

Lector Phono Amp System (£1550)



Taking up more shelf space than other models, the Lector is heavily built with a steel case and wood end cheeks. Its black acrylic front panel carries a 'standby' switch, while the real power switch is on the separate power supply unit, which feeds the main unit via a 1.5m lead and locking connector.

Stars of small vents in the top plate reveal the positions of the five tubes mounted vertically on the circuit board below. There are two ECC81 (12AT7) double triodes for the MM input gain stage and a third for a cathode follower output. Two ECC88 (6922) double triodes provide extra gain for the MC input.

On the back panel is an MM/MC mode switch with separate pairs of phono sockets for these inputs. A further pair of sockets accept colour-coded resistor plugs to set the MC input impedance at 30, 100, 470ohm or 1kohm.

DEEP 'N' WIDE

With the Ortofon cartridge and *The King James Version*, the Lector gave a spectacularly wide stereo stage that also had depth. It presented the brass and sax sections quite vividly, with a sense of air around every instrument or section. I held my breath waiting for Les DeMerle's 'Cherokee' drum solo solo and I wasn't disappointed, as I could almost see the whirling sticks in his show piece.

With the Lector, lowering the stylus at the start of *461 Ocean Boulevard* seemed just like turning on a tap, as the power and energy of 'Motherless Children' came rushing out of the speakers. Carl Radle's bass



had a well described upper harmonic structure and clear attack, and plenty of power below.

Turning to acoustic bass, with 'Easy Money', the bottom-end sound was convincing if not entirely even, a little heavy and even slightly ponderous. But there was a really firm and arresting presentation of Rickie Lee's vocal, upfront and taking charge of the proceedings, yet with real ease and naturalness.

Moving on to Barbirolli's English string music, the Lector gave this recording an relatively incisive and lively character, a little mid-forward, but with a telling evocation of the recording venue and its ambience. Elgar's fugue in the *Allegro*, with its interaction between groups of strings, came over with real vigour.

Switching to the Koetsu Black, the Lector had Knopfler's 'Sultans Of Swing' vocal sounding incredibly relaxed, and the guitar sound imbued with richness and character.

With the Roksan Corus Silver moving-magnet, the Lector was punchier than the Icon or Unison, more forceful in the midrange and more explicit in the bass. On 'Sultans', in fact, the bass seemed too insistent, although the midrange lucidity was hugely impressive.

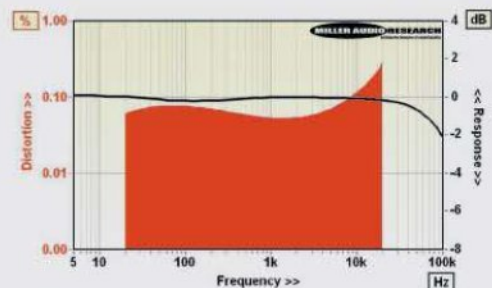
Sound Quality: 85%

ABOVE: Cherry-wood end cheeks come as standard on the main unit, but you can have them on the power supply box too, as an optional extra. Or you can specify chunky acrylic side pieces instead, for one or both units, again at extra cost

HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

There have probably been some slight 'tweaks' made to this model since the manual was printed for not only has the back panel layout changed slightly but so has the specified gain – the quoted 47dB/66dB MM/MC values are 41.6dB/64.6dB respectively in practice. There's some slight asymmetry suggested by the 72dB (left) and 76dB (right) A-wtd S/N ratios for its MM input and both PSU/capacitive coupling indicated in the poorer 36dB/20Hz and 43dB/20kHz channel separation figures, nevertheless the Lector is otherwise very 'clean'.

The equalised response is utterly flat to 5Hz [beware warps – see black trace, below] and extends to -2.1dB/100kHz while the 11V maximum output is delivered through a usefully low 210ohm source impedance. This is one phono preamp that should at least behave consistently with different partnering amplifiers. Input overload margins (89mV vs. 6.3mV) reflect the 23dB difference in MM/MC gain while distortion is very low at ~0.06% through bass and mid, increasing to ~0.3% at the treble extremes [see red infill, below]. PM



ABOVE: RIAA-corrected response from 5Hz-100kHz (black) plus distortion versus frequency (red) from 20Hz-20kHz

Input loading (MM/MC)	47kohm / 30/100/470/1kohm
Input sensitivity (MM/MC re. 0dBV)	8.3mV / 0.59mV
Input overload (MM/MC)	89mV / 6.3mV
Maximum output (re. 1% THD)	10.5V
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 5mV/500µV in)	75.8dB / 67.9dB
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -0.15dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, re. 0dBV)	0.053-0.29%
Power consumption	34W
Dimensions (WHD - Pre/PSU)	440x85x308/200x85x308mm



ABOVE: The extra pair of phono sockets is for plug-in resistors which adjust MC load impedance. When none are fitted, as here, the load is 47k ohms