

EAT Jo N°10

First hinted at a year ago, EAT's flagship Jo N°10 moving-coil pick-up finally breaks cover with a new mechanism and sporting a native diamond cantilever. A girl's best friend?

Review: **Ken Kessler** Lab: **Paul Miller**

It hasn't taken long for solid diamond cantilevers to become a thing. EAT's Jo N°10 is the fifth moving-coil cartridge we've reviewed – including models from Ortofon [HFN Oct '19 & Mar '22] and DS Audio [HFN Feb '21] – that is so-equipped, distinguishing it from its predecessor siblings, the Jo N°5 [HFN Dec '18] and Jo N°8 [HFN Dec '19]. At £6999, however, the Jo N°10 represents quite a price hike from those latter models, selling for £999 and £1999, respectively. This suggests there's plenty of scope for EAT to develop interim models and fill the gap.

While all three share the brand's signature egg-shaped body – wholly decorative as PM points out – they are visually distinguishable from each other in that the Jo N°5's shell is a lime green polyamide while that of the Jo N°8 is solid chestnut. The Jo N°10 sticks with solid wood, but this time it's a lighter coloured elm. As wood is a natural material, no two models will exhibit precisely the same grain or hue, which is part of their appeal

'A seasoned pianist would recognise it in an instant'

as you'll see below. The only downside with all three is that the bulbous body does not lend itself to quick alignment. And as I discovered, this is far more crucial with the Jo N°10 than with either of its predecessors [see PM's boxout, p89].

Decorative body aside, this trio of MCs certainly justifies each step up the price ladder with quantifiable improvements. The Jo N°5's nude fine-line diamond stylus

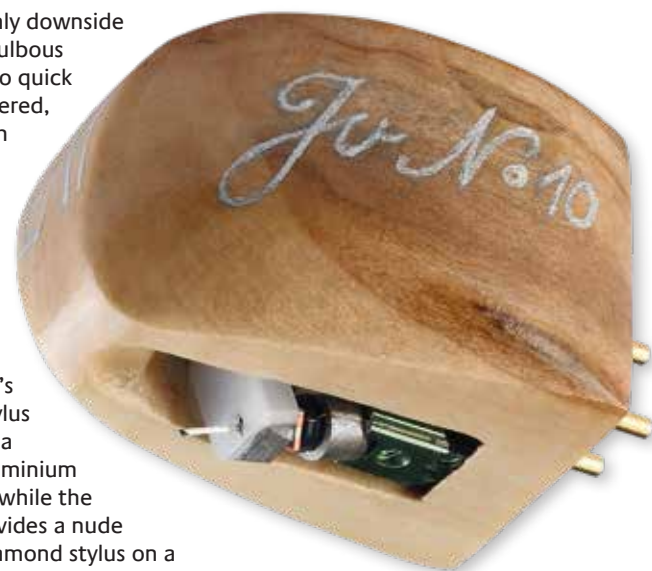
is fitted to a conical aluminium cantilever while the Jo N°8 provides a nude Shibata diamond stylus on a boron cantilever. What you gain, among other qualities in the Jo N°10 for the extra £5000, is that diamond cantilever and bonded micro-ridge stylus.

(The cantilever was originally cited as 'synthetic' but, as we go to press, is now claimed to be cut from a 'real' gemstone.) Also, the square iron former is wound with enough copper to generate a decently high output [see PM's Lab Report, p91].

LUXURY LOOKS

EAT places great value in its hardwood presentation, referencing the world's finest musical instruments, and this matters if you wish to understand the spirit of the Jo N°10. Treating this cartridge as both a luxury purchase as well as a hi-fi component, EAT tells us that each elm wood shell is hand-cut to accommodate the moving-coil mechanism. It's then hand-decorated and lacquered with a 'shellac surface treatment' by a professional restorer of Renaissance and Baroque art.

LEFT: Pictured here with its 'full cover' stylus guard removed, the Jo N°10 cartridge is very securely packed into a hefty wooden case with magnetic closures



ABOVE: Diamond cantilever, and bonded 3x80µm micro-ridge stylus, are clear to see, as are the square iron former and rubber dampers

EAT's CEO, Jozefina Lichtenegger, openly states that she wants to ensure that 'every cartridge is a unique work of art'. But be not distracted by all the artisan effort because the Jo N°10 certainly performs like a £6999 moving-coil. Consider the fancy attire a bonus with bragging rights.

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

It seems that just as diamond cantilevers are becoming more common, so, too, are cartridges that barely clear the LP surface. The Jo N°10 isn't the only cartridge I've experienced of late that demands surgical precision when setting VTA – so did the London Decca Reference II [HFN Jun '26], but then Deccas were always that way.

To compound matters, minimal clearance always makes it harder to see the cantilever and stylus while undertaking the initial adjustments on an overhang grid. In the Jo N°10, it's because the enlarged pole assembly extends below the body, shortening the exposed portion of the cantilever. That said, I was incredibly lucky with the installation of the Jo N°10 as I hit



'The elm wood shell is hand-cut to accommodate the MC mech, and also coated with a "shellac surface treatment"'

CARTRIDGE

RIGHT: The elm wood body is just a shell – the MC mech is firmly fixed into an alloy frame with threaded mounting plate atop. The delicate scriptwork is, of course, traced by hand...

it precisely with my first attempt, having been warned about the minimal 'wobble room'. Looking at this cartridge from the side, yet with the maximum allowable clearance versus correct VTA and downforce, one can see how it could bottom out on even a slightly warped LP, while also acting as a dust gatherer.

Part of the reason I avoided the former calamity is because I either use screw-down clamps or vacuum hold-down [see p74], so LPs with minor warps flatten out for the most part and do not cause a problem – but I can imagine the Jo N°10 potentially fouling on the tiniest of bulges. Additionally, as my LPs are suitably clean and dust isn't an issue in my room, the exposed underside didn't attract schmutz to end up like Pig-Pen from *Peanuts*.

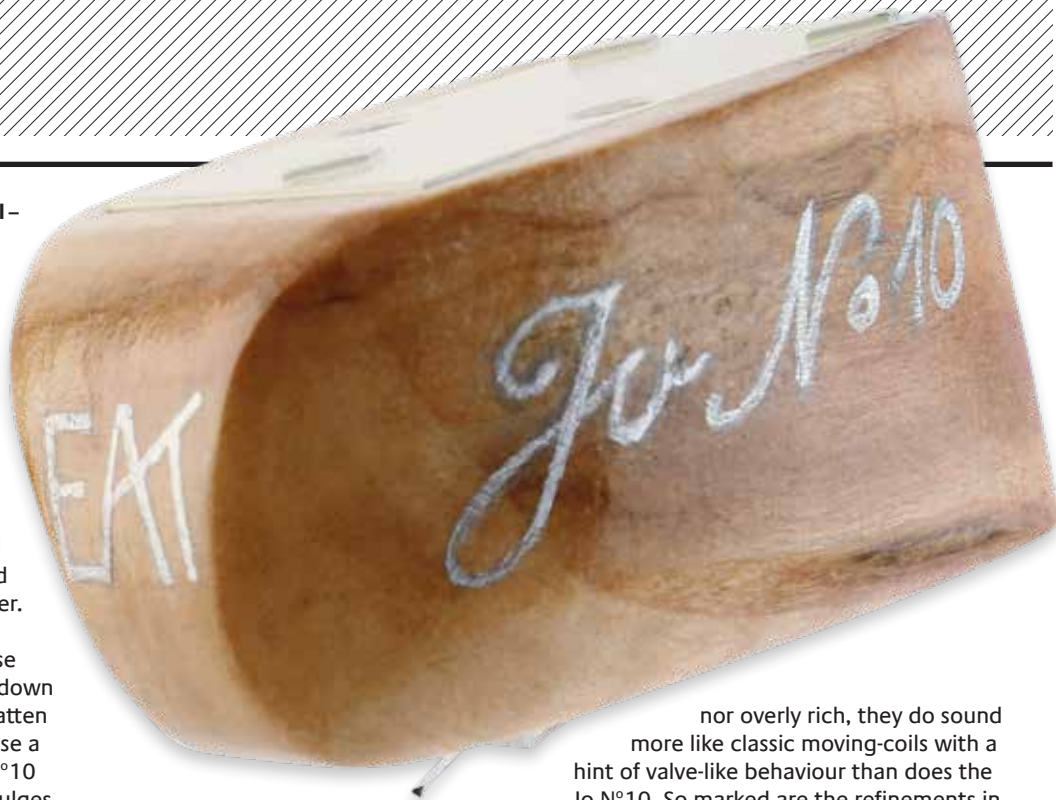
HEAD OF THE FAMILY

Shell shape aside, the installation process was straightforward. Widely spaced, colour-coded pins [see p91] and a flat alloy top with threaded holes ensured secure mounting. Tracking was excellent at the relatively low 1.7g downforce, and loading proved ideal at 100ohm – for those who like to tweak their settings, it's a sensible starting point when using variable impedance phono stages.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

MC phono cartridges are velocity-sensitive devices that derive a signal current by deflecting coils within a fixed magnetic field. However, the stylus and cantilever that communicate this movement from the groove also transmit a deal of physical vibration into the structure of the cartridge. The two black rubber discs seen behind the square iron former [inset picture] are dampers designed to attenuate this rear radiation while also providing the suspension – and defining the compliance – of the cartridge. Any vibration that feeds back into the pick-up can cause a microscopic movement in the fixed magnet poles, in addition to the coils themselves, which will modulate the induced current. And 'microscopic noise' is still important relative to the finest LP groove pitches, as any spurious vibration can add subtle colour to the reproduced sound.

EAT is sensitive to this, not only 'sinking' noise into an alloy carrier (the wood shell is largely decorative) but also encasing the front pole-piece, and magnet below, in a nylon jacket. However, as this white polymer effectively 'thickens' the width and depth of the pole, the diamond cantilever exiting through both, the Jo N°10 requires very precise installation and alignment if it's not to glance the LP surface during play. Even at 1.7g downforce, and the cartridge body entirely parallel with the record surface, the clearance is only a fraction of a mm – the merest hint of dust on the vinyl surface is rapidly collected. **PM**



Thanks to many hours with both of the Jo N°10's siblings, I was able to recognise an immediate family resemblance in the voicing of the midband and upper bass, but the frequency extremes were another story entirely. It was as if the bandwidth had been expanded, while the response flattened and detail retrieval improved. Those less expensive EAT cartridges are no slouches in either department, so the Jo N°10 had much to prove.

While I don't consider the Jo N°5 or the Jo N°8 to be particularly soft

nor overly rich, they do sound more like classic moving-coils with a hint of valve-like behaviour than does the Jo N°10. So marked are the refinements in the new model, however, that this latest Jo cartridge actually reminded me of the hyper-etched, precise sound of Skyanalog's REF [HFN Sep '24], with its similar square iron former and stiff sapphire cantilever.

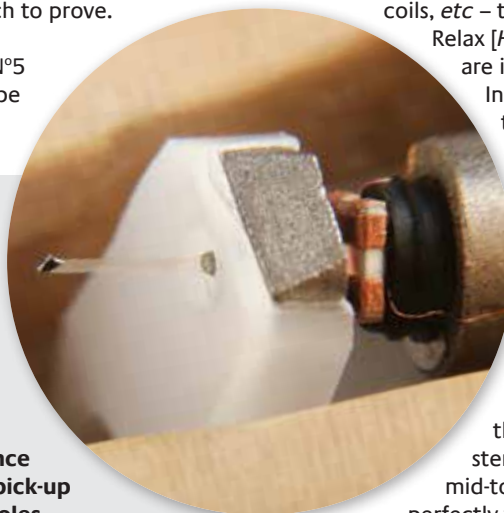
CHARACTER BUILDING

We have looked at countless cartridge families with vast price spans, differing mainly in stylus profile or cantilever while retaining the basic frame or shell, magnets, coils, etc – those from Analog Relax [HFN Apr '25 & Apr '26] are illustrative examples.

In this respect, EAT's trio provides easily discernible, audible gains as you spend more. What you also get, though, is a mild change in character, moving from almost romantic towards ultra-transparent.

When I lowered the Jo N°10 onto early stereo jazz titles from the mid-to-late-1950s, it realised perfectly their involving sound and beautifully captured sense of space. Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West* [Craft CR00434] is a joy as much for analytical purposes as for undeniable pleasure. The trio of Rollins on tenor saxophone, Ray Brown on double bass and Shelly Manne on drums is spread out nicely, with impressive depth and spectacular percussion sounds, especially the 'horse hooves' clacking.

With a completely convincing soundstage, and the sense of air almost a defining element of small jazz ensemble ➞



CARTRIDGE

RIGHT: Robust and clearly colour-coded cartridge pins make for a secure connection with your headshell leads. Despite the curves, alignment and cueing are not especially tricky

LPs of the era, the Jo N°10 transported the recording to its all-valve origins without sacrificing any authenticity. Put another way, it managed to retrieve more low-level detail than its siblings and did so without turning 'clinical'.

Having experienced how the Jo N°10 has no problem with scale and bombast via the more energetic moments of the Bob Dylan/The Band live album, *Before The Flood* [Mobile Fidelity MFSL 2-436], which revealed how realistically the cartridge handled both audience sounds and the ambience of a concert hall, I had to look to other recordings to explore its potential. Knowing Jozefina Lichtenegger's musical diet is almost entirely classical, I opted for pieces as performed on that most difficult of instruments: piano.

GOING SOLO

Piano Music By Erik Satie [Saga Records 5387], a collection of solo performances by British pianist John McCabe, presented little challenge to the cartridge in either replicating the tonality and complexity of a piano, or recreating the physical presence of the instrument. The attack attested to the speed imparted by a diamond cantilever, and the clarity was such that – although the sleeve doesn't indicate what make of piano was used – I imagine a seasoned pianist would recognise it in an instant.

My diet, on the other hand, consists of rock, soul, blues and other non-classical genres. I ran through a dozen LPs in one sitting, so captivating was the sound. Donovan's *Wear Your Love Like Heaven* [Sundazed LP5431] yielded a dead-centre image from this mono edition, but (as I am hearing increasingly) it did so with a wide enough presence to banish any feelings of a need for stereo.

Squeeze's new LP, *Trixies* [Love Records 964216311], allowed me to savour the differences between Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford's vocal textures. Some Neil Young, wilder moments with Ornette

Coleman, Miles Davis in concert, Moby Grape demos – I even dug out those old Supertramp hi-fi show stalwarts, *Crime Of The Century* [A&M 006024745450924 and p96] and *Crisis? What Crisis?* [A&M 006024745456193] to remind myself why they were played to death for a couple of decades. Via the Jo N°10 cartridge, they proved to be sonic dynamite, with soaring vocals and layers of sound.

TEN OF THE BEST

A newcomer to diamond cantilevers wishing to hear a vivid illustration of what they provide needs only listen to the Jo N°10 after the more affordable Jo N°8. Considering how much the addition of a diamond cantilever adds to the overall price – and you would be staggered at how much they cost the manufacturer – one has to decide if the 'returns have diminished'. With the Jo N°10, the gains are clearly audible exercises in refinement and subtlety, but only you can decide if they are worth an extra £5000 over the admittedly superb Jo N°8. For many of you, it may prove irresistible. ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Thanks to its diamond cantilever and micro-ridge stylus, the Jo N°10 elevates EAT's MCs way up the high-end trajectory. Aside from enervating LP clearance, it's a delight – plus it has the lushness to remind you it's a classic MC by nearly every criterion. The Jo N°10 also delivers the confidence, detail, resolution and soundstage demanded of the latest designs. And the look? Proof that hi-fi can be luxurious... and suave.

Sound Quality: 88%

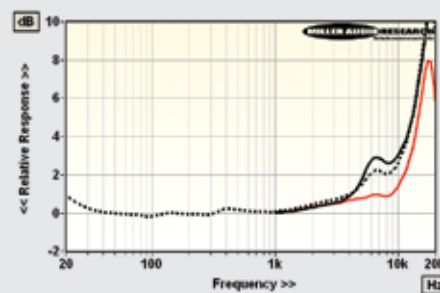


LAB REPORT

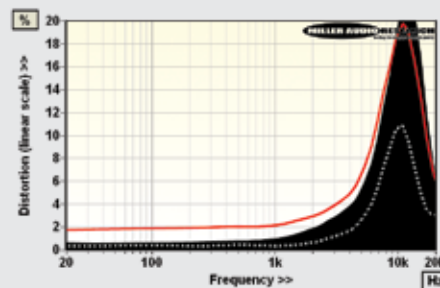
EUROPEAN AUDIO TEAM JO N°10

At the time of writing, the pictures and specifications on EAT's website reflect an earlier version of the Jo N°10 – announced as far back as High End Munich 2025. The final cartridge, pictured here, employs a different wood and uprated mechanism, so the suggested 0.32mV output is closer to 0.57mV (re. 1kHz/5cm/sec), as might be anticipated from the relatively high 15.7ohm coil impedance. Cartridge loading of >100ohm is recommended in this instance. Not only does this higher output confer greater compatibility with a wider range of phono preamps but the superb alignment of its fine, micro-ridge stylus achieves a precise 20° VTA and a stereo response [dashed trace, Graph 1] that's flat to within +2dB up to 10kHz before reaching a startling +10dB/+13.6dB at 20kHz, left/right, respectively. This very extended response is in marked contrast to the declining treble trend of the earlier Jo N°5 [HFN Dec '18] and Jo N°8 [HFN Dec '19] MCs.

Importantly, the close matching of lateral [black] and vertical [red] responses also illustrates the symmetry of EAT's choice of generator – good L+R and L-R matching promoting a balanced stereo soundstage. Stereo distortion, meanwhile, holds to a low <1% from 20Hz-3kHz [-8dB re. 5cm/sec; dashed trace, Graph 2] while the increase to ~20%/11kHz on lateral/vertical cuts simply reflects the Jo N°10's very extended HF response. Tracking is as confident as the response is extended – even with its relatively low (stiff) 12/15cu vertical/lateral compliance, and the modest 1.7g downforce, this MC is secure to 80µm via the left/right channels and holds on to the maximum +18dB test groove modulation (re. 315Hz/5cm/sec) at just 0.6% THD. While setup is critical [see boxout, p89], this is one very advanced pick-up. PM



ABOVE: Freq. resp. curves (-8dB re. 5cm/sec) lateral (L+R, black) vs. vertical (L-R, red) vs. stereo (dashed)



ABOVE: Lateral (L+R, black), vertical (L-R, red), stereo (dashed) tracing and generator distortion (2nd-4th harms) vs. freq. from 20Hz-20kHz (-8dB re. 5cm/sec)

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Generator type/weight	Moving-Coil / 12g
Recommended tracking force	17mN (16-18mN)
Sensitivity/balance (re. 5cm/sec)	572µV / 0.35dB
Compliance (vertical/lateral)	12cu / 15cu
Vertical tracking angle	20 degrees
L/R Tracking ability	>80µm / >80µm
L/R Distortion (-8dB, 20Hz-20kHz)	0.7-7.5% / 0.35-10.8%
L/R Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.3 to +10.4dB / +0.7 to +13.6dB
Stereo separation (1kHz / 20kHz)	35dB / 15dB