



CARTRIDGE OF THE YEAR

EMT JSD Pure Black
(with STX-5/1- step-up transformer)



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EMT began life as a German cartridge maker in 1940. In 2014, the company closed its German doors but soon adopted Swiss nationality... and the legend continues unabated.

The brand now makes eight cartridges as well as headshells, a very fine step-up transformer and one of the most respected phono stages ever produced: the JPA66. We looked at the JSD Pure Black; a moving coil design in the middle of the range, and tested it alongside the remarkable STX-5/1 step-up transformer. While there is nothing ‘odd’ about the JSD Pure Black’s output to challenge any good phono stage, the sound quality of cartridge and transformer in combination make it an ideal match. There are also a range of coil-winding options for each cartridge; we went with the pure silver half-coil option.

We were extremely impressed by the EMT cartridge with or without the heavy step-up transformer. Alan Sircom felt that, “It cuts its own distinct sonic path, perhaps with a few sonic nods to the best in Audio Technica in terms of transient speed and directness of musical attack, but also with more body and texture. It’s arguably more about musical drive than about air and spaciousness; it puts out a good soundstage, but there are better image resolvers than the Pure Black. However, none of those soundstage makers at anything close to the Pure Black’s price have the same direct connection with music’s dynamism or energy. And none can match it for speed and attack.” While many vinyl brands can call on a broadcast background, few make that ‘transcription’ heritage as sonically clear as EMT; “It’s about as honest as it gets, and that is perhaps even more beguiling than the warmth inherent to vinyl because it reminds you why so many feel LP remains a better source of ‘high-res’ than high-resolution digital audio. There is so much information being extracted from the groove, the sound is uncanny. Add to this superb tracking and an ability to listen through pops and crackle well and this makes for a real star performer.” +

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