



Nagaoka JT-80BK £550

Our first offering from Japan, this all-black moving-magnet sits at the top of Nagaoka's JT range

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Nagaoka JT-80BK

ORIGIN
High-output, moving-magnet cartridge

TYPE
Japan

WEIGHT
6.7g

FEATURES
• ABS resin body
• Stylus tip: 0.4x0.7mil
• Tracking force: 1.3g-1.8g

DISTRIBUTOR
Sound Design

Nagaoka started out as a manufacturer of watch parts and cartridge styli over 80 years ago. With the growing demand for replacement needles for phono cartridges, the company began research into sapphire needles and quickly developed its own polishing technology, resulting in Japan's first diamond replacement needle.

Its Moving Permalloy range of high output cartridges which work with a Moving Magnet input has been around for many years, with the MP-500 topping the bill. This has been redesigned, resulting in the Nagaoka Jeweltone series. The JT-80BK is the flagship model.

The Jeweltone series consists of moving-magnet cartridges, which represents a departure from the moving-iron or moving-permalloy

principle previously dominating the MP range. Traditionally, the company has focused on the advantages stemming from a low moving mass. Having said that, Nagaoka has always also manufactured MM carts and has considerable experience in this area.

The JT-80BK uses a boron cantilever fitted with a naked elliptical cut diamond needle. The cantilever is

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really slim and petite and therefore has a very low mass – in keeping with the company's aim of minimising the moving mass. However, the downside is that the cantilever won't tolerate any rough treatment – accidental or otherwise! The slanted front panel allows for clear viewing of the stylus tip and makes stylus replacement easy. The MP and MM ranges have the same generator assembly, but with the MM range, Nagaoka has made changes to the structure of the cantilever assembly, the core materials and the hardness of the damper rubber – which it considers have made a significant improvement to the sound balance.

The JT-80BK is designed for the standard 47Kohm load from an MM phono stage, with a recommended load capacitance of 100pF. With a

dynamic compliance of 7.3x10⁶cm/dyne, the cartridge is an ideal match for a medium-mass tonearm.

Sound quality

I kick off with *Latin Blue* from the Don Rendell and Ian Carr Quintet's *Shades Of Blue*. All the instruments are individually clear and have an excellent sonic focus. The JT-80BK achieves this without interfering with the sense of harmony between the different sections of the orchestra. It is difficult to imagine that this recording is nearly 60 years old as it comes across with all the clarity and presence of a modern pressing.

Moving on to some baroque music with Trevor Pinnock on the harpsichord playing Bach's *Partita No.1 In B Flat Major*, all of the tonal complexities of this wonderful piece are clearly reproduced. When Pinnock changes the stops part of the way through the third movement (*Corrente*), the tone of the instrument instantly brightens. The elliptical diamond stylus extracts all of the details from this wonderful recording.

For some female vocals, I next listen to Lyn Stanley's *It's Magic*. Nagaoka has a great reputation for its ability to reproduce vocals well and I am certainly not disappointed here. Stanley's rendition comes across as very classy as her relaxed and sophisticated style of singing comes through with marvellous clarity.

For a full orchestra, I play Chabrier's *España* by The National Symphony Orchestra. The beautiful flowing musicality of the orchestra is very evident with the JT-80BK and the energy of this powerful piece, as well as the large dynamic range, is faithfully reproduced.

To summarise, the JT-80BK offers a really natural-sounding presentation across a wide range of different music. In particular, ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Natural, realistic and full sound quality

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Delicate cantilever assembly

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: A cartridge that offers a realistic and refined sound

FEATURES



OVERALL

