

PRESS RELEASE
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DS Audio replaces Master 1 optical cartridge with new third generation, 'semi-flagship' Master 3



DS Audio's Master 1 optical cartridge was originally launched as the brand's flagship model in 2016. Since then, flagship status has been justifiably captured by the peerless Grand Master and Grand Master Extreme models, featuring DS Audio's 'third generation' of optical cartridge technology. Now, the Master 3 brings the brand's third generation features down a price point, bestowing the new Master 3 with 'semi flagship' status.

Japanese innovators DS Audio launched their first optical phono cartridge onto the worldwide hi-fi stage in 2013. Since then, designer Tetsuaki Aoyagi has continued to advance and refine the state of the art, achieving level after level of groundbreaking sonic performance. Still unique in the world, DS Audio's optical cartridges dispense with the usual moving magnet and moving coil designs and instead use an optical system that converts stylus/cantilever movement into audio signals. This completely eliminates the electromagnetic forces that are rife in traditional MM and MC designs, thus enabling an astonishingly lower noise floor.

The new 'third generation' Master 3 optical cartridge system has been comprehensively re-engineered, drawing on technology developed for the flagship Grand Master.

Independent LEDs and photo-detectors for the left and right channels deliver a significantly increased output voltage: now 70mV compared with the Master 1's 40mV. This new independent design has also made it possible to eliminate crosstalk, greatly improving left and right channel separation. At the same time, the signal/noise ratio is further improved.

This new design also enables a smaller shading plate, which is reduced in both size and weight thanks to the use of 99.9% pure beryllium rather than the previous aluminium.

In a first for DS Audio, the Master 3 features the combination of a square pillar diamond cantilever with a Micro Ridge stylus.

The cartridge's body structure has been crafted to provide maximum rigidity, while the internal wiring is 1.6 times thicker than used in the second-generation Master 1, thus reducing impedance.

Like all DS Audio optical cartridges, the Master 3 requires its own equalizer / phono stage, which this new design also brings up to 'third generation' level. The new Master 3 equalizer is a dual monaural circuit design with three transformers and completely independent left and right channel circuits. It offers both unbalanced and balanced outputs with a choice of six different low-frequency roll-off points, ensuring that the Master 3 will partner seamlessly with any high-end hi-fi system. The power supply has also been significantly strengthened to enable deeper and richer low-frequency expression.

Like every DS Audio product, the Master 3 phono cartridge and equalizer are hand-made and quality assured, with every component part tested and evaluated by the company's own in-house team of technicians in Japan.

Technical specifications

DS Master 3 optical cartridge

Body material	Ultra duralumin
Cantilever	Square pillar diamond
Stylus	Micro Ridge
Signal output	Photo-electric conversion
Output signal level	> 70mV
Channel separation	> 27dB (@ 1kHz)
Weight	7.9g

DS Master 3 phono stage/equalizer

Inputs	RCA
Outputs	RCA x 3, XLR x 3
Rated output voltage	700mV (@ 1kHz)
Output impedance	RCA 120Ω, XLR 120Ω
Pre-amp input impedance	> 10Ω
Dimensions	452 (w) x 153 (h) x 484 (d) mm
Weight	23kg

Pricing & availability

The DS Audio DS Master 3 optical phono cartridge and phono stage/equalizer are available now, priced as follows (inc. VAT):

Cartridge and equalizer package price	£22,995
Cartridge only	£ 8,330
Equalizer only	£18,885

DS Audio cartridges are fully compatible with any of the company's accompanying phono stages/equalizers, allowing you to mix and match.

Consumer contacts for publication

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