



Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista Vinyl **£3,300**

It's an awful lot of premium preamp for the money, but has the Nu-Vista Vinyl got it where it counts?



► DETAILS

PRODUCT
Musical Fidelity
Nu-Vista Vinyl

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
MM/MC
phono preamp

WEIGHT
14.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
482 x 130 x 385mm

FEATURES

- MM/MC input
- 5x RCA inputs
- XLR/RCA output

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio Ltd.

Mighty. That's the only word to describe the Nu-Vista Vinyl. Maybe bomb proof, too. The thing's build is quite simply monumental. It has an aura of indomitability and confidence that doubtless presumes to cover all bases with talent to spare. Some 482mm wide, it boasts thick aluminium panels to kill airborne vibration, while prominent lateral heatsinks are used for extensive cooling. To provide additional decoupling, cones with thrust bearings are provided as an alternative to the standard conventional footings. Let's put it this way: if you're about to drop so much money and shelf space on a phono preamp, it had better be special.

Musical Fidelity itself uses the words: "without any practical limits" in its

The Nu-Vista plays everything with a straight bat and luxurious tonality

description of the Nu-Vista Vinyl, citing a level of input headroom that, in real-world conditions, cannot be overloaded. The driving capability of its output stage, via either single-ended RCA or balanced XLR, is said to be virtually unburstable too and I don't see any reason to doubt the claim.

Part of the credit must go to the type of valve employed. Like other components in Musical Fidelity's flagship Nu-Vista line, the Vinyl's circuits use tough, low-noise tubes in sintered bodies called nuvistors. Developed in the mid-Fifties, these

weren't originally intended for hi-fi but for use in measuring and radio-receiving equipment requiring high sensitivity. To protect against external interference, including microphony, they had small (about 20mm high), rigid metal cases with a ceramic base and a service life many times that of conventional thermionic valves. A few hi-fi companies recognised the potential, but it was Musical Fidelity, then owned by Anthony Michaelson, that found the magic bullet therein.

Sound quality

There are no fewer than five inputs, each of which is compatible with moving-magnet and moving-coil cartridges and remembers its loading and capacitance settings. And this is the only phono preamp in the group to offer IEC correction as well as RIAA. All the controls are laid across the expansive front panel – again, no fiddly DIP switches hidden around the back to unmake your day.

The first thing to hit me is great stereo with pin-point imaging and believable rendition of acoustic ambience. This gives Lunatractors' *Lover, Lover, Lover* real presence in a spacious soundstage that extends to a point behind the speakers. Tone and texture are very 'analogue' and there's an affecting ease to the presentation.

Absent is any form of unnatural edge and, as claimed in the brochure, sibilance that would otherwise snag your attention has unceremoniously been shown the door – this despite an up-close and intimate mic position for Clair and Carli. Then again, the big cymbal crash two-thirds of the way

through the song is missing a small measure of metallic splash and harmonic shimmer.

Musical mojo seems a little curtailed on *Naptown Blues* as well, Oscar Peterson and friends playing well enough together, but the event somehow coming across like a practice run rather than a studio 'take'. In short, the vital spark doesn't quite make the cut.

Curiously, irrespective of load tailoring, there seems to be a kind of Nu-Vista sound that in and of itself is very attractive but plays everything with a straight bat and luxurious, cream toffee tonality. Consequently, Stanley Clarke's *Journey To Love* has superb stage depth and, in the opening passage, a dreamy and silky vibe very nicely done, but Jeff Beck's lead solo simply doesn't muster the bite and impact conveyed by most of the others here. For better or worse, the Nu-Vista Vinyl always seems to be having a sunny day cruising the kilohertz ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

LIKE: Superb build quality; features; silky, spacious sound

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

DISLIKE: Tiny bit enormous; sound seldom shows teeth

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

WE SAY: If you like what the Nu-Vista Vinyl does and need lots of inputs, welcome home

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★