

SUMIKO BLUE POINT EVO III

PRICE: \$349



Sumiko's Blue Point EVO III is an updated version of the firm's popular Blue Point Special (BPS). The EVO III is a "naked" (i.e., exposed motor) high-output moving-coil cartridge with aluminum cantilever and elliptical diamond stylus.

The EVO III, I found, offered *substantial*, across-the-board improvements over the original BPS. Compared to the BPS, the EVO III's tonal balance has become richer and more accurate, with greater bass weight and authority, and less upper-midrange prominence. The EVO III showed a fundamental heartiness typical of live music, drawing out the natural warmth underlying even cool-sounding recordings such as the Jan Garbarek/Bobo Stenson Quarter's serene Nordic jazz album, *Dansere* [ECM]. Second, the EVO III offered very good resolution and focus that spanned most of the audio spectrum (by comparison, the Linn Adikt had superb midrange, but more softly focused bass and treble). This top-to-bottom consistency helped me hear the music *as a whole*, rather than become fixated on whatever frequency range was the cartridge's "sweet spot." Third, the EVO III tracked well and responded gracefully to heavily modulated passages. Where the original BPS sometimes turned strident when the going got rough, the EVO III reacted to tracking challenges in a forgiving and progressive way, only gradually losing focus and resolution as its limits were approached.

The EVO III struck me not so much as having drawbacks, but as having

made artful compromises. The EVO III, I noted, "trades off the 'nth' degree of moving-coil resolution and finesse to achieve a more forgiving, pleasing balance overall." Can you find moving coils with more definition, better focus, superior three-dimensionality, etc.? Yes. (Sumiko's new Blackbird is a good example.) But, be careful what you ask for; unless you are willing to spend considerably more money, you may find some of those "superior" performers carry unwanted baggage in the form of more glaring flaws.

The EVO III provided a big helping of moving-coil goodness, yet was refreshingly free of common moving-coil quirks and foibles. Enthusiastically recommended.

**PHONOSTAGE SETTINGS: 50KOHMS, 200PF,
40DB GAIN.**