



THE SKY IS THE LIMIT

Skyanalog has made a name for themselves with first-class MC pickups at an affordable price. The new P-1M and P-1G will reinforce this reputation – and with ease.

Text: Matthias Böde

Before the Chinese manufacturer Skyanalog launched its own line of MC pickups in 2019, it was already able to look back on a 20-year history in cartridge manufacturing as an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) supplier for other brands. It's thus not surprising that the representatives of the first "G" series, which also contained a confidently priced top model with the €2,200 G-3, had a thoroughly experienced and professional appearance.

At the lower end of the scale sat the P-1M. It was presented somewhat later and received a first-class review in *STEREO* 6/23, making a statement for less than 400 euros. A proper MC pick-

up with a metal body is unusual at such a low price. And it is precisely here that progress can be reported – without the price increasing. The recently updated P-1M is equipped with Skyanalog's newly developed "Yan" damping system. The same applies to the P-1G, which has also been revised in this way. It is slightly more expensive at around 590 euros, but has a higher quality cantilever and stylus. These parts are built into an eye-catching, green anodized housing.

Both cartridges weigh around ten grams and are classic low-output MC models. The P-1M offers a slightly higher output voltage, which however is of no great importance in actual use. As it usu-

ally operates in cheaper turntables, it has been equipped with a rather robust aluminum cantilever with a conical diamond at the tip, according to the manufacturer. The P-1G's diamond is not only elliptically cut, which aims to give it access to even narrower groove modulations, but it is also set on a hard, stiff boron rod, which is usually only seen in much higher price ranges. Below 600 euros, this is remarkable. The aim is to transmit ultra-fine information to the coil armature mounted at the rear end with particularly low loss.

And that brings us straight to the point! Because this section is mounted on the new Yan rubber. In general, this element is responsible for the smooth interaction of the internal forces. It also ensures harmony in terms of the tone-arm mass acting on the needle, so that the overall result is a spring-mass system that is neither too high nor too low and also decays quickly. As has long been the standard, the Skyanalog pickups are designed for the medium-weight tonearms commonly used today.

Less "Pressure" Recommended

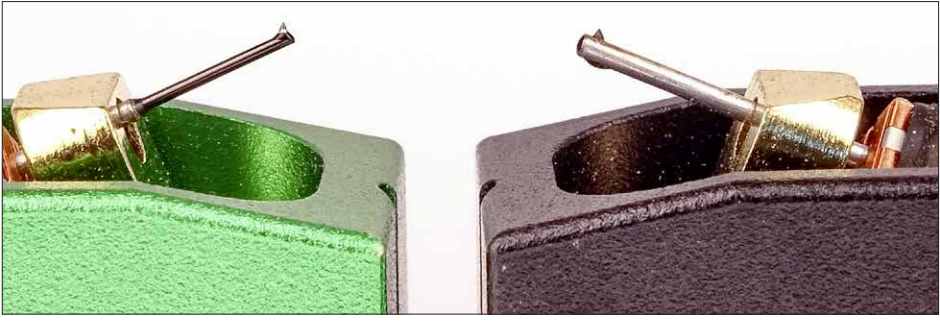
The Chinese company promises a particularly sensitive responsiveness and minimization of information loss and distortion as advantages of the Yan rubber compound, which is tailored to their needs and offers optimized elasticity. A tonally and dynamically broadband design is supposed to contribute to this result. According to Skyanalog, an eye has constantly been kept on the balance between analytical fanning out and homogeneous unity.

The higher stiffness of the Yan recipe compared to the previous solution is intended to achieve more precise vibration control, especially in the high frequencies. There, Skyanalog generally recognizes problems and limitations in the scanning process.

There is also another, immediately visible consequence of the switch to Yan: The recommended tracking force for the new P-1M and P-1G drops by a few millinewtons from around 18 to around 14 mN. In our opinion, that is indeed neither good nor bad.

Okay, some vinyl listeners think this is a way of protecting their records. We don't think so, however! On the contrary, we consider (excessively) low tracking forces to rather be harmful, as the stylus then more easily loses contact with the groove and damages it on its rebound.

Photos: STEREO, Manufacturer



While the new P-1M has an aluminum cantilever with a conical stylus (r.), the needle carrier of the P-1G consists of a boron rod with an elliptical diamond attached to its tip.

And not to forget the tracking distortions that occur under these conditions as well as the usually rather thin sound at such "low pressures".

This problem does however not arise here, and perhaps „Yan“ enables lightness without regrets. In fact, the two Skyanalogs achieve an almost ideal ratio of uninhibited liveliness and tonal substance at around 15 mN. Additionally, we were not able to detect any difficulties such as hissing when picking up sharp „S“-sounds or soft spluttering as an undesirable companion to loud voices.

Quite on the contrary, actually: if you set the tracking force to around 20 mN out of ignorance or old habit, you will lose finesse and agility. Both Skyanalogs will sound slightly restrained in terms of dynamics and their timing will be slightly off. Thus, the reduction in weight outlined here is not only possible, it's a must!

And if everything is set correctly? Is the sky the limit then? Probably not quite, but the Chinese duo sounds surprisingly good. The previous version of the P-1M was tuned slightly towards the bass and was also a little tough in the un-

folding of sound – both in order to fit in well with systems that tend to be nervous in the upper frequencies and display a thinner sound image. The Yan-modified successor, however, loosens the small knot, plays more freely, more openly, more forcefully, but retains its heartiness. The latter is largely due to the round stylus employed. It makes the reproduction pleasantly "dense", gives drums a bold punch and the entire performance an emphatic quality.

The Hearty and Bold P-1M

This has a pleasant effect on practically all turntables. That is especially true in combination with Technics' popular SL-1200GR2, which plays decidedly fine, present and tight. The P-1M, with its spacious three-dimensionality, provides it with the right amount of emphasis and accuracy while also ensuring that the treble comes across clear and distinct, but never exaggerated. A dream combination!

The P-1G presented itself as more finely accentuated, more spacious as well as even livelier and more daring. In STEREO 12/24, the new Hana S-Pickups from Japan had

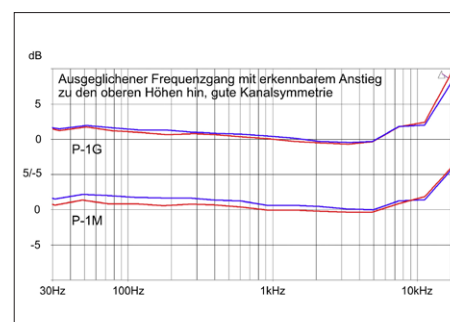
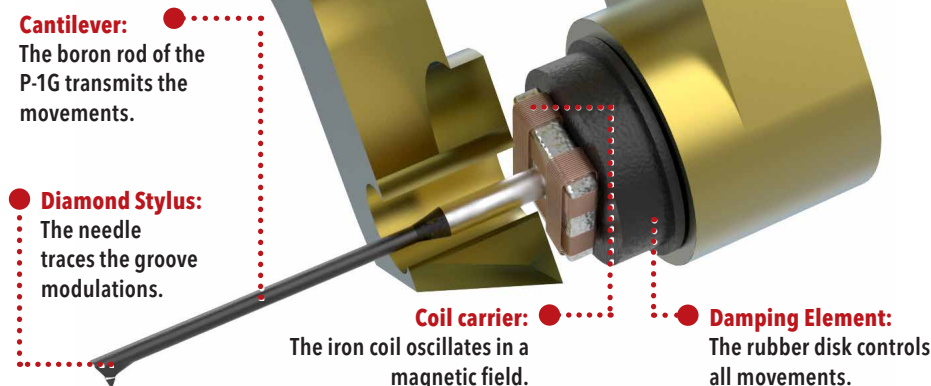


The needle guard is easy to attach and fits securely; the connection pins are color-coded.



Matching screws for the pre-drilled threads are included along with washers.

TEST PHONO CARTRIDGE



Very gentle drop towards the upper frequencies, rise in the highest frequencies.

only just conquered the throne in the 750-euro league, but the green MC cartridge performed so fresh and carefree, yet sophisticated and refined, as if it wanted to knock them off it again straight away.

That didn't quite happen, as Hana's SL MKII kept the slightly more pronounced treble of its challenger under control with its somewhat more balanced tonality. However, the differences between these two Asian rivals were not that big. Considering the fact that the Skyanalog P-1G is around 160 euros cheaper, some prospective buyers are bound to reconsider. Especially as the green MC pickup from China leaves nothing to be desired in terms of the fanning out and internal order of the sound images.

Fine-tuned with finesse

A look at their frequency response shows with how much delicate attention to detail the Skyanalogs have been tuned. From the bass, which is by no means under-represented, right up to the five-kilohertz mark, they drop very gently in the range of two decibels for a touch more sonority. Above that, there is a rise towards the highest

frequencies, which prevents the P-1 MCs from displaying even the slightest bit of dullness; it rather introduces a pinch of additional freshness. Don't worry though, the duo doesn't seem exaggerated in the treble range. Even the P-1G, which has a slightly stronger rise in the high frequency range, only returns to the level of 30 Hz at 12 kHz. The overall effect of this tuning is balanced, colorful and refined.

It is difficult to say how big of a part the Yan damper plays in the convincing performance of the pickups. Of course, a phono cartridge is a system in which all parts are cleverly interconnected with each other. In conclusion, it can be said that the new P-1M has become an even hotter tip than its predecessor at the same price. This however also applies one level higher to the astonishingly high-class P-1G. ■

SKYANALOG		P-1M	P-1G
Product type / Price class		cartridge / 200 to 500 euros	cartridge / 500 to 1,000 euros
Web address		www.skyanalog.com	
Price (in euros)		399	589
Weight (in g)		10	10
German distributor		TCG, www.skyanalog.de	
Phone		+49 5921 7884927	
Cartridge type		MC	MC
Recommended tracking force (in mN)		15	15
Output voltage (in mV, 1kHz / 5cm / s)		0.29	0.28
Compliance (in µm / mN)		12	12
SOUND	70 %	very good 1.5	very good 1.4
Sound quality		lively, round and spatial sound, firm punch	delicately fanned out, spatial and lively performance
Tracking ability		very good	very good
MEASUREMENTS	15 %	very good 1.3	very good 1.4
Frequency response		very good	still very good
Channel symmetry		very good symmetry	very good symmetry
HANDLING & FEATURES	15 %	good 2.1	good 2.1
Scope of delivery		needle protection, screws with washers, Allen key	
Haptics & Workmanship		very good	very good
Connections color-coded		yes	yes
Threads pre-drilled		yes	yes
Quality of the manual		detailed, but only in english	
Warranty in years		2	2
STEREOD TEST RESULT		very good 1.5	very good 1.5

TEST DEVICES

Turntables: Technics SL-1200GR2, Transrotor Rondino nero with Ortofon AS-212R

Phono Preamps: Brinkmann Edison Mk II, Pro-Ject DS3B

Phono Cables: Audioplan Maxwell A, van den Hul The Valley

Accessories: Stylus cleaner Flux HiFi Sonic, installation block from Millennium



For detailed information on the test devices, scan the QR code.