

Pro-Ject Essential III



The Essential has always been something of a star. The first version used a surprisingly capable unipivot arm which was later fitted to a £600 (699€) model, the 2 Xperience Basic+, and it was more than able to hold its own at this level. It was replaced by a standard dual pivot arm for the Essential II but the deck still proved to be a winner.

The Essential III belies its eminently affordable price tag with a sound that is fluid, musical and generally highly accomplished. The deck is sure-footed and more than able to dig deep into the heart of a recording to reveal inner detail. Another early note I made regarded the deck's quietness – not in terms of its musical output but that hiss, hum and general background intrusion were very well suppressed. That simple earth wire clearly does its job well.

I own turntables with platters that weigh more than this entire deck, I couldn't shake off an initial nagging worry that the sound might be a little 'lightweight', but nothing could be further from the truth. The Essential III has a boldness and warmth in the lower registers that belies its humble status in the turntable hierarchy.

Pro-Ject has done it again. By subtly improving critical aspects of the Essential II turntable and making a small cartridge change to big effect, the Essential III once again jumps nimbly to the top of the budget turntable class. The whole package is beautifully judged, well made and superb value for money. Even more importantly, its sound perfectly illustrates to a newcomer exactly what is so good about vinyl.

Sound Quality: 85%

