Features facilities setting up and use

Three separate components are covered by this report, namely the SH108T plinth: the SP10 II motor chassis plus power supply, and finally the EPA100 pickup arm. Supplied as a complete ensemble, the whole is designated SL1000 II, its inclusion here representing a retest, as this system was in fact covered in the previous issue of Choice. Considering the price level it was a little disappointing to find some minor finish blemishes on the motor top plate as well as significant play in the vertical ruby ball race on an arm: a degree of headshell tilt was also apparent which could not be corrected. Technics were informed of these problems at an early stage in our test procedure, but in fact did not follow up our comments by the time the edition had gone to press. Fortunately at least the bearing play could be cured by adjusting the appropriate setting screws.

The quartz-locked direct drive motor was clearly built to professional standards, and in fact large numbers are in use in broadcasting and recording studios. The heavy plinth, which alone weighed 12g, consisted of a low resonance laminated structure supported on rubber feet which offered a desirable very low 5Hz resonance. The arm employed a damping headshell, with a titanium double layer tube and variable damping. Three speeds were offered, namely 78, 33 1/3, and 45 rpm. The unit as a whole was superbly engineered and came provided with comprehensive instructions, although once again, cartridge alignment was by the inaccurate overhang measurement system.

Lab performance

As one should expect at this price, the motor results proved to be at the threshold of measurement, and simply consist of a list of 'excellent' for wow and flutter, rumble, stability, loading, overshoot, start up (1/2 second) and torque. However, while acoustic breakthrough was rated as above average it was not outstanding, particularly at higher frequencies. Thanks to the separate power supply, the hum levels proved very good using all types of cartridge. Feedback was similarly rated, but vibration sensitivity was only just 'good'.

Judged to be above average the response was quite even above 1.5kHz. However early minor breaks occurred at 150Hz and 200Hz, with a further series at 350, 700 and 1200Hz. The 2nd odd headshell socket list has already been mentioned and will undoubtedly have affected the subjective performance, particularly with regards to stereo depth and clarity. The other arm parameters were fine with effective mass on the heavy side: even with the damping control, compliances no higher than 20uc are indicated. Bias compensation was about 30% high.

Sound quality

The more critical standards employed in this issue have resulted in a marginal downgrading by comparison with last time; however the 'good' performance rating achieved was still well above average. The arm was considered very good allowing for the shell misalignment, the system as a whole characterised by low coloration, some 'shyness' in the low bass and a 'feathery' quality verging on 'fizz' in the high treble. Marginal stereo positioning and depth loss were also apparent.

Conclusion

The SL1000 II remains a top class turntable despite the odd defect or two, but on the basis of sound quality versus-price, it does not merit a recommendation. However, used appropriately, the motor section is outstanding in terms of its technical performance.