
Subject: Tracking Force

Posted by [Cooper338](#) on Wed, 02 Feb 2005 21:37:47 GMT

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I just purchased an Audio Technica AT-PL120 direct drive turntable, which was supplied with an Audio Technica ATP-2 cartridge. The recommended stylus tracking force is a rather heavy 3-5 grams. The cartridge sounds fine at 3 grams, but I'm worried about excessive record wear. So, I'm considering purchasing a replacement cartridge with a recommended tracking force in the 2 gram range. I'm interested in feedback about whether I should be obsessing about tracking at 3 to 3.5 grams versus 2.

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 03 Feb 2005 13:33:27 GMT

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Check this out: Tracking weight and anti-skating force

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Manualblock](#) on Thu, 03 Feb 2005 19:23:41 GMT

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Wayne's thread is informative, the short answer is don't worry. The difference between a cartridge that tracks at 2 and 3 grams is negligible. And that arm you are probably better off tracking at the high end. If the cartridge calls for a range between 2 and 3; track at 3. When the needle is firmly seated in the groove there will be less wear over all. How many times do you plan on playing each individual record? Also; how difficult are they to replace, that is the real question. I track my rare Blue Note jazz albums at 2.4 grams and they are holding up fine. If you have rare recordings then you need to examine the whole objective of the table/arm/cart system. Otherwise I wouldn't obsess.

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Cooper338](#) on Fri, 04 Feb 2005 10:59:26 GMT

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Wayne and Manualblock: Thanks for your replies. The reading I have done also confirms that proper stylus seating in the groove is just as important (if not more important) than tracking force with respect to record wear. I was just curious whether there is a particular tracking force above which record wear is likely to lead to immediately audible results. My intention is to play each

record only as many times as necessary to get a digital transfer. So, I suppose record wear shouldn't be too much of a problem, but I'd still like to do as little damage as possible. Another problem I have with setting this cartridge at the high end of the recommended range is that most tracking force gauges I have seen only go up to 3 grams, rather than 5 or 6. Do you know of an economic gauge that will register that high?

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Manualblock](#) on Fri, 04 Feb 2005 12:59:35 GMT

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Cooper; Hi I have to ask; the cartridge you are speaking of; that must be made for DJ work, is that correct. While 2-3 grams will not harm the recording, 6 grams will most definately take some vinyl! Seriously at that point I would set it at the highest point on the scale than tweak it slightly for more force, however some arms counterweights will not accept that much adjustment so now you have to place mass on the counterweight. Maybe a nice 39\$ Stanton that tracks at 2.5 grams could be an option? In answer to your question I have not encountered a gauge that goes that high.

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Cooper338](#) on Fri, 04 Feb 2005 16:28:10 GMT

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Yes, I believe this cartridge is designed for DJ use. I've done exactly what you suggested: use the stylus force gauge to set the cartridge at 3 grams, and then tweak it just a bit higher. It sounds very good at that setting, so maybe I'll just leave well enough alone. But, the Stanton might well be worth looking into. Thanks for the recommendation.

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Dominic](#) on Sat, 09 Apr 2005 01:34:21 GMT

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I don't see how 3 grams is anything to worry about. Some of the old systems were tracking at 10 or more grams. I like to track at 1 gram myself but will boost it up to 3 on a bad record just to keep it from skating. I have a web page about this topic.
see: <http://dvautier.home.comcast.net/lp/lp.html> also
<http://dvautier.home.comcast.net/audio/audio.htm>
LPs and tracking

Subject: Re: Tracking Force

Posted by [Cooper338](#) on Tue, 12 Apr 2005 09:22:22 GMT

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Thank you for the feedback, Dominic, and for the links to the web sites. Very well done, and I like your common sense approach. Since my last post, I went ahead and purchased a Shure M97xE, and I'm tracking at a cool 1.25g. It is clearly superior in sound to the stock Audio Technica cartridge that came with the turntable, but having said that, the AT cartridge is no slouch either. It will be good to have a backup to use on some records that might require a heavier tracking force. Coop
