



Collaro Audio LP12 mat

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I am a relative newcomer to the world of Linn Sondek LP12 ownership, I bought a pre-loved one last year and rebuilt it with upgrades from Linn and from Tangerine Audio just last year. The LP12 seems to draw adulation and scorn in about equal measure in the audiophile community. If you 'get' what it does, there are few turntables at any price which match its musicality although it is not without its foibles. There are also no other turntables that I know of which so lend themselves to after-market tinkering, and LP12 specialist fettlers are a small but highly regarded subset of the analogue audiophile population.

Ever since I brought my LP12 home from Gullifords Hi-Fi in Exeter after its extensive makeover in the summer of 2018 it has been my preferred source for music. Playing through the variety of equipment which passes through here for review it is just a pleasure to use and hear, and whatever else I may change in my system, I think my LP12 is here for as long as I am. I belong to a Facebook group dedicated to the LP12, a friendly place which is mercifully free of the trolling which bedevils so many social media groups. It was there that I first saw a picture of the Collaro mat, a strikingly red thing compared to my very grey early 90s Linn original. It sports a logo on one side, with the other side plain. In photographs it looks a bit bright but it is actually a rich red and rather lovely, at least to my recently rejuvenated eyes (cataract surgery does wonders). It is fair to say that it triggered a whole range of reactions from very positive to the usual snake-oil stuff. The pressed wool felt feels noticeably more substantial than on my original mat but it is only a tiny bit thicker, and I have not had to just the VTA on my Ittok arm to compensate.

By its nature, comparative listening with this device is very simple. Play a record on the original, then on the Collaro. To be honest, it only took one play of the Mobile Fidelity issue of Bob Dylan's 'Blood on the Tracks' for me to be hooked. The acoustic guitars had more body, his voice more realism, the drums better definition and the bass more tuneful punch. The difference is not subtle, if you will excuse the cliché. Every record I played benefitted from the Collaro effect, to the extent that putting the Linn mat back on the platter seemed to rob the music of its realism. For two whole days I swapped back and forth between the Linn and Collaro mats. I subjected the long-suffering Mrs Kelly to some blind listening tests on some of her favourite albums, so we had George Ezra, Katie Melua, Mark Knopfler and Eric Clapton take the turns

to be heard. She successfully identified the 'red mat' every time, and preferred it strongly to the original.

In the weeks I have been lucky enough to have this review sample here I have left it on the platter, but this afternoon I thought that I better check that my initial reaction still held good. On went the grey original and immediately the sound seemed to shrink. It still had the Linn sound of course, but somehow it was appreciably diminished from that to which I have become accustomed. If by now you are saying words to the effect of "pull the other one", all I can say is that for £99 it is the best value upgrade available to any LP12 owner. I am putting my own money where my mouth is on this one.



If you are intrigued but you have a different model of turntable this mat will work with a variety of other turntables including Rega, Pink Triangle, Project and more, Collaro has also recently added the thicker Tempest mat for idler drive models in white and at the same price. It is good to see that there are still people with sufficient enthusiasm for turntable replay to invest their time and resources into developing what can only be a minority interest product.

Coming up with the right wool for the felt, finding machine shops capable of pressing the material, cutting machines to get them perfectly circular, silk screen printers capable of printing on to this material, then persuading retailers to stock the product and recommend it must have been a real labour of love. To get all that and a real sonic boost for £99 makes this, to me at least, a genuine hi-fi bargain.