

STEREOPHONIC REVIEW

*Origine Turntable and Tonearm from Oracle Audio Technologies
with Ortofon MC-1 Turbo Phono Cartridge*



Photos: Franco Moggia

The Divine Origine Mk II

» By: ADRIEN ROUAH

I have not asked **Oracle Audio Technologies** why they chose the name *Origine* for their new turntable; I rather simply told myself that if the analog reproduction of music has taken an incredible new boom over the past few years, the best idea for a new turntable would certainly be *Origine*! After all it was the first diffusion medium, a democratic diffusion... in millions of homes. Just like in the car industry where some companies

marked History with a particular model which still persists today (like **Volkswagen** with their *Golf* that started back in 1974!), **Oracle** already belongs in the History of high-fidelity audio with their *Delphi* turntable. Known and recognized all around the world, this piece of art from **Oracle** will soon celebrate its 40th year of existence!

The model entrusted to your magazine was therefore named the *Origine* and was delivered to us equipped with an **Ortofon MC-1 Turbo** phono cartridge, the *MC* indicates that this is a moving coil cartridge. It is in fact the most affordable *MC* cartridge that is offered in the Danish manufacturer **Ortofon's** lineup. Mounted onto the **Oracle Origine**, whose admitted desire is to be rather affordable, we assist to the happiest of marriages. This association presents a double advantage where the first is to demonstrate to audiophiles how delicate the sound is from a moving coil cartridge and secondly, to equip this Oracle product with an affordable cartridge that comes from a brand which is also at the origin of analog music reproduction. Note that, for comparison purpose, the *MC-1 Turbo* retails at about the same price as my usual *2M Bronze (MM)* cartridge from the same manufacturer.

Presentation and Technics

From the start, I would qualify this *Origine* turntable as very pretty, well anchored in the Oracle lineage with its tripod base that is similar to the *Delphi*. The one we received has a glossy black finish for its main plinth and a mat black finish for its feet, and its tonearm, contrasts that are due to some of the parts being made from acrylic and others made of Delrin. The designers had it embellished using an undulated finish giving the *Delrin* parts a nice machining effect. But it is not the only attraction of this new turntable. Indeed, **Oracle** proposes to color the base with different colors and even to add one or two more color inserts to the base. You can then personalize your turntable and it will become unique. Beautiful idea this variety of colors, an idea that demonstrates yet again how **Oracle** does not only distinguish itself for its mechanics but also on the level of aesthetics, as

always. For me, it's a success and if, as I did myself, you equip the stand with a small lamp that will allow you to better see where to drop the stylus between two tracks of a record, and you can redirect this lamp towards the colored part of your base which will light up the whole of its periphery. Very pretty and impressive with an artificial light, and if by chance your sound room is generously bathed with daylight; the effect will also be very enjoyable. On the technical side, we have a motor completely detached and independent of the main plinth with only the drive belt tying the two together circling the perimeter of the platter. The silent start up and the silent rotation are absolutely perfect. The choice of speed is double, 33 1/3 and 45 rpm, and is selected by changing the belt position on the motor's pulley. The three rubbery feet are adjustable in height allowing to easily level the turntable, which is especially important in this case due to the unipivot nature of the tonearm (only one point of contact). This tonearm is also a creation of **Oracle** whose sophisticated technicity ensures the best of fusion with the *Origine* turntable. The unique pivot contact point was placed at the same height as the stylus of the cartridge and at the same height as the tonearm's rear counterweight. These three elements being on the same horizontal plane adds to the dynamic stability. Another small technical element is the tonearm's tube moveable weight called "the Olive" which allows a better adaptation of different phono cartridges by varying the effective mass/compliance equilibrium. The anti-skating mechanism is a classic one made of a weight that hangs from a thread that pulls laterally on the rear of the tonearm. Its adjustment is done by adding or removing small metallic pins into pre-drilled holes into the hanging weight. This anti-staking barrel weighs one gram and the idea is to add metallic pins that each weighs 0.25 grams until the force applied by the weight cancels the centripetal force acting on the tonearm when reading the groove. Simple, precise, clever, pure **Oracle!** The tonearm wiring, including the links to the *RCA* connectors, is made of **Cardas** wires. From the front or from all sides, this object is splendid and for me, the unit I received was in black with double layered neon red insert separated by a black insert responded to my personal taste.

The plinth is available in white or in black, and by looking at the available colors for the plinth's inserts; there is no doubt that anyone's tastes will be fulfilled.

Presentation of the listening sessions

I did not want (and I did not, even to satisfy my own curiosity) to do comparative listening tests between the supplied cartridge (**Ortofon MC-1 Turbo**) and my own cartridge (*2M Bronze*) from the same manufacturer. This was not the main objective of this review and, as usual, **Mag@zine TED** only uses what is proposed by the manufacturer. And the fact to offer the *Origine* turntable, that we wish affordable, equipped with a cartridge that is affordable too, delighted me. Note that the high output of the *MC-1 Turbo* means that it is absolutely not required to use an external phono preamplifier with adjustable settings for moving



coil cartridges. A classical phono input or phono preamplifier set for moving coil cartridges suffices. If this intelligent marriage created by **Oracle** can help destroy the well-established idea that a moving coil cartridge requires a special phono preamplifier that has adjustments; then, I can only congratulate oracle for this "tour de force".

The listening

I will say right away that it is indeed a "tour de force", no need to listen several hours to be convinced. The clarity is obvious and immediate, a little bit like when comparing a class *A* amplifier with one that is of class *D*. Something is going on already, especially with the medium frequencies which are reaching a beautiful and soft definition. Definition, not over-definition, soft without being fluffy. I started playing various records of different musical types, at random, just for the pleasure of the discovery. And as the discovery is stimulating, I begin selecting records that I have never used in my previous reviews. **Astor Piazzolla**, for *World Music*, **Lynne Gangbar**, *Classical* guitarist recorded *Live*, the exceptional *Jazz* guitarist **Elek Bacsik**, **The Who**, and to finish, **Jean-Sébastien Bach** violin concertos for orchestra. A selection which includes music from many different horizons. I want to emphasize that all listening sessions were done using the record clamp which is supplied by **Oracle** with its *Origine* turntable.

Astor Piazzolla renews the contemporary music genre from Argentina with a heavy *Tango* influence. His introduction was certainly not easy because he always gets out of the normal habits of tango. A little bit like if today, analog music was at its beginnings and was trying to counter dematerialized music. Fortunately, there is a long past of amenities and pleasures. Because the pleasure is really there, precise and immediate with analog. The **Oracle** turntable does not hide any expressions; lively, the sensations precise themselves. The bandoneon lets his keys hit, which adds a particular charm and gives realism to the sound take. As I do not have a photo, I let my imagination play with the instrument. The bellows is sometimes pushed, sometimes pulled and if I cannot see it, I can imagine it easily.

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The rhythm is sustained and the spaciousness is very real. Soft moments and intense moments magnificently succeed one another. The song *Otoño Porteño* is very useful to demonstrate this musical exchange from subtle at one time to raging at another time. The **Oracle** satisfies right from the start with World Music.

I do not know much about **Lynne Gangbar** and the Web reveals very little about her. Her record, which is a *Live* performance, is very interesting because after a few minutes, you completely forget that you are in a room. The sound take on the guitar lets you imagine that it is located farther than it should which the *Origine* transmits very well. The play of this artist is spectacular and the *Origine* is exactly that as well. While listening to this solo instrument played admirably, I am reminded of what I previously heard and read in specialized magazines. In general it is said that the sound of a guitar, especially when played solo, would not bring much to a demonstration and that it is actually a very simple instrument to reproduce. In fact, I would say that it is completely false

because everyone knows this instrument, everyone tried to play it and everyone knows the sound it produces *Live*. We can also discern the real size of the instrument and to focus on the size of an instrument in space is a good place to start seeking High-Fidelity.

Thanks to the **Oracle**, there is no possible confusion between the size of the instrument and its position in our sound room. It sounds real and it is well imaged.

The recording of the disc of **Elek Bacsik** is just as formidable as the artist himself. The spatial dimension is so present in this recording that you cannot believe that he was born in the 1960s. The version of *Take Five*, for example, takes us out of the ordinary and the phrasing of the guitarist is well accentuated by the **Oracle**. We can follow every note (the game for the guitarist is to properly separate the notes) and the attacks are sharp as

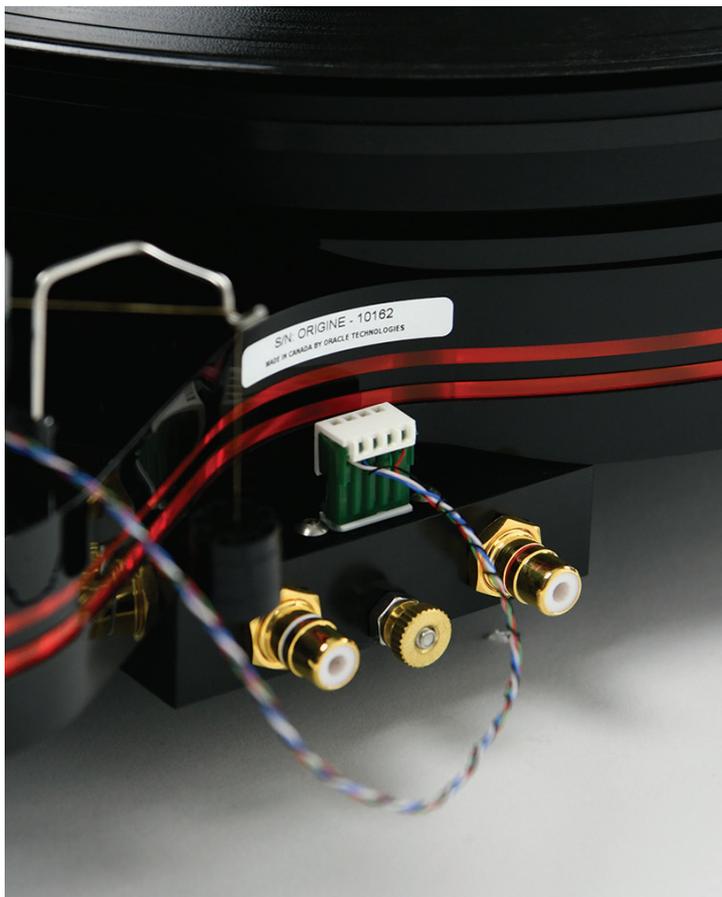
The version of Take Five, for example, takes us out of the ordinary and the phrasing of the guitarist is well accentuated by the Oracle. We can follow every note (the game for the guitarist is to properly separate the notes) and the attacks are sharp as we desire them. My observations stay true for the song Blue Rondo à la Turk. A beautiful interpretation that shows the exceptional transcription that is done by the Oracle.

we desire them. My observations stay true for the song *Blue Rondo à la Turk*. A beautiful interpretation that shows the exceptional transcription that is done by the **Oracle**. A beautiful sound take that also adds to the pleasure of this artist who is not well-known. **The Who!** This is more eventful and dynamic but the subject is well worth it. This is yet again a *Live* recording, but I suspect that the feed of the recording was taken directly from the console as the sound is studio-like with the crowd's applauses very far in the background. With *Magic Bus*, we can follow the progression of the transcription of the *Origine* and the cartridge makes wonders especially when we consider how difficult it is to reproduce this type of music. When **The Who** gets bursting on their chorus, everything is well dissected, fluid and limpid. The stereophonic effects are extremely precise, more so than what I was expecting. The guitar solo is surprising as it is powerful yet melodious. The **Oracle** setup handles this musical trap very well!

Musically, I'm very versatile, but I understand that an audiophile can choose 90 % of *Classical* music and, in this case, **Johann Sebastian Bach** comes to the rescue.

A violin concerto (BMV 1041) harbors a particularly romantic andante which will help perceive all the sensibility of this concerto and the quality of the turntable defending it! Here, it gets better than good, the play of the soloist **Stoika Milanova** lets itself be discovered very pleasantly. The notions of space and position are truthful and the beauty of vinyl, in this case, is not excluded. The depth is well felt, and I suspect that the *MC-1 Turbo*





GENERAL INFORMATION

Origine turntable without cartridge

Price: 2,500\$

Origine turntable with Ortofon MC-1 Turbo

Price: 2,750\$

Waranty: 3 years

Acrylic dustcover offered as an option

Price: 250\$

Distributor: Oracle Audio Technologies, Tel.: 819.864.0480, www.oracle-audio.com

Mediagraphy

Astor Piazzolla, *Adios Nonino*, Pathé Marconi, C 062 92792

Lynne Gangbar, *Live in Concert*, Musica Viva, MV1006

Elek Bacsik, *The Electric Guitar of Fontana*, 885541 MY

The Who, *Live at Leeds*, Polydor, 2484 006

J.S. Bach, *Concertos for violon and orchestra*, Harmonia Mundi, HM 113

cartridge is pushing things a notch farther than my usual listening. We can really feel every nuance from the composer, and the mechanical diffusion which the **Oracle** is producing is absolutely remarkable to a point where the mechanical aspect disappears completely. Time for the music, time for details and time for subtle revelations. Thank you divine *Origine* from **Oracle**!

Conclusion

I voluntarily have chosen records whose print quality is exceptional, without being specially meant for audiophiles, with artists that are more or less known. I also have chosen musical pieces that are radically different from one another as this is what, I believe, can do honor to the **Oracle** company, musical and artistic diversity. The *Origine* turntable is beautiful and so is its tonearm! Augmented by a particularly well-chosen phono cartridge, the **Ortofon MC-1 Turbo**, the future owners will have access to analog music in the proper fashion! The style of music that will be chosen will always go perfectly with the *Origine* turntable which asks nothing else than to be used in diversity. It is **Oracle** that needs to be congratulated for its know-how and its undisputable expertise. We also need to salute the idea of proposing an affordable turntable of very high quality especially after putting to market very high-end turntables. In general, it is rather the contrary that happens. Let's also underline the possibility to rival with numerous importations as this beautiful object is entirely fabricated in Canada. All that is left to do is to use it to be able to appreciate it for other than its appearance because the *Origine* is a remarkable success at all levels!