

Ortofon 2M Black **£500**

This flagship MM cart has become a benchmark for many, but how will it fare in such rarified company?

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Ortofon 2M Black

ORIGIN
Denmark

TYPE
Moving-magnet cartridge

WEIGHT
7.2g

FEATURES
● Shibata stylus
● Aluminium cantilever
● Quoted frequency response: 20-31,000Hz

DISTRIBUTOR
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Launched in 2011, the 2M Black came out at a time when Ortofon had recently completed research into optimum cartridge body materials, and the result was the use of a Noryl plastic/glass combination developed in conjunction with Møller Jensen, who also collaborated on the widely well-respected MC Jubilee and Kontrapunkts. It was also the last product designed by former chief engineer, Per Windfield. Inside is an upgraded generator with split pole pins and silver-plated copper wire. The removable stylus assembly plugs into this and sports an aluminium cantilever tipped by the same nude Shibata diamond stylus as the Jubilee.

Everything about the 2M Black is well thought out; the body is easy to handle and to mount, the stylus guard works well and the cartridge weighs a sensible 7.2g. I find it tracks securely at 1.5g, although 1.4g to 1.7g is permitted. Compliance is high-ish by the standards of this group, but

nothing wild. It has standard 47k ohm loading resistance, a recommended load capacitance of 150 to 300pF and a healthy 5mV output. The 2M Black comes nicely packaged with a carbon fibre stylus brush and simple stylus balance that works better than many fancy designs. It's supplied with two different lengths of M2.5 screws, but as ever with Ortofon, these are a little soft so you can't tighten them up as much as other mounting hardware.

Sound quality

The 2M Black sounds excellent across a wide range of programme material, with a distinctively 'clean' Ortofon sound that has tremendous detail resolving capability. By the standards of the group it's a little brightly lit in the upper midband, with a crisp nature that picks out female vocals and percussion for example, yet is by no means tonally hard or grating. Indeed, it makes some others here, like the Grado, seem a little woolly.

Cue up the punchy electronica of Dave Wallace and you'd be forgiven for thinking you're listening to an expensive moving coil; the mix is accurately conveyed with every strand located precisely in its correct place. The percussive sounds stop and start very quickly, giving fast attack to the drum machine's hi-hat cymbals. At the other end of the scale, the bassline is taut and tight with energy and animation – even if it's a little lighter than the likes of the Nagaoka. The 2M Black thrives with this sort of music, and classical too. Again, it

IN SIGHT

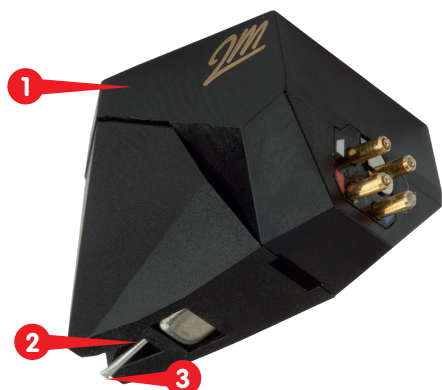
- 1 Hopelex shell
- 2 Aluminium cantilever
- 3 Shibata stylus

goes to work on the recorded acoustic, setting it up tidily with lots of atmosphere stretching right back to the edges of the concert hall. At this point, I am impressed by just how quiet my eighties-vintage Deutsche Grammophon pressing is; despite decades of (ab)use the Ortofon delivers a near-silent surface. Interestingly though, there is some emphasis on the violins, which tend to sound more 'lit up' than on some cartridges in the group.

The Thomas Dolby track is fun too; those fast-paced drum machines and dense swathes of electronic sound come over with gusto. Despite the mix being populated with all sorts of embellishments, the Ortofon keeps

The mix is accurately conveyed with every strand located correctly in its place

everything tidy and in perfect proportion. It is very good at expressing the emotion in the lead vocal and capturing the dynamic nuances in the track overall. Enjoyable stuff, although this cartridge doesn't quite have the rhythmic flow of the Nagaoka or the sheer brio of the Dynavector. It's a more matter-of-fact-sounding design than most here, working hard to bring vast amounts of detail for the listener without getting overly emotionally involved. For some this will be a huge plus, for others a minus. Whatever, it remains a great option ●



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OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Superb all-round presentation

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Nothing at this price

BUILD QUALITY



WESAY: Great do-it-all high-end MM cartridge

EASE OF SETUP



OVERALL



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