

Tangerine Audio Evenstar upgrades LP12

Monday, April 3, 2023
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Tangerine Audio Evenstar record stabiliser

Tangerine Audio Evenstar is the latest creation from a company that's dedicated to the Linn Sondek LP12 turntable (hereafter referred to as the LP12), a turntable that celebrated its 50th birthday in March. Many other competing products have come and gone in that time, but the LP12 sails on. Of course Linn themselves have made many changes to the original model in the intervening years, which has helped to maintain its popularity and inevitably there have been some enterprising folk who have seen a market opportunity in supplying after-market products for the LP12, and Tangerine Audio is a major player here in the UK.

Founded some years ago by the late LP12 whisperer Derek Jenkins and his business partner Mark Digman, Tangerine Audio have built a sterling reputation for their LP12 upgrade hardware. My own LP12 was rebuilt using a Tangerine Audio sub-chassis and top plate. Thus it took me no time at all to agree to review the latest piece in the Tangerine Audio catalogue, the Tangerine Audio Evenstar. And what is the Evenstar? It is an equilateral triangle, formed from a single piece of aluminium with a hole in the centre. The record side of the piece has three small feet or lands on it, at the corners of the triangle. On top, a matching shaped indentation, another equilateral triangle surrounds the centre hole. Prior to starting the rotation of the platter the Tangerine Audio Evenstar is slipped over the spindle to sit on its three aluminium lands on the record label. I weighed the Evenstar and it comes in at 118g, about the weight of a standard vinyl LP. Each side is 65 mm long and it stands about 10 mm tall. I have always understood that centre weights are not appropriate for the LP12, and I have never added one to my turntable, so I initially approached the Tangerine Evenstar with some caution.

The review was carried out using my LP12, which has a Linn Ittok arm with a Dynavector XX2 moving coil cartridge attached. I use a Collaro felt mat on the platter. The phono stage is a Gold Note PH5 with a Gold Note PH10 power supply. The loudspeakers in this instance are the extraordinary Node Audio Hylixa (watch out for a review in The Ear soon) and two different integrated amplifiers were used, the MoonRiver 404 Reference and more recently the PMC cor (both of which are lined up for review). Cabling was from Tellurium Q: Ultra Black II speaker

cables and Statement RCA interconnects, with mains distribution handled by a Shunyata Research Hydra 6.

The Tangerine Audio Evenstar effect

I started the review by playing my favourite album of the moment, the recent reissue of Dave Alvin's *Eleven Eleven* on the Yep Roc record label, reissued appropriately enough last year on the eleventh anniversary of its release. Side one has three tracks on it. Starting with



Harlan County Line, as featured in the excellent F/X television series *Justified*, this is a prime piece of Americana and features Alvin's distinctive baritone voice backed up by his own excellent guitar work and an accomplished rhythm section. I am used to this track now but I still find it spellbinding. Next up is Johnny Ace *Is Dead*, another Western folk tale in song, and utterly engrossing too. The last track is a slower song called *Black Rose of Texas*, executed brilliantly by Alvin and his band. I played it through once and thanks to being home alone at the time, sang along and generally got immersed in the music. I then lowered the Evenstar over the top of spindle (it is a perfect fit), cued the arm and resumed my seat.

It was apparent within the first few bars that the Tangerine Audio Evenstar was having a positive effect on the music. Everything was sharper, crisper, better defined. The snap of the snare drum was just that - a snap, very clearly etched within the drummer's area of the





soundstage. Alvin's guitar seemed to have a shade more attack and his vocals, which I have never struggled with, took on an extra clarity that I had not witnessed in all my previous times listening to the album. Not to be left out, the bass player's contribution was also clearer. It was as if I was listening to a brand new copy of the album; almost like a well-executed remastering. This may all sound slightly hyperbolic, but I can only tell you what I heard.

The MoonRiver 404 Reference is a corker of an amplifier, with an uncanny way of communicating with the listener, it has a slight warmth that never fails to present the music in a most engaging way. It picked up the extra detail and resolve that the Tangerine Evenstar imparted and allowed me to enjoy these familiar tracks as if for the first time. I listened to all my usual test albums and then started selecting things at random from the storage cubes in the room. The Analogue Productions 45rpm of the Doors' *LA Woman* was very interesting. Many of you will know that the album signs off with one of the band's finest works, *Riders On The Storm*. I played the whole of side four without the Evenstar first and then with it. The rain storm at the beginning of the last track, with the Evenstar in place, had such added realism that I all but reached for my umbrella.

After a few days I replaced the MoonRiver with the PMC cor. This 95 Watt per channel all analogue device had been described to me by PMC as having absolutely no character of its own, which was meant as a compliment. In any event, I let it warm up for a couple of days. On the third day I felt that the cor had recovered sufficiently from its cold journey through the courier system to allow me to do some more critical listening.

Chalk meet cheese

I had that very day received my copy of the newly released live version of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon Live At Wembley*, recorded about half a century ago. Now if there is one album of which I do not need another copy, it is *Dark Side of The Moon*. However, I listened to this newly remastered live at Wembley version on Qobuz and was very impressed, so forked out the £20 or so for which it was being sold online. I played it through, both sides, and then repeated the exercise with the Tangerine Audio Evenstar in place. Chalk, meet cheese. What I had liked about this recording in the first place had been the extra clarity of all the instruments, especially Roger Waters' bass guitar and the Rick Wright's keyboards. With the Evenstar in place, this was magnified even more, and the music became the transcendental experience which I suspect the band had intended five decades earlier. If you go to your friendly dealer to evaluate the Tangerine Audio Evenstar, try to play this track if they have the album. It will be the most pleasurable eight minutes you will have enjoyed for a while. In fact as soon as I have finished this piece I shall go back to the lounge and play it again. The fact that the Evenstar's shape mimics the world-famous *Dark Side* triangle may or may not be a coincidence, but if it is, it is a very serendipitous one.

The PMC cor/Node Audio Hylixa combination is very interesting. Both in their way are seriously excellent bits of kit, but their shared characteristic is an absolute neutrality. They don't

Linn Klimax LP12

just open a window to the music, they knock the whole wall away, allowing the listener to hear exactly what is coming from the source components. In this instance, they revealed what this innocuous little triangle of metal was doing to the sound of my LP12, and it was all good.

Tangerine Audio Evenstar conclusion

My wife asked me once how I could write a thousand words about a bit of wire. Goodness knows what she will make of 1500 plus words about a little piece of metal. However, I think Mr. Digman better warn his suppliers to standby, because I have a very strong feeling that a great many LP12 owners will want one once they have heard it. At 118g it can hardly be described as a weight, nor does it have any clever vibration suppression technology within it, but however it does what it does, it really works. It comes in an elegant cylindrical box, inside a groovy



drawstring cloth bag, but I suspect that most owners will leave it on the deck permanently, rendering the bag redundant. In the world of hi-fi, where we have all become wary of the wiles of those peddling the oil of serpents, there occasionally comes a thing that is truly fit for purpose and worthy of the modest investment required for ownership. For me, the Tangerine Audio Evenstar is that thing. Now if you will excuse me, I must return to the Wembley gig.

Specifications

Type: record stabiliser

Material: anodised aluminium

Weight: 118g

Dimensions HxWxD: 10 x 65 x 65mm