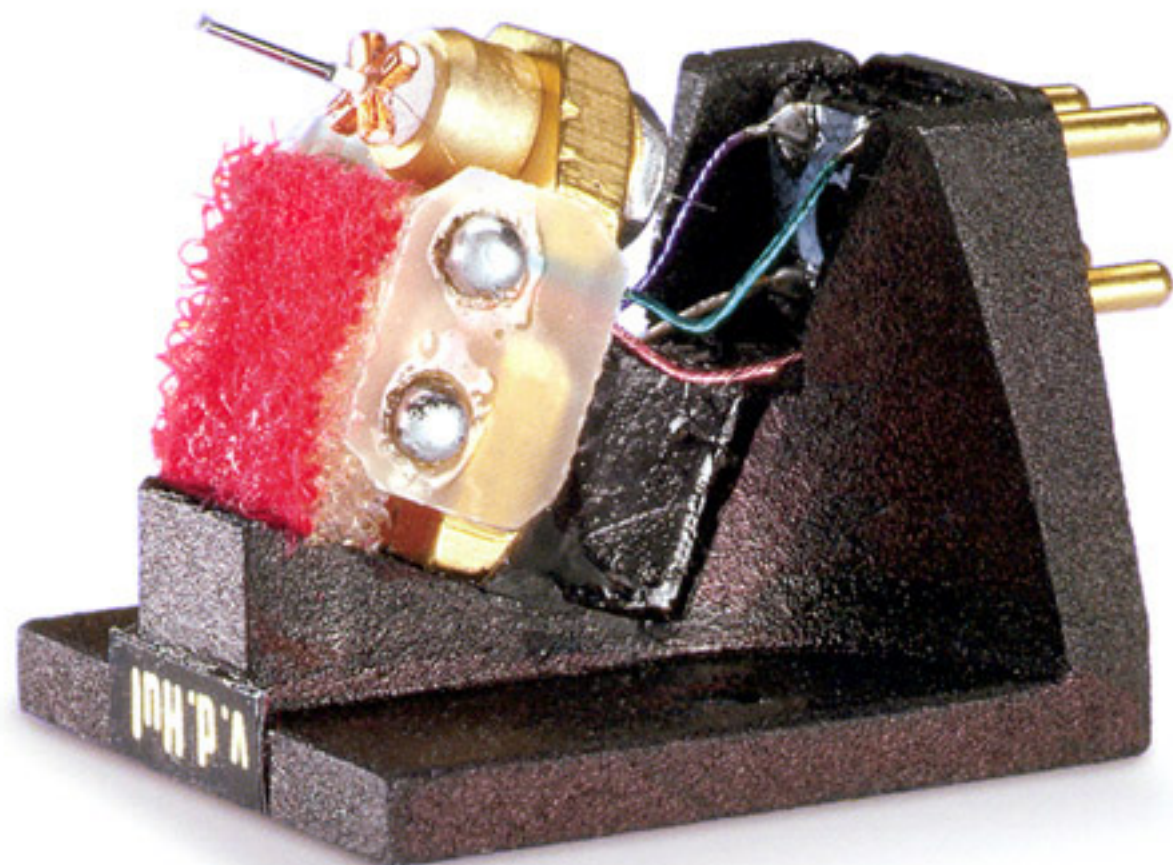


## Van den Hul The Condor-XCM

*Original text by Dirk Sommer, Photo: Rolf Winter  
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Following the filigree Grasshoppers and tender Colibris, van den Hul now sends (at least in the fauna) a clearly mightier Condor behind, and, already betraying this much here, the phono cartridge can fulfill a lot of the expectations that its name arouses. A Colibri Special X nevertheless is not so easily outshined...

But that also isn't the task of the new development. It should by no means cast doubts on the company's internal reference, as not least made clear by a look at the price tag. With each evolutionary stage, in the last years Aalt Jouk van den Hul had brought his top models, which already for ages had been bred for a

maximum information yield, high dynamics and an unloading reproduction of space, tonally a little bit further to the pleasant and plausible side. And that was good because the not rarely in a star-like manner behaving cartridges could only unfold their full potential in the very best tone arms with an optimal alignment and in rather more warm sounding audio systems. The high carats from the Netherlands therefore were objects of lust almost exclusively for experienced analog fans.

With the Condor Aalt Jouk van den Hul then broke with some of the proven principles to create (as he formulates in his usual pointed way) a "VolksTonabnehmer", a "people's" phono cartridge. With the above-mentioned systems, usually coils with an internal resistance of less than 50 Ohms generated the output voltage. They moved between two magnetic pole pieces. Equipped with just one of those the Colibri came out, which however provided the pre-amplifier with only just 0.25 millivolt (\*1).

\*1 Remark: The output voltage of current versions of the Colibri ranges between 0.40 and 0.65 mV. —**A.J. van den Hul B.V.**

The Condor likewise possesses only one pole piece. This because this manner of construction is to entail a clearly better resolution. A six-layered coil winding with a DC resistance of 96 Ohms here however provides a more than twice as high output voltage (\*2), and therefore the new system fortunately doesn't require a particularly sensitive (and with it usually also very luxury) phono pre-amplifier.

\*2 Remarks: A six-layered coil winding: Only found in the High Output (= -HO) versions of the Condor.  
A coil DC resistance of 96 Ohms: Only with the XCP-HO & XCM-HO versions of the Condor.  
The statement "a twice as high output voltage" of the Condor in comparison to the Colibri does not count anymore with our current versions:  
The Colibri's versions range from 0.40 to 0.65 mV and the Condor's versions range from 0.25 to 0.55 mV.  
—**A.J. van den Hul B.V.**

The name additive reveals further constructional details: The "X" stands for a cross-shaped coil carrier, which is supposed to effectuate a better channel separation than the otherwise at this point frequently found square soft iron armature. The "C" suffix indicates Copper wire coils. Toward the end of the year (2004) also somewhat more expensive models with Gold wire ("G" suffix) will be available. Already now however, one has the choice between a minimal body made of an aluminum Metal alloy ("M" suffix) or one of a nylon/carbon Plastic mixture ("P" suffix). For committed fans of dynamics the designer by the way recommends the aluminum alloy body version. Completely independent of the material used, the to its basic function reduced body however already requires the attention of its future owner when ordering the system: Because of its width it does not fit in the headshells of all tone arms. Breuer and Brinkmann users for example must order a minimally narrower version, which however with van den Hul's single item productions so far never has been a problem.

Since the supplied unit has standard dimensions, the Brinkmann 10.5 drops out as play partner. For a first impression (at least I first thought so) the Condor therefore lands up in the SME V. However, already at the first tones this combination proves to be exceptionally harmonious. It neither misses the necessary substance in the bottom tone range, which was not rarely the case with earlier van den Hul systems in less lucky combinations, nor does it lack liveliness in the upper frequency spectrum, which rather would have been to hold against the SME, or more correctly: its connection with the drive assembly. Howlin' Wolf's *London Sessions* turn up extremely powerful and alive. The tinge of intellectual analysis which enveloped many van den Hul cartridges is completely strange to the, not even having been run-in, Condor. For that however, the leaping dynamics and the extensive imaginary soundstage give clear reference to the nest which the Condor stems from.

After quite a number of additional record sides, the Condor then is almost ready for comparison with the, held by the 10.5 arm, several times more expensive Clearaudio Insider. Only the optimal termination impedance is missing. The FM 222 Mk II does not offer the recommended 1 kilo Ohm, but leaves the choice between 750 and 1500 Ohms. Although the differences are everything else but earthshaking, the higher value helps the Condor to a somewhat more exciting and more alive reproduction. Also the rendition of space here fascinates with much depth and an almost incredible width. With the Clearaudio the soundstage still seems to expand another few centimeters further behind the speakers, however appears a bit narrower than with the Condor. The Condor directs the attention yet a touch more emphatically to the tiniest detail information and does this in a unsurpassed manner, but not by any means with coolness or even sharpness: it conveys voices even a tinge more emotionally than the Insider, which for that however pampers with a little bit more pressure in the lowest octaves. With regard to joy of play, dynamics and speed however, the two noble cartridges are as good as in the same league.

### image x-tract

If it wouldn't be for the price, which, even though being extremely positive for the offered performance, nevertheless is quite considerable, the Condor could absolutely become the "people's" phono cartridge: It neither requires highly sensitive pre-amplifiers nor does it need exotic tone arms to satisfy even high-driven high-end demands. For me the Condor is van den Hul's best and most charming phono cartridge!

image information		Test system components	
<b>Phono cartridge</b> <b>Van den Hul The Condor XCM-HO</b>		Turntable:	Brinkmann LaGrange with tube power supply
Operating principle:	Moving Coil	Tone arm:	Brinkmann 10.5, Kuzma Air Line, SME V
Recommended tone arm mass:	12 - 20 g	Phono cartridge:	Clearaudio Insider Reference
Recommended tracking force:	13.5 - 15 mN	Phono pre-amplifier:	FM Acoustics 222 Mk II
Internal resistance:	96 Ohms	Pre-amplifier:	Brinkmann Marconi
Recommended load impedance:	0.5 - 47 kOhm	Power amplifier:	Brinkmann Mono amplifiers
Stylus shape:	VDH - 1S	Loudspeakers:	LumenWhite WhiteLight Monitors
Output voltage:	0.55 mV at 5.7 cm/s eff.	Cables:	Precision Interface Technology, Nordost Walhalla, Shunyata, Audioplan Powercord S
Weight:	9.25 g	Accessories:	Clearaudio Matrix, Sun multi-way mains outlet blocks, Audioplan Powerstar, HMS mains outlets, Acapella bases, Acoustic System isolation feet and resonators, Finite Elemente Pagode Master Reference and Cerabase
Warranty period:	24 Months		
Price:	See Advisory Retail Pricelist on van den Hul website		

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