

TESTE  
AUDIO





# ORIGIN LIVE ARM ENTERPRISE MK4

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If we had the opportunity to test every product with the widest variety of equipment, we would be living in an ideal world, as far as any audio critic is concerned. Sometimes this happens! Not as often as we would like, but it happens!

Which was precisely the case with the Enterprise MK4 arm. I had the opportunity to hear this on the Timeless Ceres turntable, and in its perfect partnership with the Origin Live Sovereign (read the test in 273rd anniversary edition) - plus a wonderful arsenal of phono cartridges and phono Stages.

Take special note of the long list of Phono Stages: Boulder 508, PS Audio Stellar, Luxman EQ-500, Nagra Phono Classic, and Gold Note PH-1000 (test in October edition). And the list of cartridges: SoundSmith Hyperion 2, Hana Umami Red, ZYX Bloom 3, and Grado Statement Series 2.

Another great advantage was that we had the arm for 6 months in tests, before coming to our final conclusions

- which allowed this to be by far the most complete test of an arm.

If there's a specific area that my critics may accuse me of being a 'conservative', it's in my arm choice. Because I recognize that in my particular case I only upgrade when all the criteria that I consider essential have proved to be superior. And in this case, I'm not just talking about performance, but also compatibility with cartridges and turntables. In this sense, the SME Series V has served me for a decade in a majestic fashion.

However, the time has come to upgrade this component that I thought I would keep unconditionally. And I did so in such a reliable and all-encompassing manner, because in the end the Enterprise MK4 proved superior in all aspects of auditioning, as well as in its compatibility with cartridges and turntables. ▶



But I confess that this time I 'extrapolated' on the upgrade, because instead of selecting a 9.5-inch arm, which would be the most obvious choice, I opted for the 12-inch version. Something that I had already pondered over since I tested Mark Levinson's turntable, model 515 (read test in issue 266), and I had several "flea in the ear" observations with the 12-inch VPI arm installed. Because in tests with several reference disks, certain features in overall performance really stood out to me.

The most evident was the smooth precision and detailing of the 12 arm, in relation to my SME V. And, second, something also very evident in the analog: The timbre of the instruments, which were great in SME V, became much more 'realistic' in the 12-inch VPI.

After the test was completed, I got hold of a friend's 12-inch Jelco arm and again those characteristics were repeated (in the case of Jelco, the most significant was the realism of harmonics and the separation and intelligibility of very complex passages).

As I had already heard the 'Origin Live Arm' effect in the Timeless Ceres turntable test (read test in issue 269), and it was with a lower arm in the range than the Enterprise, I took a risk and bought the 12-inch version without audition.

My friend, that was the best decision I ever made in my life! For all that I had observed in the other two 12-inch arms, was repeated, but more excellently and even more emphatically!

I don't know if it is fact or pure legend, but they say that this was the arm which designer Mark Baker (designer and founder of

Origin Live) invested most of his time researching solutions that turned it into an absolute benchmark in terms of a 12-inch arm.

If you go to the Origin Live website, you'll read that with the Enterprise MK4 you can achieve a higher level of performance than with exorbitantly more expensive arms (read the reviews of various writers describing their impressions). This translates into a speed which resembles that of live music, a realism that has never been closer, and a degree of intelligibility that makes the most out of every cartridge installed in it.

This sounds like mere marketing hype, like so many things we've all read or heard about. But this 'thinking' ceases as soon as you hear this arm in a suitable and properly set up system. Because what you hear is exactly as described on the site. Without adding or subtracting a comma. Fortunately I'm not the first reviewer of this incredible arm, so I have dozens of testimonials from high-profile publications and countless audiophiles in various international forums.

But even if I were the first to test this latest version, I wouldn't be trepidatious in describing what follows.

But first, let's go to the description of the arm, according to Origin Live:







"The arm tube is made up of six materials for better energy dissipation and greater stiffness in the arm. This results in: increased transparency, dynamics and performance. The ultra low friction dual pivot bearing provides greater clarity and separation, along with a natural and accurate treble. The floating vertical bearings decouple the arm tube and prevent the arm from adding coloration to the performance of the cartridge. The Enterprise's sophisticated dual-pivot mechanism incorporates several additional layers of isolation for the vertical movement of the arm, which produces lower levels of coloration, allowing much greater intelligibility in the micro dynamics. The bearings are made to Origin Live's own specification. The internal cable is Linear Flow 2, manufactured by Origin Live, for minimal signal loss, resulting in higher integrity of signal transmission from the cartridge to the phono stage. This cable is fully balanced and 95% shielded. The phono plugs are WBT nextgen RCA pure copper. For reliable, low friction performance, the dual pivot bearings employ two tungsten carbide spikes in hardened cups, widely spaced to imitate the stability of gimbal bearings, but without the friction. Bearings for horizontal movement are specified for minimum friction."

Although visually it may seem simple to manufacture an arm, you can dismiss this idea unless you have the experience of a watchmaker, because you will not know the design intricacies necessary to deliver outstanding performance.

Due to my lack of manual dexterity (caused by a screw implant on my right wrist impeding movement) and eyesight issues, to extract the maximum from this product, I counted once again on the invaluable help of collaborator André Maltese. This time I really felt sorry for him, because it was more than 4 hours before everything was ready for the first audition.

The install and set up of the Ceres was only the first of many trips, because the arm then had to be installed on the Origin turntable for the test included in the magazine's Birthday Edition (another 4 hours for Timeless's *Giovani*),

For every time I repeatedly changed cartridges for the tests, I have to thank Andre for his goodwill and those bright eyes similar to a teenager who has the anticipation that he will hear something new. He's great company to have at your side when listening for first impressions. I like to hear his observations when comparing with other arms and cartridges that he owns, or has installed. He has an encyclopaedia-like mind for analog!

What do we expect from an upgrade? That its the best possible in terms of performance — I imagine that's what moves you to put your hand in your pocket. But what does a reviewer expect? Same as you, and a few other important items like: synergy with the widest range of turntables (in the case of an arm), cartridges and phono stages.

Interestingly, to these three questions, I cannot imagine an arm with a more "chameleon" like character than the SME V, because it never left me in the lurch, evaluating countless turntables, cartridges and phono stages. So I want to make it very clear that in this particular case, the SME Series V was only changed because of performance aspects! And it was unquestionably beaten by the Enterprise MK4, beyond any shadow of a doubt!

I don't remember which astute reviewer, listening to the Enterprise C (I think the MK3 version) when comparing with his reference arm, the SME V, wrote: "in direct comparison, my SME V sounded monochromatic in relation to the amazing tonal refinement of Enterprise C." My conclusion was similar in terms of analogy, but what struck me the most was the differences in the way of presenting the musical presentation as a whole. SME V has always given prominence (independent of cartridge and turntable) to the leading performers such as: soloists, vocals, instruments, always making us pay more attention to the central event.

The Enterprise C MK4 does not emphasize anything at all, because it attaches itself to the whole, it is like when we step back a bit, to enlarge our field of view. By broadening our field of view, we can appreciate the landscape more fully and understand the composition that stands before us. ▶





If you still don't understand my explanation fully, I'll resort to another analogy, that of going up a hill to see the whole landscape surrounding the hilltop.

It seems only a question of perspective, but it encompasses much more than listening in another way, because it gives us the perception that each element is not there by chance. That that subtle, almost inaudible triangle was etched to sound that way in that bar. Or Elis Regina's quivering, almost whispered voice on the Elis & Tom record, in two moments, has the same importance as the phrases sung loud and clear. Or the torpor of Keith Jarrett's grunts (so familiar to everyone who knows his records), have details that accompany the tension of his chords, whether we understand it or not.

What I'm trying to tell you, dear reader, is that by listening to two or three songs on this arm, you will immediately understand how essential the details are for a deep communion with the whole.

Now I wish to summarise the manufacturer's philosophy: "re-producing the original sound as played live". That may seem like mere pretense or marketing, but it's present in all three of their products that I've had the opportunity to listen to so far (and I hope I can hear others). It's clearly evident when we listen to Origin Live.

When you're done reading this test, browse the internet and read other reviews, and you'll see that the descriptions and topics are the same as the ones I'm trying to share.

I'm very comfortable, because the observed results did not occur only with an Origin Live set up, arm and turntable. This same result occurred in Timeless Ceres, with the two Origin Live arm models used. So much so, that by putting the Enterprise MK4 on Ceres, its performance grew, jumping from 99 to 100 points! It may seem like a mere detail, but it isn't. Because all of you who have systems above 98 points know how much difference a single point can make in the final system 'performance'.

But the virtue of great synergy is not the end of the story, since all the cartridges used also benefited from this matching, so much so that if the SoundSmith Hyperion 2, had been tested with this arm, it would have benefited by an additional 1.5 points on its score, distancing it even further from the second and third cartridge of the Top Five.

And even the Grado Statement Reference 2 would benefit if it were tested again rather than when I listened to it in the SME Series V.

All recordings seem to sound much better with the Enterprise MK4, even technically bad recordings. Regardless of the cartridge used or the phono stage. Poorly produced records, which we know are bad pressings, gain better tonal balance, and bass usually dry or with little weight, gains impact and definition. Bright, spitty treble, improves along with the bass, and gains a better balance. Now I can hear so many important musicians, that were inaudible on several records from the Som da Gente record label, such was the lack of technical recording expertise and quality of pressing. The same is true of records from the Kuarup label.

If my father were alive, I would bet his observation on hearing this arm would be: "They changed analytical to musical!" Tell me exactly what they did. And I would be able to go further because you still extract everything in the groove, but you don't over-emphasize some things at the expense of others.

One proof of this argument is to listen to any of the albums of the group Weather Report, with its incredible walls of synthesizers (both in the harmonic bedrock and in the solos). Listen to each one individually, without losing perception of the whole. Normally this exposes a lack of auditory satisfaction familiar to those who love this group as much as I. Based on this, they have spent their lives thinking that the engineers had made a mess of the recordings. No, my friend, it's all there, but you need the right arm to discover these 'submerged' wonders.

For so many years we've focussed on cartridge upgrades, to improve the quality of certain records that we have a special love for, but which always disappointed us by under-performing in our analog set-ups.

If we go deeper and realize that maybe instead of up-grading cartridges, we could think in terms of a more advanced arm. ▶



that has 'capabilities' beyond the reach of others, our desires would be met. I confess "mea culpa" (I'm to blame), because I walked down this road exactly for a decade, thinking that because of the degree of SME V's compatibility, this was my ideal 'tool' for testing, and with this 'I purged' dozens of LPs which I loved! If my testimony serves any purpose, use it, my friend. I assure you that Origin Live arms (at least the two I tested) are literally a 'paradigm shift'. Because they fulfill what they promise, which is to give you a much truer to life, real and exciting analog experience!

If you are still an enthusiastic fan of analog and don't wish like I did, to dispose of poor-quality LPs, invest in what seems to be the most crucial in terms of upgrades. If you already own an excellent turntable and a great cartridge then obtain this arm with its superlative performance.

This was by far the biggest analog upgrade I've made in the last decade! ■

**POSITIVE POINTS**

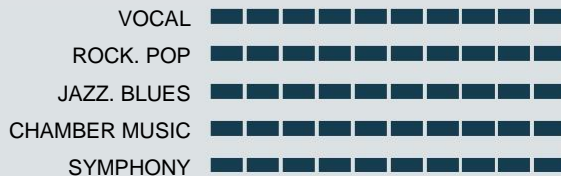
An Ultimate arm upgrade for sublime performance.

**NEGATIVE POINTS**

The price.

**ORIGIN LIVE ENTERPRISE C MK4 ARM**

Tonal Balance	14.0
Soundstage	14.0
Texture	14.0
Transients	14.0
Dynamic	14.0
Harmonics	14.0
Organic presentation	14.0
Musicality	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>113.0</b>



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Arm: R\$48,420  
 Additional 12": R\$3,730  
 Total: R\$52,150

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