

# Bits & Pieces

A COUPLE OF SHORT REVIEWS OF ACCESSORY PRODUCTS

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## Tangerine Audio Karmen

The thing about small specialist hi-fi operations is that they do have a habit of splitting up. Some while back (*hificritic Vol6 No2*, Apr-Jun 2012) I wrote about a modified top plate for my Linn that was curiously (if memorably) called a Tiger Paw *Khan*. This was a cast alloy plate with carefully placed ridges that created a plate that was significantly stiffer than the standard Linn tensioned steel affair, and unquestionably improved the sound quality of my heavily modified *Sondek LP12*.

I suspect that the Tiger Paw *Khan* is still doing the business for many happy customers, but two of the guys that used to be involved in the operation, and originally came down to install it on my record player, have split with the third member of the team, and have developed a new top plate with subtly different stiffening and cosmetic arrangements. This is the Tangerine Audio *Karmen*, and when they offered to bring one down and fit it to my Linn, I felt it would be churlish to refuse.

I was a trifle discombobulated to discover that the price was £1,400 rather than £795 for the *Khan*.

Apparently the *Karmen*'s top plate is both thicker and uses a higher grade alloy, and involves significantly more CNC work too, as the starting point is a solid aluminium alloy billet. The top plate of the *Karmen* is entirely flat: all the stiffening ribs are machined into the underside here, and the standards of finish are first class. The kit also includes new precision fixings and a new machined alloy cross-brace.

Not unexpectedly, the *Karmen* does sound similar to the *Khan*, though I also felt the change was well worthwhile, especially in its still better dynamic range and obviously superior bass extension. I also liked the all-black finish, though I guess that's essentially a matter of personal taste. Certainly I'd recommend that anybody wishing to resuscitate an existing (and possibly ageing) *Sondek* ought to investigate the *Karmen*, especially when the fine set-up skills that Derek Jenkins brings to the party are added into the equation. Happily, the significant price difference should mean that there's room for both *Khan* and *Karmen*, as well as Linn's own sprung steel top plate.



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