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Subject: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Strum Drum](#) on Mon, 15 Jan 2024 15:18:10 GMT  
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I've had my Shure M55e for about a decade and it's still going strong. Is this typical? If so, it explains why the company quit making cartridges. The money wasn't in it for them. What's the longest you've used a cartridge?

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Mon, 15 Jan 2024 16:54:58 GMT  
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I have a few cartridges that I've owned for decades. One I've had for over forty years. As long as you replace the stylus when needed, a cartridge can last longer than a lifetime.

That's the tricky part - Knowing when to replace the stylus. I bought a microscope to examine styli in an effort to be able to see when a needle was done. There's a whole thread on that subject here:

Stylus Inspection

What I found was it wasn't as obvious as looking at a flat tire on your car. There is a document written by Shure in that thread that describes the process of examination and what to look for. But it's still not as obvious as a flat tire.

I just don't want to let a stylus get worn enough to start trashing my records. So do I wait 'til I see wear spots? Or do I replace a needle that still looks good, even under high magnification?

Look at the thread above and let us know what you think.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [gofar99](#) on Tue, 16 Jan 2024 01:57:18 GMT  
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Hi, A good link. I have a 10-200X digital scope that feeds a PC monitor or HDMI TV. It has its own screen but it is only about 6 inches diagonal and not good enough to see what you need to see. As Wayne noted even knowing what to look for it is difficult to determine if a stylus is worn enough to replace. Micro ridge and similar ones are especially hard to tell. If I have any doubts it gets replaced. Styli are replaceable many LPs are not. If it is an expensive cartridge especially one that the stylus is not user replaceable I send it off to a pro to evaluate and if needed replace. This does cost \$\$ though. Often in the area of \$75-100. Still cheap insurance on protecting the LPs. For folks that have modest budgets I would stick to cartridges that have easily replaceable stylus. The 55E should not be difficult to find a replacement for. Check over on the vinylengine web site for help in getting a good source. I would assist on that, but have no cartridges by that company.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Tue, 16 Jan 2024 13:37:59 GMT  
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I have enough carts now that a regular rotation amongst them I think helps in the stylus becoming too compromised. I've binged on some nice vintage cartridges that have either good existing styli or there were replacement stylus availability. It's gratifying to find these little gems for a good price and keep them going. Several that the cart body, new stylus and a headshell came in under a c-note investment.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [gofar99](#) on Wed, 17 Jan 2024 02:04:53 GMT  
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Hi Everyone, A few of the cartridges I like that have replaceable styli are the Goldring 1042 (really excellent and can be found new with great markdowns on occasion) Ortofon OM series (all the styli interchange) with an OM 20 or 30 stylus, the 3,5 and 10 are so-so and the 40 too costly, Grado if you like their particular sound quality (The Gold is my choice, but most costly). For cartridges that don't have replaceable styli, Hana EL (or EH), Grado Sonata II is my normal go to cartridge (the III does not seem to be as good), Dynavector 10X5 (or 6 if you can find one at a good price), AT33PTG-II (again the III seems not as good), AT F7, and my go to high end one Dynavector Ruby Karat 23MR-RS. A reasonably good sounding MC is the BIN 215. One thing for sure...cartridge prices do not always translate well into performance. I do not own any but there are several AT cartridges that are both cheap and apparently sound pretty good. Lots of choices and many can swap styli. Generally though the quality of performance is incrementally better with higher cost. Two mistakes many folks seem to make is (one) getting a really low ball cartridge for a high end tone arm and (two) getting a really high end cartridge for a low end arm. Neither work well IMO. It seems to me that there tends to be a sweet sort of relationship. The cost of the arm ought to be between 1/2 and 1 times the cost of the cartridge. If the arm is pre-mounted on a turntable the cartridge probably should not be more than the turntable. For example a \$500 turntable should not have a cartridge costing more than that and you could go down to 1/2 of that. A \$500 arm could do well with a \$500 to \$1000 cartridge. BTW all prices are retail for new gear. Used stuff is a lot less and many components show up from time to time highly discounted. BUYER BEWARE of deals from unknown sellers that seem to good to be true. They probably are.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Wed, 17 Jan 2024 12:27:56 GMT  
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I've never tried a Goldring cart. Many people praise them. Something to consider. I have the Ortofon super OM-30 that I like very much. My Grado red though has been a disappointment. Doesn't track well. I've come to learn that all Grado in the Prestige line, black through gold have the same bonded stylus on them. That seems to be a contradiction to their progressively higher stylus replacement cost based on the color designation it represents. And their advertising that classifies a better performance level to that color level. I think that bonded tip skews their

performance.

Audio Technica is true value in their progressive price level in their cartridge line. Their VM line goes from conical, bonded elliptical, nude fineline to nude shibata styli at just under 200 dollars. I have a few AT's and find them nice well made performers. And the claim they're tipped too dominant in the higher frequencies doesn't come across for me. I have one lone LOMC. An AT OC9II. I got at a great price when it was discontinued. I made a SUT with CineMag transformers to go on to the MM phono preamp.

I haven't contemplated replacing the arm on my Technics 1200 table. It's a decent arm that can handle a wide range of carts. I did add a fluid damper to it that I think makes a good arm even better.

Still, my oldies carts give me the greatest kick. When the art and innovation were at its peak.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Strum Drum](#) on Thu, 18 Jan 2024 23:49:14 GMT  
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Wayne, for me it's none of the above. I've tried various tricks over the years to visually inspect it, from using a USB microscope, to taking a macro photo and blowing it up, but I'm ever quite sure I'm seeing what I think I'm seeing. I find it impossible to suss it out visually. Instead, I rely on the sound it produces, coupled with a general idea of its previous longevity. It's not exactly scientific, but then again, I don't have rare vinyl records to protect.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 19 Jan 2024 01:18:16 GMT  
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I agree with you. One of the things I found was exactly that - it is difficult to know how much wear is too much wear.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sat, 20 Jan 2024 15:34:12 GMT  
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Meanwhile over at the Vinyl Engine. A few, (obsessed?) individuals have done some exhaustive investigations into stylus wear.

[https://www.vinylengine.com/turtable\\_forum/viewtopic.php?f=19&t=134294](https://www.vinylengine.com/turtable_forum/viewtopic.php?f=19&t=134294)

More power to them but, I can't get the inspiration to go to those lengths looking at these tiny things. I'm with you there Strum Drum. If it starts to sound funky, then time to get a replacement stylus. And as I've mentioned, with my stable of carts now. Doing a prudent rotation keeps the

replacement issue to a minimum. I think.

Things can get so esoteric with hobbies. Delving into these issues. I remember as a kid that the needle as was the parlance then to call the stylus. When it would change sound character, nudging one to look at the thing. It'd be covered in a ball of lint that you'd run your finger across to clean it. Contact patches were as far away from your mind as Pluto was.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge

Posted by [Strum Drum](#) on Tue, 23 Jan 2024 02:03:28 GMT

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Rusty, you're probably correct that maintaining a steady rotation helps to cut down on issues. That sounds like as good a plan as any, and it requires little fuss in carrying out.

What amazes me most about cartridges is their quality. Sure, we all have our brand and style preferences, but most cartridges have longevity. Sadly, we now live in a world where things are designed to break, so it's nice to see something that has maintained its excellent quality over the years.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Tue, 23 Jan 2024 18:50:42 GMT

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Not much to break in them Strum Drum. As long as the coils stay intact in the body of a cartridge. The only thing to replace is the diamond styli. MM, MI's make that easy. And why I like them. The one LOMC cartridge I have is very nice. But so are most of my MM cartridges. Without all the fuss and expense of getting the stylus replaced or matching step up transformers to them. And the vintage cartridges I've amassed are from the time when the state of the art was being improved upon all the time. The innovation from then hasn't been improved upon really.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge

Posted by [Kingfish](#) on Wed, 18 Dec 2024 20:08:19 GMT

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The link in post #2 still works. I used to play ALOT of records, and you just acquire an ear for when the needle/stylus needs to be changed out. The acquired dust depends on how dusty the room is where everything is. That's been my experience, at least.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge

Posted by [Rusty](#) on Thu, 19 Dec 2024 17:39:12 GMT

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You'll do your cartridge styli justice also by keeping your records clean and dust free. A good

record brush prior to play helps. Many types of record cleaners on the market for those used records we buy. And I always use a cheap trick, (not the band) I found on the SoundSmith website for removing crud from your styli. That blue tack stuff you can find in the stationary area of a store. A clay like material that works well pulling off that buildup of lint and crud. I do it prior to every listening session.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Kingfish](#) on Sat, 25 Jan 2025 17:27:02 GMT  
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In a perfect world, things would be made to last. People would buy the product and the people who made the product would then expand on the product to make it better. Keep expanding on an existing product, that is still made to last, and we would have a more quality-driven society.

Sadly, that is not the case though.

I think there needs to be a benchmark of time, so to speak, that tells us when to replace the stylus and cartridge. The stylus especially.

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 25 Jan 2025 18:32:18 GMT  
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Opinions differ, but not by much. The general consensus appears to be that a stylus lasts between 300 and 1000 hours. Some say shape matters, and most say that tracking weight matters too. All agree that stylus and record care and cleaning are important as well.

Audio-Technica on stylus longevity  
Ortofon on stylus wear

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Subject: Re: Longest you've used a cartridge  
Posted by [Rusty](#) on Sat, 25 Jan 2025 19:58:43 GMT  
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One thing too is if you have collected cartridges. You can rotate their use to extend their styli lifespan. I have a good baker's dozen or so of contemporary and vintage carts. Which I can put on the tonearm since I have one that you can unscrew the headshell off the arm wand and put another headshell with aligned cart on. Just change the vtf if needed, height adjustment, check the antiskate and away you go.

I call it my cartridge harem.

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