



# A GOOD TIP AMONG FRIENDS

Are you looking for a truly convincing-sounding MC cartridge with the finest ingredients yet at an affordable price? The Clearaudio Concept MC fits the bill, and so good you'll be recommending to your friends.

Cartridges may be small, but they can command big money. You see, the exterior size tells you nothing: here value is determined by quality parts, elaborately precise assembly and applied knowhow. So, looking for an recommendation among the popular moving-coil models, preferably without breaking the bank, we found Clearaudio's Concept MC. Maybe that was no surprise – we've been consistently impressed by the

quality of the current MM and MC cartridges from the Erlangen manufacturer, which at times have gone way beyond already high expectations – but still we were curious about the quality of the Concept MC, as Clearaudio's least expensive MC model.

It doesn't look like corners have been cut: the ceramic-coated and resonance-resistant housing is made of an aluminum-magnesium alloy, which shimmers

in elegant black, the cantilever is extremely hard, light and stiff boron and the stylus itself is of a "Micro Line" profile, promising a pronounced love of detail and dynamics. All of these have long been central elements of Clearaudio's sound philosophy, along with precise tuning and excellent presence. The Concept MC not only measures extremely well (see diagram) but also lives up to the company's "house sound".

The eight-gram Clearaudio is easily accommodated, needing a fairly normal 20mN tracking force, and its minimal 100ohm impedance requirement makes it compatible with the moving coil stages commonly in preamps and integrated amplifiers. If adjustment is possible, one should choose between 150 and 200 ohms, but higher impedances will start to affect to the open and detailed high frequencies available here. The output voltage is in the MC midfield, and in terms of compliance, the Concept MC will matches the midrange tonearms commonly used today, such as Jelco's popular SA-250, which we mainly used in the test.

So far, so easygoing, but one thing should be kept in mind: the horizontal alignment of the arm tube. Just out of habit, we started our hearing tests with a tonearm lift of one or two millimeters, which usually makes cartridges sound a little more sensitive without disturbing the homogeneity. The Concept MC, however, responded this setting with a slightly harsh, hoarse touch in the mid-range, which at first we thought would disappear with different recordings recording. Not so: it was only when the tonearm was dropped in to an entirely

parallel setting that the Clearaudio settled down.

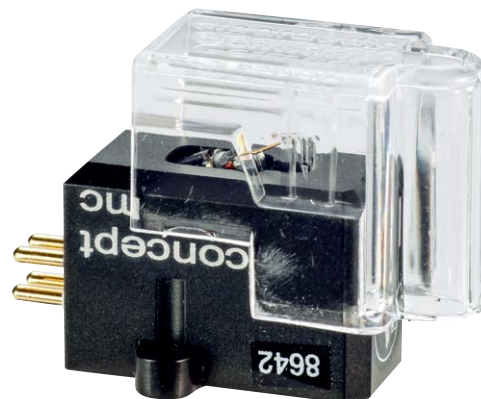
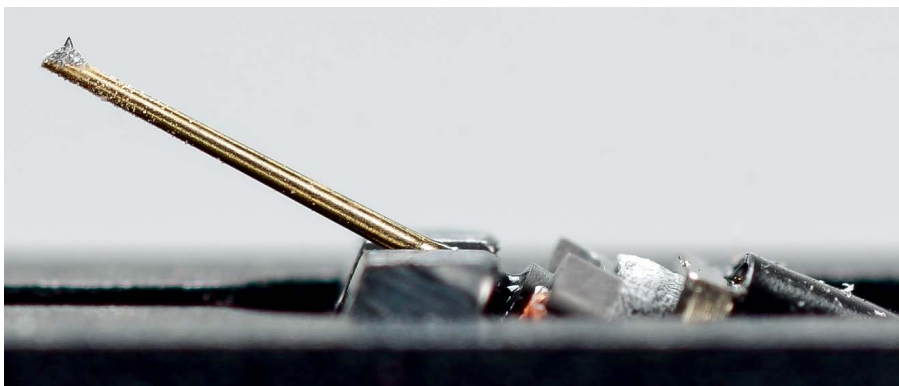
### A master of space

That doesn't make the Concept MC a "softy", of course: instead it sounds clear and clean, with sharply focus and three-dimensionality. And that's not all: the its sets the class standard in terms of spaciousness and soundstage layering, the synthesizer clouds from the soundtrack of "The Vietnam War" fading away into the depths of endless jungle worlds, Lyn Stanley's voice on "Girl Talk" standing clearly in front of the band, and the Red Norvo Quintet's "Saturday Night" presented in orderly manner, without any moderating of the liveliness of the performance.

Pronounced fine and coarse dynamics are among the merits of this cartridge, with music at turns smooth and effervescent, the bass fine-edged, sinewy and firm bass, and the midband and treble playful and nuanced overtone range. In fact, the Concept MC is really only challenged by even more expensive competitors, such as the company's sonorous, colorful V2 Gold. But then that one costs twice as much – which might just test the limits of those friendships.

*Matthias Böde*

A boron rod forms the cantilever, to which the „Micro Line“ stylus is fixed precisely using epoxy adhesive. ▼



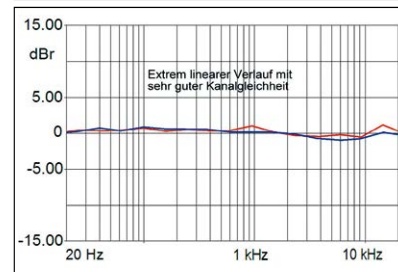
▲ The stylus protector included in the kit also fits other Clearaudio moving coils and leaves plenty of space around the vulnerable diamond. But put it on carefully!

### CLEARAUDIO CONCEPT MC

Price: at 750 €,  
 Warranty: 2 years  
 Contact: Clearaudio  
 Phone: +49 9131 40300100,  
 www.clearaudio.de

Clearaudio's most affordable MC cartridge follows the sound profile of the company's more expensive models, delivering a sound all about clarity, attention to detail and liveliness. High-quality parts and precise workmanship make the Concept MC a fine buy for price-conscious high-end users.

#### MEASUREMENT RESULTS



#### STEREO - TEST

SOUND QUALITY **79%**

PRICE/PERFORMANCE



**OUTSTANDING**