



I can't truthfully say it beats all comers, I think you'll find it's only truly bettered by the really exotic alternatives on the market – and at a price that is (probably) disproportionate to the degree of improvement offered.

Sonically, it offers a nice compromise between the warmth and electronic richness of, say, a Koetsu, and the cool slight distance of analyticals like, say, a Lyra. Surface noise was low and the impression created was one of fluid musicality allied to stability and security – like the best CD player you never had. It's also a good tracker – even on the most known difficult LPs were handled with ease.

For my money, tracking abilities are vitally important. Having grown thoroughly used to the sheer consistency of CD, I'm not tolerant of vinyl's 'dances' – be it electronic surface noise or sudden breakup distortion during loud passages, and at end of side. Anecdotally, at least, these things are getting worse with new vinyl; the combination of old pressing plants and the upturn in LP fortunes has made for some relatively poor albums. But fortunately the MC-1 sounds impressively secure and stable, and seems able to ride the grooves with complete assurance.

It doesn't seem to be one of those pickups that's terribly sensitive to dust; you're not forced to keep cleaning the heads due to dust build up. There's plenty of clearance between the body and the disc surface, so warped or dished LPs should not cause any problems. The cantilever is quite long, so cueing tracks is made easier; it means the stylus tip is quite visible.

The MC-1 is capable of great subtlety and delicacy too. It offers that winning combination of relaxed assertiveness only top-notch vinyl seems to deliver. The sound is immediate, without seeming aggressively forceful or unpleasantly forward. At the same time, there's an abundance of fine detail that 'tells' in a very beguiling manner.

Stereo separation is likewise wide and stable, while soundstaging is broad and (on the right record) vivid and holographic. When you factor in the relatively reasonable selling price of the cartridge, such qualities make it something of a bargain. You'll have to pay a lot more to get better performance, and even then it's unlikely you'll get superior results in every single aspect.

You've always had to pay dearly for the best quality cartridges. And while the Charisma MC-1 isn't exactly inexpensive, it's very reasonably priced in terms of the performance offered. Partner it sympathetically, and your vinyl collection will sound totally transformed and magnificent. And that's a promise! +

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Cartridge Weight:** 13.6 g

**Cantilever:** annealed INOX steel

**Stylus:** line contact nude diamond 5 x 150 µm

**Vertical Tracking Angle:** 20 degrees

**Coil:** pure iron crossed-coil with 6N OCC copper

**Output Voltage:** 0.4 mV at 3.54 cm/sec.

**Internal Impedance:** 15 ohms

**Frequency Response:** 20 – 20,000 Hz ± 1 dB

**Channel Balance:** better than 0.5 dB

**Channel Separation:** better than 30 dB

**Dynamic Compliance:** 15 µm/mN

**Recommended Loading:** 100 – 1,000 ohms

**Recommended Tracking Force:** 1.9 g ± 0.1 g

**Tracking Ability at 315 Hz / 2 g:** 80 µm

**Recommended Tonearm Mass:** medium

**Warranty Period:** 50 hours

**Price:** £750

**Manufactured by:** Charisma Audio

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