

Keep on spinning

This year marks the 45th anniversary of Linn's legendary LP12 turntable. A recent run in with this timeless classic finds **Ed Selley** reflecting on this industry stalwart

There is a recurring theme across many interests, activities and pastimes that unless you have owned, driven, visited, eaten – delete as appropriate – a particular thing, you cannot claim to be a true devotee of it. In my time working in and around the hi-fi industry, a few products have been floated as the 'must own to classify as a true enthusiast' candidate, but one has cropped up more times than any other: the Linn LP12, which celebrates its 45th birthday this year.

During those 45 years, almost every aspect of this turntable has been altered, upgraded and fettled, but crucially the appearance hasn't. In a world of space-age materials, skeleton plinths and rivals that are as much statements of artistic intent as they are devices for audio replay, this is still a device of wood and metal and still the shape many people subconsciously expect a record player to be. Inside, it can be a deeply sophisticated device – in SE spec, you have a turntable that is a seriously impressive piece of packaging – but on the outside, it's business as usual.

With this comes the mythology that seems part and parcel of our perception. Interchangeable with the 'LP12' comes 'setup', 'bounce' and 'tweaking.' The Linn is not and never has been a plonk-and-play device. It needs a degree of care and attention put into the business of setting it up or it won't deliver any of the attributes that its acolytes will

tell you about. The process has become part of the LP12 itself – you can't have one without the other.

I've had a timely

reminder of all of this with the arrival of a Majik LP12 recently. At my urging, it was delivered partially knocked down and a quick perusal of the contents of the box brought me to the realisation that while I could probably have taken them and turned them into a convincing facsimile of an LP12, the result would probably not have been a fair representation of what the device was capable of. As such, I'm indebted to Peter Swain at Cymbiosis for offering to perform assembly and setup.

Watching Peter at work is fascinating. As he repeatedly stressed throughout the setup, there is nothing mythical or arcane about the process of turning a box of components into a functioning turntable. No prayers or incantations are uttered and the assembly can be carried out in all phases of the moon. Nonetheless, to the untrained eye at least, it has little in common with any other assembly I've been party to. It uses a selection of unique tools and varies slightly depending on the vintage and specification of the



LP12 undergoing the work. Often, the sight of a piece of equipment partially dissembled rather destroys the sense of mystique – it reminds you that for all the materials and design, the object in question is still just another collection of electronics. Here the reverse is true. What starts as a suspended belt-drive turntable is something possessed of its own identity by the time it has come together in front of your eyes. What is interesting, though, is that for all the talk of the delicacy of this process and of LP12s going 'out of tune', with some tactically placed polystyrene and kitchen roll, the Majik travelled back down the M1 to my rack and has installed perfectly level, enthusiastically bouncy and utterly free from unwanted noise.

It's a kind of Majik

For Peter, this demonstrates that behind some of the more inventive tales about the LP12, installed and used with any degree of pragmatism, this is a turntable that still offers exceptional performance at the huge variety of price points that it can be built to. For him, the reason that it has made it this far is not sentimentality or the curiously masochistic desire of many audiophiles to make life as tricky as possible for themselves, but because the Linn record player still delivers the goods.

What is also intriguing is that as far as he is concerned, the basic design of the LP12 still has more to give even after 45 years. Despite the range of alterations to the design in recent years being some of the most significant that have ever been made, Peter feels that there are still areas where alterations to both materials and processes can yield even more improvements. It seems faintly surreal to imagine that a product that was launched when the Apollo space program was ongoing still hasn't finished evolving, and we are still yet to see the ultimate version of this analogue icon ●

It might be getting on a bit, but the LP12 still has so much more to offer

The basic design of the LP12 still has more to give even after 45 years

