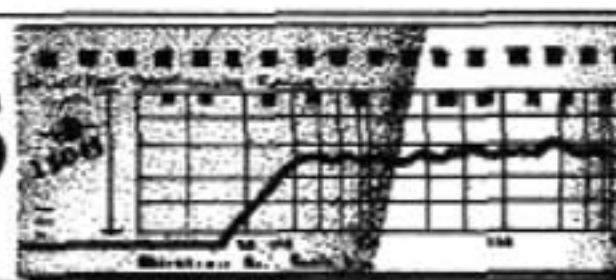
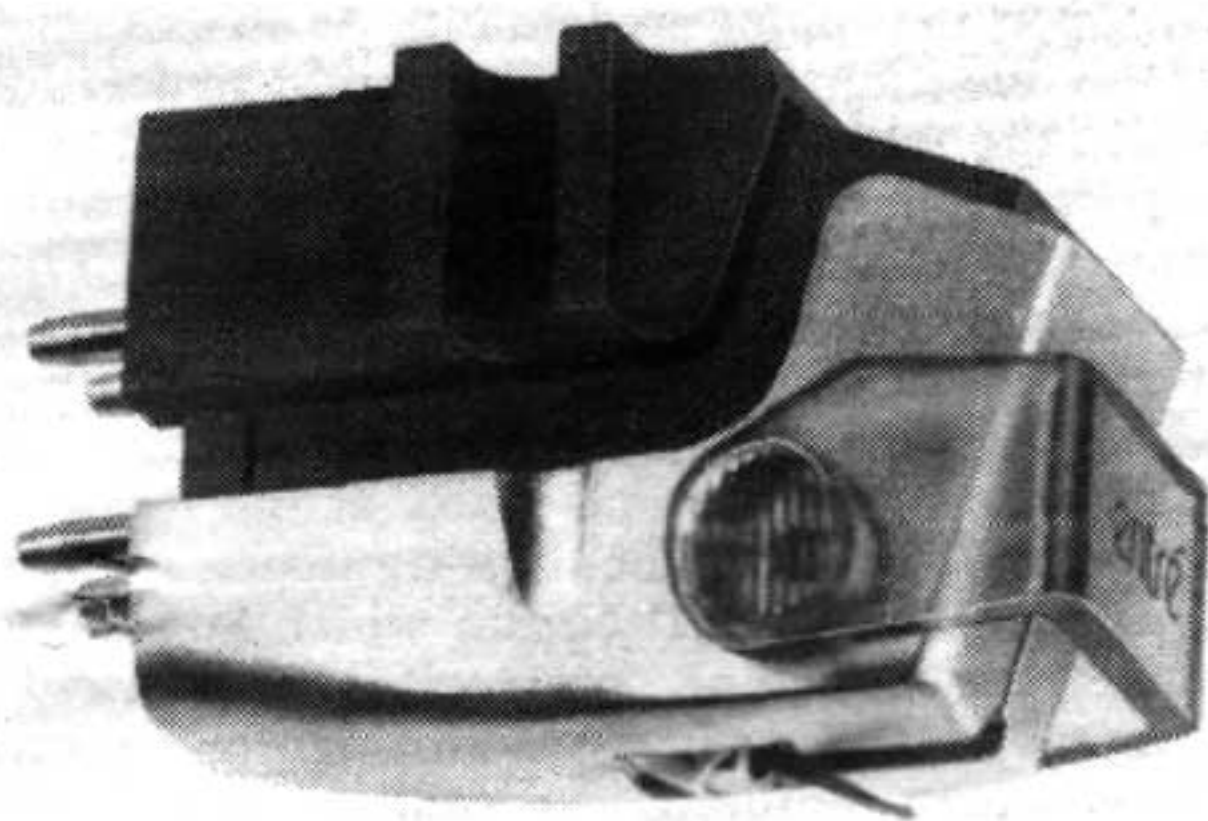


Equipment Reviews



Lentek Entré 1 cartridge



THE word 'bland' has become a commonplace within the the glossary of hi-fi jargon, but it is often used in the meaning of being dull or uninteresting. In connection with the Entré 1 cartridge I would use this word in its proper sense, describing it as gentle and polite. Quite correctly it draws very little attention to itself by way of any particular outstanding feature except, needless to say at the exalted price it commands, a performance of sound quality which well exceeds that of a run-of-the-mill cartridge.

It is with regard to price that I am compelled to take a super-critical view in terms of evaluating this product since, like most other moving-coil cartridges, one also has to add the price of a suitable step-up device. In this case the cartridge came from the importers complete with their own Lentek preamplifier (which they naturally recommend). I notice that the packaging of the cartridge was printed in the USA although I understand that the product originates from Japan. The Lentek preamplifier, on the other hand, is made in Cambridge, England and represents extraordinarily good value for money. Therefore the Entré/Lentek combination is not unreasonable when compared with other cartridge/preamp configurations.

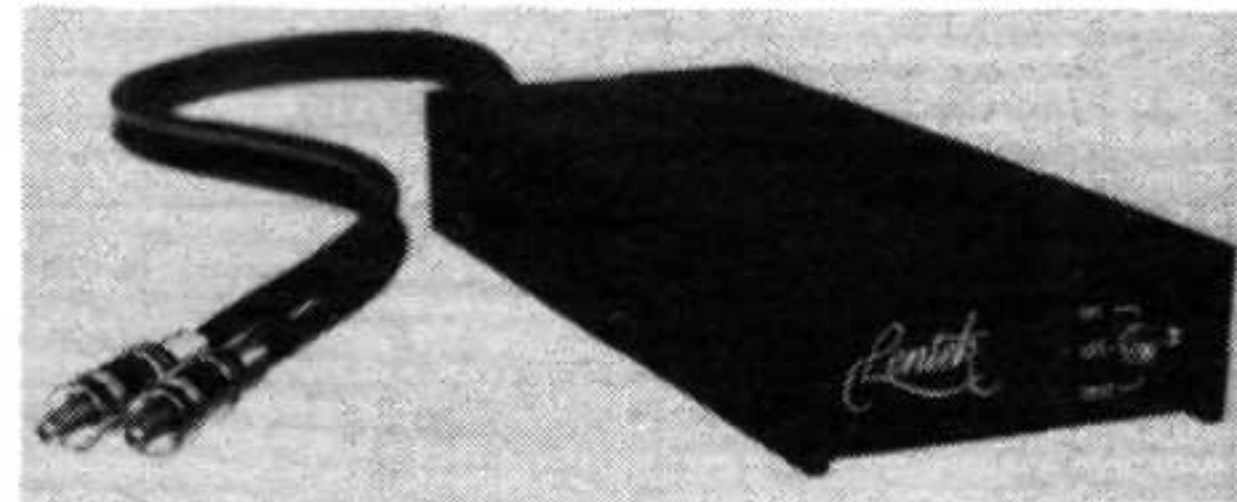
Each cartridge comes supplied with its individual response curve plotted on Brüel & Kjaer equipment using the normal QR2009 test record. Listening tests were not commenced before measuring the cartridge, but so inadequate were the results that I felt it necessary to contact the company. Instead of the near ruler-flat response of the accompanying curve, this sample exhibited a 'suck-out' of nearly 5dB around 8kHz, whilst the vertical output was even worse, indicating considerable mechanical asymmetry. Separation at high frequencies also fell to a low of only 8dB. The cartridge did track properly, however, and so it might well have been thought by a consumer to be bland—in the other sense of the word. A second sample, which provides the main basis for this review, proved to be quite superior. Without wishing to harp upon the subject, I do feel that, at this price, the importers should check each cartridge for shipping damage, or whatever. On the other hand, it is nice to know that they don't pick unrepresentatively good samples for reviewers.

The response of the final Entré cartridge was as shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 3. As can be seen, the left/right, lateral and vertical responses are all very similar, showing only the mildest depression in the treble, and there are adequate separation and distortion characteristics. The square-wave response also showed a good rise time with the minimum of ringing. The playing weight is refreshingly conservative in its rating at 1.8 up to just over 2 grams. On first impressions this seems high for an elliptical stylus, but two mitigating factors reduced cause for con-

cern. Firstly the minor axis is 0.3mil. instead of the now common 0.2 (which means a reduction in unit pressure) and secondly I found that only 1.5 grams was actually required to play the majority of records. In fact very little was gained by increasing the stylus pressure to 2 grams even on records which I knew to present tracking problems. It seemed that, when accurately set up, what the Entré wouldn't play at 1.5 grams it wouldn't play. As a generalization, this comment is restricted to records that still sound unpleasant even with cartridges that can track them. Whilst nobody would underestimate the importance of adequate tracking, I do feel that to seek this parameter as a priority in cartridge design can be over-done.

Listening tests, contrary to my introductory comment, did reveal one special quality about the cartridge. It was one of absence rather than embellishment, and lay in a notable reduction of surface noise, even on poor pressings. Why this should be I do not pretend to understand. The tonal balance could barely be faulted, being perhaps minutely dim as opposed to bright and not having quite the attack on brass and cymbals that has exemplified some competitors. On the other hand, low-frequency behaviour was extraordinarily well controlled and it did not prove an aggravation to set up for optimum damping. This might be partly a function of its lower than usual weight, but certainly it makes it easy to use. It is not too arm-conscious and is free from the annoying aberrations of accentuated rumble (and hum) components from which I have suffered on other occasions in the past.

Since this review primarily concentrates on the cartridge, I will leave fuller dissertation on the merits on the Lentek preamp to another issue when I shall discuss several of the step-up devices currently available. At this stage, however, let me say that I consider its construction impeccable. (In fact it is a salutary observation that at first I thought it might be Japanese.) Being battery-operated (given sensible care, the battery will rarely need replacement) the hum



Lentek's own preamplifier, suitable for use with any low-output moving-coil cartridge, is available separately and will be the subject of a future report

level was not measurable above the general noise, which was objectively and subjectively so quiet as to present no practical problem. The input impedance proved to be, as stated, 100 ohms exactly right across the frequency spectrum, and the overall gain boosted the Entré to a suitable level to drive almost any preamp without stretching its sensitivity or overload capabilities.

In conclusion, as is inevitable, personal taste must influence final judgement. It is my opinion that this cartridge will be acclaimed by the serious music enthusiast, where its neutrality would be most appreciated. Not revealed in measurements, ambience, stereo positioning and front-to-back perspective were all superb, particularly against a background of

Fig. 1. Entré 1—frequency response and crosstalk, both channels

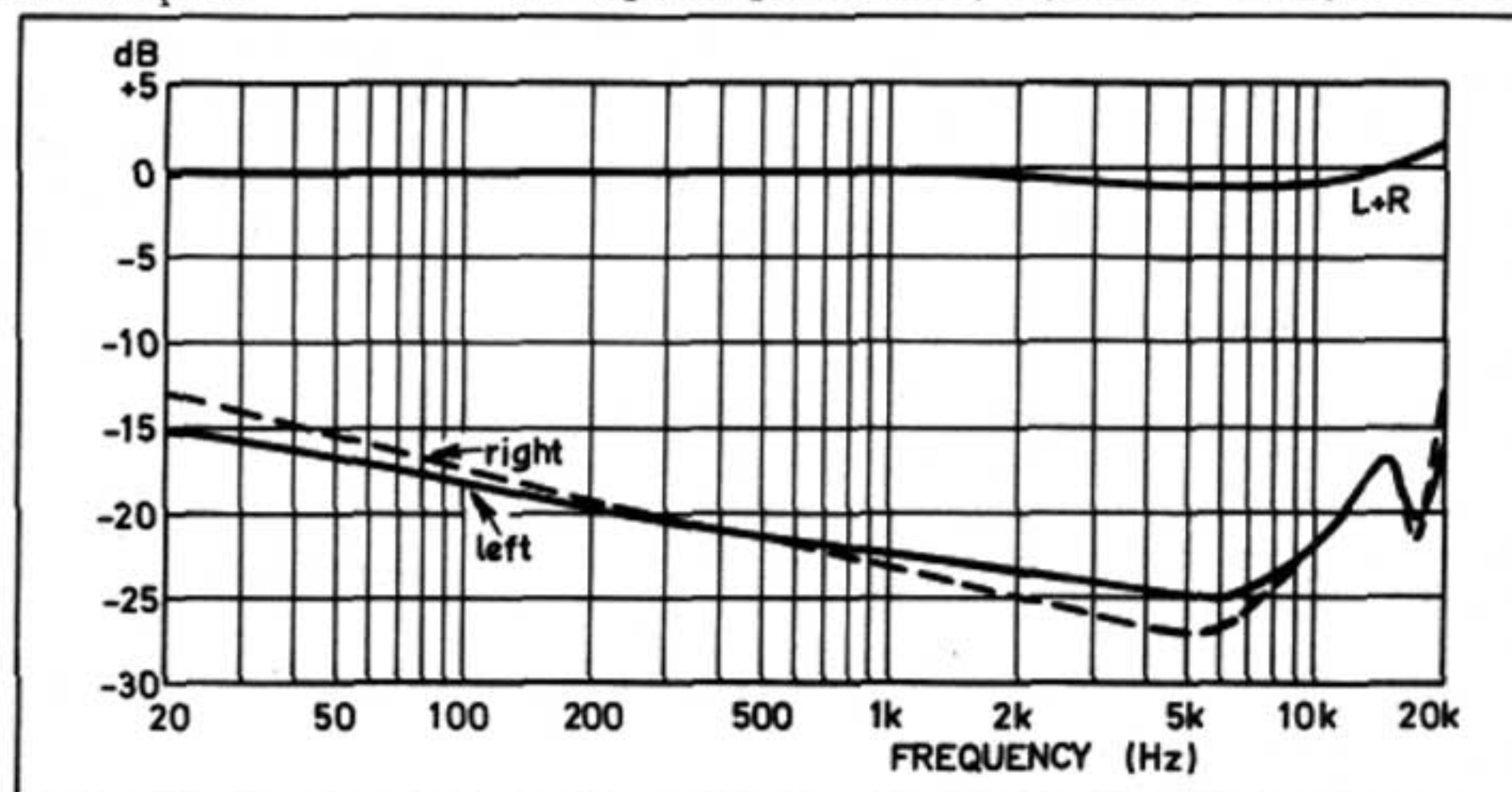


Fig. 2. Lateral and vertical response

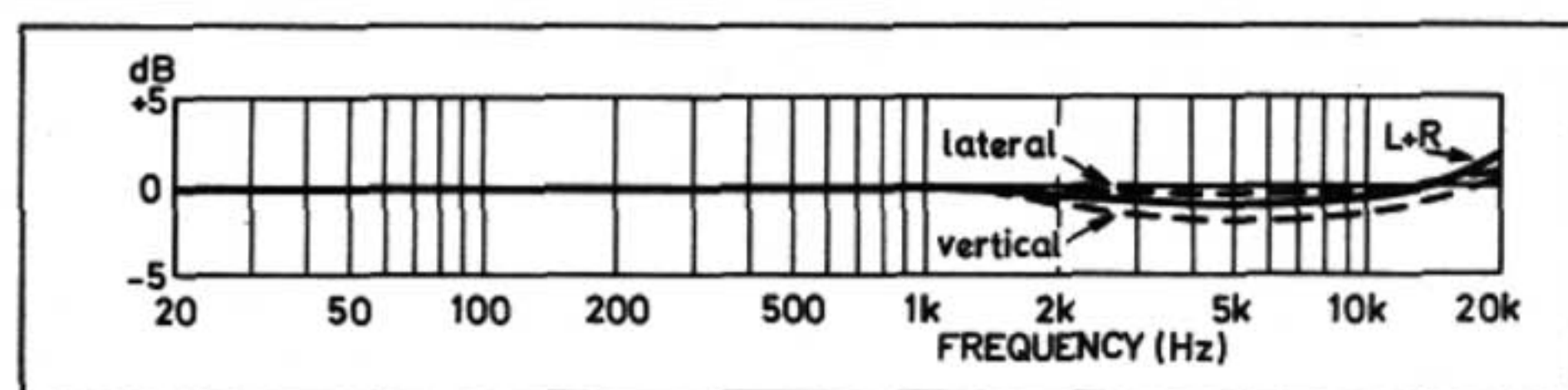
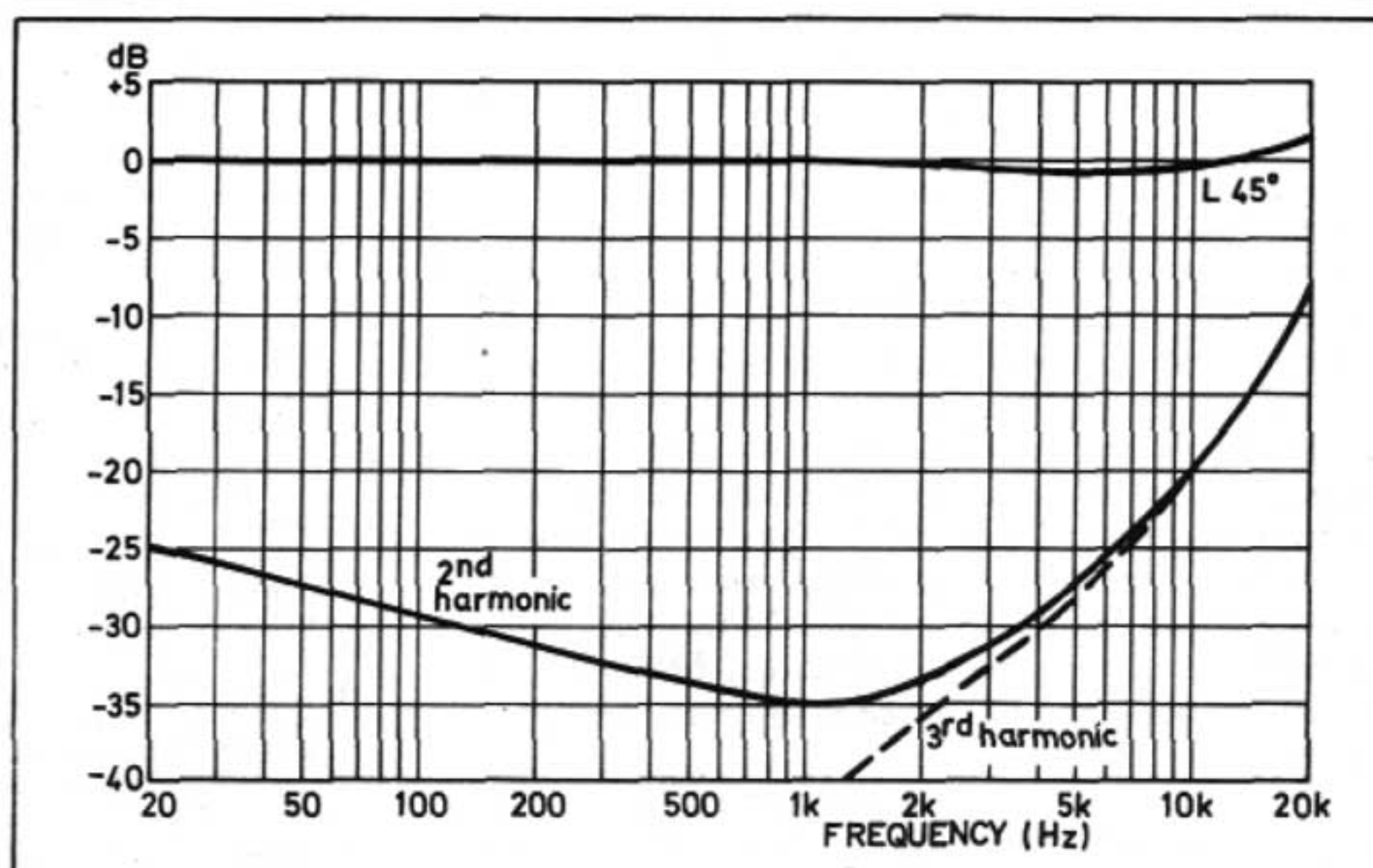


Fig. 3. Frequency response with 2nd and 3rd harmonic distortion



**SPECIFICATION AND TEST RESULTS
LENTEK ENTRÉ 1 PICKUP CARTRIDGE**

	Maker's Specification	Test Result	Reviewer's Comments
1. Type	Stereo moving coil	—	—
2. Sensitivity (mV for 5 cm/sec.)	0.28	0.2	Slightly lower, but not significant; approx. 6mV via the Lentek preamp
3. Channel balance	Within 1dB	0.5dB	Excellent
4. Rec. playing weight (g)	1.8-2.1	1.5	See text
5. Frequency response (Hz)	10-50,000	See Figs. 1-3	Very good
6. Crosstalk (dB)	28	See Fig. 1	Again very good
7. Impedance (ohms)	3	—	—
8. Stylus tip radius (μm)	20×8	(=0.8×0.3 mil.)	—
9. Vertical tracking angle	20°	—	—
10. Cartridge weight (g)	5.8	Agreed	—

Manufactured in Japan. UK distributor: Lentek Audio Ltd., Edison Road Industrial Estate, St Ives, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE17 4LF. Price: £98.44 (cartridge); £55.69 (Lentek preamp).

almost complete silence. Even after my usual weeks of extended listening, I failed to suffer from any form of listening fatigue that could be attributed to this Entré/Lentek combination.

One can therefore presume that they are not only fine products, but that they are also kind to distorted programme material.

JOHN S. WRIGHT.