

# Van den Hul

## MC - ONE Special Phono Cartridge

A.J. van den Hul has devoted much of his life to perfecting the design and construction of phono cartridges. He has said that he aims to capture and reproduce the emotional values in performance through technical means. The MC - ONE Special delivers on that promise through its subtly layered soundstage and its detailed and highly musical reproduction of voices and instruments.

All van den Hul's cartridges are handmade. He builds about 500 each year, and reconstructs another 1,200, often originally the product of other hands. At a list price of \$1,500, the MC - ONE Special is far from his most expensive cartridge, but he has lavished attention on it. According to the product specifications, it's an enhanced version of the entry-level MC 10 Special, with a thicker front pole and an extra small magnet for improved resolution and output.

The opening scene from Puccini's *Turandot* [London OSA 13108, 3 LPs] delivers an impressively spacious soundstage, in all directions. It portrays the reunion of a blind father and his long-lost son, presumed dead. We really hear the dialog here because the two singers are so clearly and reliably positioned downstage center, a few feet apart. The son, played by Luciano Pavarotti, stands out for his pure Italian tenor sound, clear vowels, and the ring on his voice, in contrast to the darker, richer timbres of the father, sung by baritone Nicolai Ghiaurov. The two easily emerge from the orchestral foundation behind them, solid and balanced as it is, and from the chorus, which spreads out in the background.

The versatile MC - ONE Special is also adept at smaller fare, delivering an intimate and detailed sound portrait of Joni Mitchell in "This Flight Tonight" [from *Blue*, Reprise LP MS 2038], and revealing the delicious interplay between Mitchell's guitar and the twangy pedal steel played by Sneaky Pete. Mitchell's voice serves to illustrate the cartridge's impressive evenness of upper-midrange reproduction.

Treble sound was bright at first, but attained better harmonic balance after I adjusted the VTA. Bass extension was excellent, if slightly unfocused at times, though this was also remedied by VTA adjustment. I could complain about a tiny hint of graininess, but to do better in that department would inevitably cost more. The MC - ONE Special is a fine cartridge that's above entry level and sports a real-world price tag. If that works for you, take it for a spin.

**John Higgins**

### SPECS

Operation: Moving Coil

Output voltage (@ 1 kHz at 5.7 cm/s eff.): 0.65 mV RMS/channel

Static Compliance: 28 microns/mN

Recommended load impedance: 200 ohms

Weight: 8.2 grams

Recommended tracking force: 13.5 to 15 mN, or 1.3 to 1.7 grams

### ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

VTL ST-150

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