

Review of EAT Jo N°8
by Gary Lea, 09/2020 on :



E.A.T. Jo NO 8 MC Cartridge

I think most of us are aware of E.A.T. and their turntables and cartridges. You may have read Robert Levi's review on the stunning Jo No. 5 cartridge back in our July 2018 issue ([HERE](#)). Robert had serious praise for the cartridge, ending the review with the following statement, "The E.A.T. 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 one recommendation! Welcome to America Jo!" Robert's recommendation sent me to the company to seek a cartridge for my personal use. This in turn led to my being offered the chance to review the follow up to the lovely Jo No. 5, the cartridge we are discussing today, The Jo No. 8! Not sure what happened with Jo No. 6 or 7, but it matters not. The Jo No. 8 is a wonderful follow up effort!



For those a bit less aware of E.A.T. let me introduce the company. European Audio Team is the brainchild of Jozefina Lichtenegger, who happens to be the Owner/ C.E.O., and main designer. Initially known primarily for her work in manufacturing KT88 and B300 tubes, E.A.T. has since branched out into a broader array of products. These include cartridges, stunning turntables, tonearms, the aforementioned tubes, amplifiers, phono stages, and accessories. Just waiting for some speakers and cables to round out the complete E.A.T. System.

Jozefina got her start in the audio business in 1998 while she was studying towards her MBA at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Czech Republic. She went to work for VAIC, who most audiophiles are more than passingly familiar with. It was during this tenure that Jozefina learned the valve manufacturing technology. Jozefina started selling 300B and KT88 tubes in 2003 that were specifically produced for her. Three years later she bought the company. She then rebranded and moved the entire facility to a new site just outside of Prague. She took all of the skilled crew and gear and has steadily been employing new experts for her expansion of product lines. Thanks to her excellent leadership, E.A.T. revived the vacuum tube production. Every tube is handmade in the Czech Republic and rigorously tested on custom-made equipment to ensure unparalleled performance. E.A.T.'s mission was, and still is, to produce the most excellent 300B, and KT88 tubes money can buy.

It is clear from the company's product offerings that things have gone exceptionally well from the humble beginnings, and now has grown into an audio force to deal with.

Just to mix things up a bit, you will find a tab for By Jozefina on the EAT site that offers her scented candles, perfume, and jewelry creations also. How is that for diversification from a brilliant mind? Not only can we seek your wonderful audio gear, but we can also make your listening room smell fabulous!

"Exquisite candle collection L'Oiseau de Feu Bleu."

This exquisite floral smell of oriental hyacinth will fill space around you with lot of warmth but also freshness and purity. Very unique compound. You have never smelled something like this before.

Scented candle 180g/ 8 oz. +- 40 Hours."

Count me in!

On to the subject of this review the Jo No. 8, here is their take and specs for the cartridge from EAT:

"The Jo N°8 high-end performance moving-coil cartridge will extract more from the groove than previously imagined.

"In 2018, E.A.T.'s Jo N°5 moving-coil cartridge raised the bar for affordable transducers capable of high-end performance. Reviewers around the world acknowledged that it was remarkable for a cartridge at its price point. But, they mused, what would E.A.T. deliver with no price constraints? According to founder and CEO Jozefina Lichtenegger, Jo N°8 was created because of the demand to go one step further, following of the success of Jo N°5. Customers and distributors concurred that the design was an obvious candidate for more exclusive components, an even more carefully conducted, higher level of selection and—ultimately—a superlative, but inevitably more costly and exclusive precision-made body.

We knew that this recipe would result in a wonderful-sounding transducer.

"Use of the word "transducer" is the key to understanding the demands of the design criteria, with the recognition that a cartridge is just such a device: a turntable / cartridge is an electromechanical transducer that converts mechanical information into an electrical signal, working in exactly the opposite manner of a loudspeaker. This conversion is, in the opinion of E.A.T. the MOST CRITICAL element in an audio chain because any distortion or non-linearity in the amplification is ten times less than what occurs at the speakers or via the cartridge.

"For the fastidious listener, any increase in one's investment in a fine cartridge is worthwhile. The benefits include the reduction of distortion to a minimum, and the achievement of a perfectly flat frequency response. Accomplishing both is extremely demanding, requiring the utmost attention to detail, abetted by the use of only the highest quality materials.

"But that is not enough: the designer must understand how to apply these in combination: the stylus, the cantilever, the bearing, the suspension, the "motor," and lastly, the body shell, working in perfect harmony. To elevate the already-exceptional performance of the N°5, E.A.T. has employed for the N°8 a nude Shibata stylus on a boron cantilever, contained in a matte-finished wooden body made of solid chestnut. A perfect match for the new F-Note tonearm, the Jo N°8 moving-coil cartridge will extract more from the groove than previously imagined."

- Moving Coil Cartridge
- Nude Shibata Stylus
- Boron cantilever
- Elegant looks
- 8N pure copper coil wire
- Selection for smallest tolerances
- Special TPE suspension
- Dark Stabilized Chestnut / Aluminium body
- Exclusive real-wood jewelry Box (these are beautiful boxes and worth the extra \$\$\$\$)

EAT JO N°8 Specifications

- Stylus Type Nude Shibata on Boron Cantilever
- Weight 12.5g
- Frequency Response 20-30,000Hz, (-3dB)
- Output Voltage 0.3mV
- Channel Separation >25dB (1kHz), >17dB (15kHz)
- Compliance Dynamic/Lateral 15um/nM
- Tracking Force Range 2.0-2.5g (20-25 nM)
- Recommended Tracking Force 2.3g
- Tracking Angle 20 degrees
- Coil Wire 8-nines copper
- Internal Impedance, DC Resistance 5 ohm
- Recommended Load Resistance 15 ohm

As usual specs don't tell the story. They tell a small part of the story but what matters is how it sounds in your system. So lets talk a bit about that aspect.

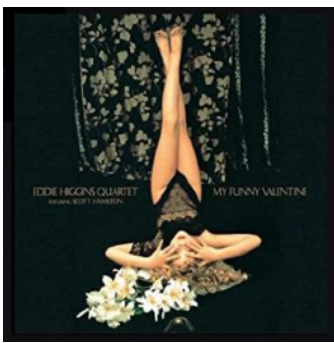
Mounting and setup were rather straightforward and easily done. Mounting to the Jelco Arm made easier due to the Nasotec removable head shell. Once aligned and set to the recommended 2.0 gram tracking force we were off and running.

The cartridges rather sizable body made handling the cartridge very comfortable, and since it leaves the mechanism fairly shrouded and protected from fingers this made mounting it a non event.

The Jo No. 8 was allowed to run in my system on my Jelco 900 tonearm with the Nasotec headshell for about 40 hours before I sat in for serious listening. As I spun a lot of different vinyl in "background mode," I could tell out of the box that this was going to be a special cartridge. It just seemed to be more alive than any other "out of the box" cartridge I have reviewed in a while. I would catch myself turning from the desk in the back of my listening room and taking note of things that just jumped out at me even during the burn in phase.

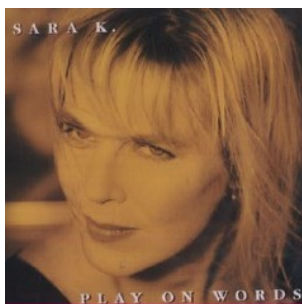
After the cartridge got properly run in I began to sit for more focused listening, and what a wonderful surprise.

This cartridge is the equal measure of a any number of cartridges out there selling for 60-100% more from my experience with many different cartridges, including my own Koetsu Urushi Vermillion (now a bargain at \$6500). I could just end things there, but what fun would that be. Want a Koetsu level cartridge and want to save about \$4k, here you go. That is just too easy. So here is the skinny (actually it is quite a chunky bit of kit. LOL!)



On the first run of The Eddie Higgins Quartet featuring Scott Hamilton track "Stardust" from the album, My Funny Valentine - (Venus Records TKJV-19149) the cohesion was astonishing. Every player gelled on a compact stage, but were given proper air and space between each player to give the sense of real placement in a small nightclub. Centered and up front was Scott Hamilton's saxophone with a slightly elevated presence, as though on a stage roughly a foot in height. Joe Ascione's drums were slightly to the right of center, and definitely four or or so feet behind Scott. Jay Leonhart's bass off to the right about 3 feet from Scott and slightly behind while Eddie Higgins piano was just slightly behind Scott and to the left, as though Scott was standing next to the piano. Each musician occupying a small club stage with enough breathing room between them to make the presentation open and airy without breaking the cohesive nature of a small smoky jazz club. The sound was intimate and warm without being as blooming or as warm as the Koetsu earlier mentioned. More neutral and slightly more analytical. Almost as if Jozefina set out to emulate the warmth and presence of the Koetsu, yet add more neutrality and slightly more sharpness to the placement and definition. The breathiness that is present in a lot of Scott's playing, along with the clattering of the valves of his sax, were just a bit more defined. Not distracting but a bit more clean than with some of Koetsu cartridges that have long been favorites of mine.

Jay's upright bass had just the right amount of depth from each note to make it feel as though I could reach out and pluck a string or two myself. The sizzle from Joe's cymbals was spot on, and so was the decay. The kick drum came in with just the right amount of punch for a jazz quartet to lend weight and timing without listeners being blasted out of their seats. Eddie's piano was weighted perfectly. Not only were the notes precise, but you could also feel the percussive nature of the keys hitting the strings and rebounding. That is a lot of information to pull from an album, and the Jo No. 8 did it with precision, and a slightly relaxed nature that prevented the presentation from being overly analytical and possibly slightly sterile. I was on the edge of my seat for the whole A side of the recording.



When it comes to replicating the midrange where voices live, the Jo No. 8 was just as capable. On Sara K's "A Horse I Used To ride" from the album Play On Words - (AudioNauts Recordings AN-1602), Sara's vocals were astonishingly detailed and very creamy, which is the best way I can think of describing her voice. Sara's voice always relaxes me, and with the Jo No. 8 it was especially pleasing. There is definite sparkle to the midrange when appropriate. This cartridge just seems to dredge up so much detail and info that it keeps you coming back for more. I found myself listening to multiple tracks over and over to make sure I was not hearing some brief anomalies as opposed to the detail that was there in every track I listened to.

Another track that drove this home was Sade's "Why Can't We Live Together" from the Diamond Life LP- (Epic EPC 26044) where her vocals just drove the track with aplomb and sincerity that just oozed from the track. The track also produces some killer bass, and the Jo No. 8 delivered it all with spectacular detail and impact. This is something the cartridge does exceptionally well.

Suffice it to say the Jo No. 8 does midrange with astonishing accuracy, detail, and impact. Those words continued to repeat in my mind over and over again. This cartridge does it all, and without effort that might be distracting. Everything I played with the Jo delivered new details I had missed before. It did not matter if it was a reference type pressing or older albums, such as my copy of Toto's Hydra - (Columbia Stereo FC 36229). The intro in the title track "Hydra" is fraught with low level orchestra leanings and the Jo No. 8 dredged the bottom of the grooves and presented it with a clarity I usually don't get until it is cranked way up. The track morphs into a rollicking affair, with a lot of impactful dual cymbal strikes. The sizzle was just right, and the decay was akin to what you hear at a live performance. Jeff Porcaro's drums had just the right balance of punch and snap. Steve Lukather's guitar had copious amounts of sustain, grind, and punch all delivered without fuss. As an original pressing of their sophomore album this 1979 / 1980 pressing is well worn.

The Jo No. 8 cut through the haze, and delivered a stunning presentation. I love it when a cartridge looks past the age of a recording and just plumbs the very depth of the grooves like this one did.

Late 80s music for me was a difficult proposition. Between Hair Bands, Disco, and other permutations, I found that time period lacking on a lot of fronts. I am sure I will get a fair amount of push back to that sentiment. That being said, there were albums and performances that I enjoyed. So many albums were over produced, too synthesizer driven for my tastes, but one album that I truly loved was the album by Ira Davies' Icehouse recording Man of Colour (Chrysalis Records OV 41592). This album was an exception to the rule of the day, and was so well balanced and so well executed. The track "The Heartbreak Kid" is the narrative of a love affair between a gal named Sunset and the Heartbreak Kid gone terribly wrong, and done to the theme of a western gunfighter who woos a fair maiden to disastrous results for him. This is another original pressing from 1987. I have never heard it sound any better than I did with the Jo No. 8! Ira was one of those underrated talents, especially as a singer. He just had a wonderful sense as to how to best use his voice. On this particular track he was at his best. A very good storyteller in his song writing, and this song could easily have been his opus. He just drew you into the story. The recording has a good blend of serious dynamic swings between the softer passages and the giant swells of dynamic percussion and crescendos of orchestral support. "The one mistake you made was just enough. That one mistake was boy you talked too tough. It only takes a single bullet to take the fastest trigger down." All against a soaring composition complete with twin guitars searing through the background. A truly stunning track and the Jo No. 8 dissected it instrument by instrument, separated them out across the depth and breadth of the soundstage, gave them space and air, and then neatly brought them back together in perfect cohesiveness.

No matter the cartridge, I am not sure what more you can ask from it than this type of performance. Perhaps others might disagree, but I have had a number of cartridges from \$11,000, super cartridges down to \$500 cartridges. The Jo No. 8 at \$2495 is clearly light years beyond anything under its price point that I have encountered, and 9/10s of the more expensive and the best I have listened to at a significant reduction of coin.

I can ramble on indefinitely about how engaging this cartridge is to listen to for long periods. No fatigue, no matter what I threw at it. The cartridge just gleans the info from the grooves, and presents it as neutrally as it can be done without being constrained or over analytical and sterile. It is an attractive piece, and if I had one negative, if you could call it that, the finish on the Jo No. 5 is more to my liking, but that is just a personal preference. Urushi styled lacquer finishes on wood bodies are always stunning, as the Jo No. 5 and the others have so well demonstrated. In a nutshell, I am wondering if Jozefina would take a trade of My Koetsu for the Jo No. 8? I think that sums it up nicely. I doubt there can be more of an endorsement more serious than that! This cartridge should be on everyone's list who are considering upping their game to a mid priced cartridge. It would take years to get to the point of looking at anything more expensive if it ever came to that at all. A rare over achiever in a world of sometimes over hyped under performers. Make it part of your journey to check out the Jo No8 and look for it at some point in the future to make it to my reference system list.