
Subject: More Audio-Technica 440MLA, a review, kinda
Posted by [Bill Epstein](#) on Fri, 15 Aug 2008 04:10:55 GMT

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I have about 10 hours on it now and it actually required lowering the arm about an 1/8" to maintain parallel so I suppose the suspension is pretty well broken in. Imaging has improved and the tonality is more even from top to bottom; the exciting mid-range is diminished but the cart is still quite lively. There's lots of treble extension, cymbals shimmer nicely, flutes and trumpets sound like...flutes and trumpets. The fruitcakes over on that Asylum place are extolling the virtues of the Grado Black today. I've had one for some years and keep it as a reminder of how bad a cartridge can be. It can be summed up in 3 words: dull, grey and lifeless. These are the same guys that think the Denon 103 is better than Koetsus and spend hundreds of dollars dressing it up in wood and epoxy and aluminum. The same Filberts say the 440MLA has no top or bottom. Did they all do their service in the Field Artillery? Midway through listening to the complete La Traviata tonight, Anna Moffo, Robert Merrill and Richard Tucker, I swapped out the 440 for the Grado Sonata which is definitely waaay better. There can't be anything better than Opera for evaluating a cartridge: great big stage, voice, acoustic instruments and performers moving around. Compared to the 5 times more expensive Sonata, the 440MLA has a harder, somewhat steely edge to transients, less nuance to the imaging and lacks the ability to convey the loveliness of the bel canto singing style. The 440 really rocks, tho'. Played Queen, Jazz, at fairly high volume this afternoon. Dynamite show, right here on Justice Ridge! Linda Ronstadt sounded great, too, inflamed adenoids and all. For "headbangers" with lesser 80's tables like the Marantz 6100/6300 or various Technics and Sonys, the 440MLA should be hard to beat at 100 bucks. More serious rigs deserve a more serious cartridge.
