

ANALOG CORNER

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MIYAJIMA LABORATORY INFINITY MONO CARTRIDGE

Let's say you don't have \$12,000 to drop on a mono cartridge, and/or your phono preamp can't produce enough quiet gain at 47k ohms—by all means check out this monster from Miyajima Laboratory. The Infinity Mono (\$3350) is big, but it should fit in most headshells, and it's otherwise an electrically "normal" moving-coil cartridge. Its body is made of African Blackwood and it weighs a hefty 14.8gm.

You can order the Infinity with either a 0.7 or 1.0 mil stylus attached to its aluminum cantilever. The 1.0 mil is more appropriate for mono LPs from the early days of microgroove records. The 0.7-mil stylus is better for tracking the grooves of modern monos from the start of the stereo era to the present, and especially for new monos cut using a stereo cutter head and stylus. My Infinity came with the "all-purpose" 0.7-mil stylus.

With an internal impedance of 6 ohms and an output of 0.4mV, the Infinity Mono is a more typical MC cartridge; it has a specified frequency response of 20Hz–24kHz, and is designed to track at between 3.0 and 4.0gm. This pure mono cartridge has no vertical compliance whatsoever. As in other Miyajima mono cartridges, the Infinity's cantilever can rotate about its zenith axis up to 180° without harm, but don't do it deliberately. If it happens accidentally, just use your thumb to rotate it gently back into position.

Also as with other Miyajima cartridges, using the Infinity Mono's long brass screws and tiny nuts to mount it in a headshell can be a difficult, sometimes frustrating job, not helped by its mostly curvaceous shape, or by the fact that the stylus guard must be removed



to access the bolt holes. You're advised not to overtighten the nuts—doing so can split the hardwood body.

The Infinity tracked well at 3.5gm. I used it with Ypsilon's MC-10 SUT and VPS-100 MM phono preamp. The Infinity is Miyajima's most costly mono cartridge; it's also the line's fastest and most linear and neutral sounding. The richer, somewhat old-school sound of earlier Miyajimas has yielded to a more "modern" sound that's no less enticing.

From bottom to top, the Infinity doesn't quite have the Grado Epoch's bottom-end weight or midband richness, or, especially, its deep soundstage. But its overall timbral presentation was fuller and rounder than the more typical lean, modern MC sound, and its transient speed and resolution of detail compared well with those of more costly MCs.

One thing I really liked about the Infinity was its top-end snap, speed, and transient precision. On an original mono pressing of Lee Morgan's *The Sidewinder* (Blue Note 4157), Billy Higgins's cymbals were pleasantly in my face, and the reediness of Joe Henderson's tenor sax produced an exciting immediacy without harshness or etch. Higgins's lower-level snare pops were equally rousing, and when Bob

Crenshaw took his double-bass solo, the transient pluck was more nimbly presented than through the Epoch, though with less "meat."

Another of the Infinity's great strengths was its unwavering image stability, and its ability to float between the speakers, with almost ghostly ease, a satisfyingly well-organized and appropriately compact picture. When I began playing an original mono boxed set of *The Nat King Cole Story* (3 LPs, Capitol WCL 1613), I didn't stop until the end of side 6. Cole's voice between the speakers was warm and mellow yet eerily real; the supershort echo behind his voice in "The Christmas Song" was easily discernible, backed by clean, fast, yet warm piano transients.

I've heard this cartridge elsewhere, paired with a Miyajima Lab mono step-up transformer in front of a Tektron Italia tubed mono phono stage (both are carried by Miyajima's US importer, Robyatt Audio). The combo produced a satisfying mix of fast and precise high-frequency transients, a wide-open but not spotlighted top end, and midband generosity that pleasingly warmed up the sound. At home, the Infinity through solid-state electronics produced a uniformly leaner sound that was no less attractive or convincing.