



Graham Slee GSP Audio Era Gold Mk.V MM/MC phono preamplifier (\$759.95):

I don't know Graham Slee from Gram Parsons, or which House he was in at Harry Potter's Hogwarts School, but let me tell you: If you'd just been listening to a bunch of budget phono preamps, as I had, then came upon the GSP Audio Era Gold Mk.V, you'd think someone had switched out not just the phono preamp but your entire system. You might think you were listening to a different pressing or a different cartridge. How can this be?

The GSP Audio Era Gold Mk.V is about twice as expensive as the Perreux SXV1 and the Musical Fidelity X-LPS^{v3}, but it sounded at least 10 times better. It was amazingly dynamic, quiet, full-bodied, harmonically complete, supple, sensuous, and spectacular. It had nearly full dynamic expression at both ends of the scale, and absolutely astonishing bass performance. It made music sound almost as *real* as the really expensive stuff does, and it carried a 1000-



Graham Slee's miraculous Era Gold Mk.V MM phono preamp.

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lb tune with ease.

The Gold Mk.V requires a long burn-in period, but your patience will be rewarded. It's designed for high-output MCs or MMs of 2–10mV, and had plenty of gain (41.5dB) for the 2.5mV

Sumiko Blackbird. It has no lights, no bells, no whistles, and a big regulated wall-wart. And unlike the budget Slee that I wrote about in June 2002, the Gold Mk.V has a nicely made aluminum case.

But you won't buy this one for its looks. Given its price and its miraculous — and this agnostic means *miraculous* — performance, I recommend the GSP Audio Era Gold Mk.V as enthusiastically,

if not more so, as I've recommended any product I've reviewed and recommended in all the years I've been doing this. Instead of dropping \$1500 on a new cartridge to use with your less-than-outstanding phono stage, spend your \$1500 on a Sumiko Blackbird and a Graham Slee GSP Audio Era Gold Mk.V, and you could live happily ever after in analog land. I think I could, and I've been playing with ridiculously expensive stuff for years. This is one budget piece Bob Reina has to hear. ☒

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