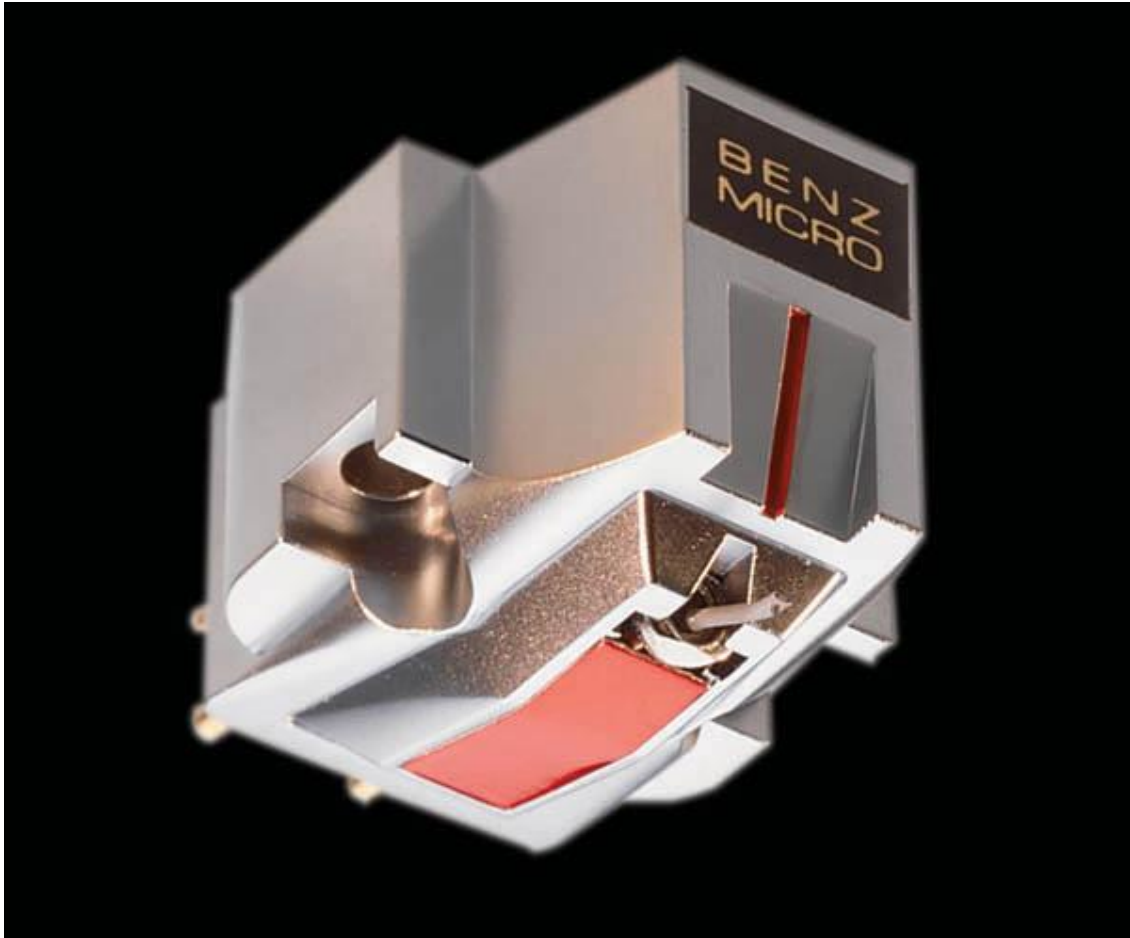


Benz Micro Silver MC High Output Phono Cartridge



Product name: Benz Micro Silver MC Cartridge

Manufacturer: Benz Micro Switzerland

Cost: €288.00 (Currency conversion)

Reviewer: Chris Templer - TNT South Africa

Reviewed: July, 2014

The arrival of my Silver MC cartridge was accompanied with some trepidation. Having been down the route of MC cartridges before, only two that I have heard met my needs, the Spectral Signature and the Blue Angel Mantis. Of the two, the Mantis suited me best and, as it's being rebuilt by the manufacturer, I needed something to use as a stopgap. I do have some low end MM cartridges, a Stanton 500 and a cheap Audio Technica. Both have a smooth response with plenty of dynamics, but suffer from noise pick up due to the conical tips. Otherwise they are very satisfying.



I had bought, tried out and gave away very quickly a Grado Prestige Silver MM cartridge. Hum and a dead presentation I don't need! So after looking around for something of reasonable price, the Benz Micro was ordered.

Spectral Signature MCR & Blue Angel Mantis cartridges

Benz Micro Silver MC Phono Cartridge Specifications

- Type: Moving coil stereo cartridge
- Cantilever: Aluminum alloy tube
- Stylus type: Elliptical diamond
- Stylus tip radius: 0.3 x 0.7 mil
- Vertical tracking angle: 20°
- Output voltage @ 3.54 cm/sec: 2.0mV
- Internal impedance: 120 ohms
- Frequency response: 20Hz-25kHz
- Channel balance @ 1kHz: >1.2dB
- Channel separation @ 1kHz: >30 dB
- Dynamic compliance: 15 µm/mN
- Recommended loading: >200 - 47k ohms
- Tracking force range: 1.8-2.2 g
- Tracking force recommended: 2 g (20 mN)
- Optimum working temperature: 23° C
- Break-in period: 30 hours
- Warranty: 2 years manufacturing defect

Albert Lukaschek's phono cartridge designs are very well known. Good sound stages, correct tonality, and a sense of realism are part of the Benz magic. The Silver MC high output can be run using the settings on your phono stage for MM types, which is very useful if your other cartridges are MM. Styli are from Fritz Gyger.



Albert Lukaschek



Styli production at Fritz Gyger

As per the sales blurb, Benz's improved production techniques provide great performance and reliability, which is backed by a 2 year warranty against manufacturing defects.

Many Series 2 models, which have their coils wound in Japan, enjoy a reduction of 1/3 or 1/2 below the mass of their Swiss hand wound counterparts. This supposedly allows faster response time and even better tracking. Featured on ALL Series 2 models, a new rear pole piece increases generator efficiency up to 20% for better musical drive. This new rear pole piece incorporates the locking azimuth/suspension mechanism, allowing the Swiss production staff more fine control in perfectly tensioning the critical suspension adjustment.

Higher output level is achieved with increased magnet strength & size: All Series 2 models featuring a cross-coil armature have stronger hybrid magnets consisting of neodymium, boron and iron. Enhanced tracking using aerospace suspension technology: ALL Series 2 models utilize a soft butyl rubber O-ring damper, custom made in the U.S. for Benz by a high tech company that supplies gaskets and O-rings to the aerospace industry. The O-ring's rounded profile, strength,

and resistance to temperature fluctuation provide better consistency and longer life to the cartridge with less wear.

All well and good for me so far, although, I have a fondness for Cobalt magnets in everything audio.



Benz Micro Silver on the EMT

Listening notes

This was a rather fraught experience as the Benz Micro Silver produced a somewhat different experience from expectations. The cartridge is smooth and detailed with a perceptible high frequency lift and a clear tight bass which is softer than any other cartridge I have used. On some recordings it excels and on others it sounds thin and not very nice. It is not anywhere near the Mantis or Spectral, but then neither is the cost.

On good recordings such as the Telarc recording of Michael Murray on the Great Organ at Methuen the sound is very, very good and the bass surprisingly also, but of all LPs listened to, this is the only one where the bass stands out. There is a tendency for stridency in the treble which again is very recording dependent and an example of this is the Bernstein Columbia performance of Copland's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, where the strings become steely, edgy and harsh. I am at a loss for this as some of the recordings I had listened to were beautiful, but some execrable, although all played well with different cartridges (which is why I chose them).

The above aside, however, this cartridge brings out the instruments with aplomb, and is dynamic and very clear with low surface noise. The presentation of the sound stage is good and instruments are well positioned. Tracking is superb and nothing seemed to disturb it despite some very loud bass on the Telarc.

The more difficult instruments, piano, French horn and drums also give no problems. This is a cartridge that, provided the recording is good, is excellent. A poor one is something else and I am reminded of Longfellow's poem "There was a little girl" and the last three lines: When she was good, She was very good indeed, But when she was bad she was horrid."

Would I buy another? Yes.

Recordings listened to for this review

Tamas Vasary, piano - Chopin - DGGSKL162: Sviatoslav Richter, Piano - Brahms Concerto 3, Leinsdorf - RCA LM2466: Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon - EMI re-release - SHVL804: G&S - The Mikado - D'Oyly Carte - Decca SKL 5158/9: William Davis, Theater Organ - Acorn CF 250: Shostakovich - 5th Symphony - CBS 37218: J.S. Bach - Das Kantatenwerk - Harnoncourt / Leonhardt - Telefunken SKW12: E Power Biggs / Bernstein - Copland Organ Symphony - Columbia MS7058: Michael Murray - Bach at Methuen - Telarc DG10049: Handel - Musiques pour orgue cuivres et bois - Cocherneau / Andre - Phillips 836.800: Richard Morris - Atlanta Brass - Sonic Fireworks - Crystal Records Direct to Disk: Daniel Chorzempa - West Point Organ - Phillips 416-159-1

Equipment

EMT 948 with EMT 929 tone arm - Jolida JD 9 phono pre-amp

Tact 2175 SADI amplifier/pre-amp into Tannoy Double Autograph horn cabinets with additional ribbon treble, mid range and super tweeter speakers.

Single ended, parallel 300B mono blocks into Goodmans Axiom 201 in reflex cabinets.

Sub woofer for organ only.

Cables. All DIY Silver wire. Speakers heavy twin cord.