



Lyra **Delos** £1,400

Another cart from the land of the rising sun, the Delos' skeletal design makes it stand out from the crowd

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Lyra Delos

ORIGIN
Japan

TYPE
Low-output moving-coil cartridge

WEIGHT
7.3g

FEATURES
 • Micro-ridge line contact stylus
 • Boron cantilever
 • Quoted frequency response: 10-50,000Hz

DISTRIBUTOR
Symmetry Systems

Named after one of Greece's best-known mythological sites, there's a degree of intrigue surrounding the Lyra brand. The designer, Tokyo-based Jonathan Carr, has built a fine reputation for moving-coil carts over the past 30 or so years and subcontracts the hand-building of them to artisans Yoshinori Mishima and Akiko Ishiyama. Lyra pioneered this distinctive skeletal style of moving-coil design, which nullifies the effect of body resonance. The downside is it makes the cartridge even more vulnerable when handling.

The chassis is hewn from a solid 6063 aluminium billet, deliberately non-parallel in its shape to minimise sensitivity to external vibrations. 6N purity copper signal coils are affixed to the body, with square-shaped high-purity iron formers and a solid boron cantilever is attached to these using a

asymmetric single-point suspension system. This is designed to minimise angular discrepancies between magnetic circuit, signal coils and core when the stylus is tracking the record groove. It's claimed to yield better resolution, tracking ability and dynamic range. The stylus is a Japanese-sourced Namiki microridge line-contact nude diamond type.

The Delos' *pièce de résistance* is it's not boringly forensic, but it is high energy

The stylus guard is the saving grace for those fitting the Delos; it's designed to shield the whole body while you're installing it in a headshell. Build quality is superb and this cartridge feels more exotic than most here. I find it tracks extremely well at the recommended 1.7g and it puts out a healthy (claimed) 0.6mV@5cm/second. It's a medium weight (7.3g), low/medium quoted compliance design (12x10cm/dyne at 100Hz). Frequency response is put at 10-50,000Hz and channel separation is greater than 30dB at 1kHz. Loading is unusual; Lyra recommends it should be anything between 97.6ohm and 806ohm into a standard MC phono input, "finalise by listening" says Lyra!

Sound quality

This is another design I know well, as its predecessor, the Dorian, replaced my aforementioned Audio-Technica! The Delos is actually quite similar in some ways to the AT33Sa. It shares many of the same traits with a distinctively delicate, detailed, forensic sound – but, to use the Spinal Tap analogy – “this one goes up to 11”.

Some might call it a very Japanese style, but however you label it you're a very long way from Shure or Grado moving magnets. The resolution is mind-blowing, with an almost translucent midrange that excavates vast tracts of information out of the record groove. The Cocteau Twins' *Lazy Calm* is an ethereal mid-Eighties indie track, but listening to it is like being in the mixing booth, hearing the original analogue multi-track in all its glory. Likewise, with the Vaughan Williams piece, the Delos scythes through the recorded acoustic to deliver a hugely atmospheric rendition of the performance.

Yet its *pièce de résistance* is that it's not boringly forensic; it might be hi-res, but it's also high energy. The Van Halen track is a barrel of fun, the Lyra rocking along to the groove, while diligently signposting all of its many production effects. The only downside is that it has so much focus that you can end up thinking that the recording isn't quite as good as it could be.

It is lots of fun on the Basheads dance track too; this is a digitally mastered early-Nineties piece and so not the last word in hi-fi. But the Lyra still ekes all the natural goodness out of it. The Delos has excellent soundstaging, with rock-solid location of instruments in the mix and depth perspective that's on another level to all but the Hana here. The hi-hat sound is delicious, amazingly sweet and detailed in a way you don't hear from hi-res digital. Bass is super taut, supple and propulsive. Precociously talented, at the price it's hard not to love ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Super-precise yet highly musical sound

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Skeletal design requires extra careful handling

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Stellar performance at this price point

EASE OF SETUP ★★★★★

OVERALL

