

Is this what is meant by “intelligent design”?

- World's best vacuum tube phonostage under \$1000 (Cornet MC, \$999)
- World's best vacuum tube DAC under \$2000* (Chime, \$1799)
- World's best vacuum tube tester (VacuTrace, \$1249)
- World's best moving coil headamp under \$1000 (Piccolo, \$299)
- World's best phonostage under \$200 (Bugle, \$129)
- World's best digitizing phonostage under \$500 (The Ripper, \$399)
- World's best cable burn-in device under \$500 (FryBaby, \$249)
- World's best CD reference clock under \$200 (HagClock, \$99)
- World's best variable equalization phonostage under \$2000 (Archiver, \$1249)
- World's best turntable strobeclamp (UFO, \$399)

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* with USB input and volume control

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Often, the hardest thing for a preamplifier to get right in this price category is a real sense of resolution.

Sometimes we are given a sonic picture that has too much tonal contrast at the edges, which leads to serious listener fatigue after a while. That 'wow' factor you heard at a dealer, show or friends house starts to fade after a few hours and can get downright annoying after about 50 records.

One You Can Live With

I can happily report that the JLTi passed the 50 record test (and the 200 record test for that matter) with flying colors. I spent a lot of time bouncing back and forth between the new Pro-ject RM-10 with a Sumiko Blackbird, the Rega P9 with the Grado Master and the Oracle with the Dynavector 17D3. It was very much a yin and yang type of thing, with the Blackbird being very fast and detailed, the Grado being very lush and romantic, while the Dynavector was split down the middle. Depending on my mood, I could have been very happy with either of these choices. The RM-10 (watch for a full review next issue) with a decent thousand dollar cartridge of your choice and the JLTi made for a very musical analog front end that you don't need a home equity loan for.

These three cartridges were a great fit for this test, because the Sumiko is a high output MC (2.5mv), the Dynavector a low output MC (.23mv) and the Grado is a low output MM (.5mv and actually a moving iron cart...) The JLTi is extremely quiet and had enough gain for each of these cartridges. The MoFi 3.5 C on my SME 10 is also very low output (.27mv) and worked very well with this preamp. *(continued)*