

EAT Jo No. 5 MC Cartridge: North American Premiere

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No, I did not make up the name. Yes, Josefina Lichtenegger is CEO of EAT, European Audio Team, and is both chief audiophile extraordinaire and chief designer. Her beauty is only matched by her exquisite taste, and both seem employed in all EAT products. This is very refreshing as most of the audio industry appears stuck in the old "form follows function" routine: black, rack, and handles!

Now playing on the latest EAT turntable representing high value and near state-of-the-art performance, the Csharp turntable plus the EAT Csharp arm, custom designed in-house by their team, is the EAT Jo No. 5 MC Cartridge. I speculate that the name is a reference to Chanel No. 5 perfume, as there are no Nos. 1-4 cartridges, makes this elegantly mysterious cartridge that much more exciting.

The Mint Green is an EAT house color and it visually pops. Plus, at \$1295, it challenges my favorite \$3500 cartridge reference for best overall definition, imaging, and musicality. I cannot even suggest a cartridge at Jo's price that comes close in overall performance.

The layering of polyamide ceramics to create the body appears to be a sonic breakthrough with tremendous cost savings, too, which are passed along to the audiophile. The Jo was designed in-house, and the motor was provided built to EAT specifications. Also featured are an expensive top of the line nude diamond stylus shape and aluminum cantilever, which reduce LP surface noise by a significant amount and strongly enhance definition. What a deal!

How Good Is It?



The reissue of the Three Blind Mice LP Greensleeves was produced by Impex Records and The Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society. The Jo makes great work of this ultra-dynamic LP, produced to challenge the ultimate cost-no-object cartridges and systems. The Jo gives up a small amount of depth and a bit of textural layering, while retrieving pinpoint imaging with a focus unmistakably improving upon my \$3500 reference cartridge, and rivaling my \$6000 cartridge. The Jo sings naturally with impressive, immersive realism. With no etch or lumpiness, I hear a reel-to-reel tape presentation, not an LP.

I would have said just last week Jo's performance was impossible at this price point! With the Jo in my system, not this week! The Hammond B3 organ on the Greensleeves LP is solid, textured, and controlled down to subterranean frequencies.

Greensleeves has about the deepest, fullest, most detailed bass ever recorded at 33.3. Jo does not disappoint in the slightest. The guitar body and strings get equal emphasis. The punch and dynamic power of the drums are exciting and powerful. Jo has as much heart as accuracy...she is quite a lady. Now you understand my glee!

More Details

I found a tracking force of 2.3 grams perfect, and therefore recommend it. A 240 ohms load brought out a mellifluous performance, and the Jo was already sounding great after a brief run-in. I recommend 100 hours of playing time for max performance if the cartridge is new. I demagnetized it with the Aesthetix demag before serious listening.



Review Setup included the following:

- EAT Csharp Turntable with 10 inch arm
- EAT massive record weight
- Wywire Diamond Phono Cable with straight DIN (The Best and highly recommended!)
- E.A.R. 88PB Tube Phono Stage
- Zesto Allasso Step-up Transformer with 40 Settings! (Most quiet and flexible in the world.)
- Jorma Origo Interconnect to E.A.R.
- UITaudio Balanced Interconnect to Preamp (another most incredible value)
- Kubala-Sosna Elation and Emotion Power Cords
- Kubala-Sosna Emotion Interconnect in phono circuit

Key Features

- Nude Fine Line Stylus type
- Body and Stylus guard made of Polyamide
- Selective Laser Sintering manufacturing process (a breakthrough in cartridge design)
- Unmistakable EAT mint color

Specifications

- Weight: 15g. (I recommend a quality, precision arm as this is a heavy cartridge)
- Frequency Response: 20 - 20,000 Hz
- Output Voltage: 0.3mV. (An outboard step-up will increase dynamics)
- Tracking Force Range: 2.1-2.5g
- Recommended Tracking Force: 2.3g. (Yes)
- Recommended Load Resistance: >20 Ohms. (I like 220-240 ohms)

Note: Mount cartridge with back slightly elevated above level, due to cartridge shape, for best tracking of warped LPs and outstanding dynamics

More Music



Yuko Mabuchi Trio, Yarlung Records and The Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society. This recording is 100% Analog, Recorded Live to Tape, All Tubes All the Time, Tube Studer Tape Deck, no work copy, LP cut from master, 45rpm, 180 gram, new RTI vinyl with quieter surfaces and more dynamics, and gorgeous jazz selections. A rare refurbished AKG Tube Microphone used as well. Jo No. 5 gave the listener a massive soundstage, black backgrounds, and luscious images. Delicate piano notes never merged with the bass or drums though only one stereo microphone was employed. The bass fiddle was melodious and full with excellent textural nuances. The drums mostly laid back in a support role, though occasionally they burst through the soundstage, propelled and energetic. The fiddle was never obscured and gave you a live, in-the-room performance.

The Jo at .3 MV output had seriously powerful dynamic swings and snappy, exciting speed and rise times. I got lost in the music and forgot I was reviewing several times. Jo did smooth and sweet with the same authority. It even did rich and liquid where called for, a feat many expensive MC's fail to do. Amazing. The Jo No.5 is a chameleon on a tonearm.

Overachiever

At this approximate cartridge price point, you usually get some fuzziness or phase distortion. Images are somewhat edgy or overly rounded, cutoffs too fast or linger too long. Jo is virtually free of these sins. My least expensive \$3500 reference is 80% free. I guess EAT wants to establish themselves as a world-class cartridge source and is putting its best cartridge creation so far—and most inventive unit—out first. Smart. (An old joke: They may lose money on every one sold, but will make it up in volume!)



Hillary Hahn, Retrospective. First Direct-to-Disc LP, 33.3 RPM from DDG. I have heard her play in person and she is that good! This LP is a bit polite and soft, but well produced and obviously a very good effort. The Jo compared to my four references ranging from \$3500 to \$12000 was not embarrassed. Actually, it came in tied for second in sheer musical perfection. The Strad sounded spot-on like a Strad. The Steinway D had all the traits of the D with bell-like, ethereal highs, dynamic mids, and very big booming lows. The rosin on the bow was applied to heighten energy and smoothness. The Jo could not be flustered or overloaded. Hillary would be pleased.

Quibbles

The Jo is a killer cartridge with seemingly no serious flaws. Tweaking the VTA or impedance, erased every sonic anomaly I thought I detected in LP after LP. If I had a single quibble, it would be that I would like a touch more meat on the bones. Though certainly not lean, the Jo would be ideal with a slightly fuller instrumental presentation. It has the speed and linearity down pat, and that soundstage is enormous.

Breakthrough

Breakthrough is a breakthrough, no matter how you spell it. The Jo No.5 is how I spell it right now. At \$1295, unless you collect boxes, this is the cartridge to own. It sings with an authority, solidity, speed, and realism only available until now at triple the cost. EAT and their partner Pro-Ject have tons of R&D funds, and it shows. For once, the audiophile consumer is the winner! If Jo can be produced at this price point, what barriers may be breached at \$2500 or \$5000?

I think that the R2R tape companies are in the biggest trouble, as the Jo No.5 sounds like a Studer tube rebuild at 15 IPS (about \$24,000). Plus, tapes off masters are up to \$500 per title. The best new or reissue LP's are \$30-35. The Jo is \$1295 full retail. Best value? You do the math!

Summary

The EAT Jo No.5 MC Cartridge is the best overall performing MC cartridge I have heard in a long time, and the current "price/performance value" of the decade. It is not just a very good sounding cartridge. Jo is a cutting-edge high tech music machine enhancing the performance and erasing distortion!

WOW!

The Jo redefines the build quality and style of what is achievable, realistic to expect, and top tracking ability worth at least \$3000. If Jo No.5 turns out to be the middle or bottom of the EAT cartridge model range, we will look forward to the "big bang" of an EAT stellar transducer extraordinaire!

The EAT Jo No.5 MC Cartridge is sublime and a wondrous value not soon to be surpassed. My 50 years of audiophile listening tell me Jo fully deserves my highest number 1 recommendation! Welcome to America Jo!