



Technics SL-1200G

The Technics SL-1200 turntable is a legend, with a reputation earned in the tough, no-holds-barred world of broadcast studios and DJ mixing. Way back in the early 1980s, our campus radio broadcast studio used a pair of SL-1200s with Stanton cartridges for all music playback, and they ran for years without a hiccup.

That, of course, was before the advent of the CD and the digital revolution, which would eventually see the broadcast industry migrate away from LP records. But DJs still used and loved their SL-1200s, and when vinyl made an unexpected comeback, it was only a matter of time before a successor to the legend was born.

The advent of the all-new SL-1200G coincides with the reinvention of the Technics brand as an aspirational high-end product line-up. I reviewed the Grand Class ST-G30 music server and the SU-G30 network amplifier in our November 2016 issue, and while premium priced, the quality and performance of the two components was impressive.

The new SL-1200G closely resembles the original SL-1200. It boasts a similar layout and proportions, but it's important to note that it's an all-new design that just happens to tip an aesthetic hat to its illustrious predecessor.

Even if it wanted to, Technics would not

have been able to simply restart production of the existing SL-1200, because the tooling no longer exists.

The first thing you notice while unpacking and assembling the deck is how heavy it is.

The die-cast aluminium chassis is combined with a 10 mm solid aluminium top plate and heavyweight rubber cladding to ensure stability, inertness and damping.

The chassis is located on height-adjustable, vibration-absorbing feet, and is home to a specially designed, perfectly balanced platter combining brass and die-cast aluminium. A brass disc insert is located on top of the die-cast aluminium platter, while a layer of rubber on the underside provides critical damping.



A rubber mat fits on top of the platter.

Each platter is individually balanced, using specially shaped weights mounted underneath the outer edge. This ensures precise rotational stability and consistent momentum, which aids accurate speed control.

The platter has a sloped edge incorporating a strobe pattern, which allows at-a-glance confirmation of platter speed across all three speeds – 78 rpm, 45 rpm and 33,3 rpm.

The blue strobe light is integrated into the power on/off control, located near the left corner of the deck. Once powered up, a start/stop button is used to instantly start or stop the platter. There's also a pop-up cue light to assist with accurate placement of the stylus on the record's surface.

The tonearm is a classic, curved design made from lightweight, cold-drawn magnesium. The suspension features a gimbal design utilising high-precision bearings, with the horizontal and vertical rotation axis intersecting at a single, central point.

The arm has a removable headshell, and comes with two auxiliary weights that screw into the rear end of the tonearm wand to allow the use of a wide range of cartridges.

The counterweight is precisely calibrated, and offers a 4 g vertical tracking force range, while the tracking height can be adjusted by 6 mm using a large rotating wheel at the base of the tonearm. The arm also features an integrated anti-skate system.

Since this is a direct-drive design, the new SL-1200G employs a sophisticated motor that does without an iron core to prevent rotation irregularities. It features a twin-rotor construction that reduces bearing load while maintaining high torque loads and minimises rotational vibration.

The high torque allows almost instantaneous starting, while speed control is further optimised using high-precision motor control technology.

The SL-1200G retains the slider-type pitch control for seamless track transitions



VITAL STATS

Turntable

Type.....	Direct drive
Motor	Brushless DC
Start-up torque	3,3 kg-cm
Start-up speed	0,7 sec to 33,3 rpm
Platter	322 mm brass and die-cast aluminium
Platter weight	3,6 kg
Selectable speeds	33,3 / 45 / 78 rpm
Variable pitch	± 8%, ± 16%
Wow and flutter	0,025%
Rumble	78 dB (IEC 98A-weighted)
Outputs.....	Stereo RCA
Dimensions (WxDxH)	453 x 372 x 173 mm
Weight	18 kg

Tonearm

Type.....	Static balance
Effective length	230 mm
Overhang.....	15 mm
Tracking error.....	2 deg 32' at outer edge 0 deg 32' at inner edge
Offset	22 deg
Headshell	Removable, 7,6 g

Price R59 999

Verdict

It might look like the original, but the new SL-1200G is a much more sophisticated turntable with performance to match. Finesse, musicality and emotion rub shoulders here, but invest in a decent cartridge and a professional set-up to make the most of the considerable investment.

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OUR RATING: 85 / 100





that used to be a feature of the previous-generation SL-1200, offering an 8 percent speed variance in standard mode, while a double-up button increases the range to 16 percent.

Instead of a tonearm cable, the SL1200G has a stereo RCA output pair and a grounding cable, while the on-board motor is powered via an IEC power socket.

Assembling the SL-1200 was a fairly simple affair, but still took a good hour or so to complete, after which I still needed to fit, align and adjust a suitable cartridge (the Technics doesn't come with one as standard).

Given the lofty aspirations of the turntable, I selected two very different, high-quality moving coil cartridges for this test.

The wood-bodied Benz Micro Wood SL is a low-output moving coil (MC) cartridge with a full, rich sound that can come across as almost organic. As a counterpoint, I used the high-output SH version of the splendid Hana moving coil design reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Cartridge mounting and alignment was fairly straightforward, but the review sample did not include a

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protractor, which is critical to correctly align the cartridge. I used the highly regarded Dr Feickert NG protractor, with excellent results, but novice turntable owners would be well advised to have the tonearm and cartridge set up professionally.

Starting off with a stirring performance of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos, BW 1046 – 1051* by the Stuttgarter Kammer-orchester on the Tacet label, the Technics deck did well to translate the crystalline precision and airy soundstaging of this recording.

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The SL-1200 easily kept up with the complexities and intricacies of the performance. The tonal approach was more neutral than I expected from this cartridge, which can tend towards a slight warmth in the upper midrange.

While the low frequencies were



delivered with solid authority, allowing the timbre and presence of the strings to come to their full, impressive right, the mids and trebles remained clear and accessible, revealing even the finest of details.

Moving onto Sting's *Symphonicities* (DG 180g LP) the Technics revelled in the big, bold and accessible sound of 'Englishman In New York'. It effortlessly captured the scale and majesty of the New York Chamber Consort.

Sting takes centre stage here, but his vocals remained in perfect balance with the boisterous strings and deep, driving bass. The Technics was able to express a believable sense of texture and presence, while also treating subtleties with care and conviction.

There was nothing overblown or exaggerated about the SL-1200's delivery – just an engaging sense of flow and rhythm, with a soundstage that embraced the recording's expanse, but retained a certain intimacy, too.

When I swapped the Benz Micro for the Hana, the result was a match made in heaven. The Technics enjoyed the cartridge's higher output, and instantly

displayed a greater sense of precision and tempo.

The Hana was able to make the most of the SL-1200's penchant for precision and information retrieval, yet never lost sight of the need to retain the musical context. The delivery was clean and streamlined, but without glossing over important detail.

The deck displayed a lovely sense of pace and momentum, while the wide, inviting sound image really enveloped the listener.

The SL-1200/Hana SH combo was able to take full advantage of Queen's theatre and drama on the evergreen *A Night At The Opera* (180g LP). The sound was luscious and transparent, creating a strong rapport

with the listener.

Freddy Mercury's vocals on 'Love Of My Life' were majestic, and the layered backing vocals were delivered with succinct, controlled precision, while the Technics effortlessly kept up with the music's considerable dynamic swings.

The Technics enjoyed the smooth, saturated instrumentals of Calexico's Tex-Mex infused *Edge Of The Sun* (180g LP), grasping the essence and splendour of the music, while also extracting and serving up a rich harvest of detail.

A broad tonal range did full justice to the deep, muscular bass, the sinewy midrange and the clear upper trebles, while the deck allowed the soundstage to stretch out in all directions, inviting the listener to experience the full intent and impact of the music.

This new Technics SL-1200G is a fine turntable in every respect. It's musically more convincing than its illustrious but much more workmanlike forebear, with far greater potential to please discerning listeners.

The direct drive does a good job of keeping platter speeds pin-point accurate, and the overall build quality is as solid as it is circumspect. It needs – and deserves – a high-quality, high-output cartridge, though, while accurate set-up is equally critical.

Such quality also comes at a price, however. Yes, the Technics SL-1200G is a premium product capable of a premium-grade performance. But with a lot of specialist turntable brands already vying for attention, convincing buyers that the SL-1200G's appeal doesn't rely on nostalgia, but on real capability, will be the real challenge.

Deon Schoeman



Software

Bach – *The Brandenburg Concertos BW 1046 – 1051*
– *Stuttgarter Kammerorchester*– (Tacet 180g LP)

Sting – *Symphonicities* (DG 180g LP)

Queen – *A Night At The Opera* (EMI 180g LP)

Calexico – *Edge Of The Sun* (Anti 180g LP)

Associated Equipment

Avid Diva II SP/SME 309/Blue Angel Mantis turntable

Hana SL and SH cartridges

Benz Micro Wood L2 cartridge

Ayre Acoustics P-5xe phono stage

Sutherland 20/20 phono stage

Naim Uniti2 integrated player

Vivid Audio V1.5 loudspeakers

PS Audio DirectStream D/A converter

Esoteric UX-3SE universal deck