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no.94 January 2019

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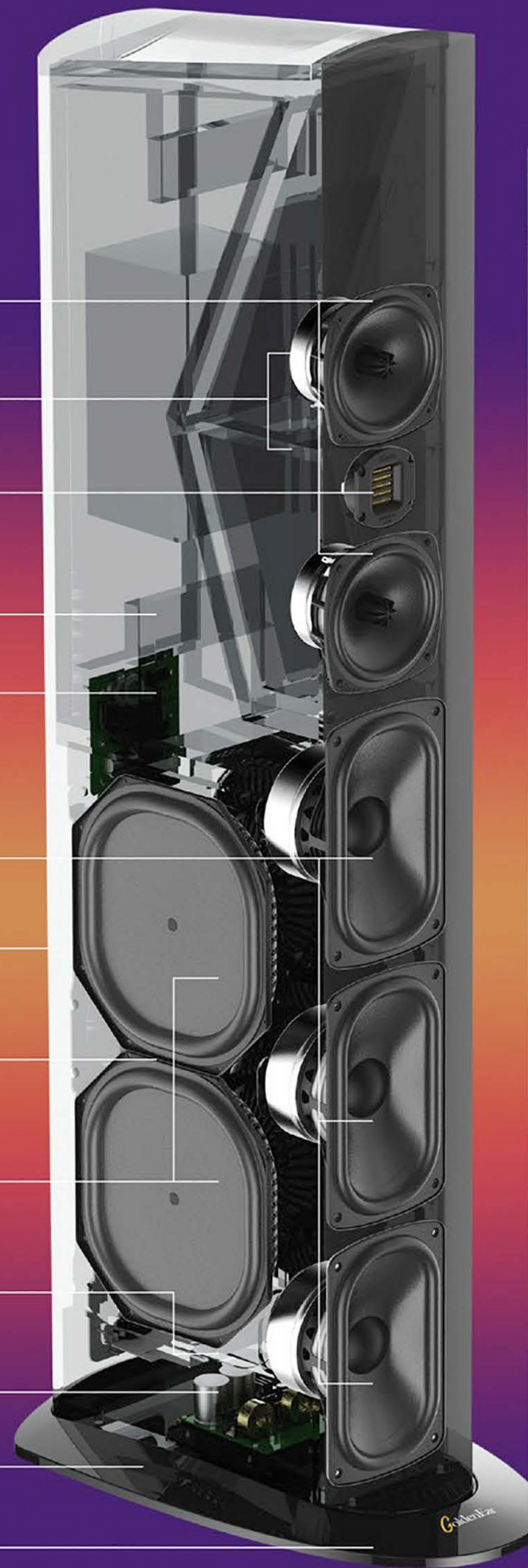
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Triton Reference
\$4499 ea.

“GoldenEar’s New Triton Reference Redefines Ultra High-End Performance and Value!”

“Stunning...a completely new level of excellence...exceptional musical performance and an awesome anchor for a multi-channel or theater setup!”

– Jeff Dorgay, *Tone Audio*

“A remarkable amount of transparency, life and soundstage detail... fully competitive with some substantially more expensive speakers”

– Anthony Cordesman, *The Absolute Sound*

GoldenEar’s Triton One is one of the best selling high-end loudspeakers ever, consistently thrilling listeners and reviewers alike and winning an enviable and unmatched collection of the industry’s most prestigious awards, including “Loudspeaker-of-the-Year” and “Product-of-the-Year” from key publications all around the world.

Clearly, we knew that the One would be a very hard act to follow. There was a spirited discussion within our product development group about an all-out assault on the ultimate, cost-no-object, state-of-the-art, to produce a six-figure loudspeaker to do battle with the most esoteric and expensive loudspeakers on the planet. However, after much soul-searching, rational minds won out, and the decision was made to create a new GoldenEar flagship, positioned above the Triton One (of course still current and available), that would joust with the best, but still stick to our trademarked slogan, “We Make High-End Affordable.” We are pleased and proud to introduce the new Triton Reference. The Reference has begun gathering its own collection of honors, winning the prestigious and coveted CES Innovations Design and Engineering Award, Digital Trends Best Home Audio Tech at CES, HD GURU Best High Fidelity Loudspeaker at CES and What HiFi Stars of CES!

“Undeniably stellar... Yes, it does deliver the sort of performance previously delivered only by cost-no-object speakers.” – Dennis Burger, *Home Theater Review*

The Triton Reference is an evolution of everything that we have achieved with the Triton One, but taken to a stunning new level of sonic performance and sophisticated visual design. All the components in the T Ref: including larger, more powerful, active sub-bass drivers with huge “Focused Field” magnet structures, upper-bass/midrange drivers with “Focused Field” magnet structures, and High-Velocity Folded Ribbon tweeter with 50% more rare earth neodymium magnet material, are brand new, and have been specifically developed for use in the Reference. The powerful 1800 watt subwoofer amplifier, with level control to fine tune the bass to your room, and 56-bit DSP control unit are a significant evolution of those in the Triton One and our SuperSubs.

There are a myriad of other significant upgrades and refinements, including: new internal wiring with a specially developed twist, further development of our signature balanced crossover including

film capacitors bridged across the high-pass section on the upper-bass/midrange drivers, a unique proprietary mix of long-fiber lamb’s wool and Dacron for more effective internal damping, intensive work with a high-resolution accelerometer to determine the most effective implementation of complex internal bracing, a 3/32”-thick steel plate built into the mediate base to further stiffen it for increased stability, new stainless steel floor spikes and cups, all of which results in higher resolution of subtle details... and the list goes on and on.

“The Triton Reference presents a serious challenge to speakers in the multi \$10K range”

– Robert Deutsch, *Stereophile*

Visually, the Reference offers a strikingly beautiful upgrade to the classic Triton styling, with a gorgeous hand-rubbed piano gloss-black lacquer finished one-piece monocoque cabinet. Sleek, statuesque and refined, the Reference is simply an elegantly gorgeous statement piece that will excite listeners with its dynamic visual presence, as well as its extraordinary sonic performance.

Sonically, the Reference has been engineered to perform with a dramatic and authoritative voice, comparable to speakers that sell for ten and more times its surprisingly affordable price. T Refs completely disappear, with superb three-dimensional imaging that will open up your room, stretching from wall to wall and beyond, and depth that makes the wall behind them seem to vanish. The astonishing bass is rock-solid, with low-frequency performance that is tight, quick, highly impactful and musical with extension flat to 20Hz and below. Another GoldenEar signature is a silky smooth high end that extends to 35 kHz with a lifelike sheen but no trace of fatiguing hardness, sibilance or stridency so common with lesser tweeters. Tremendous time and energy has been put into the voicing of the speaker and the seamless blending of the drivers, for unmatched musicality with all types of music, and home theater perfection. Rarely do speakers excel at both, but with their world-class neutrality, the Reference absolutely does. A special bonus is the Reference’s extremely high 93.25 dB sensitivity, which gives them tremendous dynamic range and allows use with almost any high-quality amplifier. You must experience T Ref for yourself!



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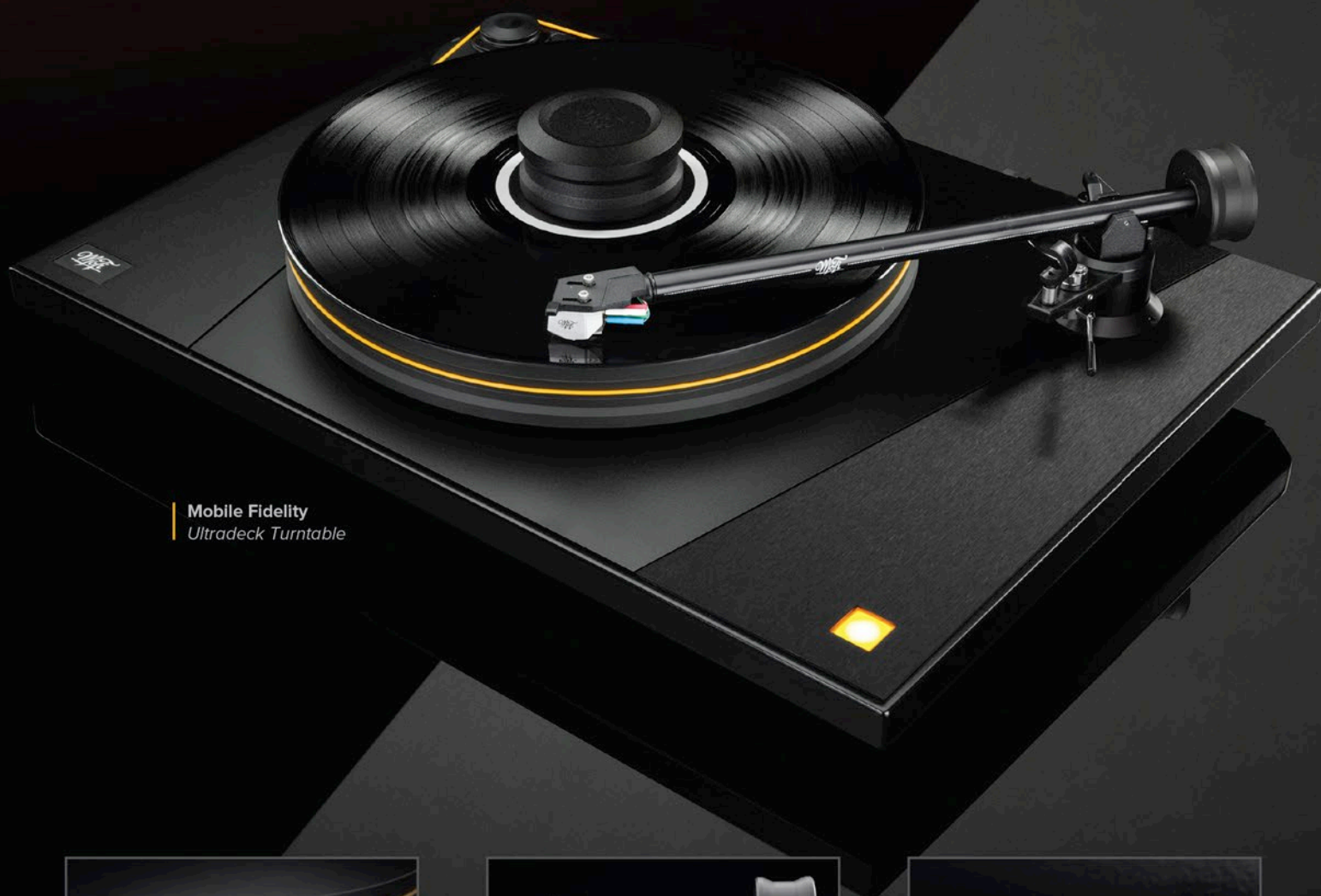
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TONE2.0

Audio

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In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge - Mudhoney

While it may seem that we have a fascination with Legos and cassettes, (guilty as charged) nothing seems more appropriate than one of punk's best bands re-released on cassette.

Watch for a full story on this sooner than later.

Or maybe not!



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new arrivals...

Brian Gage has been helping us behind the scenes with web development on our HA! and Cartridge Dude sites, as well as an update to the main TONE site. He's also putting the reviewer hat on in our upcoming issues.

A lifelong musician, music, and hifi fan, he started with a turntable-centric, all-in-one system in the 80s and never looked back. Working in college radio, playing in various bands and 30+ years in marketing, advertising and design, mirrors his musical tastes.

Another Pacific Northwest local, he's still sharing his passions for music and reasonably priced audio with his kids, via Tidal and LPs.



No, our fascination with Legos will not go away. You know where to find it...

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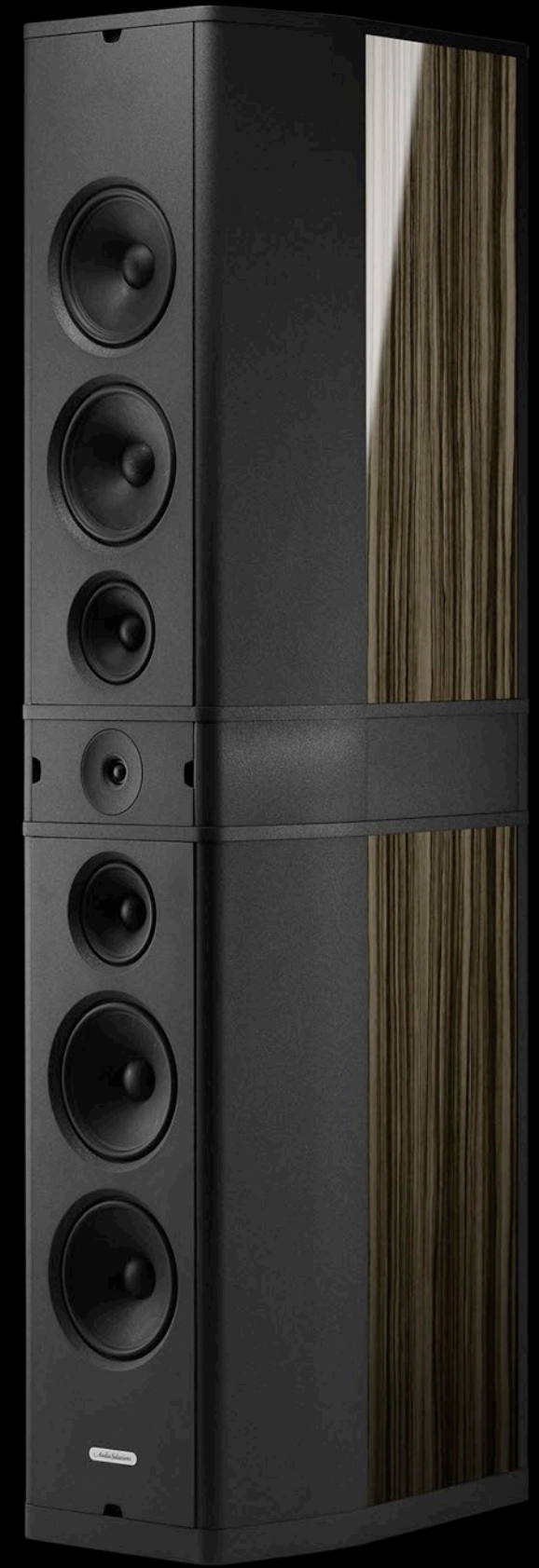
Think of this one as our "coffee table" issue.

Sonus fabers' flaship Aida graces our cover for the second time, the only product ever to do so in our 15-year history.

If the sheer sonic beauty of these speakers don't bring goose bumps, running your hand down the side will.




Audio Solutions



FIGARO XL in GRAY OLIVE

"Excellent depth and rich tonal characterization of orchestral instruments"
Andrew Quint, The Absolute Sound RMAF 2018

"Unanticipated ability to reveal honest instrumental textures, realistic weight, significant impact, and accurate body."
Greg Weaver, EnjoyTheMusic.com RMAF 2018

"Its my take home speaker, I've never heard anything like this in this show..."
Peter Breuning/Terry Eringi, Avshowrooms, RMAF 2018

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AND LEAVING BEHIND ONLY THE
MUSIC OR MOVIE SOUNDTRACK.”**

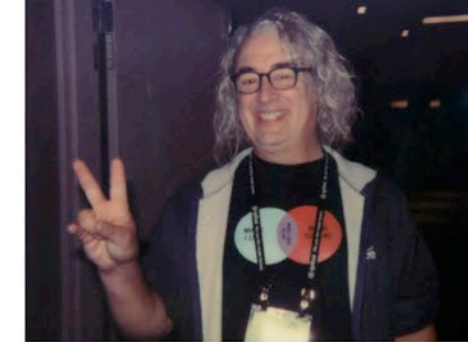
Darryl Wilkinson, *Sound & Vision*



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no.94

P u b l i s h e r s L e t t e r

The saying goes that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” So perhaps, this issue is worth a few years’ worth of words in that respect. Because I don’t really call it out in the masthead, or plaster every image I make with a photo credit or watermark, you might not know that I have taken nearly every photograph in TONE since day one. I didn’t start out as a writer, I was a photographer in the advertising world for nearly 20 years before starting this project, and I’ve been taking pictures since I was 13. When I got that first roll of film back from the lab, I knew that was what I was going to do with my life.

Many of our readers have asked us to do a coffee table book, and while that sounds fun and grandiose, we’re fairly print adverse here, as you know. While TONE was a bit ahead of the curve with a PDF magazine, now that technology has caught up with my original vision, this long time print veteran would much rather read it on an iPad Pro or a 4k/5k monitor than be bound to the compressed tonal scale that ink on paper offers. In a recent editorial, Stereophile’s Art Dudley (who’s company I’ve enjoyed often) alludes to the fact that you aren’t a real magazine if you aren’t in print. I beg to differ. As a seasoned vet of the print world, both from behind the camera and from a couple of years spent at one of the world’s finest lithography houses, helping to create million dollar printed pieces, even the best that print has to offer in terms of color gamut and dynamic range is a 320kb/sec MP3, sometimes approaching the fidelity of a red book CD – and then only when there is a seven-figure budget.

Looking at the wide color gamut of a big monitor, to me, is like looking at the rich, backlit color of an 8 x 10 inch Ektachrome transparency, on a light box, in a color corrected room. It’s like listening to the master tape.

As someone who has spent their entire life making everything from toasters to Porsches look inviting, that’s why I spend so much time on the photos for TONE, and hundreds of hours removing surface imperfections and dust specks from things. I love the way so much of this stuff looks, as much as it sounds, and the time that the manufacturers spend on their casework is often overlooked, or at the least, minimized. This issue is not only a self-indulgence of mine, it is a celebration of everyone in the high end audio industry, that has taken the time to put their product in something beyond a basic box. We all have different opinions on this, but I love every form of design, and enjoy owning products that are just as exciting to look at and make part of my environment, as they are to listen to.

So, for those of you that share my vision, I present TONE’s first “Fine Art of Audio” issue. I hope you enjoy the pictures.

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

- Gold Star - Dani's in Love
- Hosier - Nina Cried Power
- Ruston Kelly - Mockingbird
- Frank Turner - That's the way I Tend to be
- Bring me the Horizon - Medicine
- Anderson Paak - Tints
- Imagine Dragons - Bad Liar
- Years & Years - If You're Over me
- Paul Simon - Can't run but
- Slash - Driving Rain

**UPPERS & DOWNERS
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Joe Nino-Hernes is the youngest mastering engineer in the business.

After an apprenticeship with Sterling Sound, they put him on full time, and he cut the vinyl for quite a few of this year's grammy nominees.

It's nice to see the future of vinyl in such good hands. Here's some of his recent work...

no. 1 Nashville

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The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...



The Quad Z4 Speakers: Elegance in Form & Function

By Rob Johnson

Uk-based Quad is part of a very small handful of audio manufacturers who can boast an 80th anniversary. While the Quad 1 amplifier represented the company's first product release, most audiophiles associate Quad with their famous ESL 57 full-range electrostatic speaker, arriving on the scene 15 years later - a design remaining largely unchanged for over a quarter century. The ESL 57's modern grandchildren -- the 2812 and 2912 -- still carry a family resemblance.

Over the years, Quad added many products to their line, including the value packed Z4 floorstanding speakers we review here. At their price point of \$3,999/pair, they offer a lot of value to a listener seeking modern looks and marvelous sound.

Unlike Quad's classic electrostats, the Z4's offer a more conventional three-way, non-ported design. A ribbon tweeter nine mm wide and 120mm tall compliments the Z4's 150mm Kevlar-cone midrange. Three 165mm Kevlar woofers occupy the lower section of the cabinet, providing bass reproduction down into the 40Hz range.

While the speaker looks traditionally-shaped when viewed from the front, that perception is instantly shattered with a closer look. The cabinet features an elegantly rounded backside, complemented by a handsome swoop upward at the top-rear of the enclosure.

Brinkmann Audio Edison Mk II *Ultimate Analog Performance*

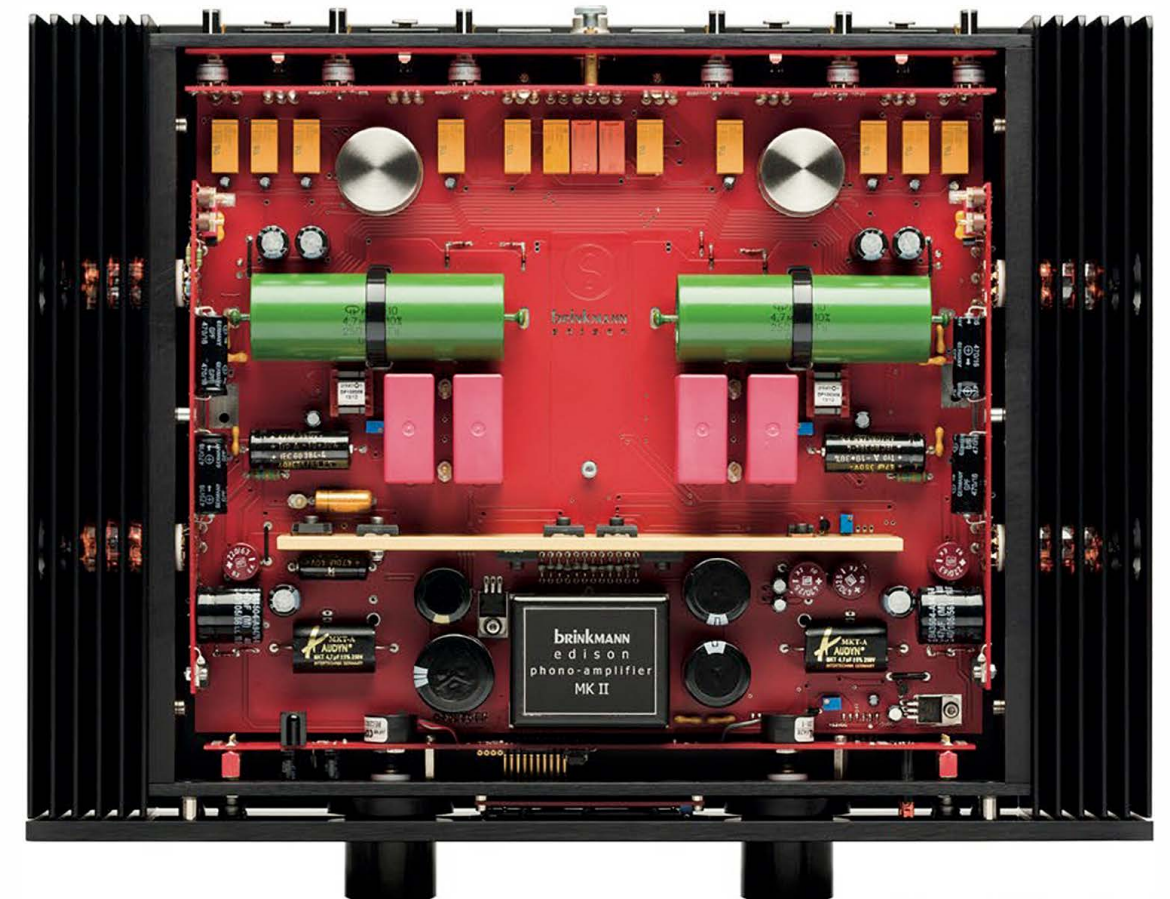


Photo © MichaelRasche.com 2018

During its eight-year production run, Edison has become the Phono Preamplifier of choice for connoisseurs who demand ultimate versatility as well as State-of-the-Art performance.

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The curvy shape improves the speaker's aesthetics, reducing cabinet resonances for better sound. Win-win! Three colors are available: Black, white, or rosewood. Regardless of choice, the top surface offers a beautiful piano gloss which adds to the Z4's elegant presence.

The Z4s stand 1175mm tall, 267mm wide, and 340mm deep. The solidly-build cabinets weigh in at 23.5Kg. Beefy, but light enough to be managed by one person.

Unpacking

Each speaker comes in its own cardboard box, with several rings of thick foam slid down over the top of the speaker at various points for additional protection. Beneath the foam, a thick plastic sheet covers the innermost layer – a soft, white fabric cover. In a separate ziplock bag along with the instruction manual, Quad provides a nice set of white fabric gloves to help keep messy fingerprints off the shiny cabinet finish during setup. I owe Quad an apology for my finger smudges on the speakers, but the gloves were a bit slippery against the smooth cabinets. Given a choice between fingerprints and having a speaker slip out of my hands inadvertently during unpacking, the choice is easy. I keep a soft chamois cloth handy to remove my unsightly fingerprint residue.

The Z4s include spikes to better couple the speakers to your floor. While spikes are great once you find the optimal location for each speaker, I'm compelled to offer new Z4 owners some warning here. During the process of freeing the speakers from their boxes, I proceeded with my usual one-person unpacking technique of keeping the box vertical, sliding the packaged speaker out of it, then removing the rest of the protective material.

Unfortunately, that decision was the *wrong* one. Unlike other speakers I have unpacked over the years, Quad has the Z4 spikes *pre-installed*.



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The lowest foam ring visually obscures the spikes, but the sharp points are there, lurking, just below the surface. As a result, “sliding” the speakers out of the box resulted in some deep and ugly scratches on the hardwood floor. Please learn from my error. Unpack the speakers upon a durable and protective surface, or alternately, lay the speakers on their side while removing them from the box.

Quad includes a package of little metal cups to place under each spike, so once the Z4s are out of the box, you can stand the speakers upright without harming the floor. Bribe a friend with beer and pizza to help you in this process!

The backside of the Z4 features four 5-way binding posts. The posts stack atop one another due to the curved cabinet shape. Banana-terminated speaker cables are an ideal partner since spade terminated cables will need to connect to the Z4 posts an angle. Gold-plated jumpers are pre-installed. However, loosening the binding posts makes removing the stamped jumpers easy if a Z4 owner chooses bi-wired cables or uses third-party jumpers.

Listening

After several days of break-in, the Quads reveal their pleasant voicing and offer a very satisfying musical picture. “Sleep Will Come” by Bliss brings together a complex mix of string instruments, accordion, percussion, and electronic effects all of which have a naturalness, and airy freedom through the Z4.

In the past, I have encountered ribbon-based designs from other manufacturers that generate ear-piercing high notes, a narrow sweet spot, or both. The Quads do not suffer from these maladies when placed optimally. Quad’s ribbon tweeter design navigates the tenuous balance of detailed sound reproduction while avoiding the ear-tweaking singe. The tweeter blends in well among the other drivers giving a full, broad, and delightful sonic experience. When listening to Dave Brubeck Quartet’s “Koto Song,” for example, each piano note rings forth with an engaging level of attack, decay, and realism. The Z4’s capability for detailed revelation could prove a double-edged sword in some scenarios. If a potential buyer’s upstream audio components that lean toward stridency and sibilance, the Z4 will not hesitate to reveal those upstream artifacts.

The speakers also offer impressive soundstaging. When the Quads find an optimum location in the listening room, music projects in all directions from the speaker creating convincing, holistic, and solid images of vocalists and musicians. For example, the background voices and noises heard in “Heroes” from Kruder and Dorfmeister’s *K&D Sessions* appear to emit from the wall well behind the speakers, while musical elements and voices dance upfront in accordance with the layering engineered into the recording.

While the Z4s roll-off below 40Hz, the low frequencies they do produce render with taught bass. The Z4s are a nuanced speaker. To coax more punch from them, a beefier amplifier in the 150-250 watt range will provide them the opportunity to sing to their full potential. The Z4 offers balanced reproduction, but may be a bit polite for those wanting bass monsters.

Regardless of genre, the Z4s work their best magic as all rounders. After several days of listening time, the Quads prove their mettle as a very musically-satisfying speaker with an enjoyable voice.



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Sound for a bit more than a G...

Conclusions

At \$3,999 the Quad Z4 speakers represent high sound quality for the dollar. With 80 years of product development experience under their belts, Quad can design marvelous speakers with an economy of scale. For the Z4, production is completed in China, helping keep the price point low while offering solid build quality, and an exceptional surface finish. Plus, owners can rest assured a company of Quad's pedigree will be there to assist in the unlikely event of a product failure.

The Quad Z4 offers great sound at a real-world price which can fit many audiophile budgets. More expensive speakers – including Quad's ESL line – may offer a more enriched musical experience, but a listener should expect to pay significantly more for that.

If you seek a great set of floorstanders in the sub-\$5,000 range, the Z4 is a wonderful option. Make sure to visit your local Quad dealer and hear for yourself what these speakers can do. You may find them your musical companion for many years to come.

MSRP: \$3,999/pair

www.quad-hifi.co.uk

Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay

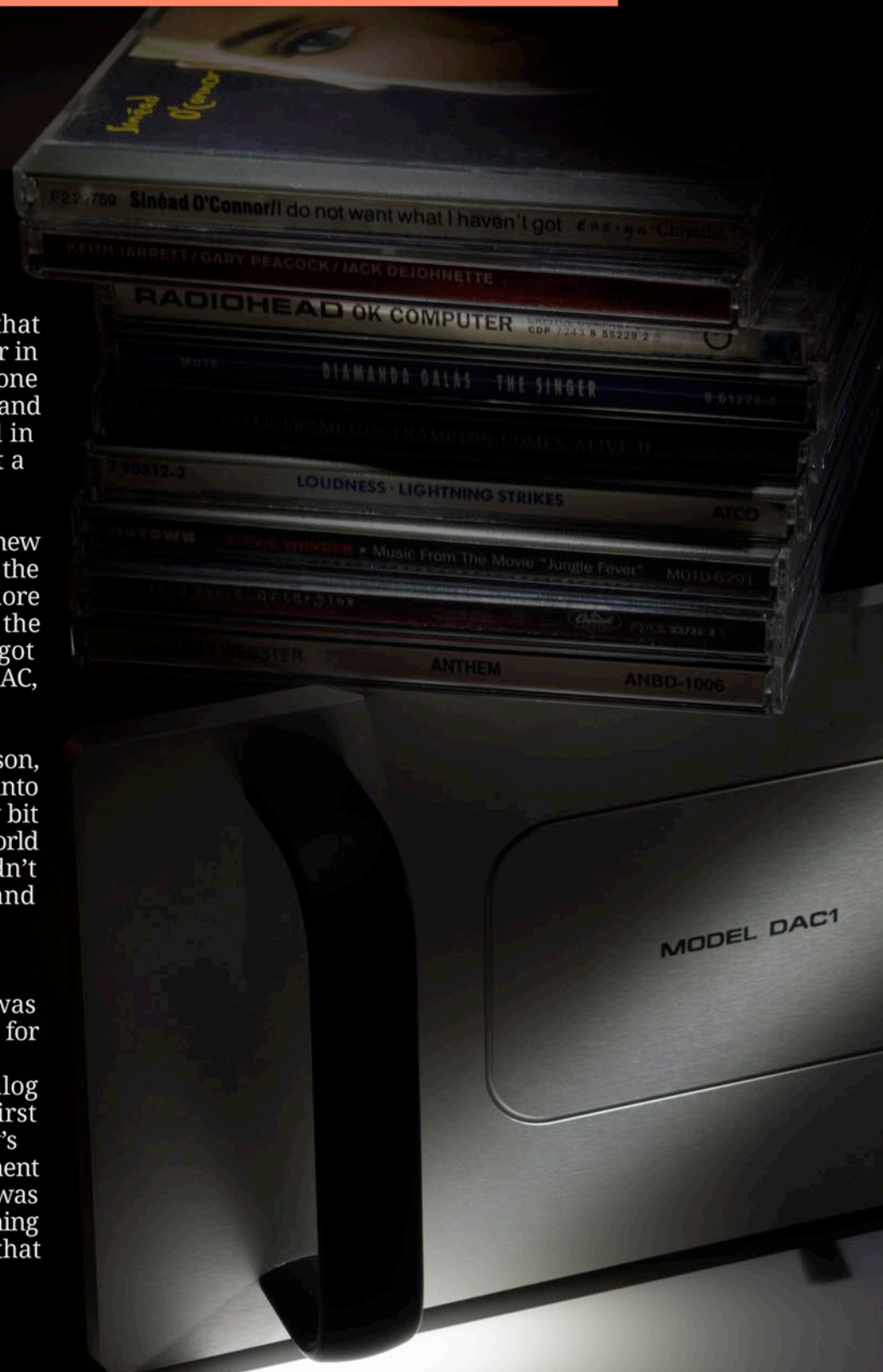
Audio Research DAC 1

Long term audiophiles often joke that DAC years are like dog years. A year in digital is like forever in analog. On one level, these are computing devices, and look how far digital has advanced in over 35 years. Guess that makes it a "mature" format now, eh?

But back in the 80s and 90s, it was a new frontier for digital audio. Much like the way computers got exponentially more powerful with every release, once the major audiophile manufacturers got behind the concept of an external DAC, it was a wild ride.

Companies like Wadia, Mark Levinson, Stax, and Meridian had all jumped into the arena and were bringing every bit of technical expertise to bear – the world had finally figured out that we didn't have perfect sound forever – yet, and that bits were more than just bits.

Perhaps one of the most unlikely companies to jump in to the pool was Audio Research – a company known for analog excellence. But it was this attention to power supply and analog circuitry made for an incredible first effort. You can read Robert Harley's full review here, and feel the excitement in his words as the digital medium was growing by leaps and bounds, becoming a legitimate format. An argument that continues to this day.



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10 products of the year and most wanted components in just 2 years by preserving relative phase relationships in a signal



"If you're looking for a major jump in your system's performance, I'd suggest buying a pair of these instead of considering a hardware upgrade. Before you write this advice off to cable delusion, expectation bias, or the recent Mercury retrograde phase, please take note: I have never said this in TONE's 11-year history"

Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio

"Well, I have just stumbled upon a speaker cable that I'm very tempted to put in a class of its own"

Mono & Stereo



"Tellurium Q have surpassed themselves here. It is often said that all cables colour the sound of a system to some extent, but the Silver Diamonds do it to a lesser extent than any other product I've heard so far."

John Myles, HiFi World



The effect of phase distortion can be likened to smearing a beautiful picture or looking at it through frosted glass. All signal cables do this to some degree and the better you tackle the engineering challenges to combat phase distortion the more natural the sound you get.



== TQ ==

Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay



A great trip down memory lane

Fortunately, this is never much further than my pals at Echo Audio in Portland, or EBay. Always affable proprietor Kurt Doslu only had a DAC 2 on the shelf and I wanted to go all the way back. The audio universe rewarded me with a mint DAC 1 and in this case the DAC 1-20, (the later version featuring 20-bit UltraAnalog converters) which is the primo choice. It also featured an AT&T glass fiber optical cable input, used only by Wadia and a few others, and many considered this the

way to transmit digital signal instead of the SPDIF coax cables of the day. If I can find a Wadia transport at some future date, we will investigate this.

In perfect shape, sporting the vintage ARC design cues, the DAC 1-20 sounds great right out of the box. After a few days to fully stabilize electrically and thermally, it proves even better than I remember from back in the day, when a \$3,500 DAC was a pretty substantial investment.

Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay

It's critical to mention, that ARC never received the respect they should in the digital department. They've always won accolades for their phono stages, preamplifiers, and power amplifiers, but not so much in the digital world. They've always made solid digital products that play in a league only a few molecules less than the world's finest. And it all started with the DAC 1.

No high res here

High resolution digital wouldn't hit the scene until nearly the end of the decade, so 16/44 (and 16/48 if you had a DAT recorder) was it. Back in 1991, I had just purchased Levinson's PDT transport and was still using my original PS Audio Digital Link for DAC duties. My system was sporting a D-79, so the DAC-1 was definitely an object of desire.

Three decades later, the bulk of my digital music collection is still 16/44, so the DAC-1 fits right in to the work flow. Borrowing my old SP-11 pre to make my all-ARC vintage system complete along

with my D79, hooking up the Magnepan Tympani IVs brings me right back to 1991.

Vintage value

\$3,500 in 1991 is equivalent to almost \$7,000 in today's currency, so that's a lot of dough today. ARC was on to something back then, and had they not joined a number of other companies to dig in, demystify, and develop this format, digital would still suck.

Clean DAC 1s are still fetching about \$700 on any given day if you can find one. I'll take a ARC DAC-1 over anything I've heard new for a thousand bucks in a heartbeat. Provided we're only talking RedBook files.

This could make a great addition to a vintage or even beginning system that doesn't require rendering high res files. And for those of you that have older transports, or budget OPPO's, the DAC 1 will prove more than worthy.



VPI Founder Harry Weisfeld seeks cost-no-object performance for his own listening.

"I use the KISEKI Purple Heart N.S. in my personal system on my Avenger Reference and have no urge to change cartridges. It sweeps you out of your seat and into the concert hall with power, grace, and air. I cannot recommend a cartridge higher than to say I use it when I just want to enjoy music."



KISEKI 奇跡

The Legend Continues

KISEKI
Purple Heart N.S.

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MINE: it should be yours

Welcome to MINE:

We're not just crazy about music and hi-fi here at TONE. While we can put many labels on our ethos, claiming to be music lovers, audiophiles, or perhaps even qualityphiles, that doesn't even cover it. Having me so many of our readers from all over the globe, as we are well into our 13th year, I'd say our readers are playful and inquisitive to say the least.

You've told us you like automobiles, motorcycles, fine art, bicycles, toys, cameras... Well, you get the picture. Lumping this all under a banner labeled "Style" seems too limiting. Let's face it, we're all a little selfish when it comes to our stuff.

So, let's call it what it is - MINE! And we'll be sharing more of our favorite stuff as we go.

Aston Martin Vantage

\$149,000 (base price)
astonmartin.com

You might think that an Aston is megabucks, but you can join the game for about the price of a base Porsche GT3. Choices, choices. Many will argue that the Porsche is a more pure sports car (and we would agree with them) but this is a true gentleman's ride - it goes nearly 200 mph and you will arrive unruffled. Why do you think James Bond drives one? And don't forget, Global James Bond Day is October 5. Be there.



Easy Peasy Lemon Squeezy



Control your entire audio environment with whatever's handy.

It all makes sense when you hear **Linn DSM**.

Find out more at www.linn.co.uk



MINE: it should be yours

Pelican 1615 Air Case
\$250 (foam insert, separately)
pelicancases.com



This new line of Pelican cases designed around the size requirements of airline travel should be welcome around those of you that are always on the go with a fair amount of gear.

We've used Pelican for decades, and their combination of durability and ability to seal the elements out is unmatched.

Fans of yellow Pelicans, these only come in black...

50 BRANDS
8 DEMO ROOMS
1 LOCATION



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hificentre.com

MINE: it should be yours

Emphasis Where you Need it:
The Ryobi ONE+Hybrid LED
Color Range Work Light

\$69.98 (battery extra)
homedepot.com

While this could be an incredibly good work light, it's fantastic for throwing some mood/accent lighting into your hifi system.

Phillips HUE lights and such are fairly expensive to use in this capacity, and they require an app which requires constant updating.

The Ryobi ONE+ can be battery powered or use a standard AC cord. The big feature is their ability to change color temp from about 2700K (slightly warm/yellow) to about 6700k (slightly cold/blue). Use a little diffusion and you've got a makeshift video studio with three or four of these.



audio research
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SOUND HAS NEVER BEEN SO TRANSPARENT

After two years in development, the all new REF160M is now shipping. It features switchable Ultralinear/Triode operation, proprietary auto-bias, output tube monitoring and protection, an innovative transparent power meter, and legendary Audio Research sound.

Contact your local Audio Research Dealer for an audition.

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MEDITERRANEO

THE ITALIAN TURNTABLE

Our journey started 25 years ago by designing our very first turntable driven by our love for analogue music and a real passion for vinyl.

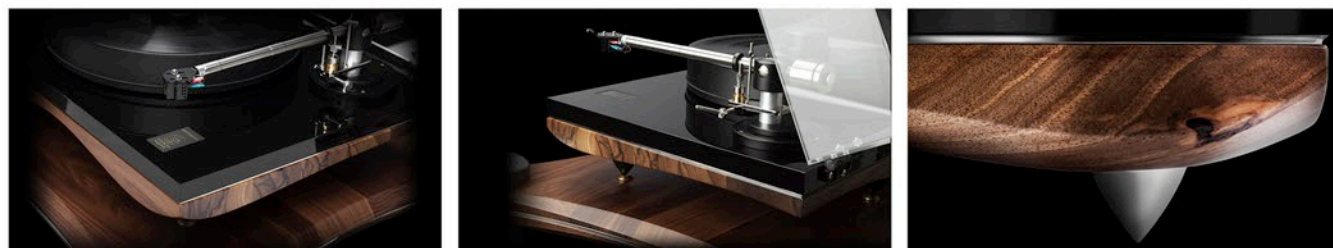
Such passion defines all our creations and particularly turntables, stimulating us to design with great care and attention every single detail in order to realise the most fascinating sources of music.

Mediterraneo is the pinnacle of Gold Note: a creation that redefines the traditional design of the turntable through innovative shapes, technical solutions and quality materials in order to merge tradition and technology and achieve the best musical experience.

Mediterraneo combines the greatest attention to technical perfection with pure beauty.

Manufactured by our local craftsmen, the Mediterraneo is fully hand-made: designed with a 60mm curved plinth made of aged Italian Walnut chosen for its exceptional elasticity, strength and high-density, then coupled with a 20mm board made of polished acrylic and finally reinforced with a 3mm stainless steel board for extra rigidity.

Every detail of Mediterraneo enhances its musicality: a refined technical innovation achieved through elegant and smooth lines.



MINE: it should be yours

Shinola + Bondhus L Wrench Set

\$40 SAE Only
shinola.com

Shinola has an incredible way of making everyday objects cool.

We're sure our gearhead friends in the audience will recognize the Bondhus hex wrenches for their excellence. Yet Shinola serves them up anodized in bright colors.

For those of you dismissing this as being silly, think of how many of these you've lost over the years.

Wouldn't it have been a lot easier to find your favorite hex wrench if it were a bright color?

Now if they only come around and offer these in metric sizes as well.





No. 25

No. 25 commemorates a quarter century of our pursuit of perfect sound, while pointing to our next 25 years of building the finest sub bass systems available. No. 25 employs our most advanced design, engineering and craftsmanship, featuring our ultra-reliable 1,000watt amplifier, lightweight carbon fibre 15" driver and legendary filter sets, crossovers, and zero compression wireless connectivity.

Featured here is the No. 25 Line Array, three No. 25s arranged vertically, permitting bass to emerge more naturally as it propagates throughout the room, striking our sinuses, kicking at our chest cavities and rumbling along the floor with power and majesty. Welcome to the pinnacle of sound, 25 years in the making.

Join the Pursuit™ | rel.net



GoodLife Slub Scallop V

\$60

goodlifeclothing.com

This modal blend t-shirt is the most comfy T we've ever worn. Available in classic cut, v-neck and long sleeve style, they are easy to take care of and won't get terribly wrinkly when you have to pack for a long flight.



MINE: it should be yours

MINE: it should be yours

Lego BMW E30 M3
\$300
statusgruppe.com

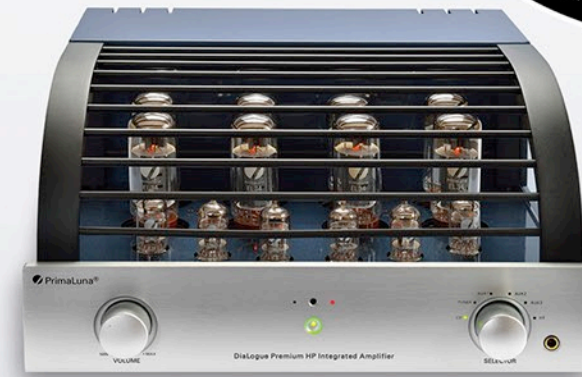


What's way more fun than screwing around with adjusting VTA? Building LEGOs!

Knowing how many LEGO, Porsche, and BMW fans we have in our readership, we couldn't resist these... While our publisher was lusting over the BMW, staffer Chris Kimmelshue and his boys were busy building the Porsches over the Christmas holiday. An old friend of the TONE family, who was building a Saturn V LEGO rocket said, "You're never too old for LEGO's." We couldn't agree more.



**Lego Speed Champion
Porsche 911s**
\$45
amazon.com



PrimaLuna HP
The World's Finest Tube Integrated \$4399



LUMIN
The finest streaming DACs made today.
All models in stock now.



NAIM Preamp/Poweramp Bundle
We bought them all to get you this price! ~~\$5990~~, \$2249



FOCAL
Electra 1038 Be
Launched at \$12,450.
One of our bestsellers.
While supplies last.
\$6999

KISEKI
Purple Heart N.S.
~~\$3499~~ \$3199



VPI Classic 4 Package
\$1000 Periphery Ring & 12" 3D Tonearm - ~~\$11700~~, \$5999



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909-931-9686
upscaleaudio.com

MINE: it should be yours

Ski Season is in Full Swing
The Bogner Leonie Knitted Hat

\$299
bogner.com

Avid skier and analog magician Richard Mak turned us on to Bogner Ski Wear. Even if you don't participate in the downhill action, you need to keep your head warm, right?

The Leonie is in the women's section of the site, but the man who's brought incredible skiing footage (including the Bond ski scenes) has an equally impressive line of winter wear for both sexes.



AUDOLICI From Portugal



A25M Integrated Amplifier



I50 "Swing"
Integrated Amplifier



AVP-01 PreAmplifier



SOUND CONSULTANT

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www.soundconsultant.com

MINE: it should be yours

Panerai Luminor Due
Efficient Design

\$6,400
panerai.com

Panerai's latest creation is a stunner. featured here, in 42mm size, it features the design cues that distinguish the brand, in a slightly understated presentation.

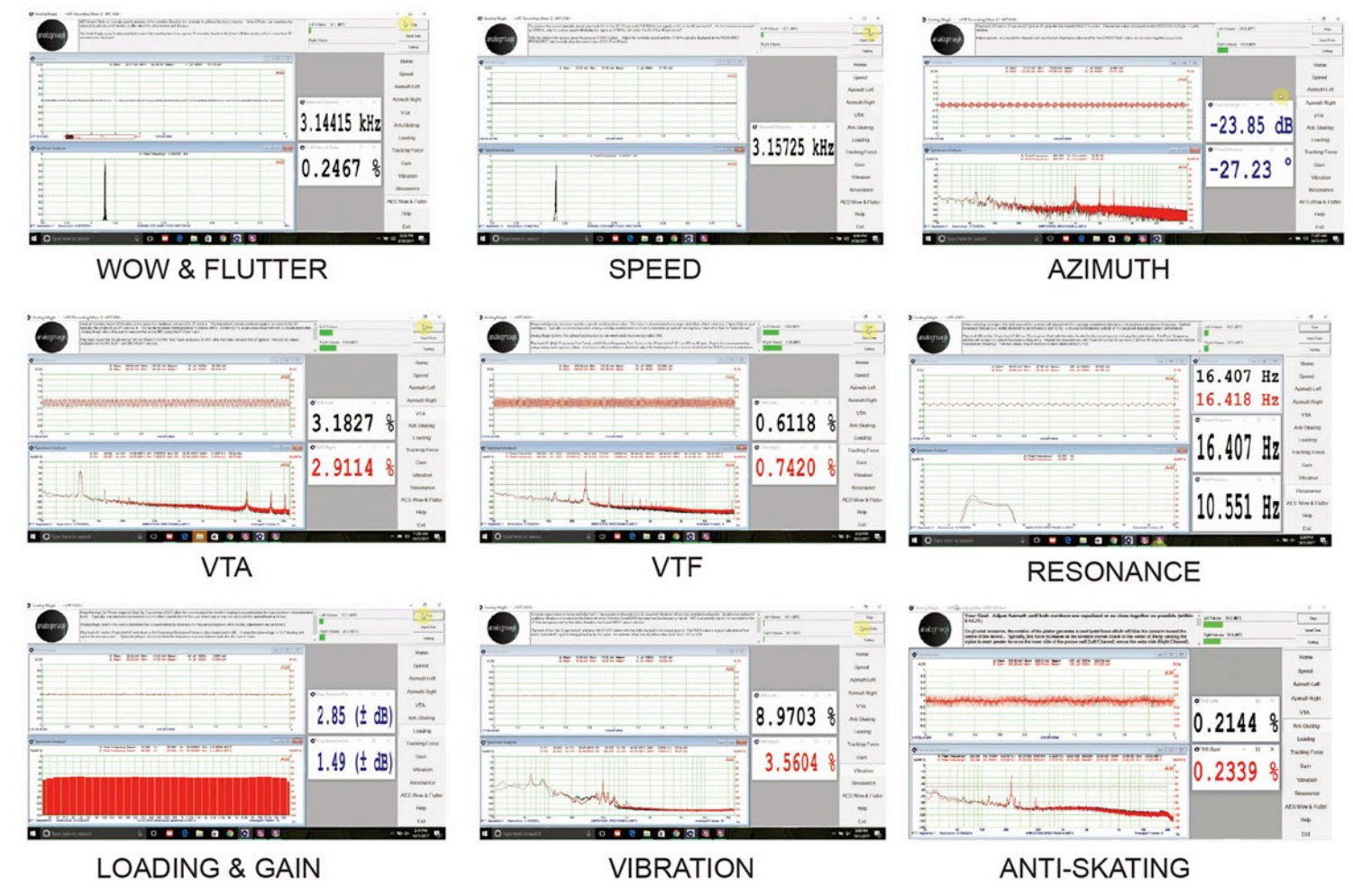
Watch aficionados around the globe are singing it's praises, with Esquire calling it "a classic, reconfigured, with modern wearability in mind."

GQ listed the 38mm version as one of their top watches of 2018.



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Playlist: What Our Readers Are Into



- Massive Attack - Protection
- Zero 7 - Destiny
- Morcheeba - Otherwise
- Hooverphonic - Inhaler
- Tricky - Overcome
- Dot Allison - Colour Me
- Soma Sonic - Falling
- Flunk - Miss World
- Supreme Beings of Leisure - The Light
- Portishead - Roads

Managing Editor Rob Johnson can always be counted on for a list of great tunes.

He mentioned he was in a bit of a “downtempo mood” the other day, and gave us a quick list.

no. 2 2 Portland (OR)

TONE Playlists are sponsored by:



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: THIN FILM ACCURACY, DEEP BASS THRILLS.

Cone speakers can't reproduce mid-range and high frequency audio with the lifelike detail and three dimensional effect of an electrostatic loudspeaker. Nothing delivers bass like woofers in a box.

MartinLogan combines these elements in the most advanced electrostatic hybrid loudspeaker ever, **Renaissance ESL 15A**, flagship of the Masterpiece collection.

With a unique suite of innovative tech and proprietary design elements, these loudspeakers deliver detailed imaging and dynamic soundstage, even in the most challenging listening spaces.

No other loudspeaker features the controlled dispersion radiation pattern of a curvilinear electrostatic transducer combined with our reflection-defeating PoweredForce Forward woofer alignment. The result is breathtakingly accurate and seamlessly integrated full-range performance. On-board Anthem Room Correction (ARC®) technology instantly optimizes response for the best sound in any room.

Renaissance ESL 15A is a revolutionary melding of form and function. This is exactly what we mean by *Truth in Sound*.

The reviews are in. This is our Masterpiece

martinlogan.com/truth

“Yes, I’ve drunk the Kool-Aid for years. But even though I’m pre-primed to like electrostatic-panel speakers, I’d never found a one-stop solution I could live with. Now that a MartinLogan active subwoofer endowed with ARC-2 has been successfully mated to an XStat panel, anyone serious about big, full, accurate sound reproduction can start here. Unconditionally recommended.”

*Renaissance ESL 15A
Jon Iverson, Stereophile*

“...the best bass response I’ve ever heard in my room in the areas of overall smoothness of response and of clarity, definition, and pitch differentiation.”

*Impression ESL 11A
Paul Seydor, The Absolute Sound*

“It’s a powerful, dynamic, musical fun maker with the usual MartinLogan characteristics of good imagery and great detail... and terrific integration between cones and panel. Factor in the benefit of subtle DSP room compensation and this electrostatic hybrid design comes extremely highly recommended!”

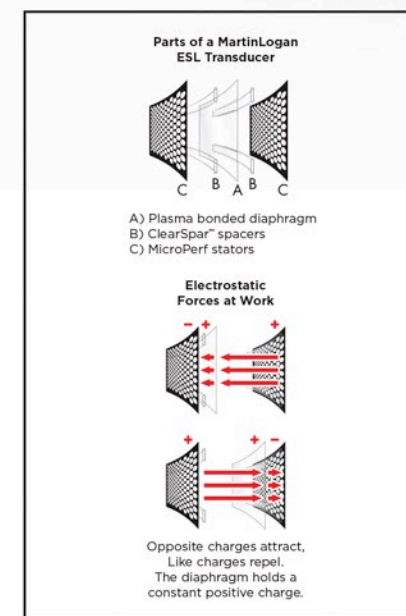
*Impression ESL 11A
Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi+*

“MartinLogan has hit a home run... This speaker improves upon the traditional MartinLogan strong points of transparency and detail and adds a much improved bass section to create a well-rounded, great-sounding speaker.”

*Expression ESL 13A
Brian Kahn, HomeTheaterReview.com*

“...a world-class speaker. It is revealing, accurate and has the huge soundstage one expects of a dipole radiator.”

*Impression ESL 11A
Glenn Young, Secrets of Home Theater & High Fidelity*



Renaissance
ESL 15A
by **MARTINLOGAN**

35
YEARS
1983 - 2018

MINE: it should be yours

MoFi Super Heavyweight Noise Dissipation Record Weight

\$199
musicdirect.com

Say that as fast as you can...

All of the cranky pants people in the audience will pooh-poo the MoFi weight, but if you've got a great table/cartridge setup, you'll hear the difference.

You'll neither see nor become the messiah, but you will get a bit blacker blacks, from a slightly lower noise floor.

And, it looks really damn cool. Many an audiophile has paid way more for way less...

The Classic SB VINTAGE DESIGN MEETS MODERN TECHNOLOGY



We have turbocharged our EISA Award-winning "the Classic" to bring you this upgraded package - The Classic SB. It includes key new features:

- Electronic speedcontrol
- Sumiko Blue Point No.2 cartridge
- Top grade Clamp It
- Leather It mat

ELECTRONIC SPEEDCONTROL



SUMIKO BLUE POINT NO.2 CARTRIDGE



For more information, visit www.pro-jectusa.com

MINE: it should be yours

The Buffy Comforter

\$120 - \$190 (size dependent)

buffy.com

Wanna stay warm and save the planet? The Buffy comforter is made from recycled PET bottles. Think of it, you'll be sleeping on empty Mountain Dew bottles!

You've got 30 days to try it risk free. Saving the planet never felt so good.



You already own the music.
You might as well hear all of it.

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The
s)und
Organisation

MINE: it should be yours

The Dave K Mini

\$49
davekny.com

Adding a bit of New York City style to our dreary Portland, Oregon winters is always a fantastic idea. A pinch of color goes a long way towards being seen when all is grey.

The Mini is their smallest offering, but there is a full line of umbrellas with a wide range of style and functionality at your fingertips.

They even offer two classic cane umbrellas and the DAVEK Alert, with an embedded chip that links to your phone.

As rain dwellers, we approve.



Bellissimo!



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FLIGHT

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Boulder

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EXPERIENCE THE NEW
1110 PREAMPLIFIER & 1160 STEREO AMPLIFIER

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303-449-8220 | sales@boulderamp.com | www.boulderamp.com

Happy Belly Sweet & Spicy Trail Mix

\$16.72
amazon.com



MINE: it should be yours

Friend and contributor, Mike Liang, of HiFi Insider turned us on to these healthy, yummy snacks. He warns, "you won't be able to put the bag down," so we were sure to take the picture after only a few bites.

They soon disappeared. You can subscribe at Amazon, so you never run out.

MINE: it should be yours

The Louis Vuitton Keepall Bandouliere 50:
A stylish way to tote your stuff

\$1,820
louisvuitton.com

An old friend once told us that if you've got more to carry than this bag will hold, it's irrelevant. Or you need to stop at FedEx before you board the plane.

Buy it once, keep it forever.



Looking for the Swiss Army knife of Hifi?



I1 Universal Integrated Amplifier



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Montreal Audio Fest
March 23-25, 2018
Bonaventure Hotel, Montréal, QC, Canada
Room St-Lambert

Visit us @

Axpona Audio show
April 13-15, 2018
Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel, Chicago, IL
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“Isn't it time you award yourself?”

Vitus Audio Signature Series SIA 25 mk II



Hunter Gloss Rain Boots

\$150/pair
hunterboots.com

If you live in a wet climate, or spend a lot of time washing cars, you need a pair of these.

And who better than Hunter, a company that has been making quality boots since 1856.

According to their website, they have two Royal Warrants of Appointment to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, claiming their boots will shield you "from the bleakest of landscapes."

We certainly love them.



MINE: it should be yours

MINE: it should be yours



**Peter Gabriel -
So: Back to Front 2012**
\$119
amazon.com

A great combination of live discs from this tour, along with a small photo album and of course, the coolio road case. A must have for PG fans!



www.gryphon-audio.com



There's no question about it, whether you're staring into a bunch of glowing vacuum tubes, watching a pair of output meters bounce around, or oohing and aahing as you admire the finish on your newest component, there is an unmistakable art to audio component design.

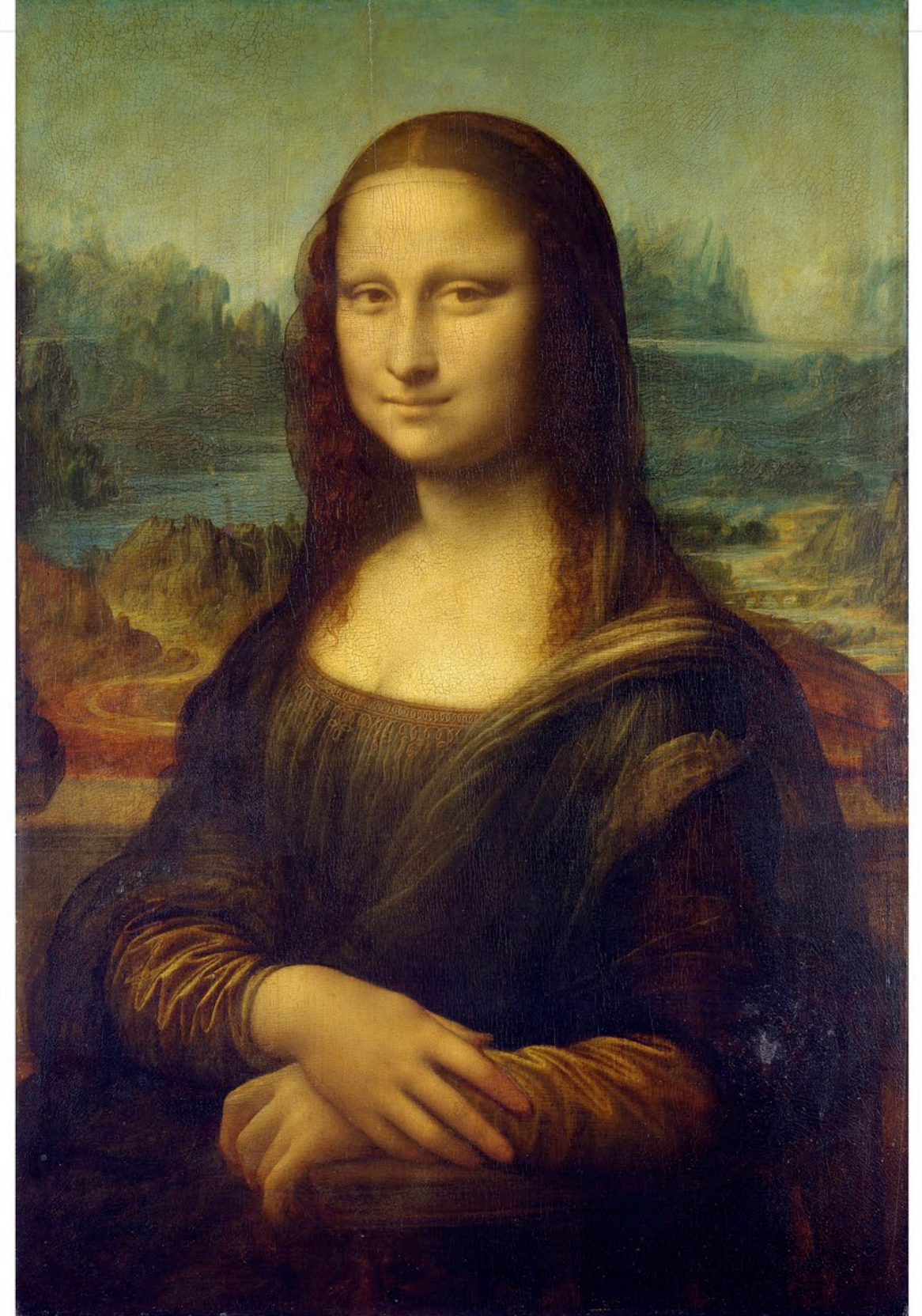
Though sometimes that art is inside the box, many components have an innate beauty that makes them just as enjoyable to admire (even when powered down) from a visual perspective as they are to listen to.

Some audiophiles get cranky, paying the price that premium casework requires, but we appreciate the density of thought that goes into creating a beautiful enclosure.

In the pages that follow, we celebrate that creativity, focusing on products and details that we have always admired.

We're sure that many of you have your own short list of favorite components for the same reasons.

Feel free to send us a picture or two of your favorites on our Facebook page.



**The Fine
Art of
Audio.**

(image courtesy of Shutterstock)

Pure legacy. Next-gen attitude.



**We've taken care of the tech.
You take care of the music.**



The new Dynaudio Xeo wireless stereo speakers: all the performance of high-end hi-fi with none of the hassle. Just plug them into the mains and plug in your sources – or stream with high-quality aptX Bluetooth. It's as simple as that.

DYNAUDIO
Xeo 20 / 30

Sometimes, intriguing design takes an interesting turn.

When I asked Jean-Claude Schlup, Nagra's head of design, why he made their PSA power amplifiers in this innovative pyramid shape, he laughed and responded: "So no one will ever place anything on top of it."



One of the first meters many of us encountered in the world of hifi, happened to be the signal strength and center channel meters on our parents (or our own) receiver.

There's just something tactile and engaging about this experience, striving to get the best reception possible. Alas, in the world of streaming, this will soon be gone forever, but the humble meter is making a big comeback in new gear.

And for some manufacturers, they never went away.



Luxman's current lineup of integrated amplifiers seamlessly and tastefully combine an old-school look with contemporary circuitry.





The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The Nagra PL-L

Even though Nagra's PL-L is no longer in production, it shares its famous all in one hand-crafted modulometer, with nearly every product made since the company's beginning.

The modulometer on the PL-L and other Nagra's is precisely calibrated, and features both channels inside its small, round housing.

SCULPTURE A

LE PHONO SE

Working strictly as a class A single ended device with no feedback, our phono stage uses only solid state components (no op-amps) with the shortest signal path circuit possible.



Tailor built for your cartridge with carefully selected and matched high end components, it works with any MC cartridge from 0.1mV (74dB of gain) up to 2.5mV.

Le Phono SE, a solid-state design without the usual issues of tube electronics.

info@
anamightysound.com



A.4 Silver

A.3

A.4 Copper



made by Ana Mighty Sound

A.3 & A.4 SCULPTURE A PHONO CARTRIDGES

Already awarded by French press with a « Remarquable » award, the A.3 and A.4 phono cartridges display a minimum tracking of 90 micron @300Hz lateral that will allow you to get the full definition of your records. For this we have developed a specific damper and use only boron cantilevers with dedicated geometry diamond tips.

With outputs from 0.1mV to 0.3mV with either silver or copper coils and impedances between 3 to 40 ohms.

It is the perfect companion of our Le Phono Single Ended phono stage and others.

With a compliance of 12 @100hz and three bodies, mixing impregnated wood with pure brass, copper, silver or gold, we are able to fine tune the weight and fine tune the sound of your cartridge to match perfectly the mechanics of your tonearm.

The A.3 is a fixed characteristic design, the A.4 is a tailor made cartridge up to your requests.



retip

Our insights on cartridge "repairs"

What if each cartridge was restored as unique artefact ? We do not believe that glueing a cantilever and diamond tip is enough. Aging has an effect on your cartridge as well as usage wear, dust, hygrometry and UV.

Cartridge service : your cartridge does not sound as good as you remember ? The damper might have been tampered with, the azimuth of your diamond tip is starting to be off or maybe the piano wire is getting loose ?

We can check it out and get back the original parameters without altering the parts of your cartridge.

Fine-repair : we are able to completely rebuild Neumann DST (or Lumière), Clément cartridges and most MC cartridges available. Open coils ? Stiff damper ? Broken cantilever ? We know how to deal with these issues and will do our best to get your cartridge as close to its original status, even though we can certainly alter your cartridge up to your requests.

Ana
MIGHTY SOUND



In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

MTV Unplugged - Alannis Morissette

As the ambassadors of defunct formats, why wouldn't we pass up a chance to fire up the mini disc player?

It just seems appropriate.



EAT European Audio Team's C-Major

Exceptionally engaging, endearing sound.*

"It looks stunning...
Best of all it sounds fantastic."

Highly recommended.

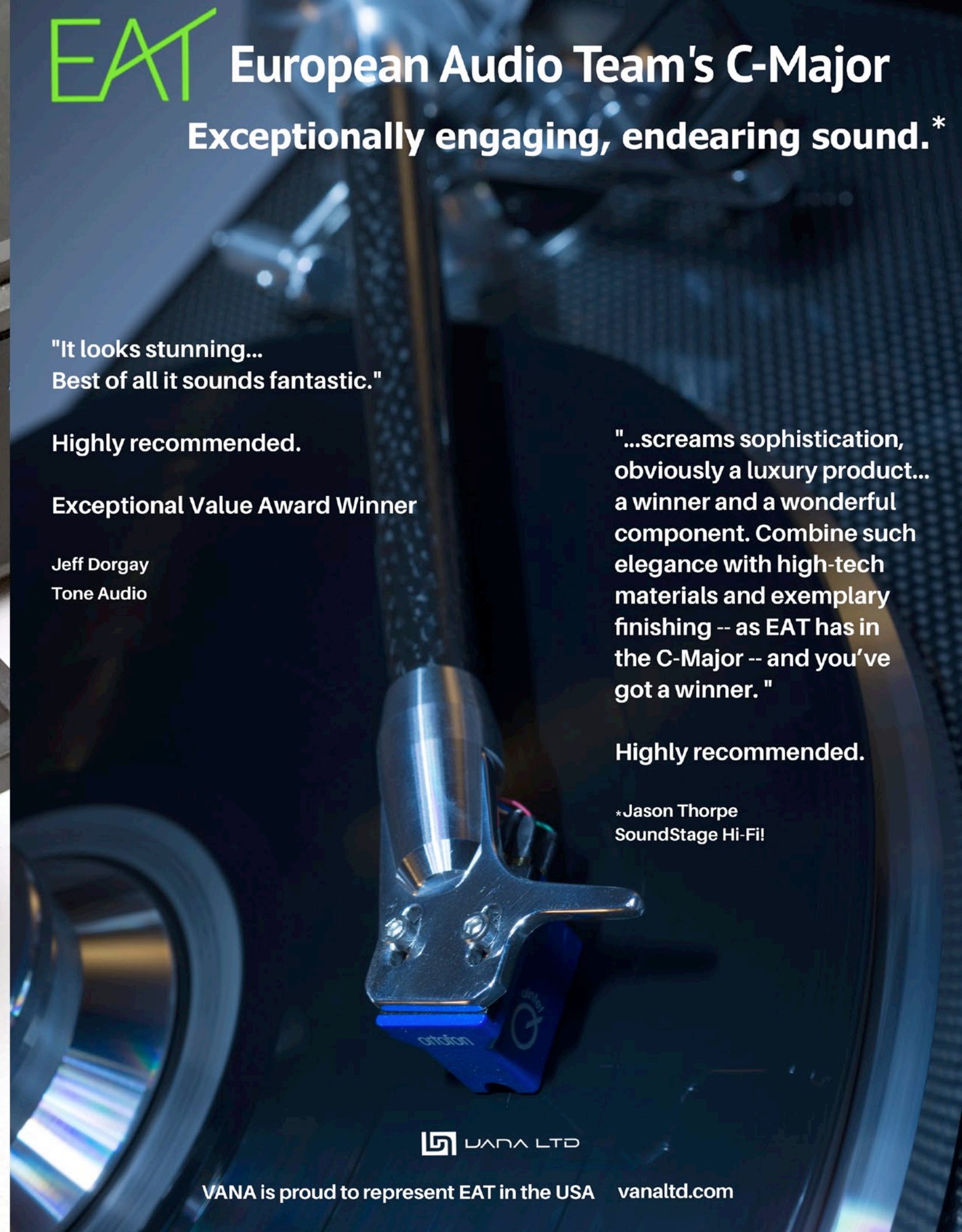
Exceptional Value Award Winner

Jeff Dorgay
Tone Audio

"...screams sophistication, obviously a luxury product... a winner and a wonderful component. Combine such elegance with high-tech materials and exemplary finishing -- as EAT has in the C-Major -- and you've got a winner."

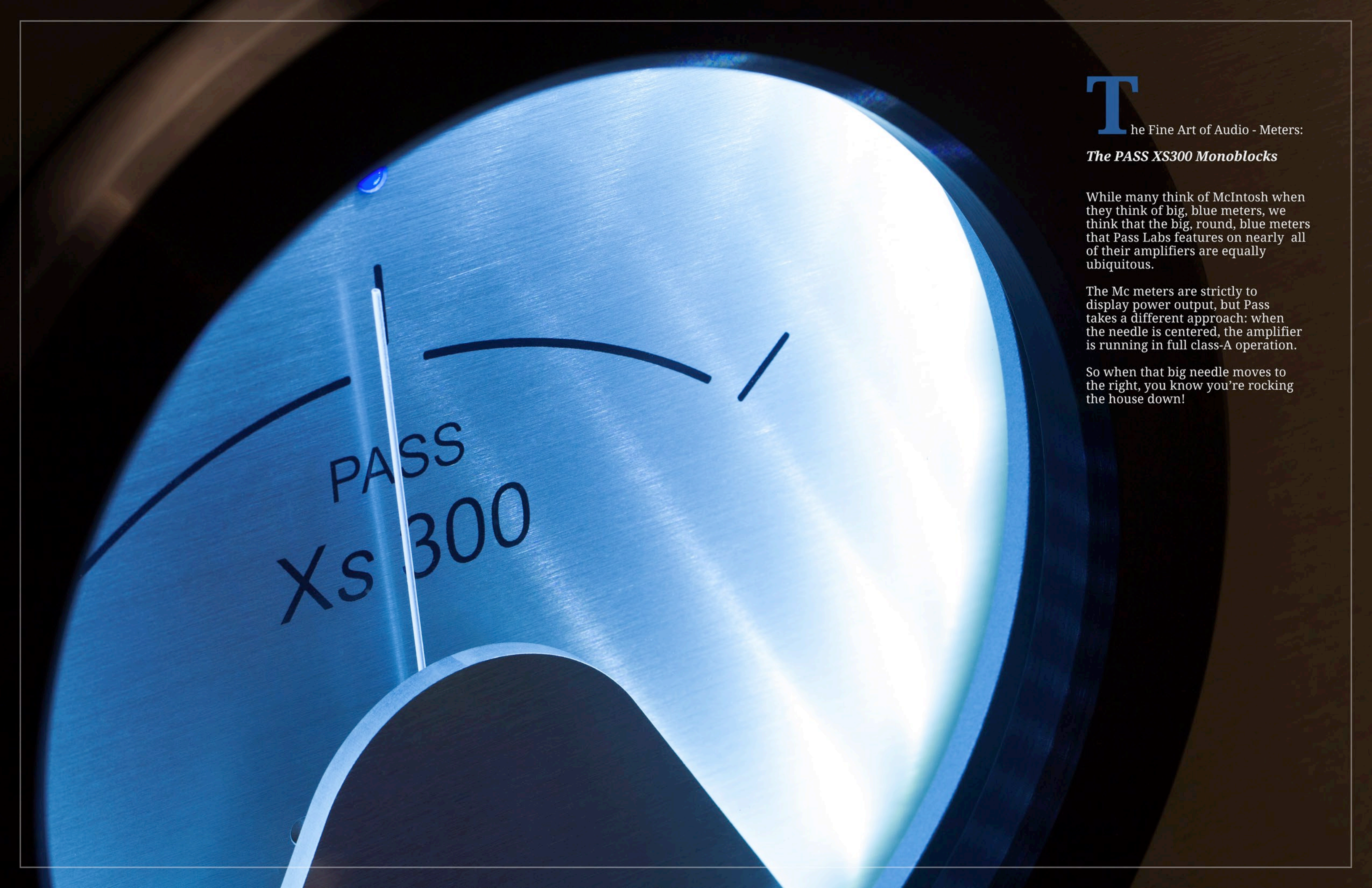
Highly recommended.

*Jason Thorpe
SoundStage Hi-Fi!



VANA LTD

VANA is proud to represent EAT in the USA vanaltd.com



The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

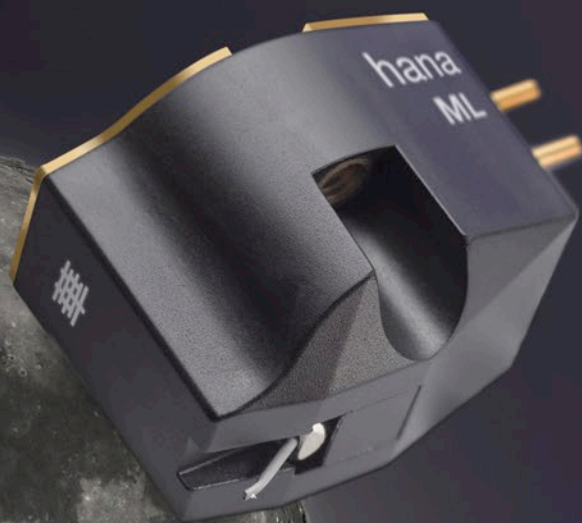
The PASS XS300 Monoblocks

While many think of McIntosh when they think of big, blue meters, we think that the big, round, blue meters that Pass Labs features on nearly all of their amplifiers are equally ubiquitous.

The Mc meters are strictly to display power output, but Pass takes a different approach: when the needle is centered, the amplifier is running in full class-A operation.

So when that big needle moves to the right, you know you're rocking the house down!

A NEW DAWN FOR **HANA** BRILLIANCE

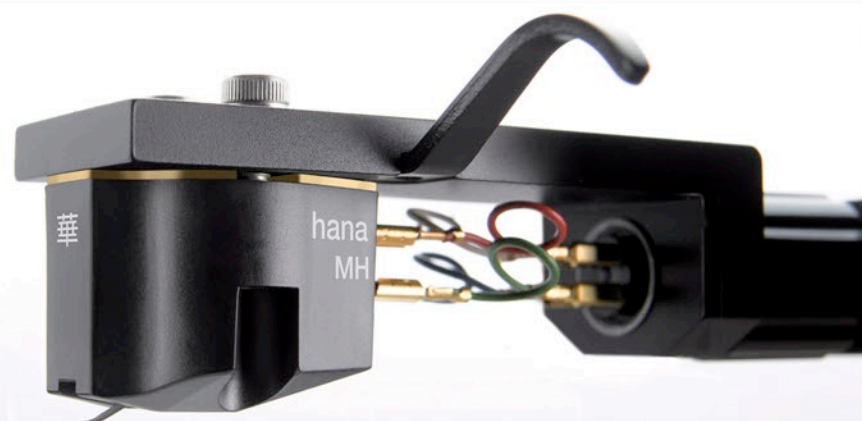


- ML Low Output*
- MH High Output
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- POM (Delrin®) Body
- Metal Threaded Fittings
- Integral Brass Cap

HANA M SERIES MC CARTRIDGES

ASPIRING TOWARDS AFFORDABLE PERFECTION

- High Purity Copper
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The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The Hammerdyne Ultimate Truth 2A3

If you can live with 4.2 watts per channel, the Ultimate Truth 2A3 delivers the most pristine 4.2 watts we've ever heard.

Those with Klipsch, PAP, AvantGuard and other super efficient speakers, your ship has come in.

This is the droid you want.





The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The Phase Linear 400

Long before our publisher had even heard the words Conrad and Johnson, there was Phase Linear.

Both the 400 and the larger 700 had earned a reputation for their output stages melting down, (affectionately called "Flame Linear by more than one enthusiast), but we never had that misfortune.

Interestingly enough, more than one touring rock band used banks of these amplifiers to drive their PA systems.

Covering this amplifier in our Old School column back in issue 8, after landing a decent 400 on EBay, the 400 still sounded quite good.

Nearly fifteen years further down the road, the remaining examples are in much less good shape, and the output transistors even harder to come by.

Best left for the hazy memories they inspired!

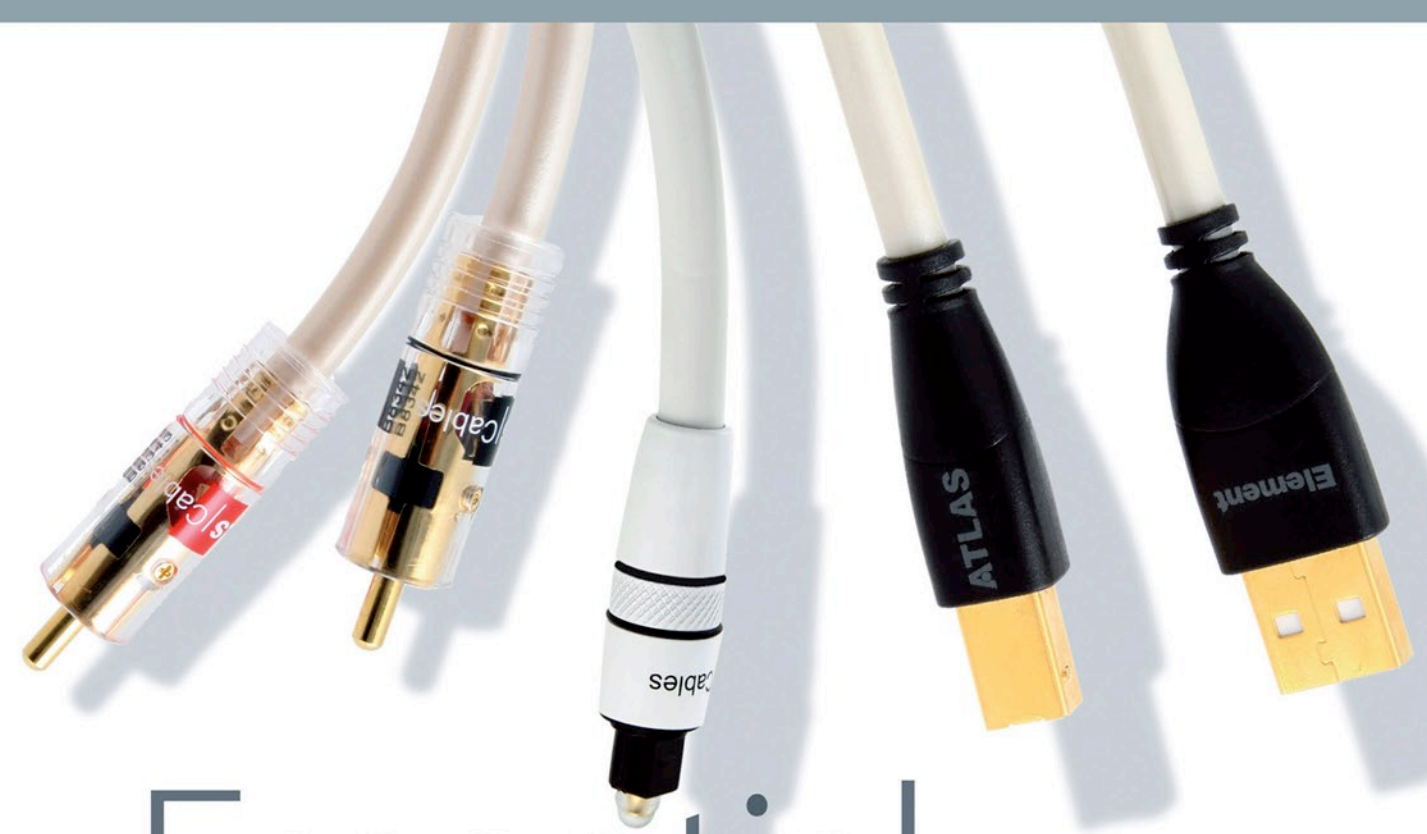


The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The McIntosh MC 1.2KW

Though it's been recently replaced by the 1.25KW (as if 1200 watts isn't enough!!), nothing grabs more attention than the massive meters on these monoblocks.

Watching them dance in the dark, listening to your favorite music is truly a sight to behold.



Essential Elements.

The Element range is the starting point in our product line-up. But we view it as essential to getting a great performance from your kit.

It seems the world's hifi press agree. We've won a lot of awards for Element, including What HiFi's 'Best Analogue Interconnect' for the last 3 years.

We apply as much innovation and effort to the Element Series as our top of the range Asimi.

The 'Integra' low mass RCA connector was originally developed for the Element cable and the principles applied throughout our range .

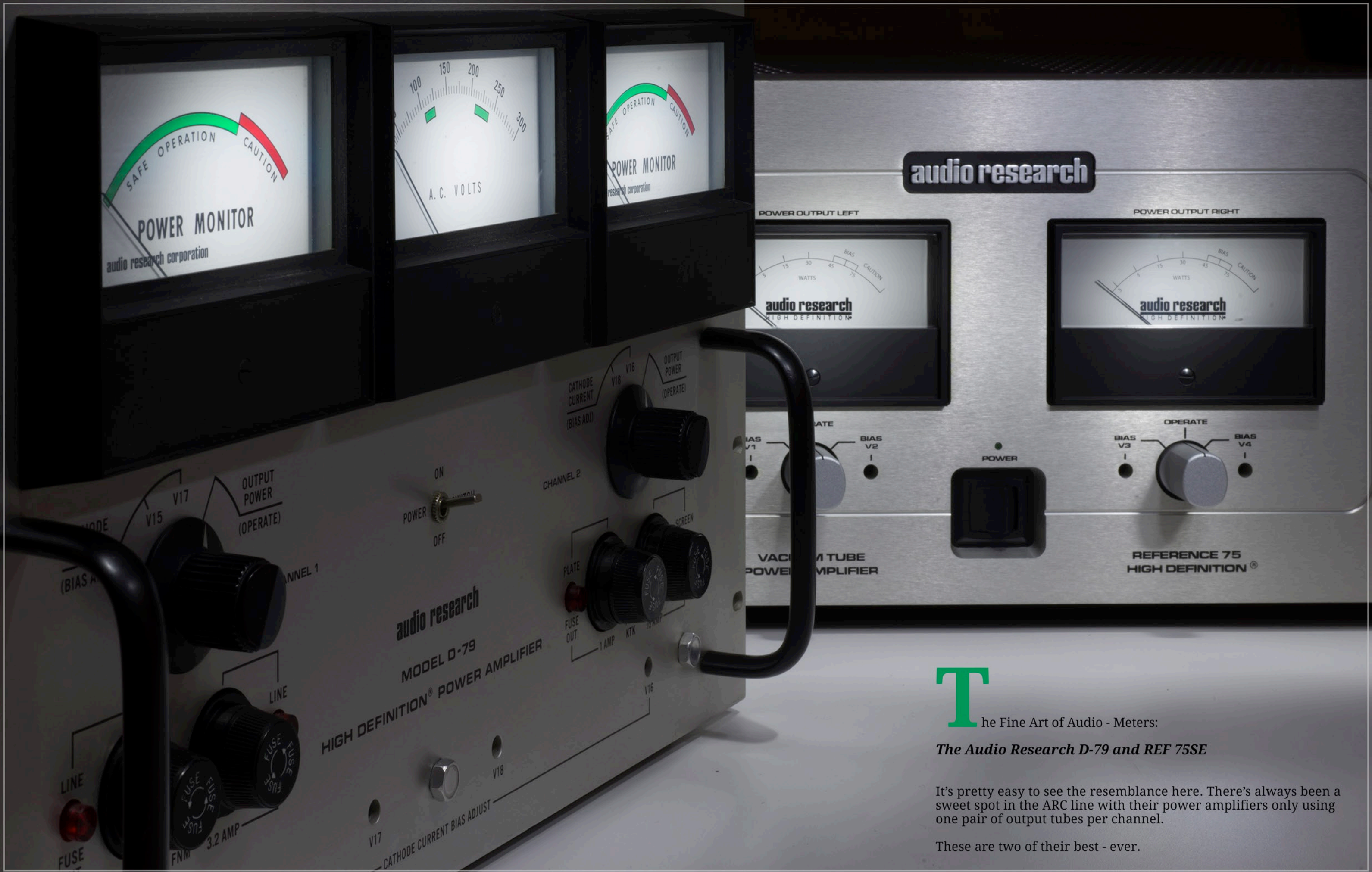
Our latest Element sc USB cable is based on research showing solid core cable delivers superior results to conventional multi-strand.

Element cables are available for hi-fi, personal audio, digital & video use.



Distributed in North America by:
www.integrityhf.com
Integrity High Fidelity Solutions
404.334.3242

ATLAS[®]
the performance connection
atlascales.com



The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The Audio Research D-79 and REF 75SE

It's pretty easy to see the resemblance here. There's always been a sweet spot in the ARC line with their power amplifiers only using one pair of output tubes per channel.

These are two of their best - ever.



The Fine Art of Audio - Meters:

The Marantz 150

Our devotion to meters begins and ends with Marantz. And for good reason, they had some of the best.

Arguably though, as cool as meters are, there's nothing like the green glow of an oscilloscope to watch the spatial information of your music as it's playing.

And it's not bad for tuning, either.



Cardas Audio
Established 1987



**The Nautilus
Power Strip**

- Cardas 4181US Outlets
- RFI/EMI Protection On Every Outlet
- Point-to-Point Wiring with Cardas 10 AWG Solid Core & 11.5 AWG Multi-Stranded Litz Conductors

www.cardas.com

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into



- Patrick O'Heran - Beyond this Moment
- Shpongole - Brain in a Fish Tank
- Michael Jackson - Speed Demon
- Maitreya - Escent
- Norah Jones - Humble Me
- Ludovico Einaudi - Night
- Christine and the Queens - Paradis Perdus
- Nina Simone - Sinnerman
- Gregory Porter - Hey Laura

Geoff Merrigan, designer of Tellurium Q cables (which we use as a reference in one of our two systems) gave us this list of test tracks that he uses to "get a feel for the way a cable sounds."

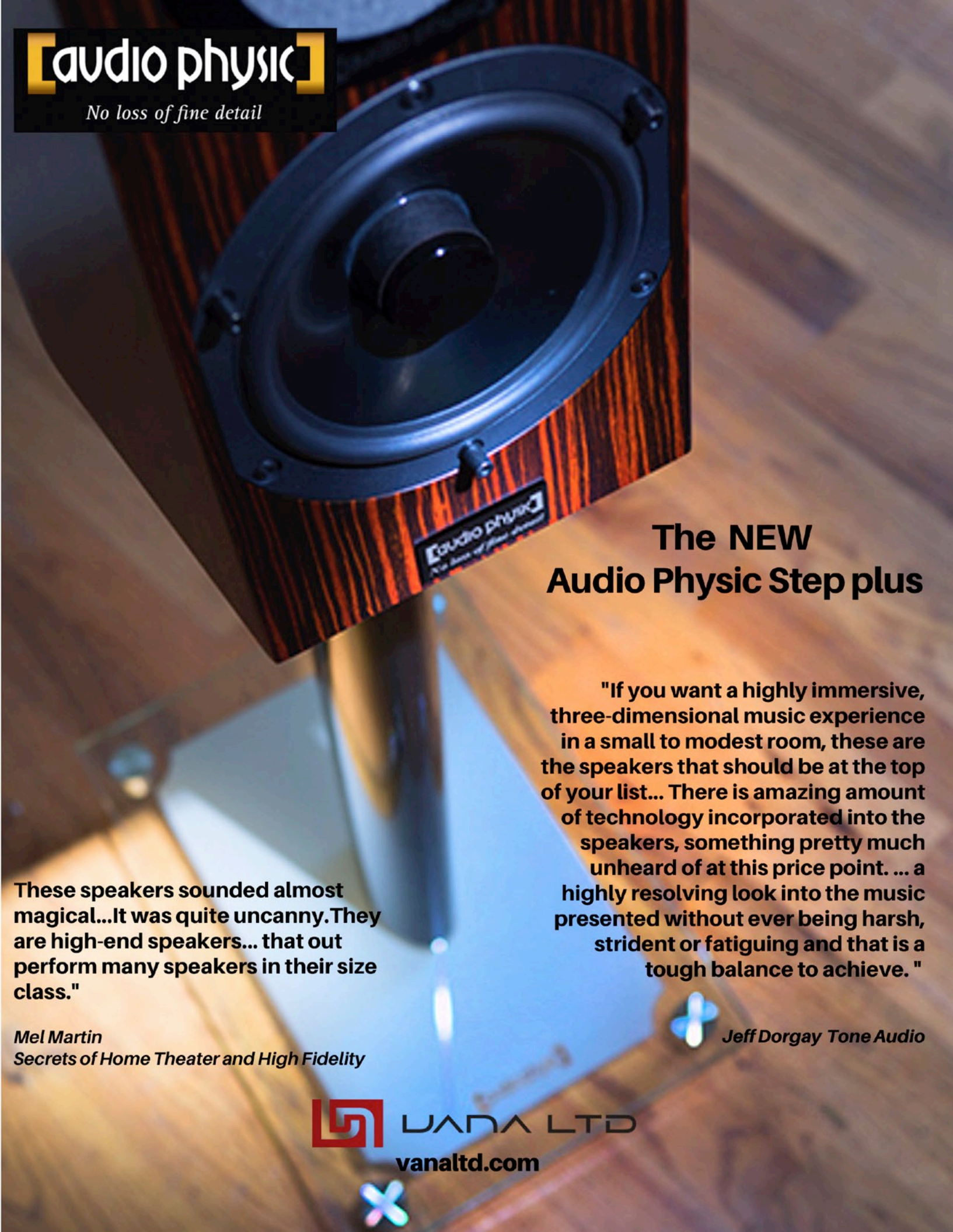
no. 3 Langport

TONE Playlists sponsored by...

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audio physic

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The NEW Audio Physic Step plus

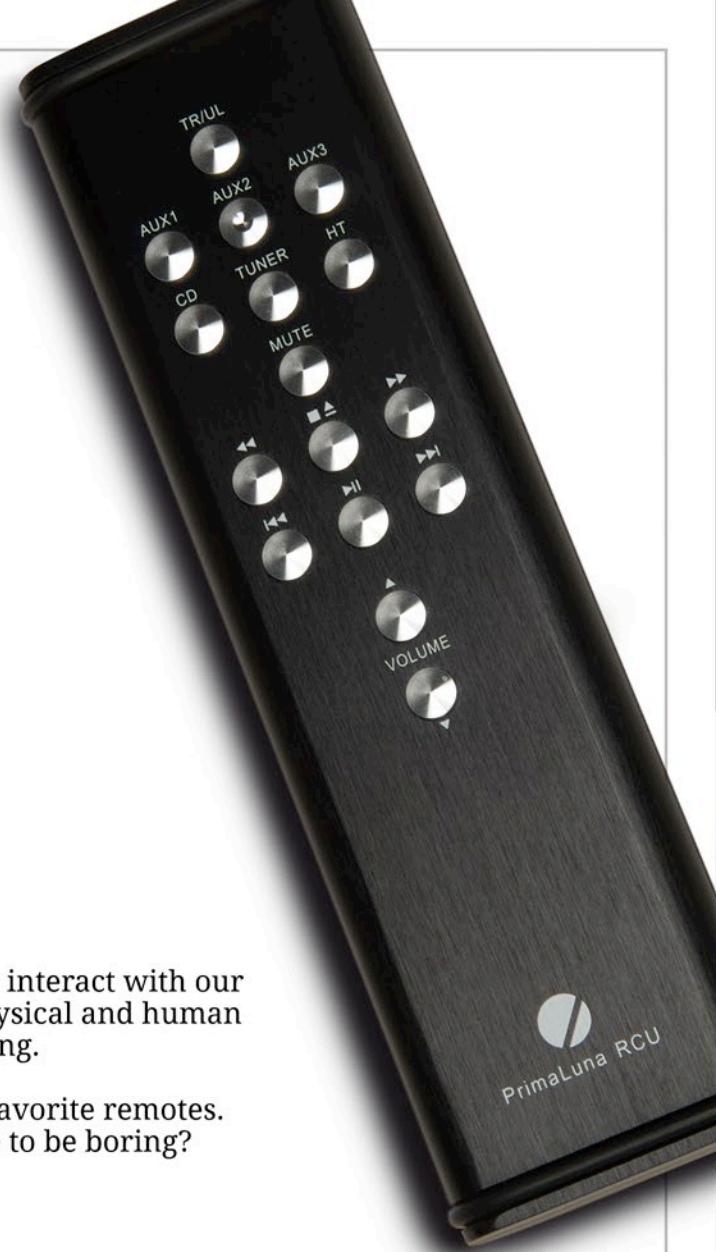
"If you want a highly immersive, three-dimensional music experience in a small to modest room, these are the speakers that should be at the top of your list... There is amazing amount of technology incorporated into the speakers, something pretty much unheard of at this price point. ... a highly resolving look into the music presented without ever being harsh, strident or fatiguing and that is a tough balance to achieve."

These speakers sounded almost magical...It was quite uncanny.They are high-end speakers... that out perform many speakers in their size class."

Mel Martin
Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity

Jeff Dorgay Tone Audio

 VANA LTD
vanaltd.com



Even the way we interact with our gear is an artform, in physical and human engineering.

Here are a few of our favorite remotes. Who says these have to be boring?



Uniti

ATOM — COMPACT HIGH-END ALL-IN-ONE

40-watt integrated amplifier and high-resolution music streaming capabilities with stunning high-fidelity sound.



“[...] a level of sonic sophistication that so many of the Atom’s competitors lack [...] the Atom is a killer choice!”

Home theater Review



- Google Cast
- AirPlay
- TIDAL
- Spotify Connect
- Multiroom
- Bluetooth (aptX HD)
- Internet Radio
- UPnP
- Digital Input
- Analogue Output



Fho would have ever thought that the phonograph would have evolved to the point that it has?

Even 20 years ago, few of the diehards that kept the vinyl torch burning could imagine a world of fifteen-thousand dollar phono cartridges, massive two-box phono preamplifiers, and six-figure turntables.

But in 2019, here we are. The big bucks stuff may scare a few away, but there's never been a better and wider range of analog hardware than right now.

Best of all, the range of available new vinyl is breathtaking, with physical media sales at the highest they've been since the format was declared dead.

So, enjoy!



If you are one of the lucky few to have experienced Lyra's Olympos cartridge you know what a jewel it is.

Even more, if you are one of the handful that own one.



The Fine Art of Audio - Analog:

The Thorens TD-124 and TD-125

Now decades old, these idler wheel and belt drive tables are still coveted by many.

Now, with a world-wide support network to keep them spinning records, you can have one of these tables anywhere from stock form to fully enhanced.

Either way, they provide an interesting perspective.

T H E F I N E A R T S

In celebration of 40 years in the pursuit of high-performance in audio, conrad-johnson is pleased to present our new limited production ART150 (stereo 150 Watts/channel) and ART300 (mono 300 Watts) amplifiers, each a virtual window on the emotional experience of live music right in your home.



conrad-johnson It just sounds right.
2800K Dorr Ave • Fairfax, VA 22031 • phone: 703-698-8581, fax: 703-560-5360 • www.conradjohnson.com



The Fine Art of Audio - Analog:
The Audio Research REF 3 Phono

ARC is a company that is always refining their designs, investigating every avenue, on a quest to reveal more music.

Their current REF 3 Phono makes you wonder how much more is lurking in there?

Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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13395 New Airport Rd. Ste G., Auburn, CA 95602
(530) 878-5350 - www.passlabs.com



The Fine Art of Audio - Analog:

The Technics SL-1200G

Other than the Linn LP-12 and Rega P3, no other table has a bigger group of followers than the Technics SL-1200.

Whether you still have a Mk.2, or any of the early models, or the new 1200G that you see here, there's no doubt that this is a very robust record spinner.



The Fine Art of Audio - Analog:

The Oracle Delphi

Suspended, minimal plinth turntables are fairly commonplace today, but back in the late 70s, when the Oracle hit the scene with the original Delphi, it was a new benchmark for high performance.

The Oracle took a radical look at what the turntable really needed to do; isolate the delicate groove, so the cartridge could better extract the fine details from the disc.

It was certainly a turning point. And still a beauty today.

Finally, we can't close our pictorial journey of audio without at least mentioning tape - reel to reel and otherwise.

Now enjoying a comeback, open reel (and to a much lesser extent) cassette tape is so organic and tactile, if you don't have a deck, you really should give it a spin.

This can be as reasonable or as expensive as you'd like it to be - as is any other audiophile pursuit.

But there's just something about the way the world slows down when you listen to, or even better, make a tape. A Tidal playlist doesn't have the same "hands on" love that a mix tape does. A format with a solid time limit, makes you choose your tracks more carefully.

Ask your favorite DJ.



An evening with a vintage TEAC reel to reel deck can start your tape journey...

“I can’t think of a better digital disc player than the PS Audio DirectStream Memory Player and DAC. If I had more than two thumbs to raise I would offer them, it’s that good. The only remaining choice is whether you want silver or black.”

---Jeff Dorgay, TONE Audio



 **PS AUDIO**

www.psaudio.com 720.406.8946 Boulder, Colorado

TONEAudio
2017 product of the year

The Fine Art of Audio - Tape:

The TDK MA-R Cassette

At the peak of the blank cassette’s popularity, metal tape was introduced, offering a level of performance that knocked on the door of what could be achieved with open reel tape.

Where a ten-tape box of TDK SA 90 tapes set the average music lover back \$29.95, a single TDK MA 60 was \$9.95. The ultimate expression of this format was the see-through MA-R, sporting a cast aluminum housing, and a cost of around \$15 each.

Today, a single, sealed MA-R/90 can fetch \$150 on EBay.





The Fine Art of Audio - Tape:

The Technics RS-1500

We first covered the RS-1500 as an Old School column, before the RTR craze really took hold.

Ten years ago, you could snag a nice example for under a thousand bucks, sometimes way below that. Not anymore.

With all the excitement surrounding the format, expect to pay \$2k-\$3k for a beater and then at least that much more to have it capably refurbished.

If you're really nuts about open reel tape, you'll also need a great tape head preamp, like the one from Doshi.

But that's a future article!



**If this isn't what your system sees,
You're doing it wrong...**

EXO GAL, LLC 4657 Aspen Ridge Circle, Eagan, MN 55122
651-964-0698 exogal.com info@exogal.com



The Fine Art of Audio - Tape:

The Nakamichi Dragon

If the Nakamichi Dragon isn't/wasn't the pinnacle of cassette tape deck design, it's certainly at the top of a very short list. It just depends on which internet pundits you feel like arguing with on any given day.

With direct drive capstans, auto-azimuth correction for optimal high frequency response and rock solid build quality, the Dragon is still the one to beat, if you can even find a clean one.

Much like the Technics 1500 RTR deck, Dragon prices have gone way up, and there are only a small number of qualified techs that can service one correctly. Budget \$1,000 to \$1,500 for a full overhaul.

And you will need one.

Fantastico!

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FL35

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The Fine Art of Audio - Tape:

The Dual Deck

Back when making a mixtape was a true art, and perhaps a mating ritual, having a dual deck to “burn” a quick copy for a friend was an awesome tool to have in your hifi system.

As it turns out, Marantz and Tascam still make them.

Get your game on.

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

- Robin Trower - Too Rolling Stoned
- Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Didn't it Rain
- Gary Moore - Still Got the Blues
- Buddy Guy - Damn Right I Got the Blues
- Eric Clapton - Lonely Stranger
- Muddy Waters - Hoochie Coochie Man
- Deep Purple - Lazy
- Rory Gallagher - Moon Child
- Stevie Ray Vaughn - Scuttlebutt'
- The Beatles - I'm So Lonely



Staffer Greg Petan is known to pick up his PRS Guitar and blast off some great blues licks with the best of them.

Here's a few of his favorites

no. 4 NYC



THE KANTA FAMILY IS GROWING



Kanta n°2



Kanta center



Kanta n°3

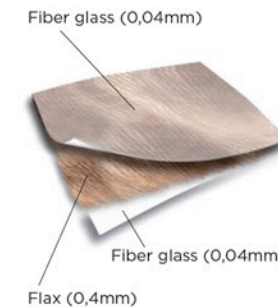


Kanta n°1



“ If you want more than a taste of the real high-end, this is the place to start ”

KANTA N°2 - HIFI CHOICE



“F” cones are constructed of a very high quality Flax fibre core sandwiched between two thin layers of glass fibre.

These cones satisfy all the essential criteria of a high-performance diaphragm: high internal damping for a very neutral and natural sound, light weight for exceptional speed and dynamics, and high rigidity for a tight and controlled sound.

Flax cones are designed and manufactured in France to Focal's exacting standards, and are also used in Car Audio, Pro Audio, Home Speakers and Custom Integration products.



With Kanta, the treble register is reproduced by a new pure Beryllium tweeter. This IAL3 tweeter combines the IAL (Infinite Acoustic Loading) and IHL (Infinite Horn Loading) tweeters features, both of which help with the absorption of waves, thus lowering the tweeter frequency.

To this day, only one material permits a joining of these parameters: Beryllium. For domes with identical masses, Beryllium is seven times more rigid than Titanium or Aluminum. This results in a sound wave three times faster than Titanium and two and a half times faster than Aluminum.

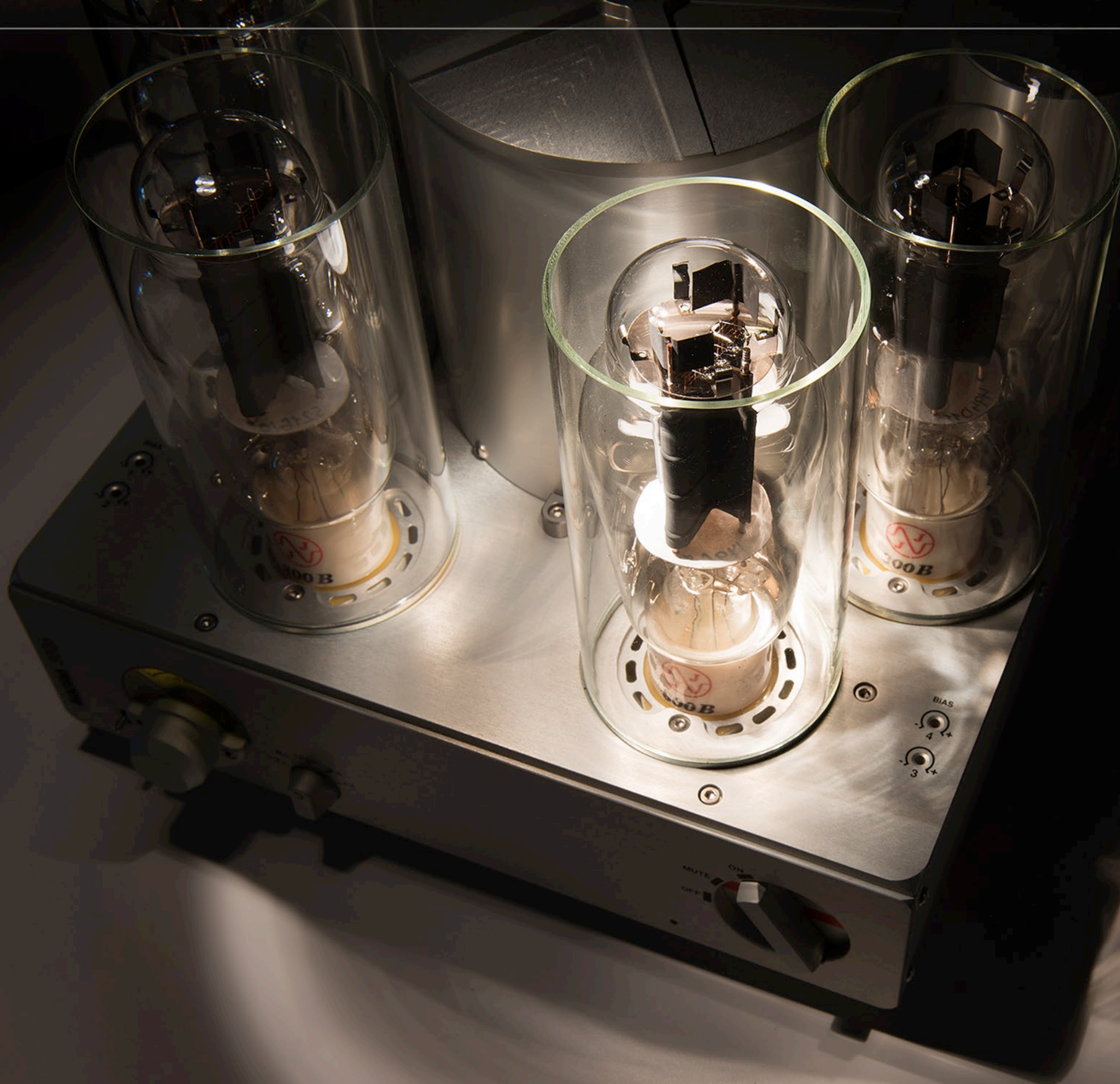
Who hasn't been taken in by the warm glow of vacuum tubes, at least once during their audio journey?

Many argue that tubes bring a certain warmth to the sound reproduced, and while most of us believe that, there's still something special about those glowing bottles that feels right.

Here's a collection of images we've taken over the years, from amplifiers and preamplifiers that embody that glowing spirit.



Few things are more hard core "tubey" than OA3 voltage regulator tubes...



The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

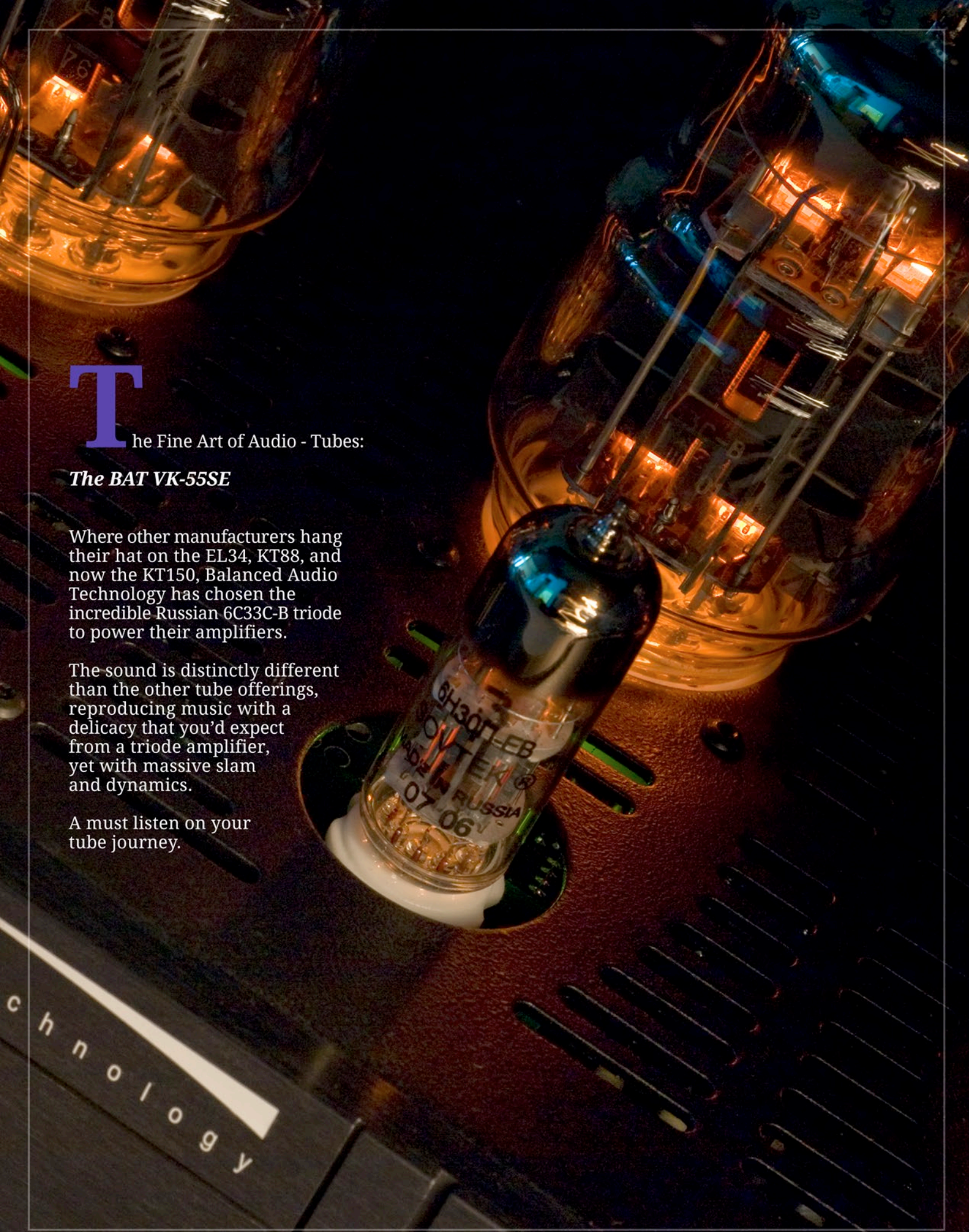
The Nagra 300P

Everything Nagra makes in their Swiss factory is handled with the utmost amount of respect and care.

Just now discontinued, the 300P is a jewel in their lineup, featuring solid-state power supply and driver stages, with a push-pull 300B output stage that rivals or exceeds any SET we've heard.

Though the 300B does not throw off a lot of light, this amplifier's sheer beauty will make it the center of attention in whatever room you might choose to put it in.

A true object of desire.



The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The BAT VK-55SE


Where other manufacturers hang their hat on the EL34, KT88, and now the KT150, Balanced Audio Technology has chosen the incredible Russian 6C33C-B triode to power their amplifiers.

The sound is distinctly different than the other tube offerings, reproducing music with a delicacy that you'd expect from a triode amplifier, yet with massive slam and dynamics.

A must listen on your tube journey.

Diana[®]





The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The Conrad Johnson Act 2/Series 2

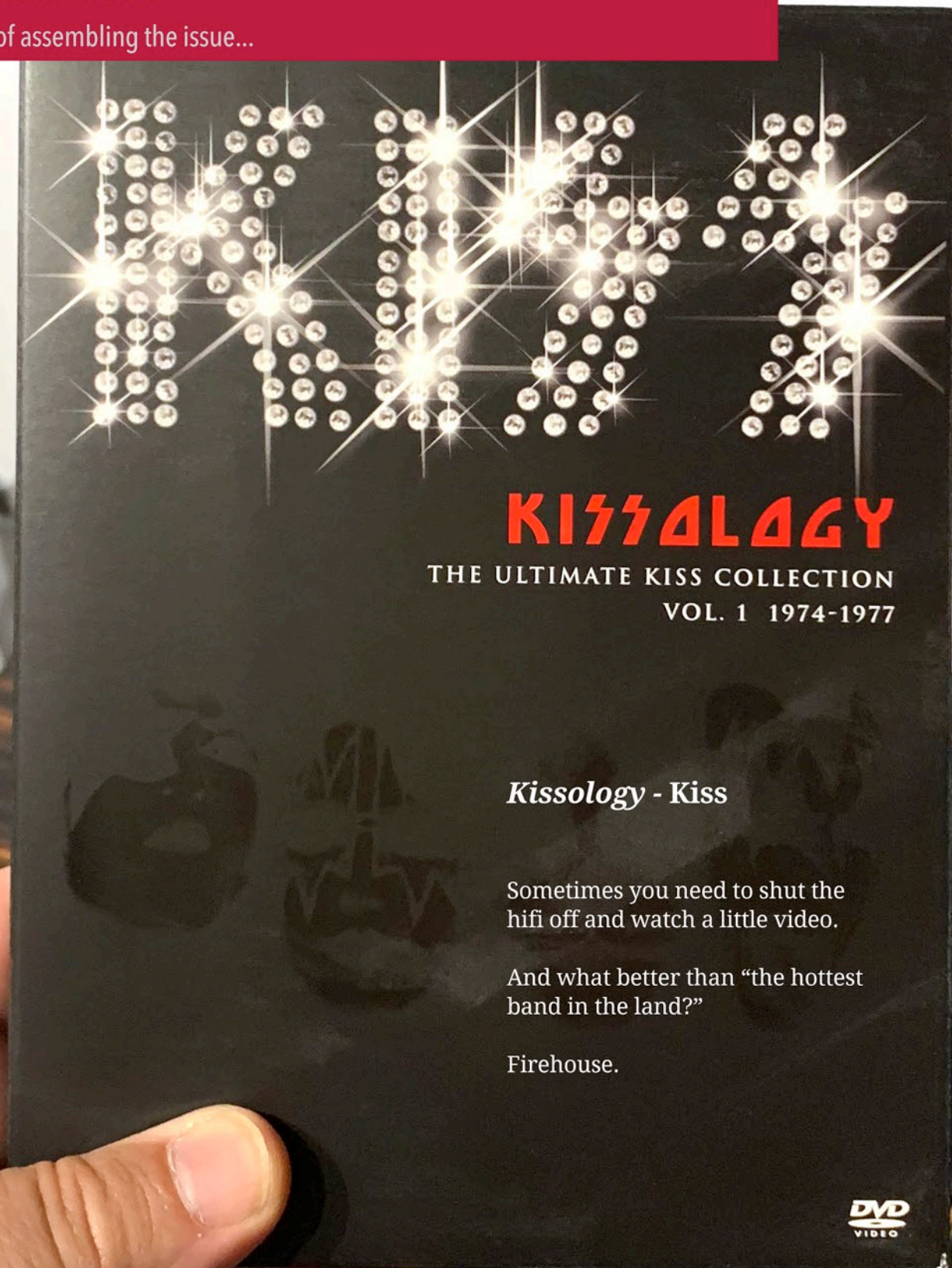
Though the four 6H30 tubes in C-J's ACT2 don't glow very brightly, this preamplifier has a mighty sound.

Many audio reviewers called it the best preamplifier in the world, and over a decade later, it is still amazing.

power

In House

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sund
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The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The PrimaLuna ProLogue ONE

The EL-34 output tube is a classic purveyor of “warm tube sound,” and few modern manufacturers implement it better than PrimaLuna.

We still have this jewel in our collection today, and it sounds as good as ever.

The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The McIntosh MC2300

Flash forward, McIntosh has incorporated a bit of bling in their newest preamplifiers, with green LEDs underneath the tube sockets.

The tubes glow normal color at startup, but the LEDs go green when the unit is at operating temperature. As you can imagine, this has the Mc community polarized!

R
Raidho
Acoustics

The remarkable performance of our Diamond drivers delivered in the remarkable elegant shape of the D-1.1





The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The McIntosh MAC1500

Early McIntosh receivers, like the MAC1500 you see here are pure sonic gold.

These days, their original 7591 tubes are easier to source, as EH has started making them again, but a NOS set might set you back as much as the entire receiver.

And notice the input for the tape head...

Considering the comeback of reel to reel, this can make for an exciting combination indeed.



The SKY Tower sets the standard for versatile, lower-cost towers that can be used with a wide variety of electronics. Delivering unobtrusive magic for the everyday music lover, the SKY Tower represents the evolution of 30 years of innovative design and manufacturing.
totemacoustic.com

TOTEM  30 ANN.
Discover yours

The Fine Art of Audio - Tubes:

The Mighty 833

Wavac and a few others use the massive 833 tube to achieve high power in a single ended triode topology. Some designs reach 150 watts per channel in a single ended configuration!

This is not for those faint of heart, checkbook, or lower back strength...

No output tube glows brighter.



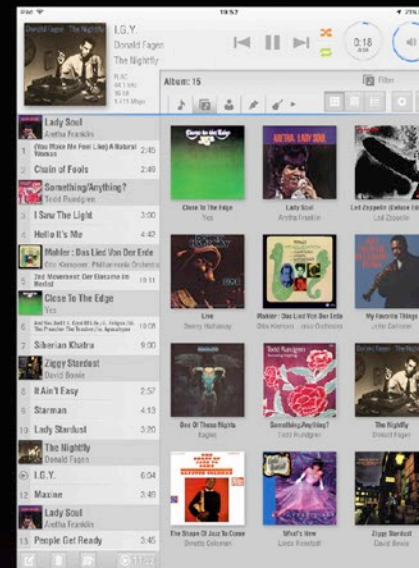
Setlist

Photo by Jeff Dorgay



What better way to spend tax day, April 15 (of 1979) with the Tubes, at the Oriental Landmark Theater in Milwaukee, Wisconsin?


ESOTERIC



Esoteric SoundStream App

The Esoteric N-01 Network Audio Player, quite possibly the world's most versatile and best sounding Network Player / DAC. Featuring 35-bit processing, the ability to decode PCM, DSD, and even MQA files, the N-01 is driven by an easy to use interface that incorporates Tidal, Qobuz, Spotify and TuneIn as well as easy access to your NAS stored music. The N-01 is also fully Roon Ready.

No wonder TONE is recognizing the N-01 as the "TONE Product Of the Year" for Digital. We Thank the folks at TONE for this honor.

 Like us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/EsotericUSA

For more information on Esoteric products or to find your Esoteric dealer please visit:
<http://www.esoteric-usa.com>

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



VPI HW-40

\$15,000 (with tonearm)
vpiindustries.com

How many companies take an award-winning product and make it better, as well as lower the price?

That's exactly what VPI did with the HW-40.

That's American know-how.

Where Have all the Good Stereos Gone?



We know. Sorting through the jungle that is pre-owned hi-fi gear can be tough. Myriad Internet forums and online shopping sites just don't offer the expertise required to make sound decisions.

That's where Echo Audio comes in. We have more than 20 years of retail experience in selling hi-fi equipment the way it should be sold: In a brick-and-mortar environment that provides you with personalized attention.

While we will certainly ship any of our gently used classics directly to your door, we invite you to stop by our shop in beautiful downtown Portland, Oregon to browse our inventory in person. Thanks to an in-house service department, we not only service everything we sell, but every piece of used gear is thoroughly checked before being put on display. Consider our white-gloves treatment your guarantee against potential problems.

So, when you are looking for high-quality, lightly used hi-fi gear, look no further than Echo Audio. Be sure to check out our Web site for current products and new arrivals.

echo)))
audio

www.echohifi.com 888.248.echo

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Paradigm Premier 700F

\$1,598/pair
paradigm.com

Paradigm's Premier line has always presented great value, but their latest offerings have taken some of what they've learned in the flagship Persona series and applied it here.

These three way floor standers make some serious sound, and we'll have a full review shortly.

Formula xHD

- Proprietary Optologic DAC
- Pure FPGA-based R2R Ladder
- Fully-floating (isolating) D/A converter system
- Hybrid USB xCore 200 (dual core) in Bit Perfect up to 768 kHz PCM and DSD 256
- Filterless Non-oversampling digital architecture



Unconventional DNA



La Voce S3 dac



La Scala Optologic dac



Formula xHD dac



La Diva cd transport

aquahifi.com

aqua
acoustic quality

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

Focal Stella Utopia EM EVO

\$130,000/pair
focal.com

One step down from Focal's tremendous Grande Utopia EM, is the Stella.

Sharing much of the Grande Utopia's technology, like the Beryllium inverted dome tweeter and the 6 1/2" midrange drivers, the Stella eliminates the 11" mid bass driver and substitutes a 13" field coil woofer.

This results in a -6db at 18hz limit as opposed to a -3db point in the Grande.

With a high 94db/1watt sensitivity, amplifier choices should be simple. The Stella's smaller size will be suited to rooms a bit smaller than the Grande as well.

We are looking forward to these, so stay tuned.



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Yokohama 222-0033, Japan
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Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Harbeth P3ESR

\$2,190/pair
harbeth.co.uk

While this speaker is often compared to the legendary LS3/5a, it is a completely different animal. Thanks to Harbeth's RADIAL2™ cone technology, this tiny monitor packs a mighty punch.

Watch for our enthusiastic review shortly.



"no matter what I listened to, I couldn't imagine the sound being much better"
— Soundstage! June 2017

Technology

Bryston's new patented Salomie Circuit is a revolutionary new way to reduce distortion and noise unveiling never before heard details only hinted at by other equipment. The input stage operates at distortion of less than 0.001 percent!

Power

Cubed Series technology is available in 10 different amplifiers ranging from the B135³ integrated at 135 watts per channel, the venerable 4B³ at 300 watts by two channels, to the incredible 28B³ 1000 watt mono block.

Control

For the first time, Bryston brings Cubed Series to the front end. Our new BP-17³ Preamplifier features the Salomie Circuit from input to output reproducing higher resolution than ever before.

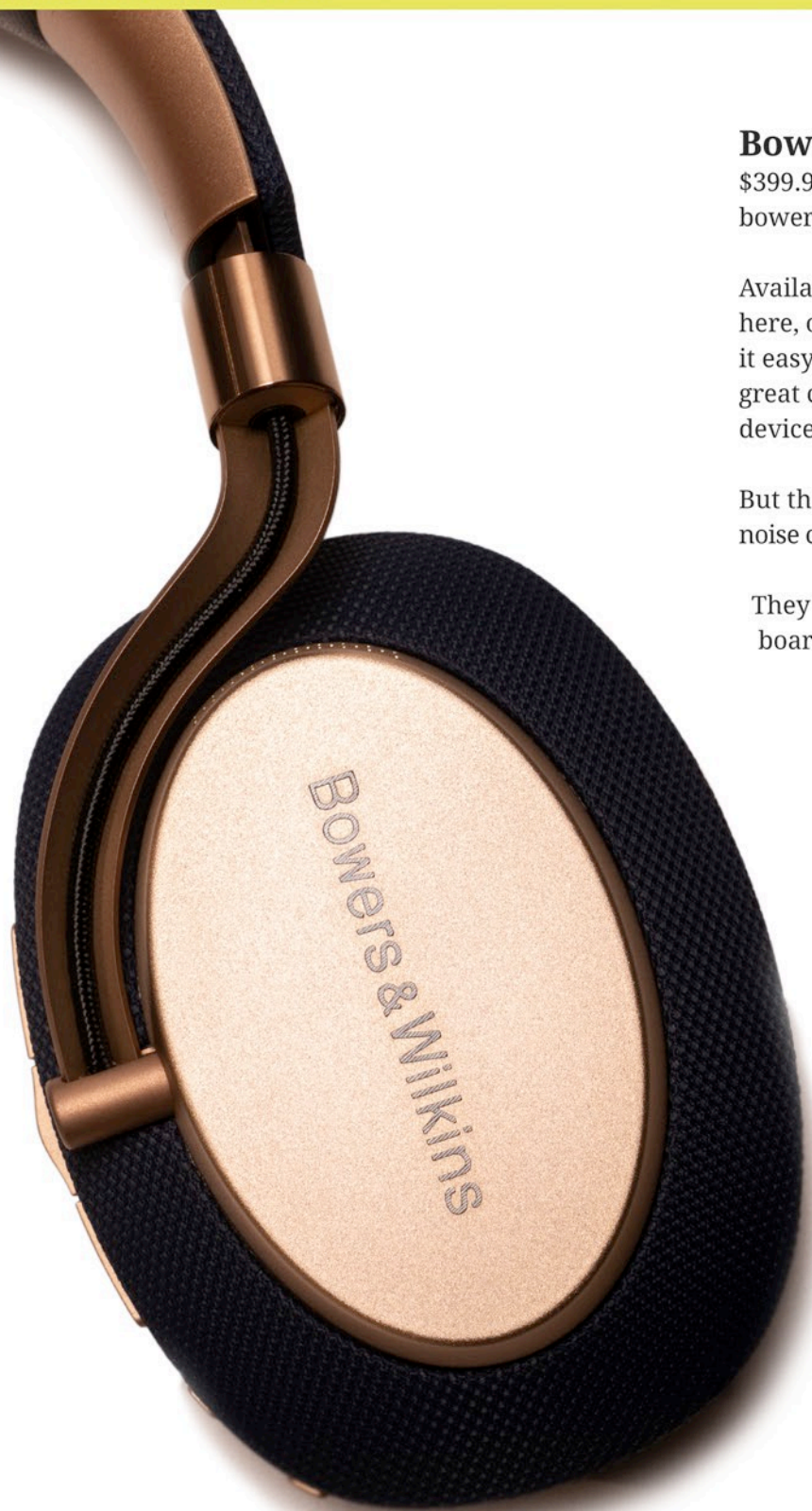
BRYSTON

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705-742-5325 | www.bryston.com



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Bowers & Wilkins PX

\$399.99

bowers-wilkins.com

Available in the soft gold you see here, or space grey, B&W has made it easy for Apple owners to get a great color match with their current devices.

But the beauty is the sound of these noise cancelling, wireless headphones.

They are our first choice when boarding the plane.

The sound and vision of Scandinavia

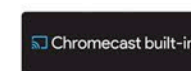


Prisma provides multi-room/multi-zone connectivity and control for playback of stored and streamed media, wired or wireless, all managed from a mobile device through a dedicated system control app.

In addition to Bluetooth®, AirPlay, and Spotify Connect, Prisma features Chromecast built-in, a unique streaming portal allowing effortless direct connection to hundreds of streaming applications, including Roon, TIDAL, Qobuz, Deezer, Google Play Music, and TuneIn radio, for the best possible performance and user experience.

Initially available in the new I15 Prisma integrated amplifier, I35 Prisma integrated amplifier, and CD35 Prisma CD player – with more to come.

► For more on all our new Primare models go to primare.net



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Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Gold Note PSU-10

\$1,400
goldnote.it

Gold Note says that their PH-10 phonostage is “one of the world’s most awarded phonostages.” And we’re happy to have given them one as well. It’s a fantastic piece, offering incredible performance, style, and value in one small box.

Now, their awaited PSU-10 external power supply has arrived, and our newest reviewer, Shanon Swetlishnoff has one. Her initial response is excellent, but she purchased both pieces. As soon as the excitement tempers a bit, she’s promising a comparison of the PH-10 with and without the PSU-10.

We can’t wait to hear what she’s got to say.

Photo courtesy of Gold Note



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You might as well hear all of it.

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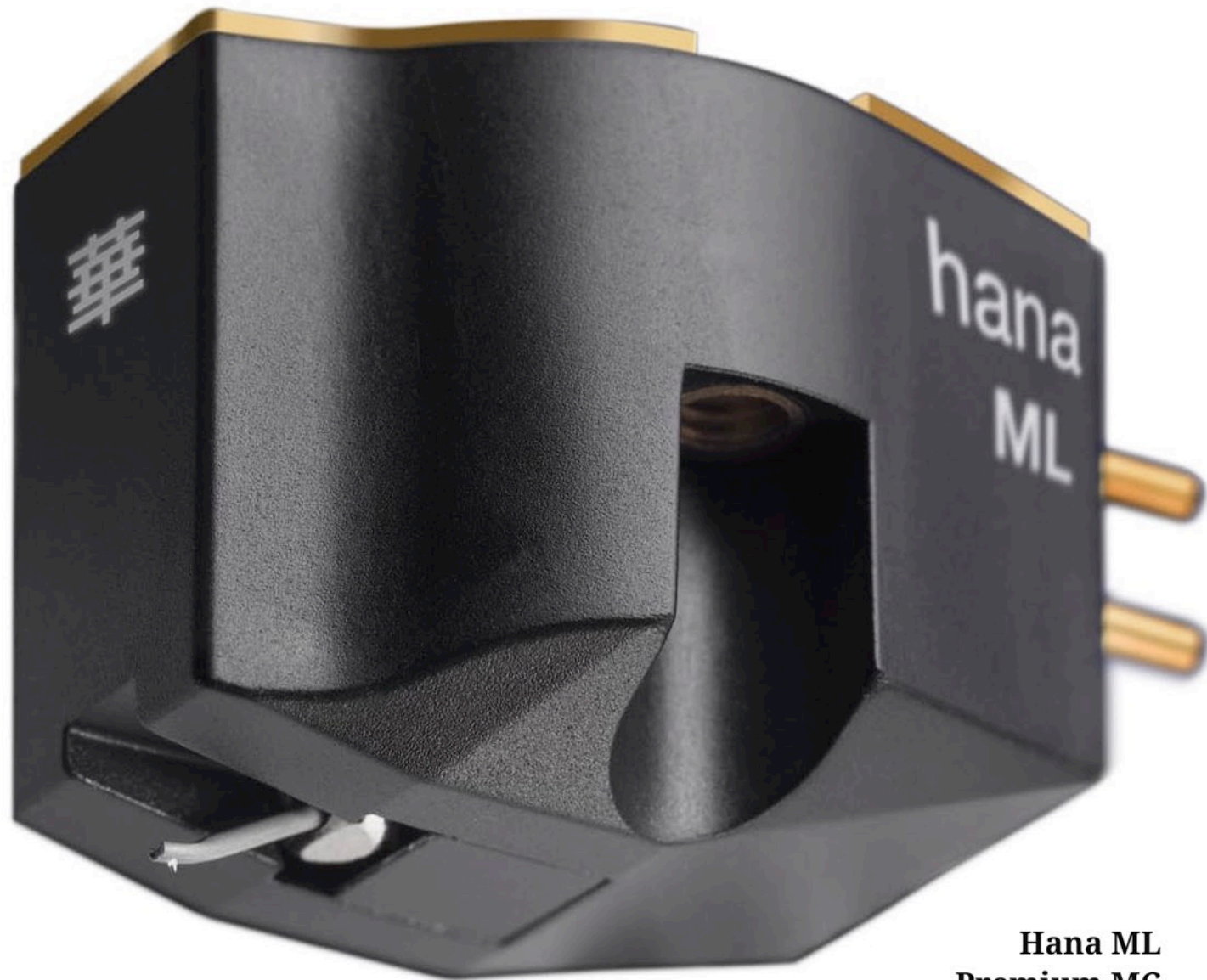
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The
s)und
Organisation

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Hana ML Premium MC

\$1,200
musicalsurrroundings.com

The Hana SL was a mind blowing cartridge at \$750. Even after the first few tracks, it's clear that the new ML is going to be another benchmark at \$1,200.

Photo courtesy of Music Direct

Welcome to The Iron Age.

Introducing Jern Speakers
jernspeakers.com



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



The Sonus faber SE17

\$250,000/pair
sonusfaber.com

That's not a misprint. A pair of Sonus fabers' crowning achievement will set you back a quarter of a million dollars.

And, yes they are worth it.

Our publisher spent some very intimate time with these recently and came back impressed.

Watch for the full review, along with an evaluation of the new Aida (only \$130,000 per pair) very soon.

Setting the record straight since 1978.
40 years of American craftsmanship
from our family to yours!



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made in usa

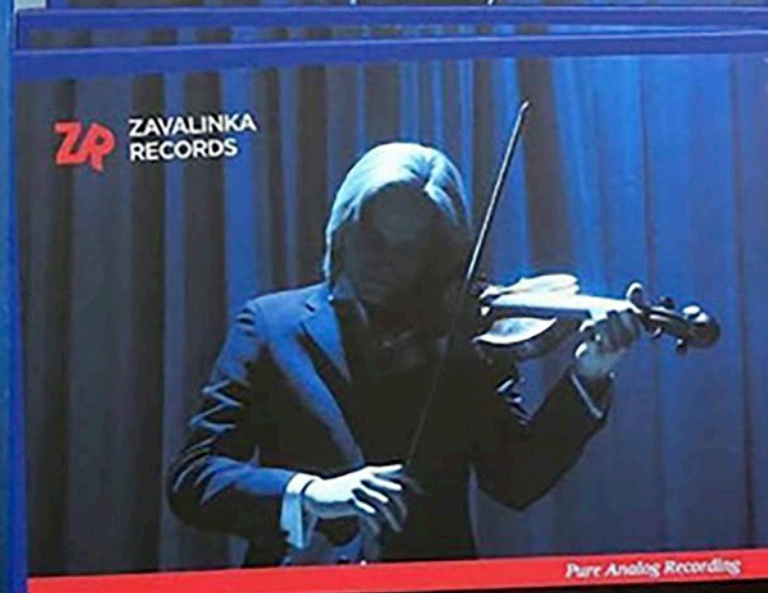
Let There Be Sound, L.L.C. named Exclusive USA Distributor for Zavalinka Records Master Tapes from Moscow, Russia

To reserve your copy of their first title: "Astor Piazzolla / Henryk Wieniawski"
contact Oz @ (954) 465-5040 or vinyrules@aol.com



Astor Piazzolla
Henryk Wieniawski

Stepan Sidorov – violin
Sergey Mitin – piano



Astor Piazzolla
Henryk Wieniawski

Stepan Sidorov – violin
Sergey Mitin – piano



Recording Engineer: Nikolai Kazantsev
Live Recording – Feb, 24th 2018 (Moscow, Russia)
2 Tracks, 15 IPS, CCIR

Stepan Sidorov – violin
Sergey Mitin – piano

Dealers That Mean Business:

You've read all the reviews, you've argued with the internet pundits,

and you're ready to write a check. Now what? If you're a slightly used customer that likes to shop for the best bargain you can find on Audiogon, this article is not for you. And, controversial though it might sound, I'm not against Audiogon. If you want a gently pre-owned preamp, love music, and just don't want to buy new, I get that – as long as you know what you're getting into. Audiogon can be a great place to buy pre owned gear if you know exactly what you want - and don't expect ANY service. But someone has to buy it new, so you can buy it used – remember that!

If you are the customer that likes to buy new, loves the feel (and the smell) of taking it out of the box for the first time, knowing no one else has touched it, I get that too. Personally, I'm about 50/50 on this experience, as I am with cars. Ask anyone who's bought a preamp or a used car from me, it's usually pretty pampered.

However, if you are going to spring for new gear, you need a good dealer. Someone who understands you, your music and most of all your perspective. You need someone to help you find the right components that will work together as a system, help you set it up in some cases, and offer support when things don't work out as planned. There's no substitute for experience, and a great dealer knows their products, and knows what will work best for you.

Nearly every audio system that has failed to achieve the greatness expected of it can be traced back to poor component choice (system and/or room) synergy and poor component setup. I've been to hifi shows, homes, and dealers all over the world – hearing sound good, bad, and somewhere inbetween. It always boils down to these two factors if something isn't truly broken, and it rarely is.

The solution is easy. Find a great dealer. While there isn't a hifi shop on every corner like there was back in the 70s, there are still some truly great dealers out there that will help you put together a stunning music system, regardless of your budget. And I'm on a mission to find as many of them as I can for you.

I'm starting with the folks I know, in this new section of the magazine. Most of the establishments in this list are running full page ads in the magazine – and there is a caveat. I will not accept advertising in this magazine from a dealer unless I've been to their place, seen the shop and have talked to a cross section of their customers to know they provide superior service. In most cases, these are hifi shops that I, or someone on the staff has purchased gear from as well.

These are not just people wanting to buy space in TONEAudio. Every one of these dealers carry my personal endorsement, and I hope that will help you on your journey. As we go forward, look for the "TONEAudio Approved Dealer" sticker on your favorite establishment. Know a great dealer, that you've had superior service from? Let me know, I would like to pay them a visit and add them to the list.



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Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

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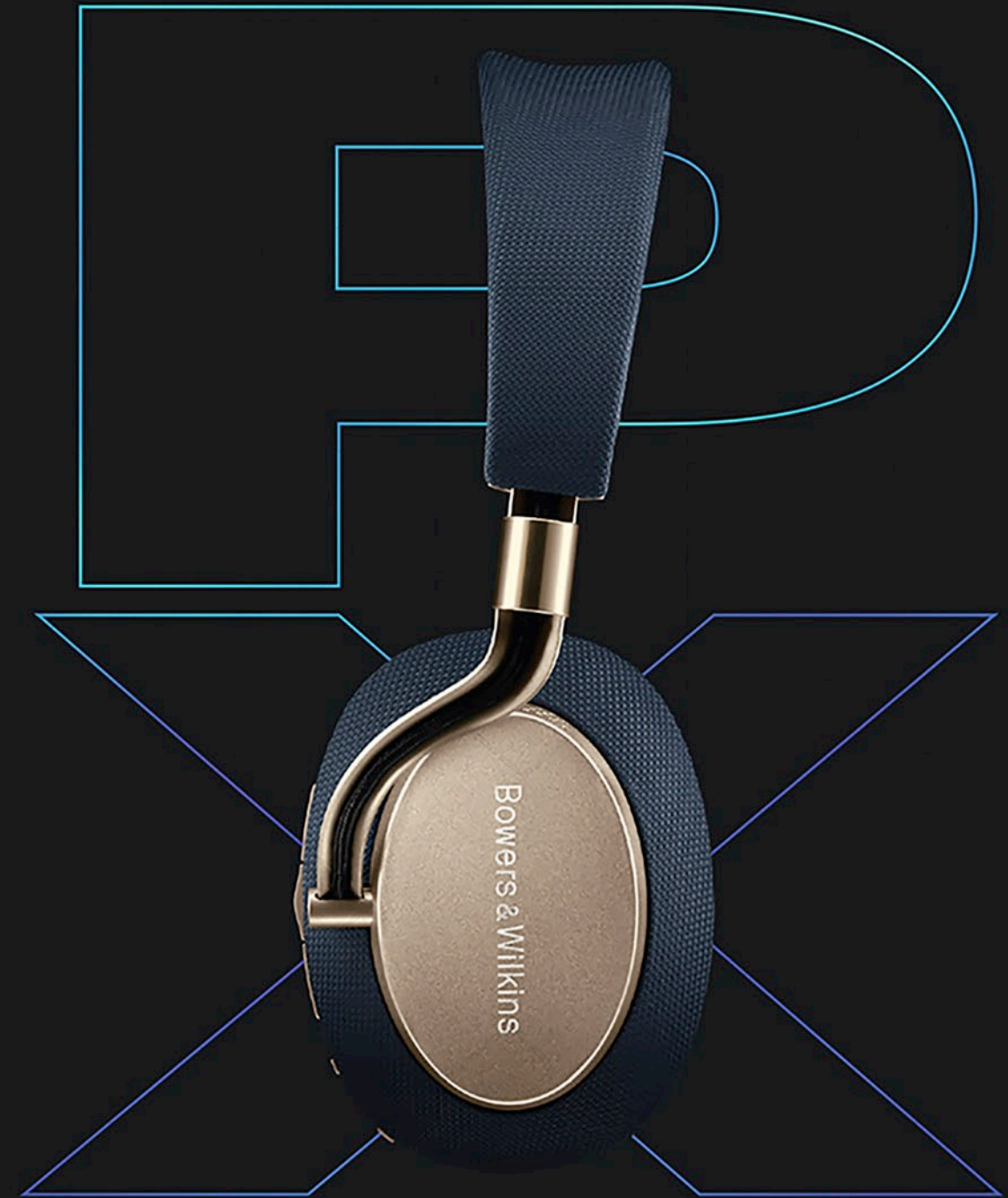
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www.nohosound.com

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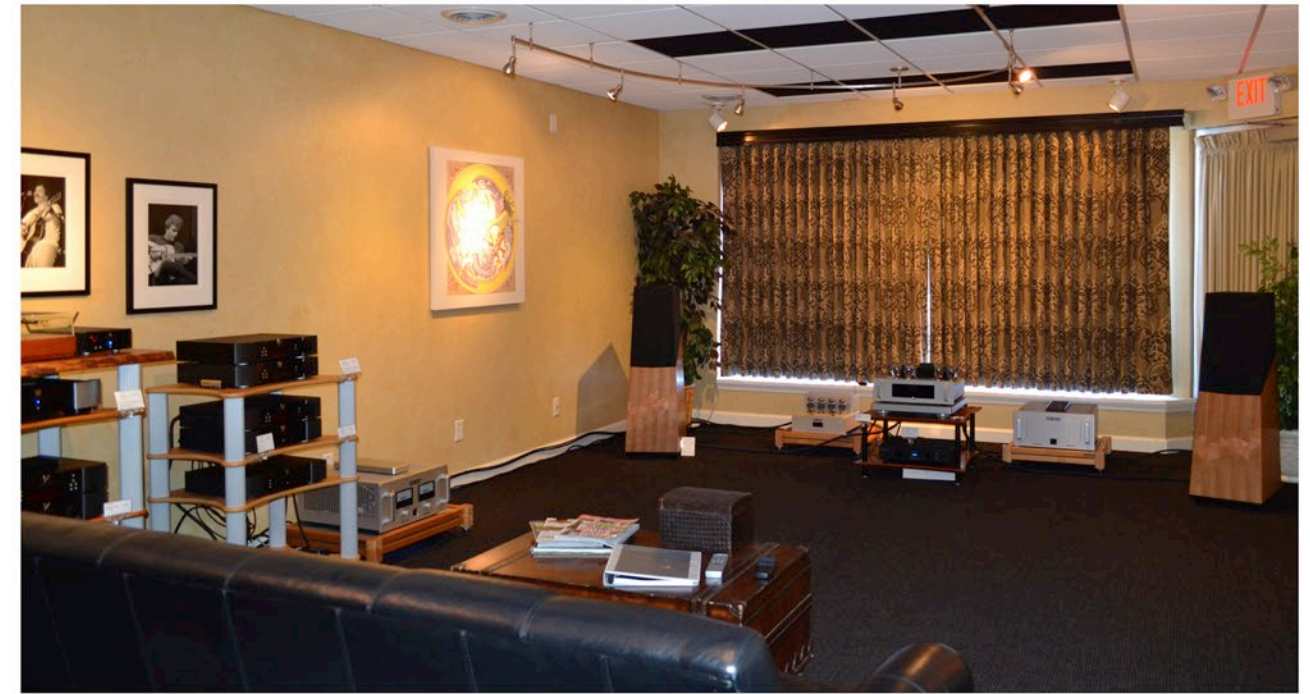
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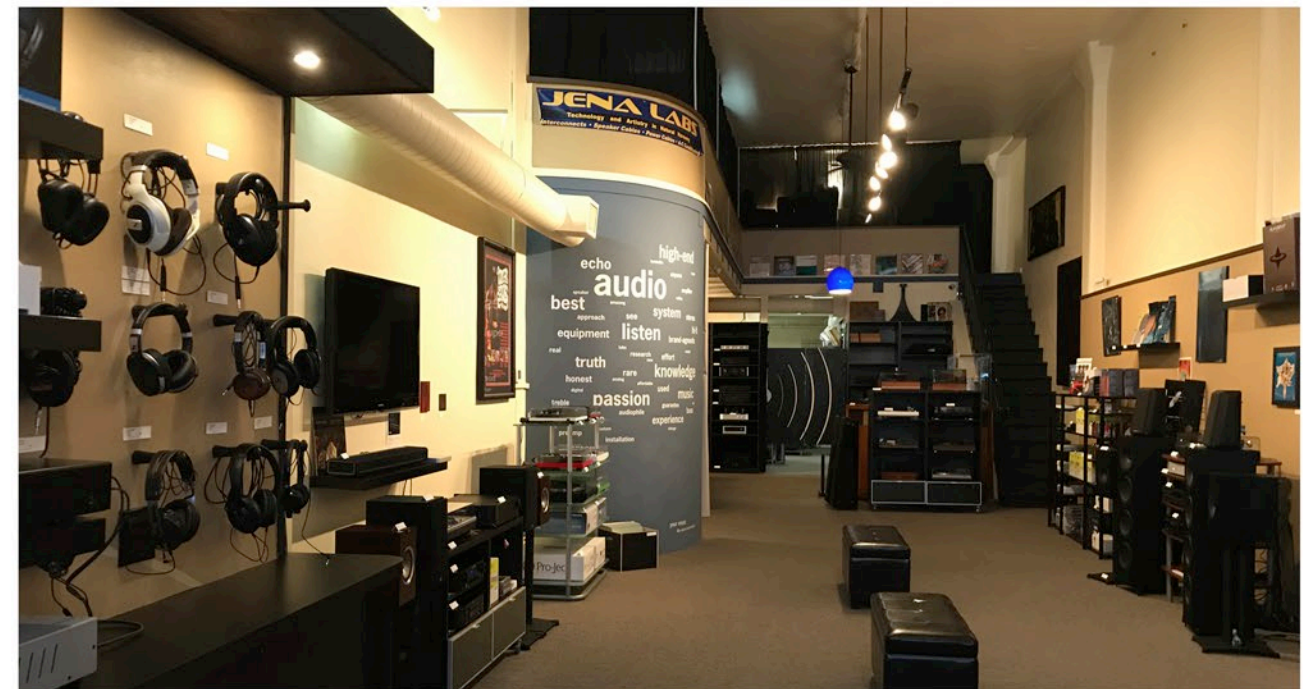
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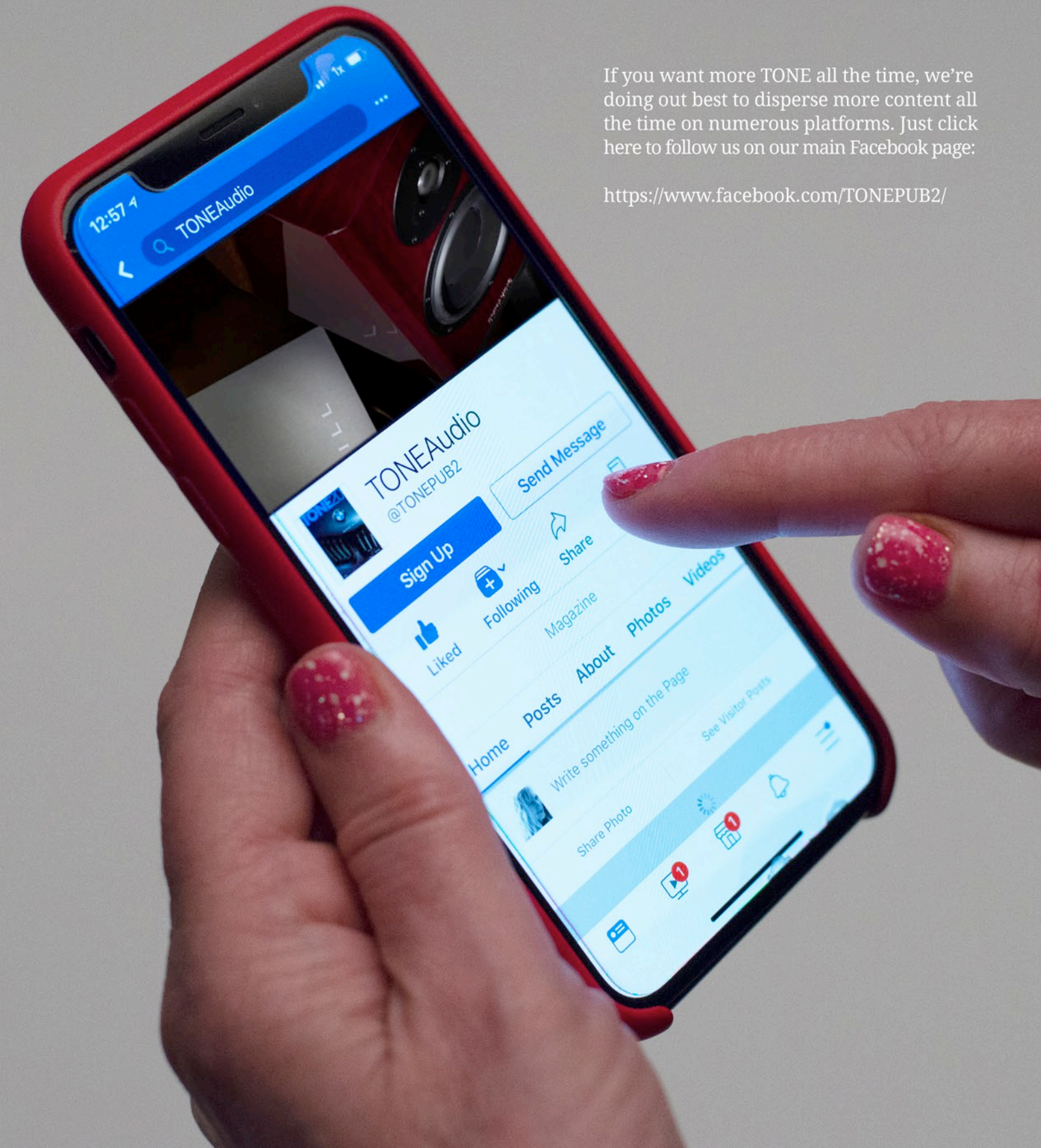
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Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

BTO - Blue Collar

The Payolas - The Eyes of a Stranger

Diana Panton - Hushabye Mountain

Gordon Lightfoot - If You Could Read my Mind

The Guess Who - Undun

Bruce Cockburn - Wonerin' Where the Lions Are

Joni Mitchell - This Flight Tonight

Tragically Hip - Lionized

April Wine - I Like to Rock

Rush - YYZ



Shanon Swetlishnoff ends our issue again with the last playlist, this time her "Canadian favorites."

It's a great list, regardless of where you hail from, but no Doug and the Slugs, eh?

no. 5

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Last Word

Our parting thought to ponder.

Zenith: Where it all started...



Long before I knew what VTA was, my only source of music was this Zenith radio, on my parents kitchen counter. Listening to the sounds of WOKY (Milwaukee, WI), I got exposed to Cream, The Doors, The Beatles, The Monkees, and many more.

Jerold O'Brien still has this baby (he's got *everything*) and it still sounds pretty good.

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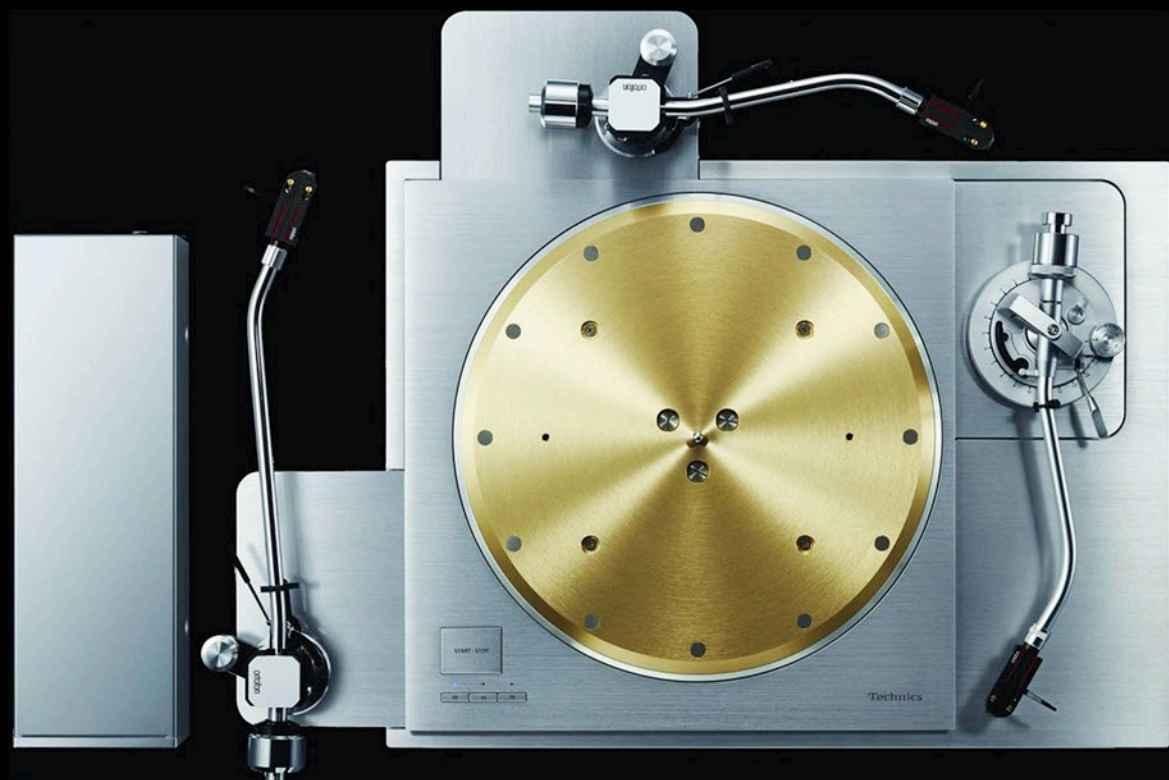
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ps audio
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rega
shinola
sme
sonos
soundsmith
stillpoints
technics
unison research
woo audio

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Ana Mighty Sound	anamightysound.com	Chord Cable	soundorg.com
Analog Magik	analogmagik.com	Clearaudio	musicalsurrroundings.com
Anthem	anthemav.com	conrad-johnson	conradjohnson.com
Aqua Audio	aquahifi.com	dCS	dcsLtd.co.uk
Atlas Cable	integrityhf.com	Dynaudio	dynaudio.com
Audia Flight	audioluxllc.com	E.A.T.	vanaltd.com
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Audio Research	audioresearch.com	Exogal	exogal.com
Audio Solutions	highendbyoz.com	Focal	audioplusservices.com
AudioVision SF	audiovisionsf.com	Franco Serblin	francoserblin.it
Audolici	audolici.com	Gamut	gamutaudio.com
AVID HiFi	avidhifi.com	Gig Harbor Audio	gigharboraudio.com
Boulder	boulderamp.com	Gold Note	goldnote.it
Bowers & Wilkins	bowers-wilkins.com	Golden Ear	goldenear.com
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Kiseki	kiseki-usa.com	REL	rel.net
Koepfel Design	koepfel-design.com	Raidho	raidho.dk
Linn Audio	linn.co.uk	Rega	soundorg.com
Luxman	luxman.com	Rubber B	rubberb.com
McIntosh	mcintoshlabs.com	Simaudio	simaudio.com
MartinLogan	martinlogan.com	Sonus faber	sonusfaber.com
MoFi Electronics	mofielectronics.com	Sumiko	sumiko.net
Musical Fidelity	audioplus-services.com	Tellurium Q	telluriumq.com
Nagra	nagraaudio.com	Totem	totemacoustic.com
Naim	audioplus-services.com	Upscale Audio	upscaleaudio.com
Octave	octave.de	VAC	vac-amplifiers.com
PS Audio	psaudio.com	Vitus Audio	highendbyoz.com
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