
Subject: Re: Stylus Inspection

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Mon, 17 Dec 2018 17:06:17 GMT

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Rusty wrote on Sun, 16 December 2018 17:41 Seems we have an inverse parallel with turntables. You went from Technics to Rega and I went the opposite. For me it was a matter of speed drift and feedback with the Rega that sent me to the 1200. And with the ability to change cartridges with easy VTA and anti skate adjustment makes it a breeze to swap. Hope you go back to it. You'll be buying more cartridges for sure.

I'm definitely lusting after an SL-1200. I didn't really move away from Technics towards Rega; It was more that I had a friend that really wanted my turntable at a time when I was never spending time at home to use it, so I sold it to him. I regretted it almost immediately, but I really wasn't using it. I couldn't part with the cartridge though. Stored it for a decade. Then one day, at one of the regional audio shows, an Audio Note dealer friend of mine offered me the Rega table I have now at a good price so I snatched it up. And I like it. But I do think I prefer the SL-1200 for all the reasons you described.

Rusty wrote on Sun, 16 December 2018 17:41 I'd tend to guess that high contrast lighting rather than diffused would help in resolving the facet shaped on the stylus. If that's possible.

I have some 10mm white LEDs that I intend to use to make lighting stands with. One on each side of the stylus.

Rusty wrote on Sun, 16 December 2018 17:41 Hope you get satisfaction with that new stylus too. I bought a stylus from LP Gear years back when I purchased a Stanton 981 HZS from KAB. The stylus was listed as a replacement for the cartridge and was around \$100 bucks. I could never get the thing to sound worth a hoot and thought maybe all the fuss about this cartridge was unfounded. I wanted to send it back to LP Gear, but months had gone by and they refused. I ended up with a Pfanstiehl stylus from Voice of Music which for twenty some bucks lets me know how good this cartridge really is. Some day maybe I'll spring for a premium from Jico. But this cheapo 2x7 elliptical sounds pretty good.

I sent back the "Bliss" stylus, and I expect to receive the replacement around the first of the year. Here in the holidays, I don't expect really fast turnaround. And that's OK. I'm not in a huge hurry.

I do wonder what difference there is in the (Bliss) Jico and in an original Audio Technica stylus. One is nude and the other is bonded, so the cantilever is different and the tip is probably different too. The mechanical interface through the adhesive in a bonded stylus is different than a cantilever with a single material in a nude stylus. It's like the difference between a pair of metal parts that are welded versus a pair of metal parts that are bolted together. One has a bit more "give" than the other. But what the difference "sounds like" - if audible at all - I don't know. Not sure I can hear the difference. We'll definitely look at 'em both close-up and see if we can see the difference though.

Which brings me to another point. It must certainly be a huge "can of worms" in some circles and offer endless opportunities to count the number of "angels dancing on the head of a pin." The point is this:

How do we measure the differences in styli or in cartridges?

I can run test signals through amplifiers and speakers and compare the difference between what goes in and what comes out. So while measurements aren't a trivial task, they aren't impossible to do either.

But how would one test a cartridge? How do we know its frequency response, for example?

I can only think that someone could use a vibrating device that provided specific displacement (or more likely inverse/square, possibly modified by the RIAA curve) at various frequencies to move the cantilever and monitor the output of the cartridge. But I can't think of any such device. So I think we all just trust the manufacturer's specifications. I know that's what I've always done.

gofar99 wrote on Sun, 16 December 2018 20:46Hi Wayne, I use a stylus scope...actually they are designed for other things but work great for this. Many of the ones that might seem to be useful for this are really glorified toys. I went through three until I found one that really did the job right. I would have to look up the brand though as it isn't marked on it. Additionally, you will need a stable and accurate stand for it. Most that come with the low cost scopes are pretty wonky. Observation is not quite as easy as it seems as the thing you are looking at is quite small and in a location that often makes high magnification difficult. Lighting is key as well. I find that an external light source from the side is often more useful than the lights in the scopes. Send photos when you get some.

I think you're right that many of the microscopes are glorified toys. The one I bought fits that description. But then again, it is almost good enough. If it was capable of just a little more magnification, I think it would work great for stylus inspection.

As an aside, I've noticed a ton of stuff in this day and age that's "glorified toys" but that does the job. It's a different world today. So many little "toyish" even "hackish" devices can be used that work well. But only for a little while - They're not robust. This is a generation that seems to design for features, not for reliability or for longevity. Seems like everything is cheap and disposable. I prefer more solid stuff, like how things were built prior to the 1970s.

Anyway, I have ordered another 'scope. This one allows changing an optical lens to allow for higher magnification. We'll see if that will get me in a little closer.