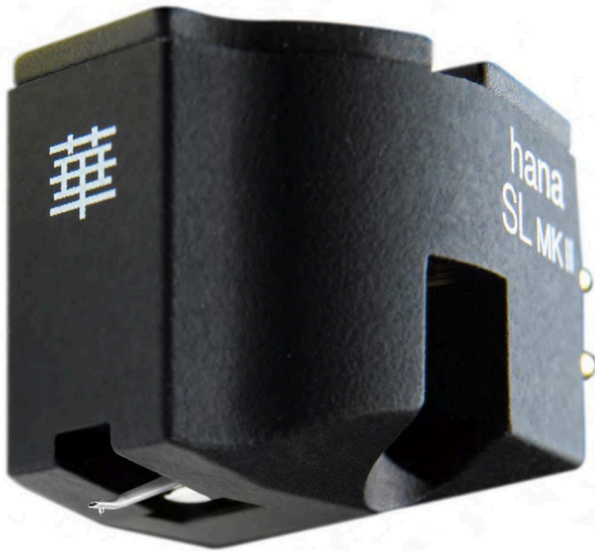


Product of the Year Awards

Phono Cartridge of the Year



Hana SL MK II

\$850

Retaining the Alnico magnet structure of the original Hana SL, the Hana SL MK II's cartridge yoke, pole-pieces, and terminal pins now get the cryogenic treatment, a new tapered aluminum cantilever for the reliable Shibata stylus along with a new non-resonant cartridge body shape bathed in a "soft-feel-black" elastomeric resin paint and equipped with a brass damping plate that has threaded cartridge mounting holes. Upon first listen, the Hana SL MK II offers admirable harmonic richness, particularly good transparency and fidelity to the recording, and excellent soundstage depth (when the music contains such information). Over time, the cartridge gains refinement without the up-and-down sound-quality variations that often accompany new cartridges between initial installation and multiple hours of playing time. Compared to the original Hana SL, the Hana SL MK II excelled in all the characteristics mentioned above; plus, it has increased musical clarity, capturing the speed, pacing, and tempo of music's initial transients along with a tone-rich decay that provides greater realism. The cartridge is closer to being chameleon-like and outputs what the LP presents with all the ease, liveliness, vigor, elegance, and emotional moods captured during the recording session. The Hana SL MK II is a worthy successor to the original Hana SL, becoming the new low-cost overachiever, capturing more of nearly everything that the cartridge it replaces in the company's lineup does. (359)