

Reviewed on 21st April 2018 on :

**WHAT HI-FI?**

## EAT B-Sharp Super Pack review



EAT must be one of the strangest hi-fi company names we've come across. The initials stand for European Audio Team, and the brand started off manufacturing high quality valves before venturing into turntables in 2009.

Though an independent company, its products are designed and manufactured by a specialist team within the Pro-Ject factory. This link to Pro-Ject gives EAT access to engineering and resources that would be the envy of most small turntable brands.

The B-Sharp is the company's entry-level deck and comes with the B-Note arm, the combination selling for £1200.

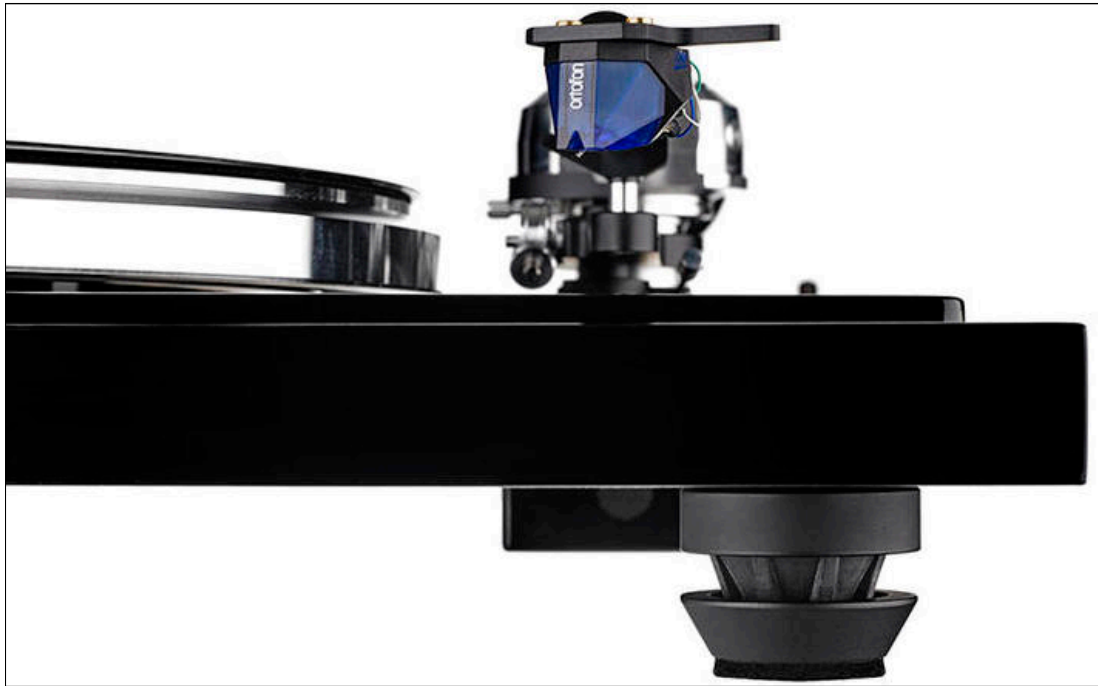
The Super Pack we have on review adds an Ortofon 2M Blue moving magnet cartridge (£185 if bought separately) into the mix for a modest saving.

### **Set-up**

The cartridge is pre-fitted, and the deck as a whole is easy to set-up. While requiring a little more assembly than the likes of Clearaudio's Concept MM, we think most people will be able to get it up and running in short order.

The assembly process involves fitting the feet, removing the transit bolts for the inner MDF chassis that supports the main bearing and arm, and mounting the drive belt. Don't forget to set the tracking weight and put the bias mechanism in place.

With such a close relationship to Pro-Ject, it's no surprise to find that certain parts look familiar, including the plastic sub-platter and damped arm counterweight. But there's enough in the way of distinctive engineering – the compliantly mounted inner chassis, the bias mechanism and sophisticated arm design, for example – that the B-Sharp comes across as a distinct product in its own right.



As with any deck, of course, it pays to ensure the turntable support is rigid, low resonance and as far away from the speakers as practical to get the best results. The EAT proves no different, though its absorbent feet and isolated inner chassis mean it's less susceptible to external vibrations than more rigid designs, such as the Rega Planar 6.



## Build

Build is generally good, though the gloss black finish of our review sample (there's also a white option) isn't as classy or neatly applied as we expected.

The B-Note arm feels nicely made and is a pleasure to use. Its carbon fibre arm tube is a tech highlight and the overall design offers a wide range of adjustability.

The pre-fitted Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge is a solid performer and tracks securely at around 1.85g.

## Sound



We use two systems during this test. One is made up of the Rega Elex-R amplifier and Neat's IOTA Alpha speakers – the level of products the EAT is likely to be paired with.

The second system is our reference set-up of Cyrus Signature phono stage/Gamut D3i/D200i pre/power and ATC SCM50 speakers – a combination that is transparent enough to show where the limits of the B-Sharp's performance are.

Those limits are distant, with the package delivering a terrific sound for the money.

We begin with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the B-Sharp delivers a dramatic-yet-composed rendition that captures the drive and power of the piece well.

It has no trouble punching out the music's explosive crescendos, rendering the wide-ranging dynamics with control.

Stereo imaging is precise and stable, the record player casting a decently proportioned soundstage and populating it with nicely layered and solidly located instruments.

There's a good sense of organisation here and the ability to keep a grip on low-level instrumental strands (and subtle acoustic clues of the concert hall), even when the music becomes demanding.

Detail levels are good, and the 2M Blue remains as even-handed as we remember.

This is a fine choice of cartridge to start off with, but we think the EAT is talented enough to be used with pricier, more capable alternatives.



We switch to Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' The Boatman's Call and enjoy the EAT's expressive midrange and its ability to communicate the easy momentum of Into My Arms. Cave's voice comes through with passion, while the backing instrumentation is cohesive and rhythmic.

The EAT isn't fussy about genre. It sounds right at home with music as diverse as Nirvana's Nevermind and Dukas's The Sorcerer's Apprentice. There's enough in the way of energy to keep music exciting, but no lack of refinement and authority when needed.

### **Verdict**

The B-Sharp is a fine alternative to Rega's similarly priced Planar 6/Ania MC combination.

The Rega is arguably the more direct performer, and certainly makes more of the rhythmic and dynamic elements of the music, but the EAT counters with control, composure and a pleasing sense of balance.

It's a fine deck and one well worth searching out.



### **Our Verdict**

The B-Sharp is a fine deck, with a broad range of talents. It's a decent alternative to the ubiquitous Rega Planar 6

For

Easy to set up

Composure, dynamic heft, organisation

Pre-fitted cartridge

Good resolution

Balanced performance

Against

Gloss finish could look classier (and tidier in places)

Manual speed change