

Transfiguration Proteus

2015/16 by Jason Kennedy

I tried the new Proteus on a Vertere MG-1 with SG-1 tonearm and got first class immediacy alongside excellent speed and bass power that resulted in very real sounding percussion on Bugge Wesseltoft's *Triologue* album. Double bass produced a gorgeous low throb and underpinned a full scale image that was totally separate from the loudspeakers, the sound being remarkably clean and controlled yet as pacy and dynamic as the turntable allowed.

On a Rega RP10 with its RB2000 arm the Proteus delivered more bass power on Jeff Beck's *Live At Ronnie Scotts* and while it can't open up this frustratingly compressed slab of vinyl it does render the guitar more effectively than usual, pulling it out of the deluge of drumming in 'Beck's Bolero'. On a far older (and older) recording of Marty Paich's Big Band (*The New York Scene* featuring Art Pepper, Victor Feldman and Jimmy Giuffre – he knew how to pick 'em) the cartridge let me appreciate just what great musicians these guys were at their peak by bringing out the nimbleness of the playing and the tone that they managed to produce. In truth this album has rarely sounded so good and the cartridge is a large part of that result.

With decent contemporary release, *Modern Cool* by Patricia Barber, you get a more visceral presence thanks to the bass extension and dynamics on this remarkable recording. The Proteus extols all its virtues with relish, revealing the fine cymbal work that often gets lost in the mix as well as the cryptic attack on music reviewers that I had never noticed in the lyrics before, low level detail is clearly very well served. As is the way that the acoustic varies so much between Jaco's bass and Joni Mitchell's guitar on *Mingus*, there is so much space between them because the bass is placed well back in the soundstage with its own distinct acoustic. All of which significantly increases the realism and presence of the performance.

Moving over to the SME 20/3 and *Chasing the Dragon's* remarkable recording of the *Four Seasons* I was struck by the quality of timbre that the Proteus managed to reveal. The original instruments have rarely sounded so distinctive and, well, woody. This combined with beautiful musical flow and the tremendous vivacity of the performance is unveiled with ease and no apparent character on the cartridge's part. The way that it can deliver fluency with inner detail alongside the full weight of larger instruments is particularly beguiling.

