



# Ortofon Cadenza Black **£2,100**

Our first moving-coil cart not to hail from Japan comes with more than 100 years of Danish knowhow behind it

## ► DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Ortofon Cadenza Black

**ORIGIN**  
Denmark

**TYPE**  
Low-output moving-coil cartridge

**WEIGHT**  
10.7g

**FEATURES**  
● Shibata stylus  
● Boron cantilever

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Henley Audio Ltd.

**T**his illustrious Danish brand has no shortage of experience in phono cartridge design and is an early pioneer of moving coils. Ortofon's very first SPU-GT appeared in 1958 and blazed a trail for the technology. Because of its very low output, it came with a small transformer integrated with the cartridge and sold with a headshell affixed as standard.

While distantly related to this, the Cadenza Black is far more advanced and is the flagship model in Ortofon's middle-ranking Cadenza range. It sets out to give a taste of the company's latest high-end models without the expense. It's a conventional design with a painted aluminium and stainless steel body, and uses a boron cantilever – *de rigueur* for a serious phono cartridge – tipped by a nude Shibata stylus. This makes for a low effective mass, which is

what you want on an audiophile design; don't use it for slip-cueing on your Technics SL-1200, though!

The Cadenza Black uses technology that has been trickled down from the company's high-end MC Anna, and other such super-expensive designs. Specifically, this is its Wide Range Damping system, which controls the high and low-frequency damping separately. The coil windings use Ortofon's Aucurum wire, made from gold-plated 6NX copper. This gives a low quoted output (by the standards of this group) of 0.33mV, so you'll need a good phono preamplifier.

Thanks to its body, it's on the heavy side in present company at 10.7g – but nothing out of the ordinary. It is of medium compliance, at 16µm/mN, so easy to match to most modern tonearms. I find it tracks best at its recommended 2.3g. Frequency response isn't specified, but channel separation is put at less than 27dB. Recommended load impedance is less than 10ohm. As ever for this level of Ortofon cartridge, it's beautifully made and easy enough to fit.

## Sound quality

So far we've had three Japanese takes on what makes a great moving coil, which – to a greater or lesser extent – all have a family sound. That means precise, detailed and grippy with the accent on technical perfection. So

how does this Scandinavian design compare? Its sound is clean, even, measured and subtle; it doesn't fire detail out at you so much, yet still has it in spades. It's less technical and more organic than the AT33Sa and to a lesser extent with the Delos, and less showy, too.

This makes music like *Lazy Calm* very nice to listen to, more in the vein of what many would call 'the magic of vinyl'. It isn't trying to be an analogue alternative to hi-res digital, but instead plays music in a relaxed but beguiling manner. Things sound very genteel and delicate with the Cocteau Twins track; I really love its ease and flow.

That said, it's no firebrand. With *Jump*, there is less rhythmic impetus than the Lyra and Hana; dynamics aren't as dramatic and things don't rock along quite so much. Yet still it is most enjoyable, showing another side to the track that the others in the group miss. The sound is super polished like the Lyra, but not quite as incisive and a touch tonally warmer. Bass plods along a little more than the Lyra and the Hana too,

## It sets out to give a taste of Ortofon's high-end models without the expense

although it isn't bad at all. I love the delicate cymbal work, although it's fractionally brighter up top than some in the group.

Soundstaging proves excellent, although not quite as defined as the Lyra. It's a touch less etched and doesn't sound like it is scything through to the rear of the concert hall so much on the Vaughan Williams. Everything is more well rounded, with music coming across as less showy and more all of a piece. The overall effect is very classy indeed ● ▶



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

#### SOUND QUALITY



**LIKE:** Sweet, smooth, sophisticated sound

#### VALUE FOR MONEY



**DISLIKE:** Lacks a little energy and drive

#### BUILD QUALITY



**WE SAY:** Classy premium-priced MC

#### EASE OF SETUP



#### OVERALL

