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Subject: Grado Sonata II

Posted by [gofar99](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 02:54:26 GMT

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Hi Everyone, as a devoted analog listener and owner of several turntables, tonearms and cartridges I thought I would pass along some thoughts on the Grado Sonata II (not the I version). YMMV as always and your ears are not mine, and your system is certainly not like mine.....disclaimers finished. I have the cartridge mounted in an Origin Live arm on an Empire 598 (series 1). I use all tube electronics and bi-amp feed Martin Logan ESLs for the above 40HZ and 15 inch Great Plains Audio (new manufacture Altec Lansing ) 15 inch drivers in 7 cubic foot vented enclosures for the bottom end. The Grado now has about 150 hours on it and is well "broken in". If you like female vocalists and jazz or acoustic instruments this is a killer cartridge. Wide sound stage, accurate centering and just plain lovely sound. Slightly better than most for residual groove noise. It is no slouch on other stuff as I like that too. It has a really solid and clear bottom end and hits all the highs quite nicely. It is not as "energetic" as my Dynavector Karat23MR-RS, but then not a lot of cartridges are. As a medium price cartridge I believe it to be a good buy (runs about \$600). The less expensive series II Grados (skip the lower cost wood bodies) are also pretty good (I have tried several) and the "gold" one is my choice. Not in the same league, but then it is about \$260 and has user replaceable stylus. The Sonata must be sent out to re-tip.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 17:59:43 GMT

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I'll never know this level of cartridge refinement, much less your Dynavector. Glad your investment made satisfying results. I'm in the meat and potatoes level of carts. But I've had an interest in Grado's due to their MI principal. My collection favorite has been a Stanton MI cartridge. I've procured a red, but haven't gotten it fit and aligned yet. One aspect of Grado's prestige line that was confusing was understanding what was different among'st the lines progressively priced stylus, other than the three and four piece cantilever's used. I couldn't determine that there was anything different concerning their elliptical stylus used throughout the prestige line. Thus I chose a more modestly priced cartridge. In the instance of your Sonata though, I understand that it is a nude mounted elliptical. Looking forward to trying the red out.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 18:37:31 GMT

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I have a Rega Elys I (purple) and an Elys II (blue). I also have an Audio-Technica AT20SLa from my way-back days.

Been meaning to try a Grado for the longest time. So thanks for the heads-up. Maybe I'll have to try the Sonata II.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 20:20:14 GMT  
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Quote:Wayne Parham

I have a Rega Elys I (purple) and an Elys II (blue). I also have an Audio-Technica AT20SLa from my way-back days.

That AT is sought after these days. Has a shibata nude stylus doesn't it? I have a Rega Elys I also, but it never gave me but ordinary, but serviceable impression. The most exotic cartridge I have is an AT OC9II. Got it for under \$300 when the III initially came out. But, my Stanton MI is still my favorite. Will see if the Grado can give the same sense of depth and detail. Wish Grado had an upgrade in styli like most other carts have.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 21:42:52 GMT  
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Yes, the Audio Technica cartridge is special. It was "audio jewelry" even back when it was brand-new.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II  
Posted by [gofar99](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2018 23:07:35 GMT  
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Hi, I have the AT OC9ML/II and the AT 33PTG/II (also an AT F7). The PTG33 is the nicest of the group and is pretty much a good all around cartridge. It wouldn't offend anyone. It is number three in my line up. The sound is generally somewhere between the Grado and Dynavector. The F7 is a good lower cost cartridge and does a rather nice job in many arms. Not fussy and has an easy to see stylus that makes for easy track selection. The Grado is just the opposite as the stylus is in the middle of a large chunk of wood. The Dynavector is a bit easier to see. BTW for all that are not aware of it, all the mentioned ATs are low output moving coil cartridges and require either preamps with sufficient gain or step up transformers (SUT). I much prefer SUTs and have a number of them. The ones from Silk Audio (SAC 220) and Softone PLT1 are the ones I like the best. Neither is really that costly. SUTs can get very costly and IMO probably not that much better than the ones I have. Another option in the lower cost range is Lundahl ones. Decent all around performance. All the ones mentioned need to be built into a housing as they are "raw" components. A hint if you go that way...you really need steel enclosures, aluminum doesn't block radiated hum well.

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Subject: Re: Grado Sonata II  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sat, 08 Dec 2018 15:36:36 GMT

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When I bought my OC9, the price was the determining factor to jump into the arcane world of LOMC cartridges. Knowing I'd take a whack at using SUT's. I went diy with Cinemag. Studied online builds and went to work. I used a cheap aluminum enclosure though, typical of most builds depicted online. The diy community is really a crap shoot for reliable information. I lucked out with any noise problems.

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