

Dynavector DV-20X2H moving coil cartridge

Moving coil cartridges are lovely things, but they can be a challenge when it comes to amplification. Many have very low outputs, which make them difficult to accommodate unless you have an extremely quiet, high gain phono stage. This is a requirement that often equates to expensive, and in the case of valve equipment usually means you need a step-up transformer as well, and they can set you back as much as a phono stage.

To achieve a higher output an MC cartridge needs to have more coil windings and/or stronger magnets, but it's usually achieved with the former because the magnets are already as strong as they get. Dynavector has a history of building low- and high-output versions of its MCs and has developed its own coil-winding machine in order to use extremely fine and thus light wire. The drawback with extra coil turns is increased mass, which is why some of the best MCs have such low output, but the other side of this coin is the difficulty of getting sufficient signal to noise with a very small signal.

Dynavector offers two versions of its 20X2 moving coil, low- and high-output variants. The 20X2H (high) produces 2.8mV which is considerably more than the 0.3mV of the low output model and it can be used with a moving magnet phono stage. It also likes a high-load impedance so can work with the 47kohm of a moving magnet input.

Into the groove

It has an aluminium body that contains neodymium magnets, Dynavector's flux damping and softened magnetism techniques. These are designed to minimise fluctuations in the flux or magnetic density in the gap between coils and magnets and are used throughout the company's range. The groove tracing part consists of a micro-ridge stylus on a 6mm aluminium cantilever, the system is designed to track at between 1.8 and 2.2g, the response trace that came in the box was made at 2g, so I went with that.

First up, the DV-20X2H was installed in a Rega RP6 turntable with its RB303 tonearm. The cartridge's 9.2g weight proves to be a little high for the standard Rega counterweight, but by combining dynamic and spring downforce it's possible to get it to 2g without the weight hanging off the stub. If you were to use this arm and cartridge combo long term I'd recommend the higher mass Rega counterweight.

Sound quality

I would certainly recommend this combo, the excellent timing and pace of the Rega is nicely balanced by the Dynavector's full and rich sound – so much so that this aspect of it did not become apparent until I tried it on a different turntable. I used a Trilogy 907 phono stage, which worked best at its minimum gain setting, the one usually reserved for MM cartridges. The result was top-notch light entertainment from one album to the

next thanks to plentiful levels of detail, rich bass and a very high degree of musical engagement.

It focuses on the sound of the instruments, and the way they are played, and that includes voice. Bass is particularly well served because the RP6 is slightly lean and the DV-20X2H a little full, as a result I noticed aspects of bass playing that do not usually make themselves heard.

Moving the Dynavector over to an SME 20/3 did not, to be honest, result in the sort of improvements I have come to expect, the turntable is very quiet, assured and powerful but perhaps a bit too much so for this cartridge. Which surprised me because I have had great results with the DV-20X2L on this deck. The H delivered plenty of body and weight with solid stereo imaging and it was now possible to better appreciate the way that the musicians were playing. For instance on Patricia Barber's *Modern Cool* album, guitarist John McLean is clearly channelling Alan Holdsworth, something that was less obvious on the RP6.

However, moving over to the DV-20X2L on the SME, things are greatly improved in the low-level resolution and melody departments, so much so that I would encourage anyone with a decent MC stage to opt for that model if they have a stately rather than spritely turntable. However Rega owners will be hard pressed to find a better moving coil cartridge at this price, even if they do have an MC stage so it's a clear case of making a good match between turntable and cartridge. Mentioning this variation to the distributor surprised him and he suggested that the considerably greater run-in that the L has had might be a factor. Overall then, a very fine cartridge, well worth shelling out for! **JK**

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OUR VERDICT

