

Review of EAT C-Sharp + Ortofon Quintet Back + E-Glo S + LPS by J. Elliot, 04/2019 on :



EAT C Sharp Turntable, E-Glo S Phono-stage and LPS Power Supply

Janine Elliot has previously reviewed the EAT C Sharp turntable, but now it's available in a supercharged package with its own phonostage and power supply. The combo is £6494 in the UK, but is it worth the extra lolly?



I reviewed the [EAT C Sharp turntable](#) (distributed in the UK by Absolute Sounds) a while back, giving it a glowing report for the price, so was delighted to be offered it again but this time combined with a linear power supply and matching hybrid phono stage. At £2798, £1198 and £2498 respectively the whole combo comes in at £6494, not a lot for the complete vinyl kit of this quality. EAT (European Audio Team) is a Czech company run by Jozefina Lichtenegger, the lady married to Heinz Lichtenegger, who many will know as the CEO of Pro-Ject. Many will not know that EAT actually started out as a maker of high-quality audio valves and accessories. Then they introduced their first turntable, the Forte, which still remains to this day their flagship deck, complete with the E-Go 12" tonearm. Since their beginnings, the range of products has grown to include a large line-up of turntables, tonearms, phono preamplifiers, cartridges, power supply and vacuum tubes, plus the famous EAT valve cooling damper. They have even started a range of candles and perfumes "for our senses", though I'm not sure if they actually improve the audio.



There are certainly links between EAT and Pro-Ject, such as the use of carbon fibre and MDF, but this is a completely different company and I particularly liked the raked aluminium edged platter and carbon-fibre arm of the C Sharp turntable when I originally reviewed it. Now with the LPS power supply added and the E-Glo S phono stage the products looks even more upmarket. Both these additions are available with piano black or Makassar wood cheeks and matt aluminium front and top. Makassar is a very dark and gorgeous wood finish, in-case like me, you didn't know.

THE KIT

THE C SHARP TURNTABLE

The C# comes complete with the C-Note tonearm carbon fibre/aluminium uni-pivot arm, not bad for under £2800. For £3,298 it even comes complete with the excellent Ortofon MC Quintet Black cartridge, as used in this review. The Carbon fibre in the construction means it can be an extremely low table by virtue of its strength; indeed, it is quite challenged in height department, especially when sat next to the Forte. This low-profile base chassis is made out of highest density MDF. On this base the motor is mounted, as well as 10 damping feet made from energy absorbing (and therefore damping) TPE (Thermoplastic Elastomers). All the rumble of the platter or bearing is therefore directed in the TPE columns where it is absorbed so that it doesn't get as far as the arm and cartridge. Finally, the cone-shape TPE columns carry the Carbon Fibre suspended plinth. The bearing is an oversized and inverted bearing shaft with a ceramic ball atop on which is placed the sub-platter, and the main heavy platter being placed on top of that. There is a 700g mass point at this bearing so that all the energy is sucked up and converted to heat.

The platter itself was disconcertingly close to the carbon plinth, though free from any friction. The motor is attached to the lower chassis so that no vibrations make their way to the platter bearing and to the arm. As this top platter has angled edges it is not easy to hold, and therefore the record clamp is screwed into it and used as a handle to lower carefully onto the sub-platter. Obviously, you previously will need to affix the belt to the motor and the sub-platter. Many turntables seem to charge extra for record clamps, but this one comes gratis, largely because it is a necessity in setting up the deck. I am a fan of record clamps since my original free "Richer Sounds" plastic clamp I obtained in the 80's. Whilst that one has long gone to meet its recycle bin in the sky, the EAT aluminium affair is a forever necessity and is really good looking. EAT recommend you don't screw the clamp down when playing records, but rather that it just sits on the record. It is heavy enough to work well in holding records securely to the platter.



I did love the ease at setting up the unit, the review sample coming complete with Ortofon Quintet Black S cartridge. This cartridge gave an effortless playing of the music, and was particularly good with vocals. The tonearm itself includes a combination of cardan and uni-pivot bearings, immersed in special damping fluid designed to damp the tonearm and cartridge resonances by more than 50%. The cardan or universal joint was coined by Gerolamo Cardano, an Italian, and this tonearm, by combining both friction-free pivot simplicity and cardan flexibility makes it very steady and robust. This arm is actually quite complex in design, with cardan joint for the horizontal and two ball race ABEC7 bearings for vertical and uni-pivot damping pin to complete the setup. The whole isn't perhaps as beautiful as some tonearms, it being fairly large in size, but it is very practical and a doddle to set up; Only the clever bias compensation caused me yet again a few moments brain searching. I had the same problem last time affixing it to the arm. The manual doesn't explain it in enough detail to confirm the path of the thread. Similarly, the counterweight is very loose on the arm which did make me nervous that it would move about and change the cartridge load, but it stayed glued to the same spot for the few weeks of my review, set at 2.35g for the Quintet Black S cartridge.



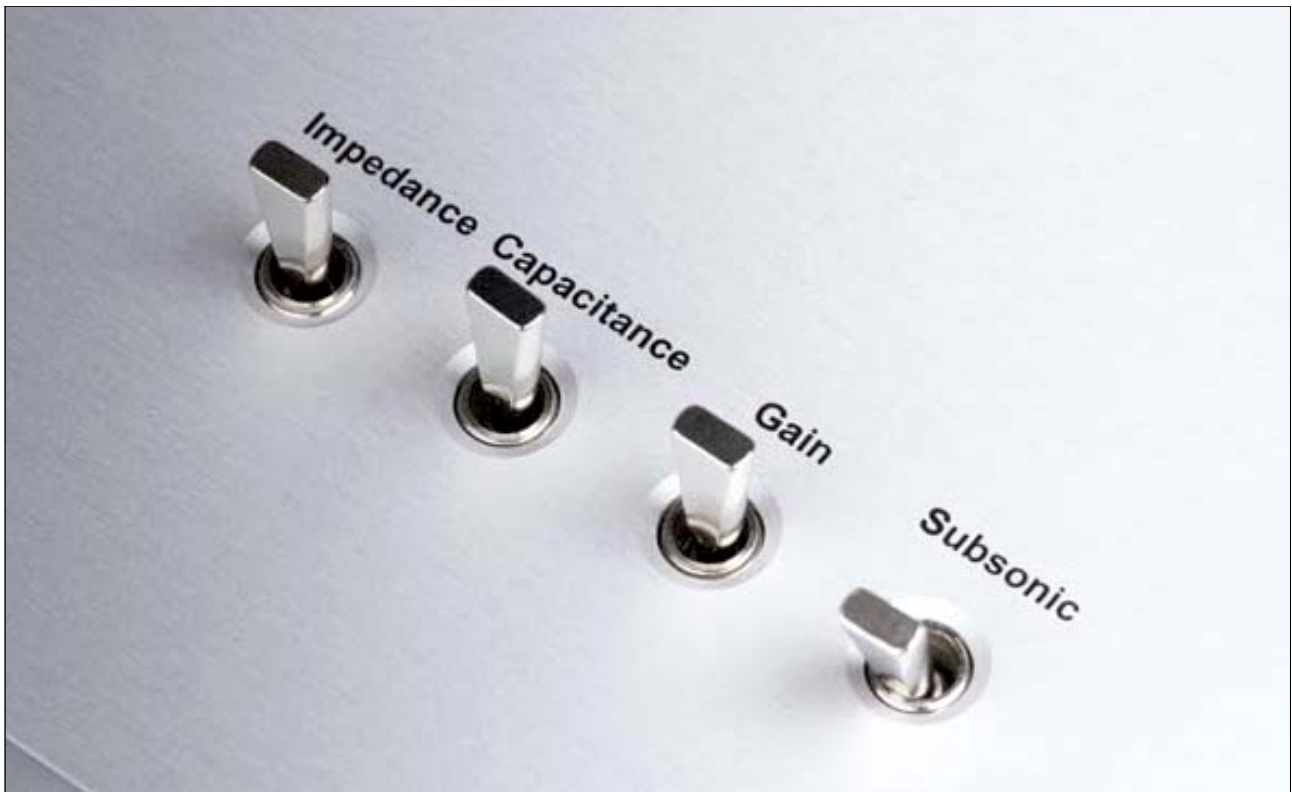
Speed selection and control is via a tasty looking black box connected to the rear of the turntable, which flashes the speed you have selected until it has reached stable velocity, in around 2-4 seconds depending on whether 33 or 45rpm. Normally a small wall-wart power supply feeds this, but for the purpose of this review the substantial LPS power supply was deployed.

E-GLO S

The E-Glo S phono-stage is one step up from the E-Glo Petit and below the excellent E-Glo model topping the family. Common to all in the range are the use of vacuum tubes. The E-Glo S is a hybrid design with ECC83 tubes (twin triode) in the first and second gain stages. This not only achieves good gain but also low noise. In the first stage is a cascade connection of tube with two parallel-connected low-noise J-FET transistors to keep noise down. The RIAA equalizer is passive and split in two steps in order to achieve excellent impedance matching between the gain and equalization stages. The E Glo S is a work of art and dual mono design. Beautifully constructed and very minimalist in looks and matching the LPS linear power supply. The E-Glo S is mightily big in features, working with both MM and MC cartridges. There are 6 load impedances for MC (10, 30, 50, 0, 100 and 1000 Ω) plus 47,000 Ω for MM. Similarly, there are a total of 7 load capacitance choices for your MM cartridge (50, 150, 270, 370, 520, 620 and 740pF) plus a variable output gain setting for the RCA output to your amplifier (45, 50, 55, 60, 65 and 70 dB).

With the more sensitive MM cartridge output is set at 45dB. It also has a subsonic button should you wish to use it. A series of blue LEDs at the front indicate the settings you have selected, and all settings are operable from four top-grade metal toggle switches on the top of the unit at the right, plus an off/on switch at the left. I am so pleased that they have not put that switch at the rear. Those familiar with my reviews will know I have a dislike for switches at the rear. Protruding out of the top of the unit are two ECC83's valves with the excellent EAT cooling damper and all protected by two pairs of doughnut-shaped aluminium covers. Therefore, no other units can be placed on top, not that you would want to. The rear is sparse with just in/out RCA sockets plus an earth connection. The top-of-the-line E-Glo phono-stage is a two-unit affair, with a power supply sitting underneath the 4-valve phono-stage. For this review rather than using the supplied wall-wart power unit I was supplied with the matching LPS power supply turning this "S" model also firmly into a 2-box affair.





LPS POWER SUPPLY

EAT has always believed that the power supply should be a major part of the signal path as it can significantly contribute to the sound quality. Whilst the supplied power supply works well, having a more advanced product that not only feeds the turntable but also the phono stage was an obvious step to take. There are predominately two types of power supply, switching and linear mode. The LPS is a regulated linear power supply, or rather it is actually two independent power supplies in one box, with a 15v DC output for EAT turntables (and Pro-Ject 15v turntables) plus 18v DC to power EAT phono stages (and most of Pro-Ject phono stages). It comes with full bridge rectifying circuitry using ultra-fast diodes followed by an 8800uF filtration bank. Voltage regulation is fully-discrete and no operational amplifier is used. The Voltage reference is TL431, a three-terminal programmable shunt regulator diode. Aimed at producing a fixed voltage irrespective of the loading on the device, power supply variations, temperature changes, and the passage of time, this all results in very low noise and excellent regulation. In many respects, it works as an over-performing battery power supply. Ripple voltage is lower than 1 microvolt with voltage accuracy better than $\pm 0,05\%$. EAT claim the "temperature drift is beyond every level of standard power supplies". The LPS can deliver the 15v and 18v simultaneously via the choice of three (2.1mm, XLR 4pin and 2.5mm) cables that are included. The on/off switch is conveniently located at the front of the unit with a blue LED to the right.



SOUND QUALITY

The idea of this review was for me to see what improvement there was using these three products together. I have already written a glowing report on the turntable itself, particularly the arm. Therefore, my listening time was spent looking at the complete kit rather than evaluating each unit separately. It did become apparent right from the start just how good that power supply was, not just in controlling the turntable speed, but giving the E-Glo S more headroom and dynamics. I didn't expect to hear much improvement from the turntable itself, but overall control of the music I listened to was actually notably improved. Since the stylus picks up the slightest motor speed variation alongside the music and amplifies it some 8000 times through your speakers, that includes any weaknesses from the power supply driving it. It was a number of years ago that I realised just how important good power supplies were in turntables, and a number of manufacturers have up-rated supplies to improve their turntables, as well as changing from AC to DC motors. Changes I heard in the E-Glo S were more obvious; as well as improved noise floor and increased dynamic range over the wall-wart plug, even the soundstage improved. Listening to the usual rather bland remastered Genesis "Selling England By The Pound" the E-Glo S gave a detailed and tightly controlled rendition but a very gentle performance. Turning to Supertramp 'Breakfast in America' it was clear to me that the power supply was improving the noise floor, particularly the long fade-up at the start of the album. Similarly, the phono-stage provided a richer and more musical sound as well as lower distortion. Don't misunderstand me, the supplied wall-wart cable is adequate, but switching over gave increased depth to the sound and lower floor as well as freedom from RF. The music sounded faster, though that is, of course, impossible; it just had more purpose to it. The piano in the title track was secure and detailed.

Turning to Julian Bream's 'Guitarra' album this gave me a chance to check speed accuracies and control of the music. This album is a mixture of Renaissance, Baroque, classical and Vihuela guitars performing music from Spain. This was a delicate and tightly controlled performance delivered impeccably by both Julian and the EAT combination. Noise floor from both turntable and phono-stage was impressive. Boccherini's 'Fandango', here arranged for two guitars, was spectacular through my Krell/Wilson Benesch setup. The musical performance was well controlled with both instruments well separated in my room. Turning to 'Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' the instruments were again given wide stage in my listening room with tight drumming from Art and the trumpeter reaching far more forward than the other instruments when the latter took to blowing solo. This heavy-weight vinyl was highly infectious and the combination of turntable, cartridge, phono-stage and power supply working as well together as were Art and his band. I couldn't possibly moan listening to the famous opening track "Moanin'". Only the badly mic'd piano let the performance down. Everything else was just right, tightly controlled and delicately delivered, an almost silky performance. I am always in love with valve amplification, and the mix of valve phono and transistor Krell made for a compelling combination. The LPS and E-Glo S added to the C Sharp turntable took the performance from the turntable to a whole new level. Timing was perfect along with the decays and reverb in "Along Came Betty" which were allowed to decay to the very end. As mentioned earlier, the E Glo S comes complete with a subsonic filter. This removes the very lowest frequencies by 18dB/octave, caused by warped records operating below 20Hz. I have to admit I didn't notice any benefit from it, largely because my records were flat, though I appreciate its inclusion.

Turning to my brilliant Brubeck "A Cut Above" direct cut disc that I bought in 1978, the C Sharp played admirably with only the odd difficulty coping with the occasional initial transients as well as it does on my own choice of phono-stage. The phono-stage did, however, give an excellent performance covering all frequencies and dynamics in a way that should please anyone looking for a phono-stage even up to £4000. It is exceptionally quiet, the only noise being the surface noise from the record. Whilst choice of load settings is less than is on the top-of-the-range E-Glo, the "S" is a fine product and I was able to get the best out of the Ortofon cartridge.

Manuel de Falla's 'Love the Magician' (Chandos, London Symphony Orchestra) is one of the composer's best works and my favourite, a ballet composed between 1914-15 and sometimes referred to as "Wedded By Witchcraft". It always gives a magical performance for the audiophile. There is everything in this work, from depth of soundstage, dynamism, choice of instruments and vocals, and frequencies from bass bite to cymbal sizzle. The E-Glo S gave this performance a characteristically silky finish that was highly seductive. Being able to adjust impedance easily, was a great feature to achieve the best from the cartridge. Some phono-stages I have reviewed have dip switches, often at the back or underneath, which is not only highly inconvenient but also don't give the user a chance to alter parameters on-the-fly. All components in this set-up were a pleasure to operate, working so well together, as they should. I could see why Pedro from Absolute Sounds, who supplied the combination for review, wanted me to listen to them. The more I played the more I liked.

The C Sharp is a great turntable with an impressive arm, working well on both low and high-end cartridges. The E-Glo S is an impressive phono-stage; full of features to enable it to drive any cartridge, very quiet and giving a detailed portrayal of the music with a silky-smooth sheen. The LPS power supply livened up the music still further, and on its own is a very valuable upgrade. Just see how many upgrade power supplies are being offered these days. “Wall-wart” supplies are like the cables that come with your hi-fi; just about adequate and cheap. Just as we wouldn’t want to be seen using a 50p cable on our expensive equipment, so, too, we need to consider the adequacy of our power supplies.

CONCLUSION

This is a really good trio of components. The turntable is highly recommended, as is the E-Glo S, but using these together with the LPS set all components onto a new level, and therefore has to be Highly Recommended bordering on Outstanding. The effects are subtle but very real, and both the phono-stage and the power supply should be considered if you buy the C Sharp. What is useful is that if you upgrade the turntable to a Forte, you can still use them.



AT A GLANCE

Build Quality: The LPS and E-Glo S are beautifully engineered simplicity

Sound Quality: Silky smooth but detailed phono-stage, and a power supply improving dynamics and detail from the phono-stage as well as controlling the turntable taking it to a new level

Value for Money: £6,494 is a good price when you consider it is for all three products making a complete vinyl section

Pros: Detailed and well-rounded sound, working well on all types of music. Long listening sessions without fatigue. The phono-stage, not too far removed from the more-pricey E-Glo.

An excellently engineered power supply. Combined they take the C Sharp to new levels (C Double-Sharp?)

Cons: Not at these prices