



Sumiko Olympia £225

The Olympia takes decent basic ingredients and turns them into a gold medal-winning performance

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Sumiko Olympia
- ORIGIN**
Japan
- TYPE**
Moving-magnet cartridge
- WEIGHT**
6.5g
- FEATURES**
 - Elliptical stylus
 - Aluminium cantilever
 - 4.0mV output
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Henley Audio Ltd.

Having gone some time without making any significant changes to its lineup, the last few years have been busy ones for Sumiko. As well as a selection of new high-end models, it has taken the opportunity to release a four-strong range of Oyster MM carts of which the Olympia is the second most affordable after the entry-level Ranier. The Olympia will also accept the stylus from the more expensive Moonstone (but not the range-topping Wellfleet) as a potential future upgrade.

An elliptical stylus (which is, if the measurements are to be believed, fractionally longer and thinner than most others here) is attached to an aluminium cantilever and single magnet generator. This is smaller than some older designs to reduce mass and improve responsiveness. The company has been focused of late on controlling unwanted resonances

and the entire body of the cart is focused on damping and directing them away from the generator.

The Olympia's overall dimensions shouldn't be an issue for most tonearms and its 6.5g weight is pretty manageable. The stylus guard is big and protects the vitals well and the rear pins are nicely laid out and

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colour coded. By a small margin, this is the tallest cartridge here, which might make fitment to arms with no VTA an issue. The Sumiko does feel a little less bespoke than the slightly more expensive Gold Note and Grado, but the manner in which it is bolted together is entirely convincing.



Sound quality

The smaller magnet that Sumiko uses still musters an output of 4.0mV, which is in-keeping with most of the rest of the group and should be sufficient for most systems. With the test level set, the Olympia does a better job than any other cartridge here of sitting between those that offer a potent and lively presentation and those that are tonally richer, but more relaxed. It lends an excellent tone to the struck notes of Poppy Ackroyd's *Muted* while effortlessly capturing the flow and rhythm of the piece exceptionally well.

Moving on to *Once In A Lifetime*, it delivers the best performance in the group. Tonally, it is effortlessly believable and impressively detailed; finding little elements of the percussion that are hard to discern elsewhere. Just as importantly, there is a level of drive and energy to the piece that has you actively engaged throughout. The slower and more flowing *Forgiveness* still maintains a degree of rhythm and timing that really helps the music along while ensuring that Emily King's superb vocal is delivered with all of its emotional content. The bass isn't as deep as some models here can muster, but it is agile, tuneful and well integrated into the rest of the performance. The upper registers are extremely well judged, balancing energy and refinement better than any other cartridge on test here.

These qualities ensure that the Olympia puts in an equally strong performance with *A Shared Sense Of Purpose*. There is both the bass weight and the fluency to do justice to the drive and impact of the track, while the manner in which the Sumiko humanises the midrange and upper registers is genuinely superb. The track unfolds in a wholly convincing soundstage that immerses you while balancing both energy and refinement to superb effect ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY**
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Balances energy and warmth to great effect; easy to install
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Fractionally less bass than some; quite tall
- BUILD QUALITY**
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A brilliantly balanced cart that sounds consistently good and offers upgrade potential
- FEATURES**
★★★★★

OVERALL

