



X appeal

This new top-of-the-range moving-coil cartridge from Vertere has **Neville Roberts** seriously impressed

Knocking the Mystic (HFC 499) off its perch at the top of Vertere's MC cart range, the XtraX is CNC machined from a solid aluminium alloy block. The mass of the body has been tuned to the internal generator to offer optimum support and control of unwanted mechanical vibrations.

The XtraX has a lower tip mass and a stiffer, faster cantilever attached to a low mass cross coil in a time-constant magnetic field. The cantilever is fitted with a Nude micro elliptical single crystal diamond stylus tip, designed for maximum tracking ability without compromising high-frequency response or increasing surface noise.

The CNC machined body of the cartridge is hard anodised to provide a tough and rigid shell to the body. The low-mass generator utilises a Samarium-Cobalt magnet with a low mass cross-coil made of pure virgin copper wires. The generator is mounted into the high-mass body using a quad-point contact with four stainless spike screws to provide optimum support of the generator and control of unwanted mechanical vibrations. The cartridge offers a wide frequency response of 10Hz to 45kHz, which, coupled with an output of 0.45mV, should be a good match to most moving-coil phono stages.

I fit the XtraX into the titanium headshell of a Vertere Super Groove

SGTA-HB tonearm and set the arm with the recommended 2.05g tracking force. The cartridge is setup by sliding it forwards or backwards and twisting it in the headshell so that it lines up with the two calibration marks on the gauge. I use an Image Hi-Fi Vinyl Essentials test record to check cartridge/tonearm resonance and tracking ability. Resonance peak is around 8Hz, with no resonance with the 6Hz or 10Hz tests, which is perfect. When it comes to tracking it manages 70 microns, which is decent.

Sound quality

I connect the output of my record deck to my valve phono stage and listen to an LP of which I also have a



DETAILS

PRODUCT
Vertere XtraX

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Moving-coil cartridge

WEIGHT
11.2g

FEATURES
• Aluminium telescopic cantilever
• Nude micro elliptical diamond stylus
• Recommended tracking force: 1.9-2.1g

DISTRIBUTOR
Vertere Acoustics

WEBSITE
vertereacoustics.com

copy-master tape – a recent Chasing The Dragon recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* performed by the National Symphony Orchestra. Playing the rousing final movement, it is quite startling how much closer the quality of the LP reproduction is to the tape version. Just when you think that you've got everything there is to hear from an LP, the XtraX comes along and manages to extract even more from the groove! In particular, each note of the solo violin has more complexity and detail, and the performance of the orchestra as a whole is so much more life-like. The soundstage is wide and deep and just as I remember it being when I attended the recording session.

For some female vocals, I next play one of Vertere's own audiophile LPs, *Reveal* by Dutch singer Elles Springs (HFC 511). She sings and plays an acoustic guitar alongside her instrumental backing group. The wonderful track *Waiting For A Train* demonstrates the superb clarity and attack of her vocals, which together with the presence of the guitar is quite astonishing. The bass on the following track, *Bonnie And Clyde*, a powerful rock piece, is super-tight and punchy. All the instruments in the backing group, as well as Springs' voice, sound clear, open and real in my listening room. The XtraX shows off the great spread of the instruments with her vocals clearly out in front and there is a good balance between the two, which are well positioned across the wide soundstage.

Conclusion

A versatile performer, the XtraX cartridge raises the level of what can be realistically expected from the humble vinyl LP and produces performances that have a wonderful sense of reality. This cart will be a brilliant upgrade for any record deck and will doubtless enable you to rediscover your record collection ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



LIKE: A top-class cartridge that produces superbly realistic music

DISLIKE: Nothing at the price

WE SAY: A fantastic-sounding high-performance cartridge