



Audio-Technica VM750SH £389



With its advanced stylus profile and clever engineering touches, this MM design offers detail and precision

HANDLE WITH CARE

The Audio-Technica weighs 8g, which is towards the upper end of the group spread, but it shouldn't prove difficult for most tonearms to handle. The cartridge's overall dimensions are relatively small as well, which helps a little with fitting, although the brand's ongoing enthusiasm for using unthreaded bodies is less appealing. The VM750SH has to be secured using separate nuts and bolts, which is fiddly on a one-piece arm even for experienced hands, especially as the guard is a fairly minimalist 'roll bar' type arrangement.

It is easy enough to remove the stylus, however, which makes cartridge installation considerably less nerve wracking. A replacement stylus, the VMN50SH, is available for £272 and there is also the option to fit the flagship £522 VMN60SLC stylus as a further upgrade.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Audio-Technica VM750SH

ORIGIN
Japan

TYPE
Moving-magnet cartridge

WEIGHT
8g

FEATURES
● Aluminium body
● Aluminium cantilever
● Nude Shibata stylus

DISTRIBUTOR
Audio-Technica

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After many years of service, Audio-Technica replaced almost its entire lineup of moving-magnet cartridges last year. The new VM range builds on the virtues of its predecessors and the Japanese brand makes great play of its interchangeable styli. This is the second model from the top of the new range and the body is made from cast aluminium, claimed to reduce unwanted interference and vibration.

Despite being one of the more affordable cartridge designs in the group, the VM750SH is very well specified and is one of the most affordable cartridges to feature a nude Shibata profile stylus – one of the oldest line contact stylus profiles – at the business end, mounted in an aluminium cantilever.

The generating system is built around para-toroidal coils that reduce magnetic flux leakage, and there is a central shield plate between the left and right channels to significantly reduce crosstalk.

With an output of 4mV, the VM750SH is towards the lower end of the group

spread, but shouldn't present any significant challenges for a typical moving-magnet phono stage.

The overall fit and finish is extremely good. The use of a metal body gives it a solidity that some here are unable to match and details like the cartridge pins all feel very sturdy and carefully designed. As with other Audio-Technica cartridge designs, the VM750SH is not fitted with a threaded body, which makes installation a little more tricky than some rivals (see boxout).

Sound quality

With the test level achieved, the VM750SH has some attributes that are consistent across the bulk of the test program. This is a very detailed performer that can find nuances in music that some others tend to miss. The sweeping brass of Kamasi Washington's *Humility* is resolved into individual instruments without losing the sense of the piece as a whole. There is also a very pleasing impression of weight and scale and the low end is well integrated with the rest of the frequency response, which helps the overall sense of realism. This spaciousness translates into a beautifully rendered soundstage that is always proportionally correct to the music being played.

The overall tonal balance is convincing if slightly on the forward side of neutral. The piano in Tori Amos' *Pretty Good Year* sounds natural and has a lovely sense of delay to the struck keys. Vocals are smooth and

well presented but feel ever so slightly bright, which is most apparent when there is the sudden leap in output midway through the track. However, there's enough headroom to handle the increase in output and it doesn't sound compressed at any stage.

In terms of timing, it powers through Bob Seger's *Hollywood Nights* with enthusiasm and handles the complex percussion with its customary detail and precision. The fractionally forward presentation is apparent here, though, leaving the track sounding very slightly thin.

Meanwhile, with the rather richer and fuller recording of My Baby's *Love Dance*, this is much less of a problem – giving the VM750SH the chance to really show off its excellent bass response to good effect. That slight sense of restraint and control makes itself felt again here, but it never tips over into sounding sluggish while vocals are well handled ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

LIKE: Detailed and spacious sound; build quality

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

DISLIKE: Can sound a little bright; tricky to fit

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

WESAY: A capable cartridge that handles a wide selection of material very well

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

