



Audio-Technica Turntable Cartridge **AT440MLa**

Manufacturer: Audio-Technica U.S., Inc., 1221
Commerce Drive, Stow, Ohio 44224; 330-686-2600;
www.audio-technica.com

Standard Mount: 1/2" centers
Vector-Aligned Moving Magnet
Output: 4 mV at 1 kHz, 5 cm/sec
Channel balance at 1 kHz: 0.8 dB
Channel separation at 1 kHz: 27 dB
Frequency response: 20 Hz - 20 kHz
Dynamic Compliance (x 10⁻⁶ cm/dyne, 100
Hz): 10.0/mN
Static Compliance: 40x10E-6 cm/dyne
Diamond tip type: MicroLine™
Stylus construction: nude square shank
Cantilever: tapered alloy tube
Tracking force: 0.75-1.75 Gr
Internal inductance: 490 mH
Coil Impedance: 3200 ohms (1 kHz)
Recommended load capacitance: 100-200 pF
Recommended load resistance: 47k ohm
Cartridge weight: 6.5 grams
List Price: \$219

This is one of the great audio bargains. It differs from the AT150MLX in its body composition (plastic), cantilever composition (aluminum), and a thicker diameter cantilever. The fixed coil mechanism has an increased number of windings and different wire material. The nude-mounted MicroLine diamond tip and the dual-magnet setup of the AT150MLX are

retained. The increased cantilever mass minimally degrades the tracking performance, but this cartridge still out-tracked those of other manufacturers and was close to the Shure V15-5MR, which commands crazy prices on Ebay now that it is discontinued.

I found a couple of cases where the distortion on the vinyl from being tracked with an elliptical stylus, was so distinct that it might not be worth archiving them, but the discs became more listenable with the MicroLine tip. The MicroLine does not perform miracles, however. Recordings salvaged from library collections may still prove unsalvageable.

This cartridge is brighter than the AT150MLX, although sound quality is not as transparent. The forward sound may not be to everyone's taste, especially those who are not a fan of CD-sound.

The AT440MLa cartridge lists for half the AT150MLX, but you can find it at authorized dealers for less than \$100. You are getting the same diamond tip as the legendary Shure V-15MR with only a slight loss of trackability. The cartridge is more forward than the Shure. To me, it is closer to the master tape, but is still a little bit on the hot side of neutral. A near-optimal balance is achieved with the AT150MLX, but not everyone can afford best of breed. At its street price, this is almost self-recommending given the state of the art nude-mounted MicroLine diamond tip.

-David A. Rich

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 **audio-technica.**
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