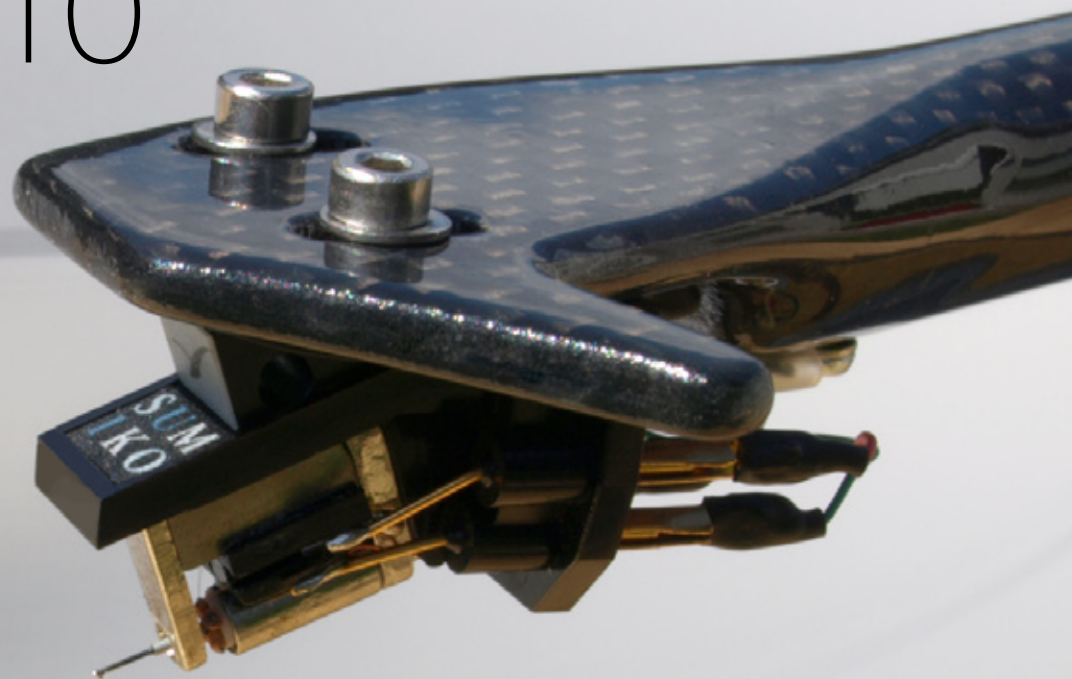
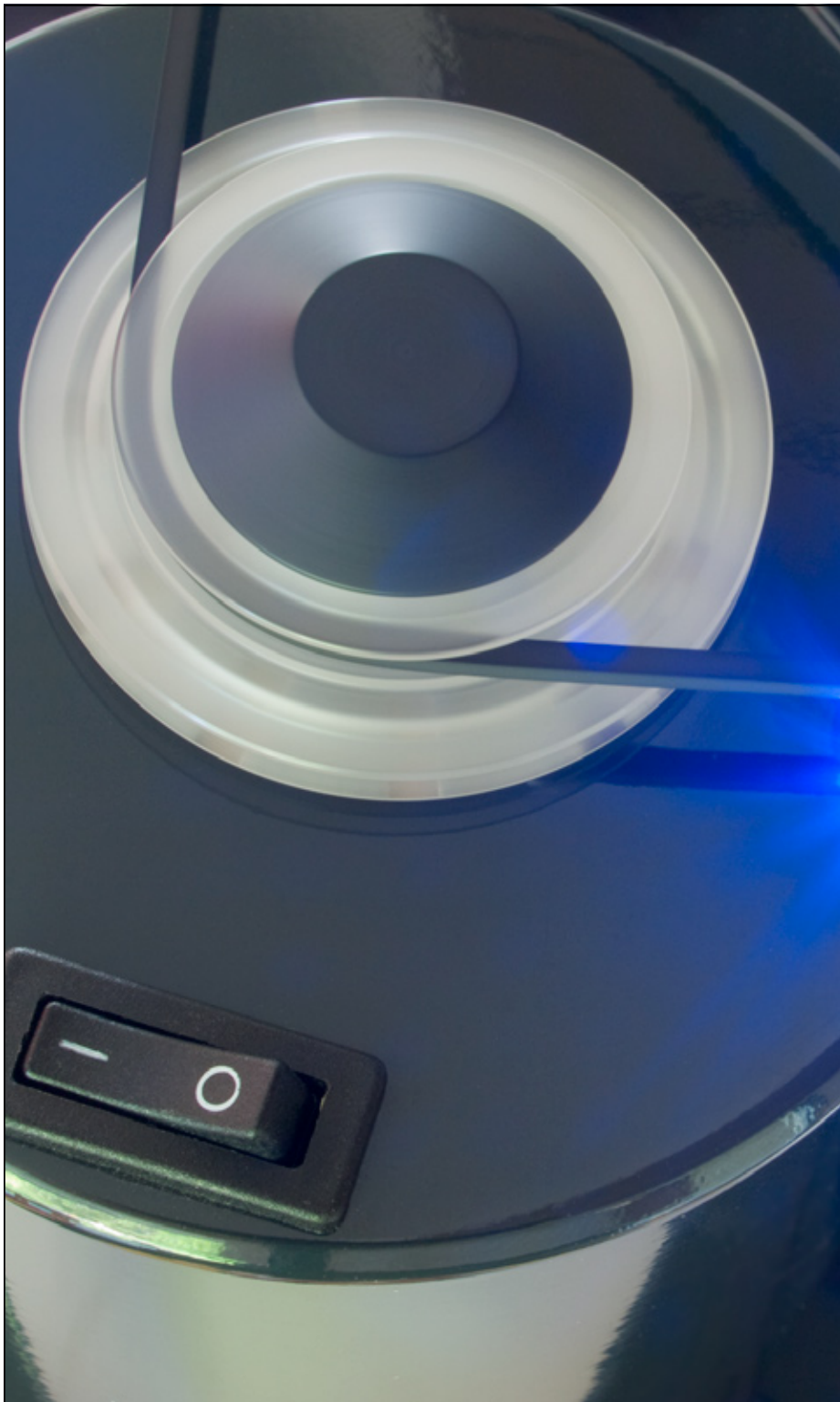


The Pro-ject RM-10 and Sumiko Blackbird

By Jeff Dorgay

Sumiko has always been known for their flagship line of SME turntables, and sometimes their more reasonable line of Pro-ject turntables doesn't get the share of attention that they deserve. I have enjoyed the Pro-ject tables that I have had my hands on, but I must say that the RM-10 is definitely a cut above the rest of the product line – this is a serious turntable.





And it's priced right at \$2499. Add your favorite cartridge and in less than an hour, you will be engulfed in analog bliss. The RM-10 in for review came with one of my favorite cartridges in the sub \$1000 range, the Sumiko Blackbird already installed. The folks at Sumiko were doing a demo in my neighborhood at Pearl Audio Video, so they just brought the RM-10 over, all set up! If only we could all get turntables this way!!

But seriously, having set up other Pro-ject tables, it is well within the range of even a beginner audiophile. Once you carefully unpack the 12 pound acrylic platter, attach the belt, counterweight and anti skate weight, you are ready to dial it all in.

More Than Just a Piece of Art

Not only is this a substantial table, but very stylish as well. The RM-10 comes with an additional isolation platform that is about three inches thick and adds about another 20 pounds to the table, but with my racks and 13 inches of concrete in my studio floor, I couldn't tell any difference in the sound by not using it. Those of you that live under a bit more wobbly conditions will really appreciate it.

That massive platter is semi suspended by a magnetic repulsion system that takes a bit of the weight off of the bearing surface, which Sumiko claims to reduce mechanical friction and noise to a very low level. The massive record clamp is brass and feels very good in your hands. Sick of your friends picking your system to shreds? Wrap your fist around this one and let them have it! Just kidding, but it does offer up some interesting possibilities...

What really sets this table apart from most of the others in this price range is the attention to detail. The 10" carbon fiber arm is a one-piece design to maximize rigidity. You can adjust VTA, azimuth and anti skating very easily and thanks to the jacks at the rear can substitute the tonearm cable of your choice in place of the factory supplied cable. Very well thought out indeed.

Living with the RM-10

After spending a fair amount of time with the VPI Scoutmaster, I was more than a little bit reluctant to entertain another table with a big acrylic platter, but the RM-10 cured me from the minute I lowered the stylus down on the first record, which was Adrian Belew's *Young Lions*. I put on my favorite track, "Pretty Pink Rose" and was instantly impressed with the sound of this table. *(continued)*

I'm a Blackbird owner, so this is a cartridge that I am quite familiar with on a number of different turntables, but I was not prepared for what I heard here! I've also heard the Project 9.1 and the Music Hall mmf-9 (both of which are somewhat derivative of this table) and I can tell you the RM-10 is well worth the extra money; it's a substantial step up.

Discovering the amount of weight in the lower registers that I had at my disposal, I instantly gravitated towards records that I knew had more energy down there to check out more! Listening to the opening bass and snare drum bits from "Green Shirt" on Elvis Costello's *Armed Forces* record just brought a big smile...

And it wasn't just big boomy bass at the expense of pace or detail. Granted, the RM-10 does not have the resolution of my reference SME 10, but it doesn't do anything wrong either. The fundamentals are there in spades.

I also noticed on some of my favorite popular recordings how big and wide the soundstage was spread across and way beyond my speakers. I was also very impressed at how much depth I was getting with recordings that I'm very familiar with; this is always hard to nail at this price point but the RM-10 did a fantastic job.

The absence of noise coming from the RM-10 really stood out and it was very free of grain. Even in my main system along side the SME, I was still very impressed at the lack of mechanical noise this table possessed.

Having been a Blackbird owner for about three years now, I must say that the synergy between the RM-10 and this cartridge is uncanny. I can't honestly say I've heard the Blackbird sound better than it does right here on the RM-10. I know Sumiko says that you can use it at the 47k setting and it is a fairly high output moving coil (2.5mv), but I still enjoy it best loaded down to about 1000 ohms.

For many people this is the fork in the road of analog.

Let's face it. Most people don't live the wacky life of an audio reviewer, with the opportunity to sample a lot of different flavors over the years. *(continued)*

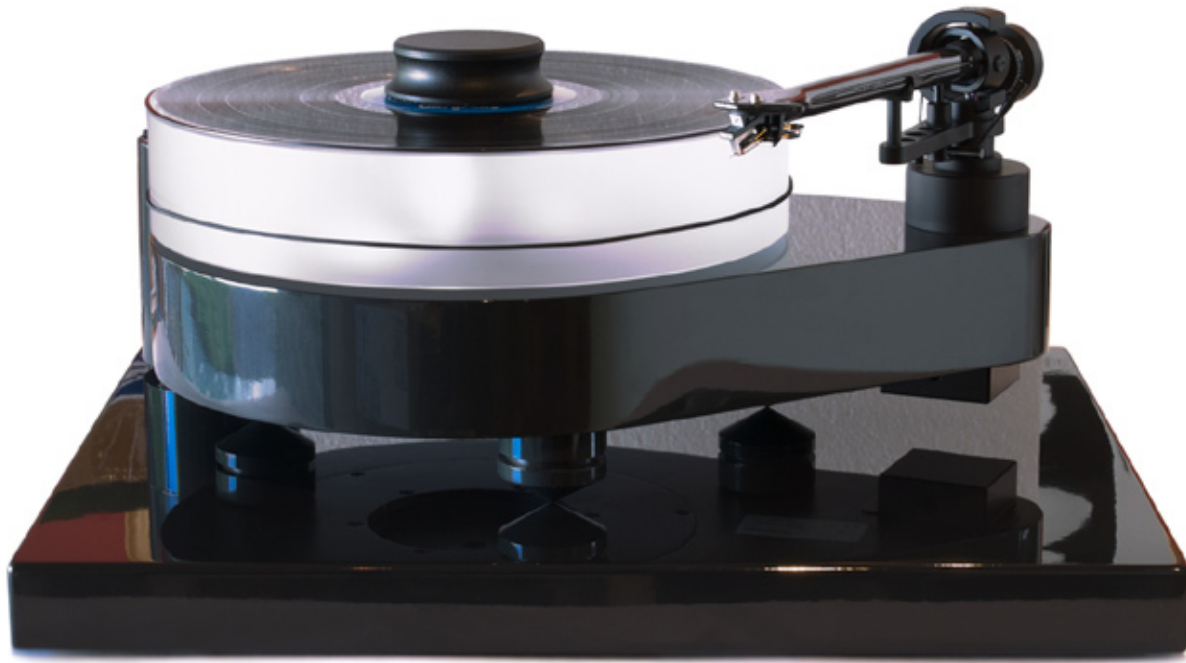


I don't mean this in a condescending way at all, the point I'm trying to get across is that 2500 bucks is serious change to spend on a turntable, and by the time you buy a decent cartridge and perhaps add a phono preamplifier, this is heading towards five or six grand in a big hurry.

For many people, this is as far as they are going to take it and if you are one of those people, I feel that you could live happily ever after with the RM-10. Should you be a crazed analog person, the RM-10 will still keep you very happy as a second table in your main system or as a good anchor of a second system. (Can't have enough turntables, as far as I'm concerned, but I've lost my practicality when it comes to this kind of thing.)

The more you spend, the higher the penalty for disappointment, so I want you to be happy with your turntable purchase. While I haven't heard every single turntable out there in the 2-3000 dollar range, I like the Project RM-10 better than anything I've yet heard. This combination offers up a tremendous amount of detail, musicality and weight. It's one of the easiest ways I can think of to just enjoy your music collection!

The Project RM-10 and Sumiko Blackbird offers up a combination that's hard to beat; Stylish good looks and great sound at a realistic price. ●



Project RM-10 MSRP: \$2599

Sumiko Blackbird MSRP: \$799

MANUFACTURER

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PERIPHERALS

Preamplifier: Conrad-Johnson ACT 2/Series 2

Power Amplifier: Conrad-Johnson Premier 350

Phono Preamplifier: ASR Basis Exclusive

Speakers: MartinLogan Summit w/Descent i subwoofer

Digital Source: Naim CD555, Meridian 808

Interconnects: Cardas Golden Reference

Speaker Cables: Cardas Golden Reference

Power Management: Running Springs Audio, Jaco and Danielle line conditioners, Running Springs Mongoose power cords, Essential

Sound: Products The Essence "Reference" power cords.

Vibration Control: Finite Elemente Pagode Signature Racks, Cerapucs, Ceraballs

Room Treatment: GIK panels, GIK bass traps, Sonex Classic