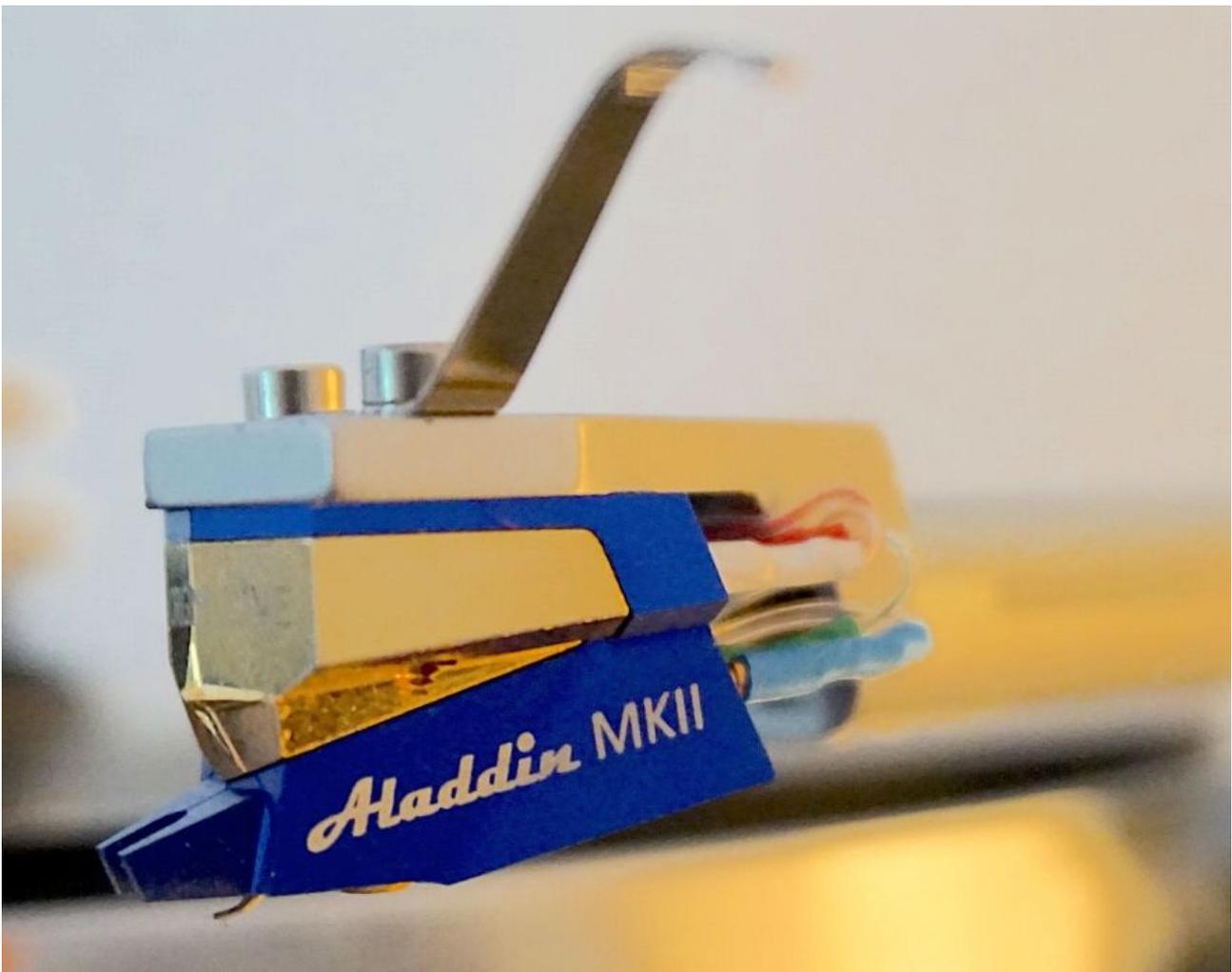
Later in the album, varying vocal harmonies were just a delight. The Aladdin Mk.II translated vocal textures beautifully. That is, the cartridge projected the character of the singer. You felt that there was a real human behind this voice.



I then turned to more dynamic fare and Greenslade's *Animal Farm* from *Time and Tide*.

Bass was both tight but also propulsive. It certainly didn't hang about. The pace from this track was both exciting and vigorous in presentation. There was real drive in this music that suited the rocking nature of the arrangement and the forceful manner of the lead vocal.

Something else that grabbed my attention was the layered manner of the soundstage. The area around the stereo image was very busy but never cluttered or confused. A host of instruments were gathered but the ear could hear each and every tap or thwack or string pluck without any sense of masking occurring. Again, impressive.



And that soundstage was encouragingly wide, expansive even. Percussion frolicked and gamboled among the long grass at the extremities of the soundstage but the transparency it exhibited merely added to the rich nature of the music.

CONCLUSION

Wholly impressive, that was the Origin Live Aladdin Mk.II. The combination of clarity and detail in the mids, the drive and energy around the lower frequencies but also the low noise and focus across the soundstage as whole was completely engaging and threatened to ruin my entire working day because it was tough to tear myself away from the music. “Hmmm, should I take a day off?” It was one of those reviews.

So look, if you ever get onto the subject of hi-fi cartridges and someone says to you, “Why should I bother looking at Moving Iron?” Then this, my friend. This is the reason. The Origin Live Aladdin II.

ORIGIN LIVE ALADDIN MkII

Price: £1,139

Website: www.originlive.com

**GOOD: low noise, focus, midrange clarity, nimble bass,
extended treble**

BAD: nothing

RATING: 9

Paul Rigby

(The Audiophile Man)

DEEPLY GROOVY

9/10



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REFERENCE

[AVID Acutus turntable](#)

SME IV tonearm

[Origin Live Aladdin Mk.I](#)

[Van den Hul MC One Special cartridge](#)

[Goldring 1042 cartridge](#)

Icon PS3 phono amplifier

Aesthetix Calypso pre-amp

[McIntosh MCD600 CD Player](#)

[Tellurium Q Statement cables](#)

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[Harmonic Resolution Systems Noise Reduction Components](#)

[CAD GC1 Ground Controls](#)

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[Air Audio AC-2K Balanced Transformer](#)

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