



# Sumiko Amethyst £630

Our second Japanese offering is named after the violet variety of quartz and is also an all-black moving magnet

## ► DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Sumiko Amethyst

**ORIGIN**  
High-output, moving-magnet cartridge

**TYPE**  
Japan

**WEIGHT**  
6.5g

**FEATURES**  
• Low resonance body and enhanced generator system  
• Stylus tip: nude line-contact  
• Tracking force: 1.8g-2.2g

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Henley Audio Ltd.

**S**umiko produced its first cartridge in 1982 and all of its offerings are hand-built in Japan. The company's focus has always been to create needles that combine state-of-the-art technical performance with the practical requirements of superb tracking and a musical and non-fatiguing, sonic presentation. The company is particularly known for its budget-friendly Oyster cartridge, but its range of moving magnets, which are rather confusingly all part of the series, extends right up to the premium Amethyst before us.

Being the flagship of the Oyster series, the Amethyst is considered by Sumiko to be its most ambitious moving-magnet offering to date. This cartridge features a nude line-contact stylus coupled to a 0.5mm diameter

aluminium cantilever, which is intended to extract every minute detail from the groove. Due to the level of fidelity on offer, the Amethyst also employs a mechanically enhanced body, which does not feature in the other models of the Oyster series, such as the more affordable Rainier, Olympia and Moonstone. With its unique body, the Amethyst's upgraded generator assembly has been designed to provide excellent tracking ability coupled with huge dynamics and very low noise reproduction. Sumiko has achieved this in a moving-magnet cartridge that still allows the user to replace the stylus assembly when it has worn out. The company considers that the Amethyst even surpasses some moving-coil options as far as resolution and detail are concerned. Although it looks similar to the other offerings in the series, its body is unique and it is therefore only suitable for use with the RS Amethyst replacement stylus.

## Sound quality

All of the instruments in *Blue Mosque* played by the Don Rendell and Ian Carr Quintet are reproduced very clearly with the Amethyst in situ. Each player occupies their own physical space in the soundstage – both in width and depth. The music comes across as soft, in a smooth sort of way. The cartridge seems really at home with the easy-going jazz style and I feel I can relax and listen to it

for hours without tiring of the music. The playing of the JS Bach *Partitas* reveals a pure and effortless sound, without any hint of muddiness in the harmonics of the harpsichord's individual notes during the louder passages. However, I feel that the lack of muddiness may be partly due to less high-end detail available when compared with some of the other offerings in the group, but the Sumiko does at least present a pleasingly warm balance to the music.

Lyn Stanley's jazz vocals have a great realism with the Amethyst, and all of the individual instruments of her *Jazz Mavericks*, as well as the orchestral backing, have a well-defined position in my room. As with the JS Bach harpsichord recording, the music has a warm tonal balance, which really seems to suit Stanley's sultry jazz singing style.

**It produces a pure and effortless sound, without any hint of muddiness**

With the Amethyst tracking the pressing of *Capriccio Espagnol*, the finale is delivered with plenty of power and energy, which is a testament to its obviously great tracking ability. The muscular bass of the drums comes across beautifully with a tight and punchy delivery.

The warm presentation of this nicely made cartridge is certainly very appealing, especially for those users who prefer an analogue smoothness from their system. However, it is not a particularly insightful option and will not find friends who like the detail and immediacy of digital music, for example. What it does deliver, however, is a powerful and beefy bass characteristic which, combined with its great tracking ability, will make it appeal to many ●

## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

#### SOUND QUALITY



**LIKE:** Smooth and warm sound; great tracking ability

#### VALUE FOR MONEY



**DISLIKE:** Some might wish for a slightly brighter presentation

#### BUILD QUALITY



**WE SAY:** A relaxed-sounding cartridge that can be listened to for hours on end

#### FEATURES



#### OVERALL

