High mass 9-12in tonearm with detachable headshell
Made by: Hamada Electric Ltd, Shizuoka, Japan
Supplied by: Timestep Distribution, UK
Telephone: 01803 833 366
Web: www.glanz.tech/; www.glanztonearms.co.uk
Price: £5600

Glanz MH-124S

From an iconic Japanese name, associated with classic cartridges from half a century ago, despite appearances, this new 'S-shaped' tonearm sounds bang up-to-date
Review: **Nick Tate** Lab: **Paul Miller**

It's not easy designing your own tonearm, let alone tooling up for it and looking after the precision manufacturing and assembly. Perhaps this explains why so few models are launched, and why the popular ones seem to carry on for decades pretty much unchanged. So when Masataka Hamada, an engineer responsible for some of Glanz's original products many decades ago, decided to launch a range of tonearms, he would have been well aware of the challenge ahead.

First on his list was obtaining a licence from the family owners of the company that first introduced the name back in the 1950s – Mitachi Acoustics. Glanz tonearms are now manufactured by Hamada Electric in Shizuoka, Japan. The range comprises the 'affordable' B series, the expensive S series, and the reference SD model. There are 9, 10 and 12in versions and price is the same regardless of length, in each range.

PREMIUM PARTS

The starter Glanz arm is the MH-9B (£1499), the flagship MD-124SD costs a cool £13,995 while the MH-124S reviewed here is a sizeable £5600. The objective is to achieve a high level of mechanical integrity, permitting the most fluid possible movement of the cartridge along the record groove. An old-school approach has been used, with no fancy shaped armtubes, exotic glues or aerospace materials. Rather, key parts are made from extra-hard stainless steel – even the headshell – that are then joined together as an interference fit. Hamada has chosen to fit four large bearings, said to be machined to extreme tolerances, and these are hand-inserted using a jeweller's hammer.

You'd expect a stainless steel tube to ring like a bell, so great efforts have been made to damp it with a thin rubber insert inlayed into the headshell, and strategically positioned structures inside the armtube itself. Furthermore, the counterweight assembly has layers of carbon fibre, ABS resin and rubber to decouple it from the main armtube, and is secured by a small screw once the tracking weight is established.

This Glanz arm has a tremendous air of quality. The metalwork is beautifully detailed with bevelled edges, so there's nothing sharp to the touch, for example. It is lovely to handle, super silky to hand-cue, with vanishingly low levels of friction discernible. The package also includes a substantial interconnect lead, and one MH-4S headshell (optional headshells cost a hefty £425 each).

The MH-124S requires a 30mm mounting hole which was easily accommodated by a custom arm plate on the Clearaudio Innovation turntable used for this review. The UK importer, Timestep, can assist with fitment to other decks. Cartridges used for the review included Lyra Dorian and Supex SD900E MCs, their low compliance suited to the arm's high effective mass [see PM's Lab Report, p43].

TURNING JAPANESE

The Glanz MH-124S might look like a tonearm first designed when *Saturday Night Fever* was top of the hit parade, but it sounds bang-up-to-date. I was taken by its combination of neutrality and speed, allied to a wonderful sure-footedness. It is sophisticated almost to a fault, yet still has a way of letting the music flow in an exuberant way.

Thomas Dolby's 'Commercial Breakup' [*Golden Age Of Wireless*; Venice In Peril Records VIP1001] showed its most striking feature – a glass-clear midband that scythes through the mix. There was an embarrassment of riches to be heard – Dolby's fragile vocals, the pounding

'Like a laser-guided device, it cuts to the heart of an LP'

TIMESTEP

Timestep Distribution's Dave Cawley has an insatiable appetite for analogue audio, from open-reel tape decks to turntables. The Dartmouth-based engineer spent much of his early career in the satellite industry, then subsequently turned his hobby into his job, retailing assorted vinyl-related goodies for over a decade now. Last year he become Glanz's exclusive UK importer.

BELOW: The main arm wand is machined from non-magnetic stainless steel, as is the detachable headshell with its rubber damping strip and 'free form' cartridge mounting clamp

synthesisers and Linn drums thrashing away – plus the texture of everything so delicately and accurately conveyed. Yet the MH-124S remained utterly unflustered, totally secure in its role even on the dynamic crescendos.

Switch to the more complex *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* by Genesis [Charisma CGS 101], and it doesn't bat an eyelid. Instead it goes straight to the heart of the recording, like some laser-guided homing device. Even the smallest details in this densely packed song seemed so effortlessly imparted that I found myself wondering why many other tonearms make such a meal of it. I loved the way it carried Peter Gabriel's vocals, eerily separating them out from the dense layers of multitracked guitars and keyboards.

SLICK SYNCOPATION

Even less expected – considering this tonearm has none of the 'stealth fighter' hi-tech styling or design touches of many rivals – was the way it got into the swing of things. The sense that the band were all playing together, brilliantly syncopated with one another, was utterly convincing.

Every musical inflection seemed to be a coherent part of the whole: the powerful bass guitar interplaying with the hi-hat cymbals. Also, the vocal phrasing seemed so much better pronounced, as if he was fully committed to the song rather than attempting a trial run.

A third facet of the MH-124S that really impressed was its stereo imaging. The Genesis track sounded exceedingly spacious and three-dimensional, and inside this the various elements of the mix were almost nailed to my listening room wall. The lead vocal appeared to be honed from granite, such was its stability and composure. Switch to Joe Jackson's 'Steppin' Out'

ABOVE: Plan view shows the offset counterweight, bearing housing, arm lift platform and [inset] detail of the lever-and-weight bias adjust mechanism

[*Night And Day*; A&M SP-4906], and this was even more apparent. The bass sequencer underpinned a vast canyon-like soundscape, inside which instruments were located with riflebolt precision.

I found myself beguiled by the way this tonearm lets the music flow forth in an unforced way. It's great at doing the 'hi-fi' thing of capturing every last nuance of detail on an LP, yet doesn't present this in a fashion that's dispassionate or matter-of-fact.

Whatever type of music you listen to – be it the shuffling jazz of Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five' [*Time Out*; Columbia CS 8192] or the classic rock strains of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's 'Country Girl' [*Déjà Vu*; Atlantic SD-7200] – the instruments aren't there just to carry the melody. Rather, they become rhythmic components of the whole. In other words, this tonearm brings you supreme insight into the goings on in the groove, yet still makes everything sound all-of-a-piece.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Don't be fooled by its 1970s-style retro appearance, for the Glanz MH-124S is an absolutely top-tier modern tonearm whose sound quality leaves nothing to be desired. Indeed, it easily stands comparison with the most respected rival designs from the past few decades. It is lovingly built, beautifully finished and a joy to use – making it extremely good value for money, even at its not inconsiderable price.

Sound Quality: 87%

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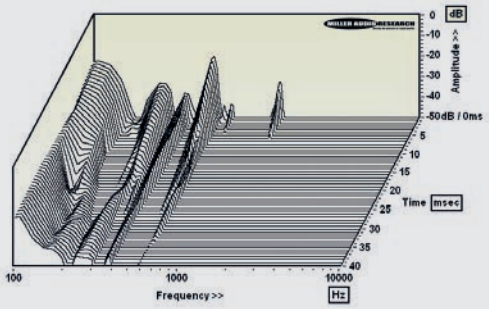
LAB REPORT

GLANZ MH-124S

With all its key components – including the headshell, armtube, bearing housing, bearings, arm pillar and base – machined from single billets of stainless steel, the S-series was never going to be a low/medium mass design suited to high/medium compliance pick-ups. This is especially true of the 12in variant tested here, although its 28-30g effective mass is impressively uniform (some high-end heavyweights exhibit a higher lateral vs. vertical effect mass) and will readily accommodate low compliance (<14cu) moving-coils with high (10g+) mass bodyshells. The four pre-loaded radial bearings (two sealed horizontal ball races and two vertical) are impressively free of play and offer low <10mg friction/stiction in both planes. No oil damping is offered to quell the fundamental arm/cartridge resonance although the headshell is treated with rubber to control local, higher frequency modes. Indeed, there is very little decoupling throughout the entire structure, the components being press-fitted without recourse to adhesives. Perhaps as a result, and also because the offset occurs 90% along the length of what is otherwise a straight stainless tube, the resonant behaviour of this arm is less complex than many other S-shaped designs. The principal bending mode occurs at a predictably low 96Hz with a 'shoulder' at 130Hz and high-Q, but extremely well-damped, modes at 280Hz, 375Hz and 550Hz [see Graph, below]. **PM**



ABOVE: Cumulative resonant decay spectrum, illustrating various bearing housing, pillar and arm vibration modes spanning 100Hz-10kHz over 40msec

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Bearing / bias type	Gimbal / lever and weight
Effective mass (vertical/lateral) **/ length**	30g/28g / 305mm
Offset angle / overhang	20° / 15mm
Friction (vertical/lateral)	<10mg / <10mg
Downforce accuracy (at 2g)	–10%
Cartridge weight/compliance range	10-35g (45g) / 4-14cu
Mounting Type / total weight	30mm hole / 1110g