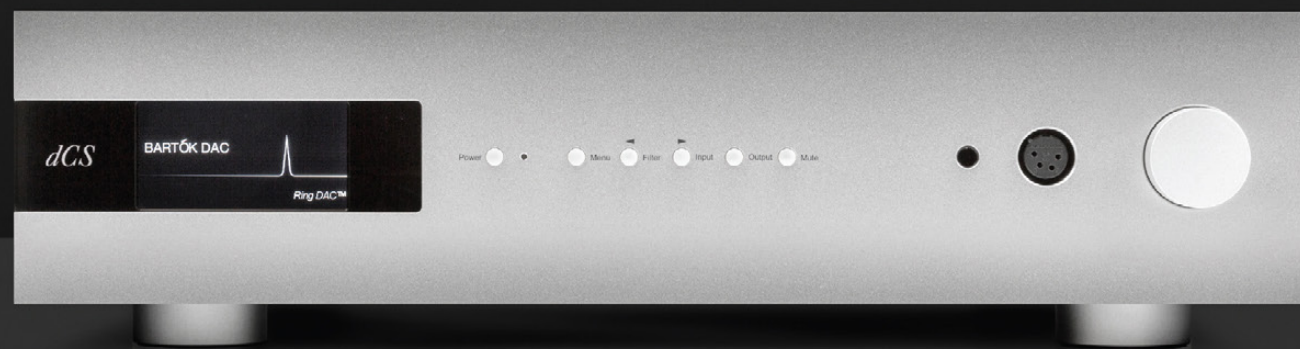


dCS introduces
Bartók DAC



Stream or play your way



UPnP



TIDAL



SPOTIFY



ROON



AIRPLAY



MQA



USB

Available as a network streaming DAC or with optional Class-A headphone section as shown.

info@dcsLtd.co.uk | @dCSonlythemusic | www.dcsLtd.co.uk

Manufactured in the UK by Data Conversion Systems Ltd
Unit 1, Buckingham Business Park, Anderson Road, Swavesey, Cambridge, CB24 4AE

dCS
ONLY THE MUSIC

Imported by Data Conversion Systems Americas Inc. T +1 617 314 9296



T O N E

no. 97

August 2019

PrimaLuna®

EvoLution

EVO 400 Tube Preamplifier

The Tube Issue.



Two 6" High-Definition Cast-Basket Bass/Midrange Drivers w/ Multi-Vaned Phase Plugs

Optimized Dual-Chamber Upper Bass/Midrange Enclosure with Angled Rear and Side Walls

High-Gauss High-Velocity Folded Ribbon Tweeter (HVFR™) w/Zobel Network

Open-Cell Polyurethane Foam Damping Pads

Proprietary Mix of Long-Fiber Lamb's Wool and Dacron for Internal Damping

Three 6" x 10" Quadratic Sub-Bass Drivers w/ Massive Focussed-Field Magnet Structures

Elaborately Braced Accelerometer Optimized Non-Resonant Cabinet

Linear-Phase Balanced Crossover Network w/ Film Capacitors and Bridging Cap

Four Inertially-Balanced 10-1/4" x 9-1/2" Quadratic Planar Infrasonic Radiators

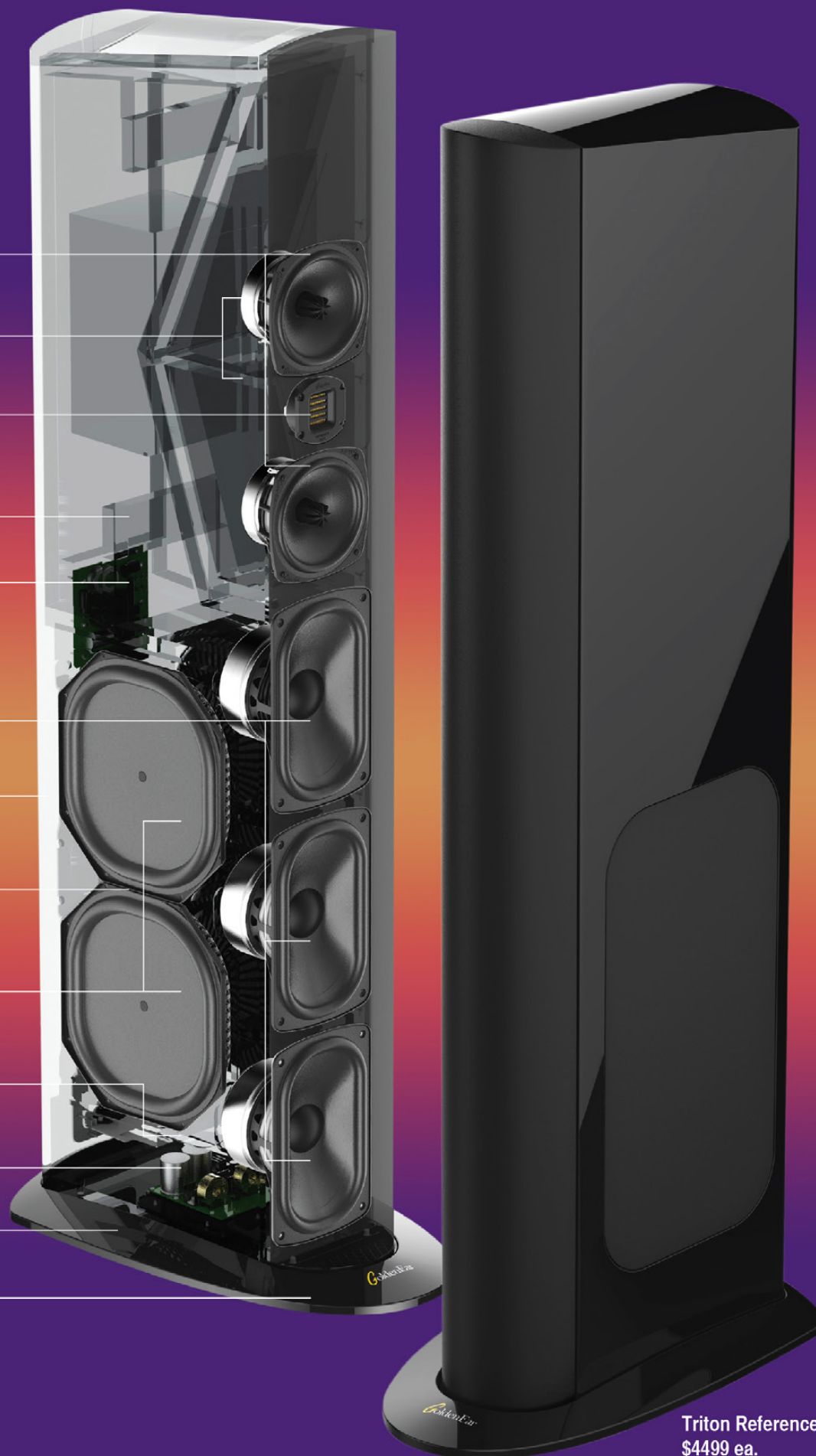
Two on Each Side of Cabinet

Hybrid Phase-Perfect Electronic/Passive Low Frequency Crossover

1800-Watt DSP-Controlled Class D Digital Amplifier with Programmable Logic Device Based State Machine

Elegantly Sleek Piano Gloss Black Lacquer Finish Cabinet

Massive 3/32" Thick Steel Plate Built Into the Base for Exceptional Structural Rigidity



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 medite 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!

GoldenEar Technology
We Make High-End Affordable!™

www.goldenear.com

PO Box 141, Stevenson, MD 21153 (410) 998-9134

Like us on Facebook!
facebook.com/goldenear

Follow us on Twitter!
twitter.com/goldeneartech

Call us or check our website for your nearest dealer

In House

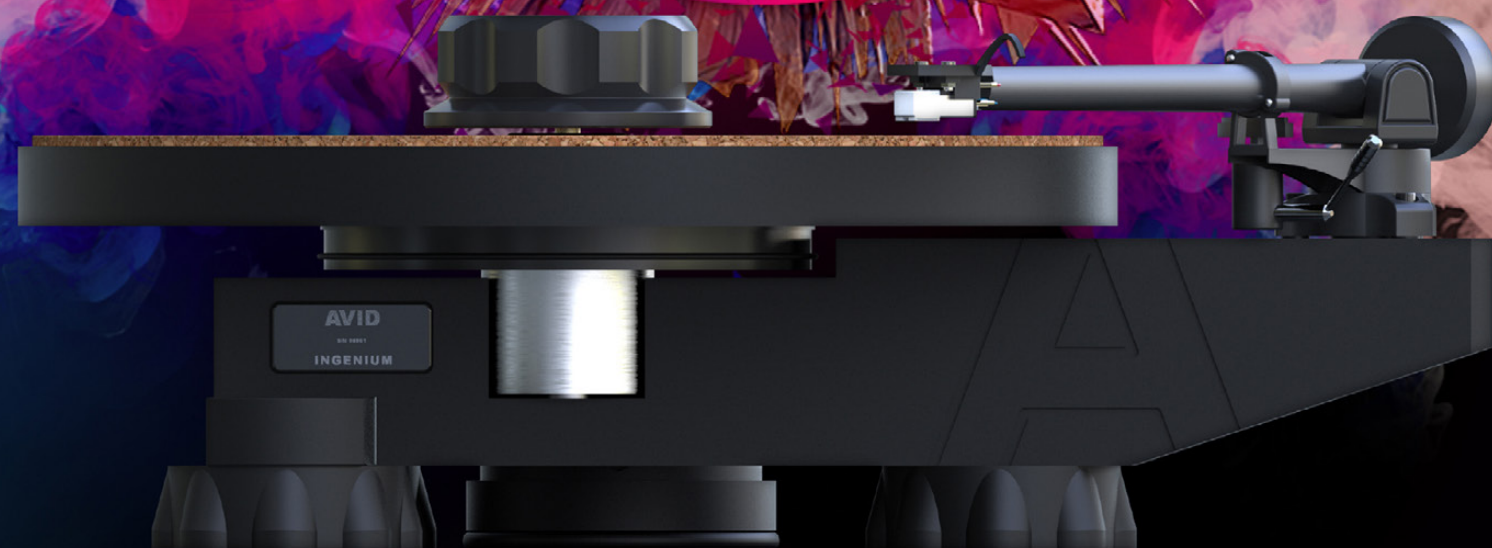
The soundtrack of assembling the issue...



The Concert For Bangla Desh
George Harrison and friends

With so many musicians performing to help charitable causes around the world, for many, this was the show that started it all. George Harrison pulled together many of his friends in the music business to help put Bangla Desh on the map for many of us.

INGENIUM PLUG&PLAY



AVAILABLE NOW
VISIT YOUR **AVID** DEALER

www.avidhifi.com



AVIDHIFI
MADE IN THE UK

Mofi ELECTRONICS

GET CLOSER TO THE
ORIGINAL MASTER RECORDING



Mobile Fidelity
UltraDeck Turntable



Isolated AC Synchronous Motor

UltraDeck's stepped-pulley 300RPM AC motor provides excellent speed stability for pitch accuracy and rhythmic drive.



Ultra Tonearm

The 10-inch straight, aluminum, gimbaled-bearing tonearm uses smooth ball bearings for low friction and Cardas Audio wiring to maintain complete signal purity.



Anti-Vibration Feet by HRS

Developed in conjunction with the engineers at Harmonic Resolution Systems, anti-vibration feet isolate UltraDeck from ruinous vibrations and interference.

Explore the full line at mofielectronics.com



TONE

STAFF

Music Editor Jaan Uhelszki

Playlist Editor Roscoe Nicholson

Audio Historian Ken Kessler

Senior Contributor Rob Johnson

Analog Master Richard Mak

Administration Pamela Dorgay

Research Earle Blanton, Ken Mercereau, Scott Tetzlaff

Musicologist Tom Caselli

Information/Architecture Chris Kimmelshue

Art Director Brian Gage/Pipe & Tabor

Photography Jeff Dorgay

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Emily Duff

Ben Fong-Torres

Brian Gage

Roy Hall

Michael "Muppet" Laurance

Andre Marc

Monique Meadows

Eric Neff

Jerold O'Brien

Gregory Petan

Shanon Swetlishnoff



Sigma 170 i Integrated Amplifier

Valve Amplification Company

www.vac-amps.com

©2018 Valve Amplification Company, Inc. VAC power amplifiers are protected by US Patent 8,749,310. International patents pending.

new arrivals...

After a bit of a hiatus, Lawrence Devoe returns to our band of hench-people. By day, he's a doc in the Augusta, Georgia metro area, and the rest of the time a passionate audiophile with a penchant for getting the data. We're very happy to have Mr. Devoe back reviewing analog for us.



"pew! pew! pew!"

what's inside:

17 Publisher's Letter:
What's what and who's who

52 Shannon Says...
Shannon Swetlishnoff loves
the Hana ML cartridge

61 Welcome to MINE:
NOS Wallet from Fielders Choice
Styling shades from Santa Cruz
Snoop Dogg Loafers
Weinermobile Air BNB
And More!

85 /134 Setlist
We take in some opera and Beck!
—photos by Pam Dorgay

92 Gear:
The Conrad-Johnson ART 27A
The BAT VK-56SE
The ARC REF 160 Monos
The VAC Sigma 170i
and more...

128 Can't Get It Out of My Head
Emily Duff

137 Future Tense:
Reviews in process...
AVID Acutus Dark,
Mytek Brooklyn + DAC,
Anthem MRX520 and more!



TONE

86

COVER STORY:

We explore the PrimaLuna EVO400 Amp and Pre

18, 42, 116, 156, 176

Playlists:

friends, colleagues, and readers
let us know what they are listening to

20

OLD SCHOOL:

Jeff Dorgay finds a great deal on Craigslist
—this time a Pioneer reel to reel deck

27

1095:

Michael Laurence runs the
Bowers and Wilkins 607s through their paces

34

The Audiophile Apartment:

McIntosh's new MT1100 turntable/amp/DAC
combination is indeed formidable

44

JOURNEYMAN AUDIOPHILE:

Linn's Selekt DSM has everything
you need except a power amplifier

158

DEALERS THAT MEAN BUSINESS:

These are the people you should spend your hard earned money with

183

GET THE GEAR: Where to find our advertisers

what's inside:

GLOW...

A quartet of KT88 power tubes light up the presentation in the VAC Sigma 170i integrated amplifier. A real treat for the eyes and ears on page 110



"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, Enjoy The Music.com RMAF 2018

"Its my take home speaker, I 've never heard anything like this in this show..."

Peter Breuninger Terry Eringi, Avshowrooms, RMAF 2018



FIGARO XL in Gray Olive
\$15,000 for standard finishes, \$16,500 as shown



BELGIUM . CANADA . CROATIA . DENMARK . FINLAND . FRANCE . GERMANY . GREECE . HUNGARY . SOUTH KOREA . LUXEMBOURG . HOLLAND . SINGAPORE . SWEDEN . TAIWAN . USA . VIETNAM

AUTHORIZED DEALERS

HOUSTON, TX

3mA AUDIO
1431 W. Alabama St. HOUSTON, TX 77006
(832) 530 - 4716 sales@3maaudio.com

WAUPACA, WI

Sonare Coeli
1547 Foxfire Court WAUPACA, WI 54981
(715) 412 - 4139 nigel.b@prodigy.net

LAS VEGAS, NV

Argutus AUDIO
7650 Dean Martin Dr. STE. 101 LAS VEGAS, NV 89139
(702) 888 - 3787 info@argutusaudio.com

HIGHLAND PARK, IL

Toska AUDIO
186 & 188 Skokie Valley Road HIGHLAND PARK, IL 60035
(847) 926 - 3102 info@toskaaudio.com

USA DISTRIBUTOR

HIGH END By OZ LLC

11870 Santa Monica Boulevard 106672
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025
(424) 344 - 0011 oz@highendbyoz.com

M O O N
by SIMAUDIO

Your records
will never have
sounded so good.

110LP v2 - Phono preamplifier



simaudio.com



TONE

MORE GLOW...

Each of the PrimaLuna EVO 400 power amplifiers have 8 EL-34 output tubes. Along with the EVO 400 preamplifier, our studio was nice and toasty during our evening listening sessions.
More on page 86





PERSONA®

**“FOR ALL THEIR VISUAL BEAUTY...
THE PERSONA SYSTEM DID THAT
MYSTIFYINGLY MAGICAL ACT—ONE
THAT ALL GREATEST SPEAKERS
ASPIRE TO—OF DISAPPEARING
COMPLETELY FROM PERCEPTION
AND LEAVING BEHIND ONLY THE
MUSIC OR MOVIE SOUNDTRACK.”**

Darryl Wilkinson, *Sound & Vision*



Visit paradigm.com to find a dealer near you and schedule a demonstration of the new Persona.



Persona 9H



no.97

PUBLISHERS LETTER

Wow, we just keep getting closer to issue 100.

There have been several great tube amplifiers sent our way in the last few months, and we all know glowing tubes make for great pictures. So...issue 97 ends up being an all tube issue, starting with the new PrimaLuna EVO400 Preamplifier and Power Amplifier on our cover.

For those of you not entirely familiar with PrimaLuna, this is the brand that launched my career as an audio writer. Much to my (and Kevin Deal's surprise) my review of the original PrimaLuna ProLogue ONE, featured in *The Absolute Sound*, would be the review that helped launch the brand. And that was nearly 17 years ago. Crazy. The new EVO components are some of the best vacuum tube components I've had the privilege to live with at any price. Today, I feel the PrimaLuna EVO components are genuinely part of the top tier of the vacuum tube world.

Many audiophiles love a spirited discussion about vacuum tubes versus solid-state gear, and after 40 years of serious listening, I must admit the glowing bottles still have their place. The world's finest solid-state components certainly give up no quarter to tubes these days, but there is always something magical about tubes done right.

The rest of the goodies we have for you are also equally excellent, all at different price points and style, from ARC, BAT, McIntosh, Octave, and VAC. And they are all excellent examples of "tubes done right." Today's top tube amplifiers bring a tremendous amount of glory to reproduced music. Yet as it is with my other passion, automobiles, sometimes a spin around the block in a great vintage example can bring an equally big smile to your face. So don't rule out that option, but prepare to have a competent tech to give a vintage piece a thorough going over before you start rocking the house.

For those of you that have never sampled tube audio, I submit you give it a try. You might find it a new taste that you enjoy.

As always, thank you for reading.

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Tone Playlists are sponsored by...



- Delany & Bonnie—I Know
Something Good
- Rolling Stones—Factory Girl
- Free Basement—Dog Song
- Linda Ronstadt—Old Paint
- Jason Isbell—24 frames
- Perry Keys—Will You Shine?
- Lizzo—Cuz I Love You
- Tyler Childers—Country Squire
- Jesse Dayton—Whole Lotta Rosie
- Orchestra Lissanga—Okuzua



Our Can't Get it Out of my Head" columnist (Emily Duff) is still wandering the streets of NYC, soaking up the sounds of summer. Here's what she's got at the top of her list this month



70 YEARS IN THE MAKING

MC2152 70TH ANNIVERSARY VACUUM TUBE AMPLIFIER



A striking new design to celebrate our seven decades of handcrafting the best audio equipment the world has ever heard.

Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay

Pioneer RT-701 \$250-750

We are on a roll with vintage Pioneer. Jay Leno once said, "You don't find the cars, the cars find you." Vintage audio is the same way, more often than not. If you're a serious enthusiast (collector, or hoarder, depending on how you want to define your desires), you probably have a few things that are on your shortlist. You may not always find them, and it's certainly never a linear prospect, but when they pop up, you have to act. Promptly. So bear with me, we'll be back to McIntosh or Marantz sooner than you can blink your eye.

Tellurium Q®

telluriumq.com info@telluriumq.com +44 (0)1458 251 997

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.



Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay



The Pioneer RT-701/707 was one of those on my list. In my early college days, going from my post-rack system to real audio, the RT-707 was incredibly cool because it fits in a rack. Right between the Phase Linear 400 power amplifier and Technics parametric EQ. All those lights and meters were pretty impressive.

Built from about 1978 to 1981, the RT-701 actually hit the scene first, and from what we've been able to tell is much rarer than the RT-707, because it only records and plays in one

direction. My experience with tape decks has always been that bi-directional operation always proves problematic, so seeing this RT-701 on my local edition of the Facebook marketplace was a welcome sight. Moreover, the fellow that sold it to me couldn't have been a nicer guy. The deck was his parents' since new and has had very little use over its life. I could tell he wanted to keep it, but his roommate was complaining about the space it was taking in the living room.

This was humorous on the way home, as the initial excitement about the 701/707 was always the power amp (i.e., small) footprint this deck needs to do its thing. So many reel-to-reel tape decks defy rack placement except on the top shelf, which isn't always practical. Thanks to a set of 20-foot long Crosslink cables from Cardas Audio, the 701 is easy to use in our reference system from across the room without signal degradation.

The direct drive transport means no belts and adjustments are required, merely a bit of clean up and maybe pinch roller replacement. Often this can get in the way of sound quality on vintage tape decks. This one still plays and rewinds as it did when new—a great thing. One thing to watch out for with this or any reel-to-reel deck is a takeup reel. If you don't

Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

by Jeff Dorgay



have one, they are becoming like gold, especially the metal ones. So be very careful that the ones you pick up on eBay and such are not bent. Bent reels can cause uneven winding at best, and oxide shredding at worst. You've been warned.

The photos you see here are unretouched—this baby was in great shape! Right out of the trunk, this one sounds great, and playback of a few tapes still on hand from my *original* RT707 days sound good, but it's headed off to our friends at Gig Harbor Audio for a thorough cleaning, alignment and a new set of electrolytic capacitors. It should be pretty spectacular after that, and we will report back.

Stay tuned.



The Evolution of Perfection

PrimaLuna EVO


Four new ranges of tube integrals and separates, plus a new tube DAC

Separates available with transformer-coupled XLR

Every integrated is now a best-in-class tube headphone amp

Even larger custom toroidal power transformers

Becoming a tube expert is easy

Visit primaluna-usa.com or our  YouTube channel



EVO 400 Preamplifier w/
transformer-coupled balanced in/out

FLORIDA AUDIO EXPO

Listen In Paradise

February 7-9, 2020

863-825-5380 | barta@floridaaudioexpo.com
www.floridaaudioexpo.com

Embassy Suites by Hilton Tampa

555 North Westshore Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33609

"The inaugural year of the FAE was a great success; the show was well organized, attendees were plentiful and interesting, with many new faces we don't see at the other shows. We will be back!"

— Jeremy Bryan, MBL North America

1095

Great sound for just over a G!

by Michael Laurance

**Bowers and Wilkins 607
Bookshelf Speakers**
\$600
bowers-wilkins.com

I have taken myself a week-long staycation. Just me at home. Even my wife has been generous enough to tear up the honey-do list and allow me to dive into my projects and desires this week. I'm officially a man of my own devices. Now, I suppose a "smarter" person would be outside, soaking up the sun, working in the yard, driving in the country, or doing something—anything that would move some fresh air into the lungs. But, what I look forward to the most is diving into my various hi-fi systems. Audio nirvana summer vacation.

Where to start, then? That was probably the most straightforward question to answer. I've had these nifty Bowers & Wilkins 607 speakers staring me down for the last couple of weeks, and I am itching to jump into them. They seemed to be the perfect starting point for the week.

Unboxing the 607s, I am immediately pleased with the fit and finish, and the solid feel of the speakers— not too heavy, but certainly substantial. I didn't, however, have the heart to cover up the Continuum woven cone LF driver and dome tweeter with the supplied grilles. They're more visually appealing to me in the raw. I'm aware that most people would use these speakers in a sub/sat-type of setup, and we'll get to that, but I had to break with tradition for the first trial. I still had the Cyrus One HD integrated amplifier set up in my listening room, so I couldn't resist the urge to hear what the 607's sound like as full-range speakers. Slipping Mark Knopfler's *The Ragpicker's Dream* into my Pioneer Elite CD player, I take off without a net.



1095

Great sound for just over a G!

by Michael Laurance

As full-range speakers, the 607's perform well, with vocals somewhat pronounced. They don't sound large or overwhelming, yet offer highly focused imaging. I didn't expect a ton of bass from a pair of 5-inch woofers, but these new Continuum cone drivers certainly produce a bit of thump, keeping the LF energy that is there tight and tuneful.



1095

Great sound for just over a G!

by Michael Laurance

The midrange, piano, in particular, is a tad bright on occasion, but some of that may be due to amplification and source choices. Yet, when all is said and done, I'm guessing the average 607 buyer isn't hooking them up to a five-figure system. Context.

Taking that concept further, I reach for my old Denon AVR-1604, a small Canton subwoofer, and move on to a more traditional sat/sub arrangement, which proves to be the magic formula for the 607s. Of course, your Bowers & Wilkins dealer will probably want to hook you up with one of their subs. Certainly not a bad way to go, and that will make it a one stop shopping extravaganza.

Either way, unless you are using these on a desktop or in an incredibly small room, a sub makes the 607s completely different speakers. Listening to Lyle Lovett's *I Love Everybody*, the soundstage instantly becomes wider, and vocals are warmer than they were when running the 607s full range. With the sub now handling everything below 80 Hz, the 607s become more expressive and balanced. The dome tweeters now feel more crisp, airy, and light, and less boxy. Percussion is sharp, pronounced, and alive, with Lovett's vocals more defined in the mix.

Pink Floyd's *The Endless River* proves a more challenging piece that the 607s ace, showing off their imaging prowess, with more width

than depth. Some of this can be adjusted with careful speaker placement for those that will take the time. As with many small monitors, the 607s are sensitive to placement, and they do their best on stands with the tweeters close to ear height. I achieved the best overall balance with the speakers about 14 inches from the back wall, 10 feet apart, toed into the listening position.

Midrange performance is equally impressive, with the tweeter again showing off its performance. The way they handle guitars is fantastic. Listening to David Gilmour on the 607s indeed was a great way to start this staycation. Maybe this is why guys like me don't ever get a tan.

Track 5 of *The Endless River* is heavy with drums; turning the volume up further makes for another torture test that the 607s pass with ease. They stay remarkably tight through these passages, never getting flabby, or out of control. The 5-inch driver responds quickly, keeping the speakers punchy and entertaining.

Continuing to listen, I'm happy with the level of finer points revealed in the discs played. The 607s do an excellent job, given their reasonable price point, of pulling out subtleties in tracks, and nuances lying in the mix. Whether enjoying them at a more relaxed volume or cranking them up a bit, the 607s fill my listening room with a lot of musical nuance.



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

1095

Great sound for just over a G!

by Michael Laurance

If you're looking for a great \$600 speaker, the Bowers and Wilkins 607s are an absolute steal, with the caveat that, like many speakers of this size and price range, these really do need to be run with a quality subwoofer to achieve the best overall balance. That being said, one can add that sub and still put together a great system at a very reasonable cost.

Happy listening!



Sonus faber

ELECTA AMATOR

III

Legacy refined





The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Small Spaces

The McIntosh MTI100
A new breed
\$6,500
mcintoshlabs.com

Not just anyone could build something like this, to the level it's made. Who better than McIntosh, a company now in their 70th year of production, with a considerable amount of expertise in vacuum tube, solid-state electronics - both analog and digital, to come up with something like this...

At first contact, the new MTI100 looks like one of any number of turntables that might have an integral phono preamplifier, but it's much more. Along with a phono preamplifier on board to handle the factory mounted Sumiko MM cartridge, there is a vacuum tube preamplifier (with a pair of 12AX7s in full view) a high-resolution DAC and a 50 watt per channel (into 8-ohms, 80wpc into 4) power amplifier. All on one chassis. Pretty cool. This is where 70 years of manufacturing expertise comes to bear.

You might think something like the MTI100 would be an engineering nightmare, but the McIntosh team has pulled it off perfectly. There is no audible noise in any section of the MTI100. Pho-

The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Small Spaces

no and digital sections are free of playback artifacts, even with highly sensitive speakers.

All this excellence doesn't come at a budget price. The MTI100 tips the scale at \$6,500. This is not an entry-level product. It's a boutique product. There is plenty of chatter from the crabby audiophiles in the audience for several reasons, but they are all missing the point. This isn't meant to be a modular, upgradable, rack system, though there is an output for a powered subwoofer. The MTI100 is a very stylish, compact music center.

Just add speakers

You don't buy an Eames Lounge because you need a chair. There are plenty of those at IKEA. Don't buy this because you merely want a turntable with a built-in phono preamplifier. You buy the MTI100 because you want to take a different approach - good sound, unencumbered by traditional componentry. And because you want something special, something with a history behind it, you want the security that comes with the McIntosh logo on the front. The McIntosh MTI100 delivers style and performance on all levels.

With 50 watts per channel into 8 ohms, the MTI100 drives most speakers with ease, and

it's enough power to give you a wide range of speaker choices. As fate would have it, we just happened to have a pair of the new Sonus faber Minima Amator speakers (\$4,000/pair) on hand, so all that was needed was to grab the supplied power cord, and connect a pair of Cardas Iridium speaker cables. What other high-end audio system can you set up in 90 seconds? And for what it's worth, we did plug the MTI100 into our reference Sonus faber Stradivari Homage speakers, so you can use them in a very high style system too. If you'd like to see the MTI100 in action, click here for the first of our "Music in Minutes" videos.

Going more "All American," we took a detour with the new JBL Classic L-100s (also \$4,000/pair) and combining these iconic speakers in the living room of our decidedly mid-century modern house made for a system that's never felt so right across from the Noguchi table. But there's nothing ancient about the sound these two serve up.

As the MTI100 features Class-D amplification, the overall tonal balance is slightly thin in the upper register, but pairing it up with something ever so slightly on the warm side of things makes for a perfect balance. The JBL L100s, a pair of Vandersteen 1Cs, some Harbeths, or (of course) anything from Sonus faber will be

Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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

The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Small Spaces

outstanding. Your McIntosh dealer will also be able to make some great suggestions.

Multiple options

Cool as that belt-drive turntable is, making up the majority of the MTI100s form factor, it has three line-level inputs as well as two digital inputs. The onboard DAC processes digital files at up to 32bit/192kHz resolution, perfect for music lovers streaming their content from a NAS or one of the more popular streaming services.

If you do feel the need to add more gear, like a tape deck, outboard DAC, or maybe connect your flat screen television to the MTI100 there are three single-ended RCA inputs, so expansion can be in the cards if you would like to go further. Adding the JL Audio's new in-ceiling subwoofer makes for an incredibly versatile 2.1 music and theater system with a minimal footprint. A large TV adds to the two-channel capability, creating a perfect backdrop for streaming your music collection, even when you're not watching movies.

It is a breeze to link an iPhone and iPad up via Bluetooth. A quick pairing has us sharing high res files from Qobuz in roughly a minute. This functionality is perfect when friends arrive. The MTI100 is a guaranteed conversation starter, and once your friends plug in via their mobile device, they'll be begging you to let them spin records.

Spin away

Just like the rest of the McIntosh lineup, the two 12AX7 tubes on the top of the MTI100 glow orange until warmed up, turning green when the operating temperature is reached.

Though real estate is at a premium and those tube cages beg to be removed, with their close proximity to the cartridge end of the tonearm, we suggest leaving them in place as the folks at McIntosh intended.

Thanks to that pair of tubes in the phono section, vinyl playback has more romance, both visually and audibly. Those tubes go a long way to remove the slight edge from the overall tonality, and spinning your favorite albums is just so much fun. The Sumiko sourced MM cartridge has a removable stylus, so if there's a situation, a replacement stylus shouldn't be much more than \$100 - \$150. If you entertain a lot with a vinyl friendly crowd, it might not be the worst idea to have a spare on hand. Again, your McIntosh dealer should be able to set you up on this.

Speaking of setup, the turntable section of the MTI100 couldn't be easier to get rolling. Install the belt, place the platter on top, and install the counterweight. If you want to upgrade the sound of the MTI100, a better MM cart could be installed and aligned, but this does slightly defeat the ease of setup/ease of use ethos that the MTI100 brings.

Know thy customer

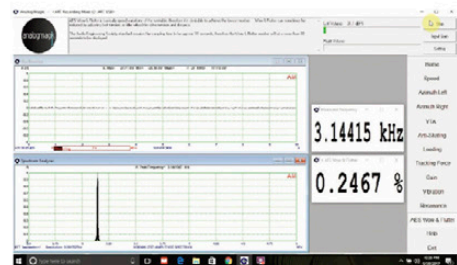
Living with the McIntosh MTI100 for a while proves it is worth the price asked. The level of quality, functionality, and audio performance makes it the perfect purchase for anyone wanting a high quality, all-inclusive music system. It is not a substitute for a rack of separate components, but you'd be awfully pressed to find a turntable/arm/cartridge, phono preamplifier, streaming DAC, and amplifier (along with four power cords, four sets of interconnects and a rack) that all work together for this price.

*Who better
than McIntosh,
a company now
in their 70th year
of production...*

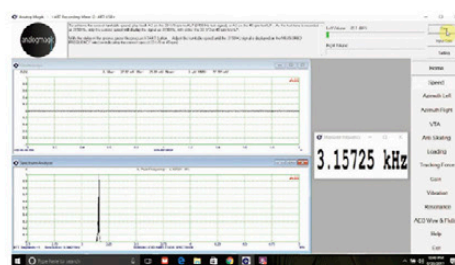
analogmagik™

All In One Cartridge Setup Software & Test LPs

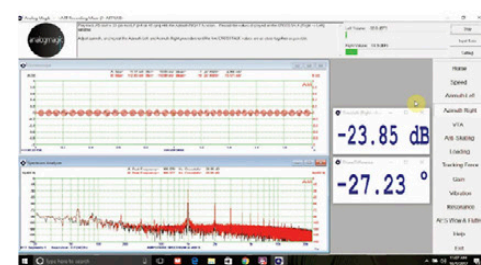
Anyone Can Be A Setup Guru



WOW & FLUTTER



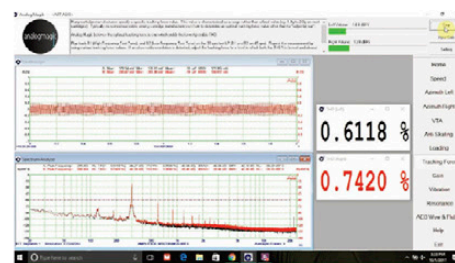
SPEED



AZIMUTH



VTA



VTF



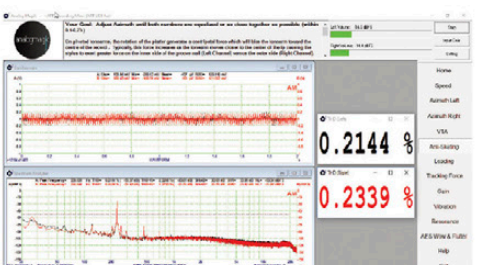
RESONANCE



LOADING & GAIN



VIBRATION



ANTI-SKATING



www.AnalogMagik.com
info@AnalogMagik.com

North America Distributor:
info@rutherfordaudio.com



EU Distributor:
info@acoustical-systems.com



The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Small Spaces



But as mentioned at the MTI100 is so much more than that. This is a piece of sonic artistry, that provides high-end sound from all the sources you can imagine, and looks great doing it. For many, this and a great pair of speakers will be a destination music system. For others, it will be a second or even third system. And I'm guessing there will also be a few die-hard, completist McIntosh collectors that will just have one because...

Much as I hate to profile anyone, I suspect the MTI100 will appeal to what I refer to as the "qualityphile" customer. This customer likes solutions that are off the beaten path, that are as technologically curious as aesthetically motivated. Gazing into my crystal ball, I expect the MTI100 is going to end up in some very design rich environments, and cherished by its owners.

Over at our companion site, The Audiophile Apartment, we've decided to make the MTI100 our Product of the year for 2019.

Click [here](#) if you're curious about what else we've picked.



Playlist: What Our Readers Are Into

Tone Playlists are sponsored by...

qobuz

Julee Cruise—I Float Alone

Xiu Xiu—Blue Frank/Pink Room

Trent Reznor—Background Noise

Pat Metheny—Part 2 (from Zero Tolerance for Silence)

Au Revoir Simone—Lark

Jean-Michel Jarre—The Time Machine

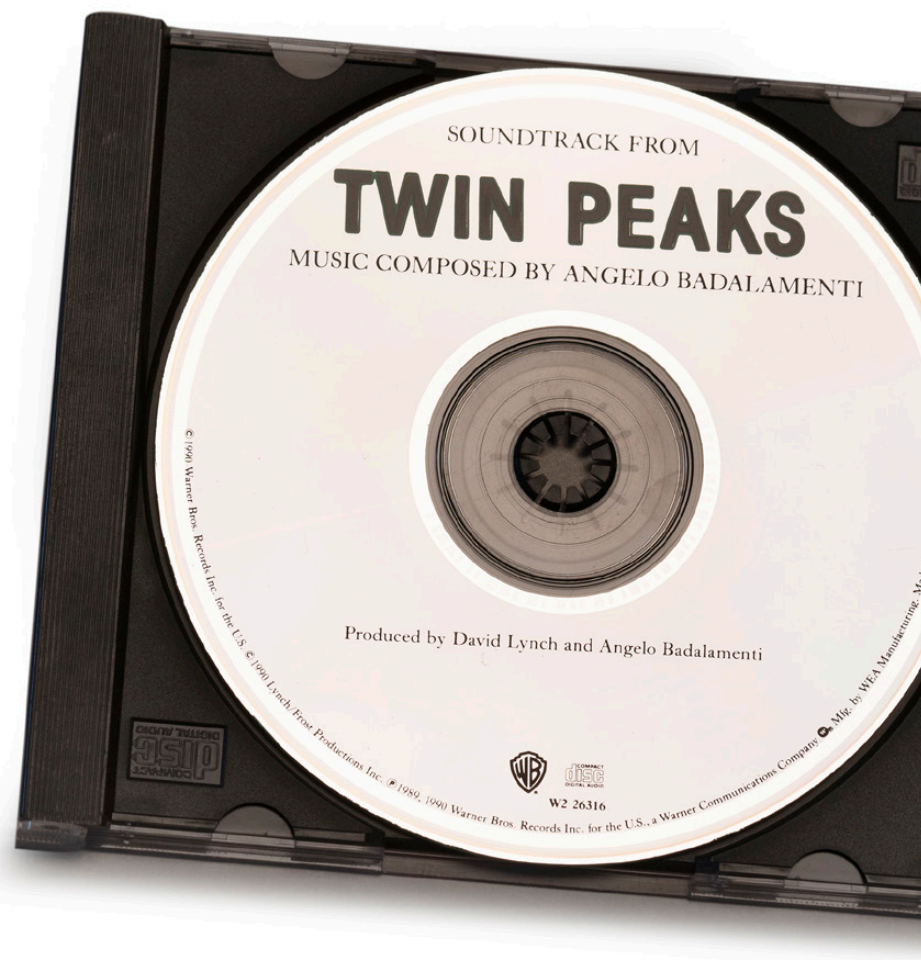
Gary Numan—Are Friends Electric?

Can—Spoon

Dead Can Dance—Opium

Billie Eilish—All The Good Girls Go To Hell

Our publisher is thinking about ethereal, electronic, slightly haunting tunes. Here's a few that have been popping up more and more often—and somehow David Lynch and Twin Peaks come right to mind.



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!"

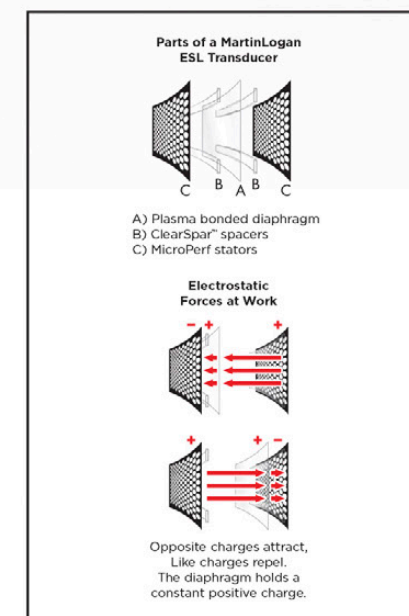
Impression ESL 11A
Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi+

"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



The Journeyman Audiophile

The Linn Selekt DSM with Katalyst DAC.
Add amp, speakers and go!
\$5,100
linnhifi.co.uk

For many of my generation, we grew up with the Linn Sondek turntable, and its analog prowess. That table is still in production today, having continuously been improved and updated—it's still a benchmark to many. In case you haven't noticed, Linn has been making incredible products for decades as well. Their CD12 (I suspect in homage to the LP12 turntable) is still a favorite amongst audiophiles with extensive CD collections. Combining these legacy technologies with their expertise in DSP and now streaming audio results in the Selekt DSM we have here.

In typical Linn fashion, the Select DSM is modular and can be upgraded to whatever form you'd like down the road.

The DSM is available with or without onboard power amplification (as stereo or surround), with or without their space optimization room correction, and with or without their Katalyst DAC. In typical Linn fashion, the Select DSM is modular and can be upgraded to whatever form you'd like down the road. I've always admired this aspect of Linn components—an upgrade path makes it a lot easier to make an investment in hifi. Solid thinking.

With five options to choose from, we decided on the \$5,100 Selekt DSM with Katalyst and Space Optimisation. This is an excellent place to start, giving the end-user a bit of flexibility in terms of output power and configuration. Want some glowing tubes to go with your Selekt? No problem. Need massive power? Easy. With balanced XLR and standard RCA outputs, the Selekt will work with any amplifier you choose. We ran a 30-foot length of Cardas Clear cables, and the Selekt performed flawlessly, so you can put your Selekt in a central location and place the power amplifier where it's more convenient, should you desire.

Playlist

65

The Journeyman Audiophile

The Selekt DSM comes in a tiny, elegantly designed enclosure, the perfect addition to anyone wanting high-performance audio without a plethora of components. Linn joins a very distinct group of manufacturers building an all-encompassing box that looks and feels this good. Only Naim and Devialet come to mind when considering the human interface side of the equation. When you power up the Selekt, it's beautiful, backlit, central volume control commands your attention. There are six preset buttons, for your favorite sources too, making operation foolproof. The Selekt feels so silky smooth in action, both you and your guests will want to walk over and touch it. Or you can use the app if you don't want to leave the listening position. That's successful product design.

True to their roots

In case you were wondering, Linn offers an onboard MM/MC phono stage with all versions of the Selekt, so plugging in a turntable is easy. And of course, your Linn dealer can put you in the driver's seat of a great table while you're there. We didn't have an LP12 handy, but we did try a couple of well known British tables from Rega and AVID, both with excellent re-

sult. If that weren't enough, there are separate inputs for MM and MC, so you could use two turntables with your Selekt.

Highly devoted analog users can take the outboard phono stage route via one of the analog inputs. Comparative listening puts the on-board phono input on par with many of other examples we've heard in the \$1,000 - \$1,500 range, so this represents tremendous value. It also makes it easy for casual analog listeners to add an excellent table and happily call it a day. Finally, the simplicity of not needing another box and set of cables makes this a bonus for those not wanting an overbearing rack of gear. We preferred using that analog input for a vintage Nakamichi cassette deck, reminiscing when the LP12 hit the scene and mixtapes were the playlists of the day.

The Selekt features a total of ten inputs between analog and digital, so nothing is off-limits. Except for MQA files, and we can't imagine that as being a deal-breaker for a control center as impressive as this—the crew at Linn has thought of everything with the Selekt. Thanks to wireless streaming, network streaming and it's being a Roon endpoint, if it makes music, you can connect it. Which means all of your friends can enjoy your Selekt when they visit.

ABYSS®
Made in America



Diana®

The Journeyman Audiophile

Digitally speaking

The Selekt DAC optimizes your digital files, regardless of source and configuration, and works with digital files up to 24bit/192kHz. Again, this should cover 99% of your digital needs. Thanks to careful attention to digital input, along with mechanical and electrical isolation of the various power supplies, this is an incredibly lifelike musical result.

Linn also makes use of a precision clock with the Katalyst architecture, and this too goes a long way to rid digital playback of the harshness that used to characterize it. This success is most evident when listening to vocal or acoustic recordings. The amount of low-level detail and decay here is incredibly impressive - dense recordings unravel with ease, and top quality recordings are stunning.

We used the Selekt primarily as a Roon end-point because it integrates so well into both our streaming and NAS based digital files. Should you take the same path, integrating a Selekt into your Roon system will take all of 30 seconds to establish. Should you not be a Roon devotee, Linn does provide their own app to organize your music.

Where some DACs seem to be optimized for high res or Red Book playback, Katalyst does an equally thorough job with both—a real relief to those of you having an extensive, legacy digital collection.

Space, the final frontier

The acoustics and dynamics of a room are often overlooked when building a system, and especially for those of us living in smaller rooms, a significant roadblock to getting great

sound. Where some DSP systems use microphones and measurements, Linn's Space Optimisation requires spending about an hour carefully measuring your room's dimensions. Entering in the wall sizes, floor materials, ceiling heights, windows, furniture placement, Space Optimisation builds a custom profile for your room. Once you enter the data, it takes about an hour to calculate, and plug it back in.

If you'd like a bit more in-depth explanation, please click the link below.

linn.co.uk/sources/network-music-players#space-optimisation

For the rest of you, it works brilliantly. Under the direction of Linn's Ross Patterson, we carefully measured my somewhat difficult shaped living/listening room and waited for the profile. Before Selekt, the bass through my Focal Kanta no.3s was somewhat weak, and the speakers sounded thin overall. Imaging was very diffuse and non-specific.

There's really nothing that the Linn Selekt DSM with Katalyst can't accomplish.

The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for for a bit more than a G...

With the profile in place, it wasn't even like listening to the same speakers! This room that I've always had moderate difficulty making good sound in was fantastic, with solid, controlled bass and a three dimensional, immersive soundfield. If you can't put your speakers in the optimum location, or have a tough room like mine, Space Optimisation makes the Selekt a go-to choice. The change is so significant, this feature alone is worth the price of the Selekt.

Happy with the results, we put the Selekt to the test in an even more challenging environment, our garage. I spend a lot of time out there working on cars when I have the time, but I can't shut my audiophile sensibilities off. Even in a nearly square garage, with smooth cement floors, the Selekt transformed a nightmare into a lovely listening environment. While you probably won't set up a pair of Dynaudio monitors and a Pass Labs power amplifier in your garage, you might have a listening space with a tile or hardwood floor with some glass in the mix. Rest assured the Selekt system will help tame a harsh environment.

More awaits you

As hinted at earlier in this review, you can either order your Selekt with onboard amplification, in 2 or 5.1 channel configurations. An HDMI input is at your disposal to connect your favorite disc player or cable box, potentially making the Selekt a full theater system in a single box.

There's really nothing that the Linn Selekt DSM with Katalyst can't accomplish. Considering how much it offers in terms of price, performance, and aesthetics, along with such a compact size, it's easy to see why we've given it The Audiophile Apartment's first Product of the Year award.



BRILLIANT & GORGEOUS
FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR VINYL AGAIN



Low Output
with Microline Stylus

ML



High Output
with Microline Stylus

MH

HANA M SERIES MICROLINE

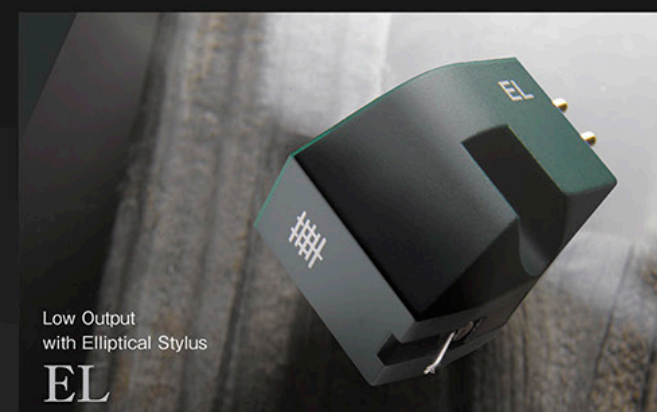


SL
Low Output
with Shibata Stylus



SH
High Output
with Shibata Stylus

HANA S SERIES SHIBATA



Low Output
with Elliptical Stylus

EL



High output
with Elliptical Stylus

EH

HANA E SERIES ELLIPTICAL

 **HANA**
BY EXCEL SOUND
HANDMADE IN JAPAN

MUSICAL
SURROUNDINGS 
www.musicalsurrroundings.com | 510.547.5006



Shannon Says...

Audio Musings from up North

by Shanon Swetishnoff

Breaking in is fun to do with a Hana ML

\$1,200
musicalsurroundings.com

When Excel Sound Corporation released their newest addition to the low-output MC cartridge family, the Hana ML, this vinyl enthusiast could not wait to try it out with some old and new favorites. Hana cartridges have been covered here at TONE with positive praise and a full review on the ML is on the horizon, so I won't go into much of the technical aspect, just an avid listener's perspective on the break-in experience. After much anticipation, installing this gorgeous cartridge and putting it through its paces is a treat. The break-in period is a great experience as the full bodied sound begins to emerge. Here's my experience with the Hana ML during its first 50 hours of life.

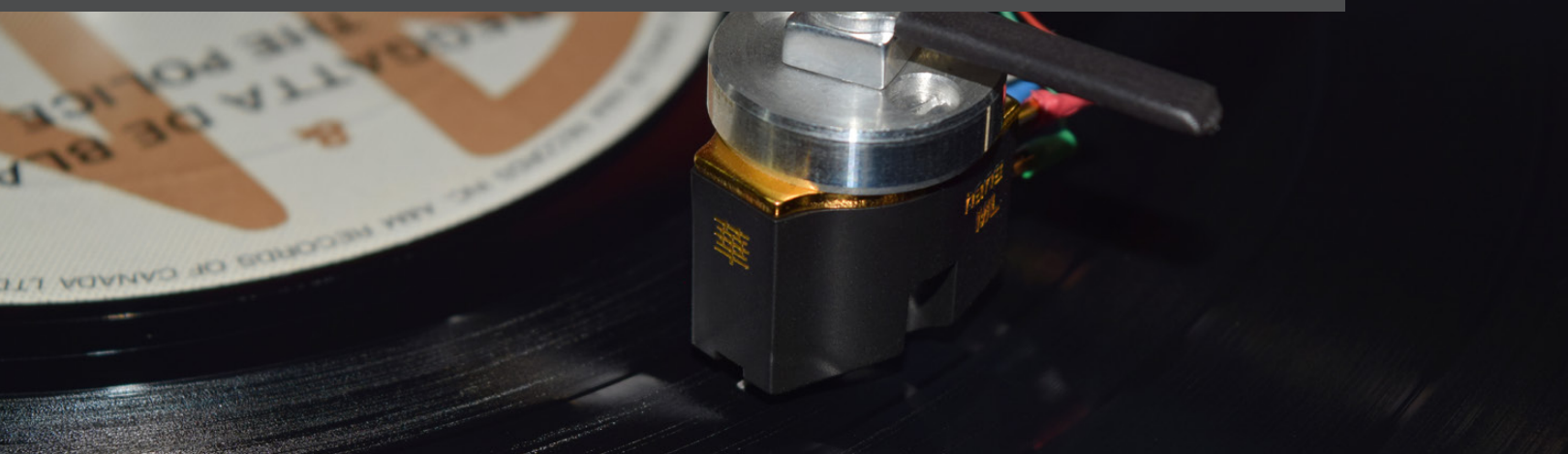
Breaking in a new cartridge reminds me of breaking in a new pair of shoes. Out of the box, the stiff, unfamiliar territory slowly softens and reveals a comfortable place. Fortunately, this brand new ML is more like slipping on some comfy kicks than unforgiving Doc Martin boots. Right from the first time the stylus is dropped, it reveals details and dynamics that are pleasantly unexpected in a new cartridge. The best part is that these aspects of the ML improve, with separation and texture getting noticeably better with every album played.

The Hana ML, installed on an Acoustic Solid Vintage Exclusive table and paired with a Gold Note PH10/PSU10 (+3 gain, 4700ohms, RIAA enhanced), is a smart looking cartridge. At first glance, the Hana ML presents a simple

Shannon Says...

Audio Musings from up North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff



design with distinctive gold logo, microline stylus and the gold-plated copper resonance plate that is integral with the cartridge body. The low output 0.4mV cartridge is set to a moderate VTF of 1.85g (recommended range 1-75-2.0g) and the ML begins her maiden voyage. From first play, throughout the break-in and beyond, the Hana ML earns its reputation for being a great sounding cartridge that doesn't cost you an arm and a leg, at \$1,200. Our publisher is quick to note for those wondering, that it is a substantial step up from the SL, which is a great value at \$750.

For this review, The Police's *Regatta de Blanc*, Dr. Dre's *Chronic*, Diana Krall's *Quiet Nights*, and War on Drugs' *A Deeper Understanding* are my go to selections. There is no muddiness to the vocals and instruments are crisp, clear and energetic, however a slight thinness to the midrange, bass prevails. Piano sections are a bit light and guitar solo presentation could be more robust. The details are compelling, but there is a feeling that there is potential for improvement in the overall sonic quality, separation and emotional connection to the music. Around the 25-30 hour mark, the first layers of separation and texture start to become noticeable. At first, these layers were subtle and shy,

but with each album played become warmer, bolder and full bodied. There is no mistaking when the change occurs. Instruments become more transparent and vocals begin to have that emotional appeal I love to feel. The bass becomes clean cut and punchy, the midrange fills in and the separation perceptible. These subtle improvements only get better and more characterized with every album.

At the 45-50 hour mark, the sound is 3-dimensional and life-like. This is most apparent with Stewart Copeland's unmistakable drumming in The Police's "This Bed's too Big Without You." In Diana Krall's "I've Grown Accustomed To His Face," the delicate piano loses its initial thin, tinkly sound when the cartridge was straight out of the box, gaining the warm, sultry, organic appeal this vocalist is known for. Hip hop bounce such as in Dr. Dre's "Nuthin' But a G Thang" is brought to life with lively, bumping bass. The emotional lyrical content of War on Drugs' "Pain" and accompanying instrumentation blooms after the 50 hour mark. This is where the Hana ML begins to reach its full potential, now routinely giving up the subtlety I was expecting. You might even want to double check your cartridges' set up between 50 and 100 hours as the suspension settles

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

Contact The Sound Organisation
today for your closest retailer.



rega

ProAc
perfectly natural

Quadraspire

THE
CHORD
COMPANY

BRISTON

kii
Face the Music

support@soundorg.com
(972) 234-0182
soundorg.com

The
sund
Organisation

Shannon Says...

Audio Musings from up North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff

in. Cartridges do tend to shift ever so slightly in the beginning.

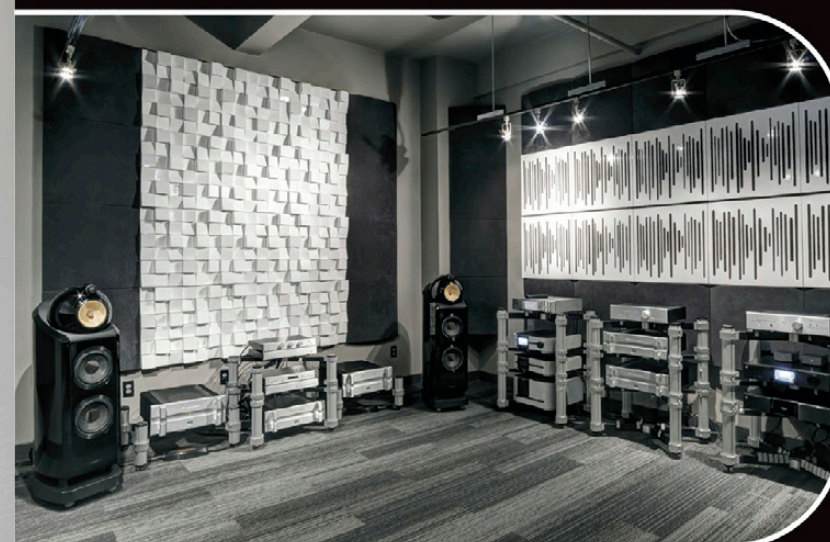
Transitioning through the break-in with the Hana ML allowed me to revisit some of my favorites in a refreshing way. For the price point, ease of installation and overall results, this is one compelling cartridge. Our publisher and I both agree that the Hana ML is well worth one of our **Exceptional Value Awards for 2019**.



50 BRANDS

8 DEMO ROOMS

1 LOCATION





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



In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Tea For The Tillerman
Cat Stevens

This has always been an influential and soothing record. But this isn't just any pressing of TFFT, it's an original Mobile Fidelity UHQR. That's old school audiophile vinyl!





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 is proud to represent EAT in the USA vanaltd.com

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.

Fielder's Choice Classic Billfold From \$125

fcgoods.com

If you're looking for something a little different when it comes to a wallet, Fielder's Choice goods produces some amazing products. Baseball fans will go bonkers over the homage to the game offered by the pockets, made from vintage baseball glove leather. You can click here to watch a short video on their construction.

Because FC scours the world for used vintage baseball gloves, then hand picking the part of the glove that their craftspeople deem to have the most appeal, no two of these wallets will ever be alike. That's a lot of cool for \$125.

The rest of the wallet is made from premium full-grade U.S. steerhide for maximum durability, and, the entire wallet is individually sewn. Even if you're not a major league baseball fan, anyone impressed with quality and workmanship will come away impressed with the final product.

The Classic Billfold feels great in your pocket, luxurious in your hand, and guaranteed to start a conversation, especially amongst your baseball loving friends.



audio research
HIGH DEFINITION®

REFERENCE 160 M VACUUM TUBE POWER AMPLIFIER



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.

audioresearch.com

MINE: it should be yours

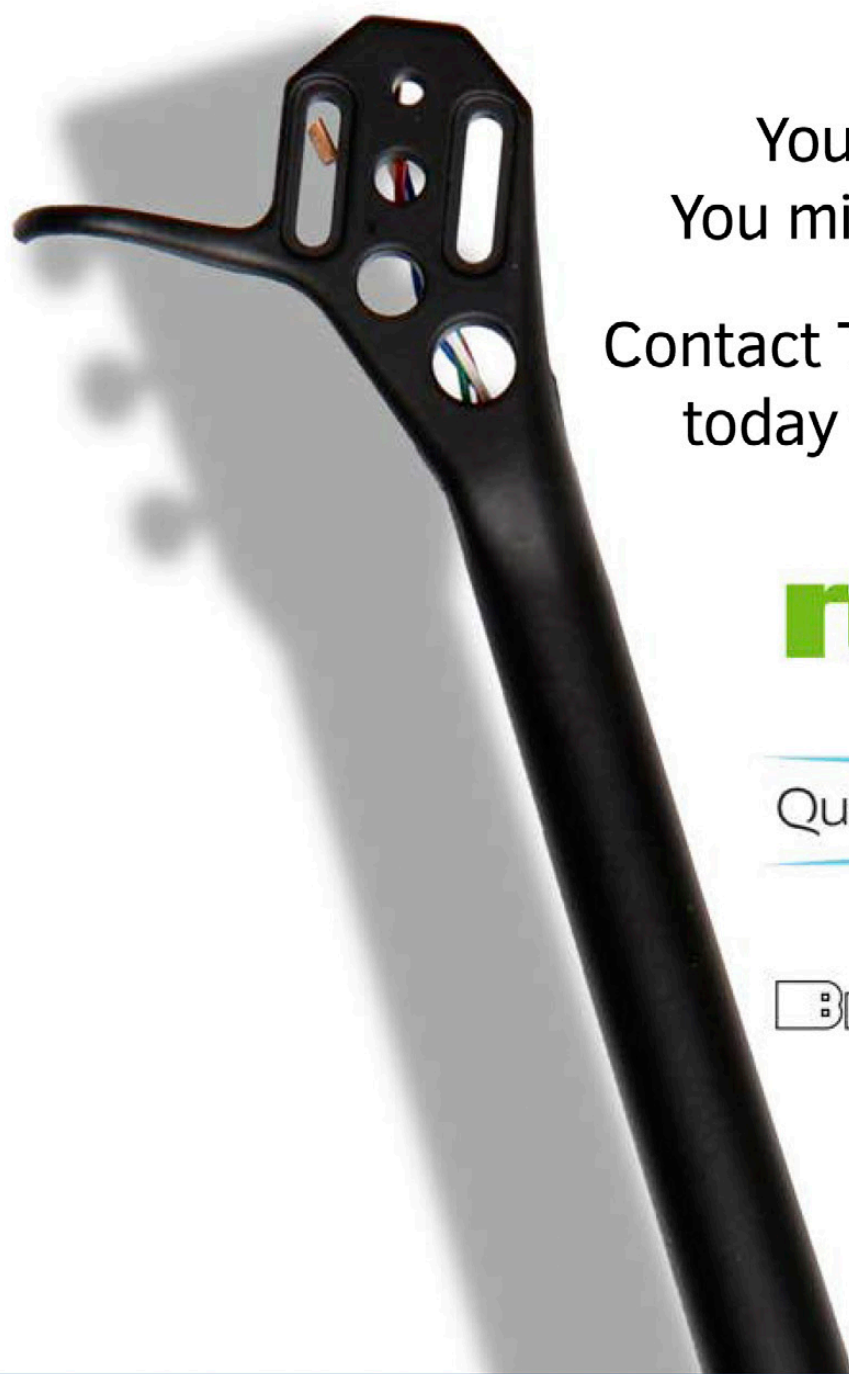
Archibald Suede HiTops

\$175

archibaldlondon.com

Who thought the classic high top sneaker, reimagined and re-engineered, would come from London? Off you go then. Also available in smooth white or black leather for \$220/pair. Don't forget to take a look at their interpretation of Italian driving loafers—fab!





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

Contact The Sound Organisation
today for your closest retailer.

rega

ProAc
perfectly natural

Quadraspire

THE
CHORD
COMPANY

BRYSTON

kii
Face the Music

support@soundorg.com
(972) 234-0182
soundorg.com

The
sund
Organisation

MINE: it should be yours

Weinermobile Airbnb

\$136/night

[airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com)

Who wouldn't want to spend at least a night in the Weinermobile? This enterprising couple from Evanston, Illinois has taken a genuine Oscar Meyer Weinermobile and made it into a place of lodging. Awesome. However the owners note that the Weinermobile is "not safe or suitable for children 0-12, or pets." Again, we warn you.



MINE: it should be yours

**Duke Snoop
Face Black Loafers**
\$300/pair
dukeanddexter.com

London clothier Duke and Dexter has teamed up with hip hop style master Snoop Dogg to create a line of loafers that will be limited to 1000 pairs total. As they say on their site, “this is the ultimate loafer, for a sleek, laid-back look.”

All loafers are individually numbered, hand made in England, and all D&D packaging is made from recyclable/ sustainable materials. So you can be down in style, with zero guilt.



Boulder
The Foundation of Your System



— EXPERIENCE THE NEW —
1110 PREAMPLIFIER & 1160 STEREO AMPLIFIER

Tone Imports

ACOUSTICPLAN

AUDITORIUM 23

EMT

J.C. VERDIER

LEBEN HI-FI

LINE MAGNETIC

MURASAKINO

RIVIERA LABS

SENTEC

SHINDO LABORATORY

SPEC CORPORATION

SUGDEN AUDIO

TELLURIUM Q

TONAPPARATE

TONEIMPORTS.COM



MINE: it should be yours

Herman Miller Mineral Aeron Chair

\$1,275 - \$1,575 (size and finish dependent)
dwr.com

At the tail end of the dot com boom, the Herman Miller Aeron chair established itself as a style icon, even though they only came in black back then. This radical new approach to task seating was developed by Don Chadwick and Bill Stumpf for Herman Miller, and today is the gold standard in office chairs. Well, maybe the mineral or black standard.

In typical Herman Miller fashion, the Aeron is now available in sizes A (small), B (medium), or C (large), so everyone can be comfortably cosseted while they work. Our publisher's wife has one in her office and loves it.

For those of you not initiated with Herman Miller's way of doing things, all of their task (office) chairs come with the Herman Miller Promise. Their chairs are warranted to be free of defect, even when used 24 hours a day for 12 straight years. Parts and labor. Considering that our publisher is still using a 30 year old Equa 2 chair that is nowhere near ready to give up the ghost, we are confident that the Aeron will be going strong for decades.

This is what you pay the big money for, at least up front. The investment looks better every year those cheap chairs bite the dust. Stylishness aside, once you sit in an Aeron, you'll never go back. We warned you.



MINE: it should be yours

Madson Classico Sunglasses
\$70
madsonofamerica.com

These ultra cool, black Classicos from Madson not only sport dark grey, polarized lenses, they feature the Santa Cruz Screaming Hand logo on the inside of their sleek frames. One of the easiest ways to bit a put of 80s skateboard culture into heavy rotation, right now.



Best Integrated Amplifier on the planet.. Period!



AUTHORIZED DEALERS

HOUSTON, TX

3mA AUDIO
1431 W. Alabama St. HOUSTON, TX 77006
(832) 530 - 4716 sales@3maudio.com

SAN CLEMENTE, CA

Cake Audio
<http://cakeaudio.com>
(949) 369 - 9262 ken@cakeaudio.com

LAS VEGAS, NV

Argutus AUDIO
7650 Dean Martin Dr. STE. 101 LAS VEGAS, NV 89139
(702) 888 - 3787 info@argutusaudio.com

NORTH AMERICAN DISTRIBUTOR

HIGH END By OZ LLC

11870 Santa Monica Boulevard 106672
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025
(424) 344 - 0011 oz@highendbyoz.com

DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOME

MINE: it should be yours



Wharfdale Linton Speaker Stands

\$299/pair
mofidistribution.com

There's no better match for your Wharfdale Linton speakers than the matching Linton stands. They keep tweeters at the optimum height, look stylish, and offer a bit of storage space for a few favorite albums underneath. What more could you ask?

Great as the Linton stands are for their own speakers, their 12 x 13-inch platform and 35 pound weight make them a great platform for those new JBL L-100 Classics, the Harbeth Compact 7, or the Graham LS5/8, as well as a few other vintage "large bookshelf" speakers. Finished in black metal and walnut or mahogany, they should be easy to integrate into your décor.

Should you want to use these with a non-Wharfdale speaker, the logos are easily removed, or you can just turn them around! It's nice to see a high mass/high quality option that is so cost effective.



MINE: it should be yours

Tag Heuer Monopoly Man F1 Watch
\$1,250
tagheuer.com/alec-monopoly

Street artist and Tag Heuer partner Alec Monopoly has done a few watches for the brand in the past, but their latest collaboration, the Formula 1 edition, with its modest price, is flying off the shelves and is becoming scarce. With its 41mm face and 200M water resistance, this watch will be right at home, wherever home might be.

This definitely isn't your Dad's Tag.



AUDOLICI From Portugal



A25M Integrated Amplifier



I50 "Swing"
Integrated Amplifier



AVP-01 PreAmplifier



harold@soundconsultant.com
608 208 3536 USA Distribution
www.soundconsultant.com



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.



www.goldnote.it

MINE: it should be yours

Volvo XC60 with Bowers & Wilkins premium sound

\$3,200 upcharge

volvocars.com

The good news is that if you go all the way to the \$70,000, 415 horsepower Polestar edition of the XC60 (which we highly suggest), the Bowers & Wilkins premium sound system is standard equipment. Any of the other models require a \$3,200 upcharge.

Our experience with B&Ws premium autosound in BMW has been nothing short of fantastic, and we expect the same from Volvo. A test car is in the works (hoping for a Polestar equipped car!!) and it will be put through its paces very soon. But if you love music, why would you not check this box?



MINE: it should be yours

RTM SM900 Blank Tape

\$35 - \$120/reel

recordingthemasters.com

Our resident tape expert, Tom Caselli tells us that the RTM tape is the only game going, if you want to make the highest quality mix tapes or make a high quality, first generation dub of some of your more expensive pre-recorded tape.

The SM 900 formulation is RTMs top tape, available in ¼, ½, 1 and 2-inch widths on 7 and 10 inch reels. Those with a cache of empty steel reels can also order their tape in cake pan format at a slightly reduced cost.

We've had equally excellent result with RTMs cassette blanks, so these are highly recommended. With tape making a strong comeback, we suggest stocking up while the getting is good! Based in France, RTM has a healthy number of dealers and distributors throughout the world, so you should be able to have your order filled in a timely manner.



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

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...



Talk Is Cheap
Keith Richards

Somehow the additional distortion of the cassette just seems right.



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

Ana
MIGHTY SOUND

A.4 Silver



A.3



A.4 Copper



made by Ana Mighty Sound

A.3 & A.4 SCULPTURE A PHONO CARTRIDGES

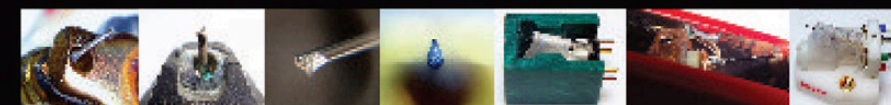
Already awarded by French press with a « Remarquable » award, the A.3 and A.4 phono cartridges display a minimum tracking of 90 micron @300Hz lateral that will allow you to get the full definition of your records. For this we have developed a specific damper and use only boron cantilevers with dedicated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



MINE: it should be yours

Sony α7R IV 35 mm full-frame camera \$3,799

sony.com/electronics

Sony is the world leader in mirrorless cameras, and now that most of the other manufacturers have come along with their own 43 megapixel models, Sony raises the bar again with the α7R IV, featuring a full-frame sensor with a whopping 61.0 megapixels. This is more than most *medium format* digital cameras. They don't stop there with a nearly 20 fps shooting speed and a standard ISO range of 100 – 32,000. Like with the current III model, this can be pushed down to ISO 50 and up to 128,000.

As with our favorite audio gear, SONY claims to have paid extra attention to the camera's body, working to eliminate vibration, and ultimately reducing camera-induced blur to an even lower level.

Though this camera looks like the α7R III it replaces, nearly everything internally has been changed. Considering the excellent luck we've been having with the III, we anxiously await adding one to the photo studio here at TONE.



Optimized or Compromised?



With the modular OCTAVE HP 700 preamplifier, there is no trade-off!

With the OCTAVE **HP 700** tube preamplifier there is no sacrifice of personal customization to enjoy perfect sound quality. Distinguished by its powerful and airy sound, the **HP 700** also boasts the incredible flexibility of eight optional high-end input modules, allowing perfect customization to any system without a hint of audible compromise.

OCTAVE
MODERN CLASSIC



Crafted from the highest grade components



Audiophile tone control option



Perfectly optimized optional input modules

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

Setlist:

Photo by Pamela Dorgay



Kat Galka. The Old Church. Portland, Oregon. August 3, 2019.

Waiting for upcoming opera star Kat Galka to take the stage to perform “Eve-Song,” Pam snapped a quick picture of Galka’s accompanist and the massive pipe organ in the back. (the sign in the lobby said NO pictures during the performance. After a set of sonnets, we were treated to a second half of jazz standards before the afternoon was over.

COVER STORY

Prima Luna EVO 400

\$4,699 each

primaluna-usa.com

Listening to the MoFi version of Santana's *Caravanserai*, in the context of a significant system, I'm amazed at how far PrimaLuna has come in almost two decades. They have gone quietly about their business of constant refinement, now offering the EVO 400 amp and pre that you see here. And at only (I know, *that word*) \$4,699 each for the power amplifiers, which can be turned into monoblocks at the flip of a switch, and \$4,499 for the matching preamplifier, these components both match or exceed the performance of stuff we've reviewed that costs more. Way more.

It's no secret to anyone following us for a while, my journey with PrimaLuna goes back to before TONE. It goes to ground zero. The first hifi review I wrote for *The Absolute Sound* was the PrimaLuna ProLogue One. That cool little integrated amp was where the brand began, and you could order it with a set of KT88s or EL34s, for \$999 or \$1,099. I bought the review sample, and other than a brief stay at a former staffers house, I've been playing music on it for going on 17 years without a hitch. How's that for reliability?

We've either owned or reviewed most of the PrimaLuna lineup, and where they had ProLogue, DiaLogue, and HP products, there are merely the new EVO products, with integrated amplifiers and separate preamplifiers in 100, 200, 300, and 400 configurations. As you might expect, as you move up the line, more performance is available, and more music is revealed.

A simple recipe for success

PrimaLuna does something that is almost deceptively simple; they stick to the plan. They came out swinging with that first ProLogue, with reviewers and audio enthusiasts all blown away by the quality of fit and finish, along with meticulous construction. They haven't cut corners anywhere, and they've improved the breed, with better parts and refinement of the circuitry that has won them tons of awards (and more importantly) happy customers worldwide.





A look underneath the chassis of both the EVO400 power and preamplifiers reveals beautiful point to point wiring like you'd see on a vintage McIntosh or Marantz amplifier, but honestly, it's executed even better. The execution is so tidy, it looks like the streets in Sim City. This is as near perfection as I've ever seen in anything at any price. Parts quality is equally impressive, with dual-mono construction throughout, (including the power supplies) and dual vacuum tube rectifiers in the preamplifier.

One of the most significant additions to the EVO400 pair is their balanced capability, so if you have a phono preamp or DAC that uses balanced outputs (like our Boulder, or the BAT that's in for review), you can now integrate balanced components into your system without buying adaptors. Those wanting the refinement of the EVO400, but not needing balanced inputs and outputs can go for the less expen-

sive (\$3,799) EVO 300. It's also a handy touch for tape lovers that the EVO preamplifiers now have a tape output.

Stunning sound

All of this would be for nothing if the EVOs didn't deliver the goods sonically. We have in-depth reviews of both components coming on the TONE website shortly, but suffice to say these are both world class components.

The T's and I's

Finally, because these are both tube components (or all three should you choose to use them as monoblocks), they are *heavy*. The EVO400 preamplifier weighs 52.8 pounds. That's more than most power amplifiers weigh! And the EVO400 power amplifiers weigh 68.2 pounds each. Save your back, get some help!

The simple remote allows you to switch the EVO400 amplifier between triode and ultralinear mode from the comfort of your listening chair.

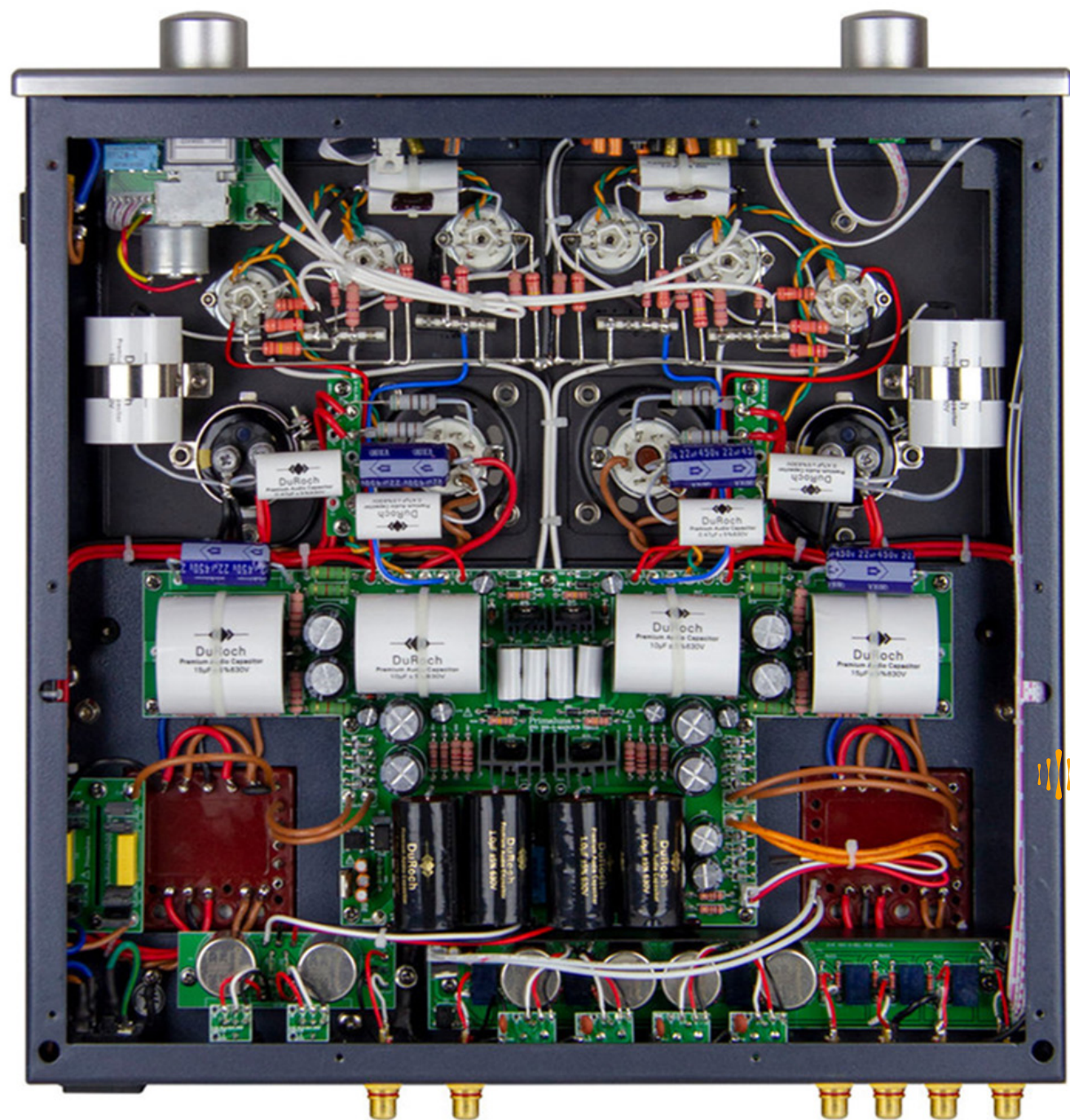
The EVO400 ships with 8 EL-34 tubes per amplifier. Where many tube amplifier manufacturers are telling you to re-tube after as little as 2000 hours, PrimaLuna amplifiers have always been incredibly easy on tubes, because they don't drive them as hard, and use more tubes per channel in their output stages. After 17 years, our ProLogue One still has the original driver tubes, and they even test within spec! PrimaLuna has chosen the 12AU7 tube in the driver and gain stages of both amp and pre, which makes tube replacement and tube rolling, for those who fancy experimenting with their sound, that much easier. And much, much less expensive.

For many of you, the 70 watts per channel that the EVO400 produces will be enough. Those who have inefficient speakers or really like to crank it up can go the monoblock route, and like some amplifiers that need to be sent to the factory for modification, this mode is only a flick of the switch away. As is the ability to use these amplifiers in triode mode. For those unfamiliar, triode mode is a little sweeter than standard operation, but the amplifier produces half as much power as a result.



The bottom line is that the adjustability gives you more options and flexibility is a wonderful thing in audio. No one gives you more sheer flexibility than PrimaLuna. The full reviews will be out shortly, as there is so much more to go over with these new EVO amplifiers. But if you've never heard PrimaLuna, these are well worth an audition. They are some of the finest vacuum tube components we've had the

pleasure of listening to. The EVO 400 amplifiers will be staying around as a permanent reference—and we've had the opportunity to use some much more expensive amplifiers. These are the best bang for the buck going in top-line tube amplifiers. Nothing offers more performance per dollar (and per pound, according to the PL website!!) than these.



The Prima Luna EVO400

Peripherals

Analog source

Grand Prix Audio Monaco/Tri Planar, Koetsu Jade Platinum, Luxman PD-717/Kiseki Purple Heart

Phono stage

Pass Labs XS Phono

Digital source

dCS Vivaldi One

Speakers

Sonus faber Stradivari

Cable

Cardas Clear, Tellurium Q Statement



The Line Magnetic LM-805IA Amplifier

\$4,995

linemagnetic.com

If you love tubes, chances are you've either dabbled into the realm of the single-ended triode (SET) or were at least curious. Because the single-ended triode amplifier is straightforward, with only one output device per channel, that is on for the entire duration of the signal, and there are none of the associated distortions that come from a push-pull amplifier. The result is a silky smoothness that's tough to come by any other way.

Audio enthusiasts that live and die by specs and measurements have already turned the page because the SET does not offer up the world's best measurements on the test bench. Because this is such an inefficient way to produce power, SET's typically don't make a ton of power either, limiting your options for speakers.

Thanks to the 48 watts per channel the LM805IA produces, a new world of speaker choices opens up. Some will argue that the ultra-low power 2A3 and 300B amplifiers deliver more musical nuance, it's lost on speakers with a sensitivity rating of 86 - 90db. Moreover, that's the strength of the LM805IA.





Mu-so 2nd Generation LUXURY DESIGN & MORE MUSIC POWER

Introducing the New Naim Mu-so 2nd Generation

Mu-so 2nd Generation evolves the iconic styling of its predecessor, but under its luxury aluminium casing are game-changing performance, feature and functionality upgrades. From high-resolution streaming to multiroom music to TV sound; you've never heard it so good from an all-in-one wireless system.



However, it only takes a few of your favorite tracks to be seduced by the calm, smooth, engaging sound of the LM805IA. While many 30-60 watt per channel push-pull amplifiers sporting EL34s or 6550/KT88s have a smoothness about them, most don't have the delicacy and freedom from grain that the LM805IA does. And they certainly don't have it at \$4,995.

In addition to great sound, the Line Magnetic amplifier is beautifully built, all the way down to the simple, yet effective remote control (featuring only volume and mute functions) which is finely machined. With Mundorf, caps, an ALPA volume control potentiometer and meticulous point to point wiring, the LM805IA channels tube excellence of yore.

These big 805 tubes take about 30 minutes to stabilize fully, but five minutes after initial power-up, the magic begins. There's something different going on here. If you've never experienced the SET thing, it's going to grab you. This amplifier may not have the sheer dynamic slam of an ARC REF or the big BAT amplifiers,

but it does have a subtlety that many other amplifiers do not.

The remaining tube compliment is relatively straightforward, with a pair of 6SN7s and a 6LS7 in the input section, with a pair of 300B tubes driving the 805s. This should make for several exciting evenings tube rolling, but that will be an investigation for some rainy Pacific Northwest weekends. While there's still top-down weather, we won't be going this in-depth.

The pair of snazzy, backlit, yellow meters on the front panel to indicate power output, are also used to set bias current for the massive 805 output tubes. Be very careful when adjusting bias, as these tubes get much hotter than your favorite pair of conventional output tubes. In addition to the input selector and volume control, there is a switch at the top to control the amount of negative feedback used. Turning this up from setting one to four, increases the amount of total negative feedback, which slows the amplifier down (ever so slightly) and warms the tonal balance even further. This al-

allows you to fine-tune the amplifiers' sound to your personal preference and speakers. We'll have more info in our upcoming review.

Around back, things are straightforward, with four sets of RCA inputs and speaker outputs for 4, 8, and 16-ohm speakers. The latter proved incredibly handy with the new 15-ohm Falcon LS3/5a speakers, making for an amazingly lovely and engaging sound.

So this is what will either pull you into the SET experience or leave you wanting more of an "Audiophile" sound. Deeper analysis is on the way, but this is by far the most versatile SET amplifier we've ever used.

Highly recommended.



TUK



BRACE YOURSELF.

kanto
kantoaudio.com



The Line Magnetic LM-805IA Amplifier

The Good:

Smooth, dreamy sound

Minimal tube compliment, simple circuit

Top shelf construction

805 output tubes have super high cool factor

Nearly 50 watts per channel



Not so much:

Slightly more background hum than your standard push/pull tube amp

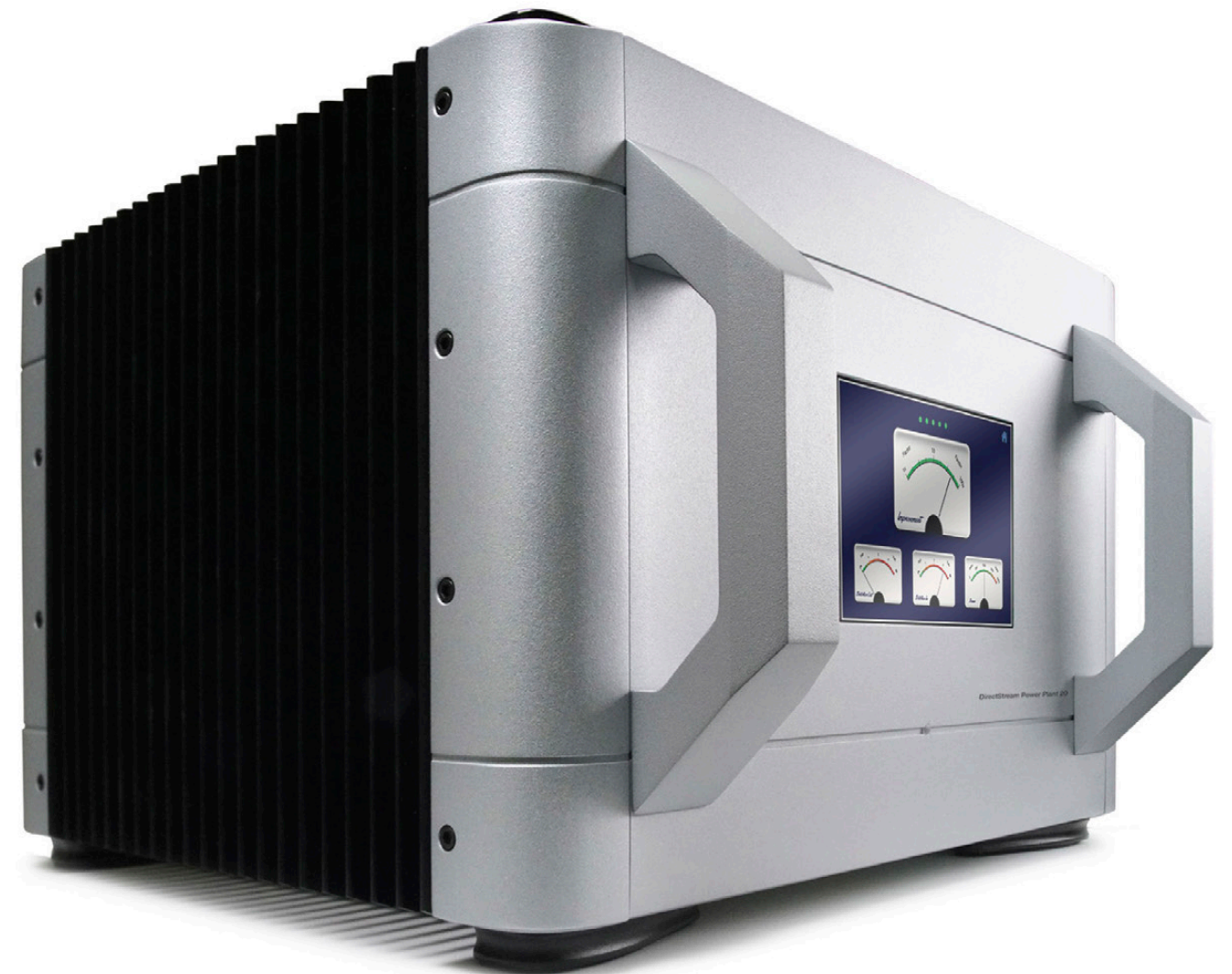
The Verdict:

We're going to stick our neck out and say that the LM805IA is one of the most fun tube amplifiers we've had the pleasure of using. Beautifully built, and priced right. You need one!



The PS Audio DirectStream Power Plant 20

It will take less time to hear the improvement it makes, than it will to read this headline.



"Nothing does a better job at supplying clean power to my reference gear than the P20."
—Jeff Dorgay, TONEAudio



www.psaudio.com 720.406.8946 Boulder, Colorado

The Audio Research REF 160M Monoblocks

\$30,000 pair

audioresearch.com

by Jeff Dorgay

Loyal fans of Audio Research know full well the influence of their Italian design team on the look and feel of their current Reference line. ARC finally has dashing good looks to go with their state of the art sound, and this image makeover began with the GS series a few years ago.

The current REF 160M (for monoblock) amplifiers go further in product and aesthetic design, and you need to look no further than the commanding, yet transparent output meter that takes up nearly the entire front panel. Backlit for even more drama, these meters let you view an approximate indication of power output while seeing the glowing tubes within. They call it the Ghost Meter™, and it's a stunning combination of art and technology, to be sure. What's missing, is settings for output tube bias adjustment, as the REF 160Ms no longer require you to manage this task manually.





Long vehemently opposed to auto-bias, ARC took this step with their Foundation series and the VT80 a while back. Now scaled up and adapted to REF duty, worrying about output tube biasing is a thing of the past. And it works brilliantly. While the REF 160Ms arrive with four KT150s per chassis, the auto-bias circuitry is designed to work with 6550, KT88 and KT120 tubes, should you decide on a slightly different voicing for your amplifiers. ARC painstakingly tests, sorts, and burns in their tubes, and having spent more than one trip to the factory to verify this, it's worth sticking with their suggestions.

Another welcome change that will open up the REF 160Ms up to more users is their ability to be used with single-ended preamplifiers (those with RCA outputs) instead of only in balanced operation as in the last few generations of REF amplifiers. This is accomplished by the mere flip of a switch on the rear panel.

Sound is king

All this is excellent stuff, and while these amplifiers are by far the most user-friendly REF amps, they are the most exciting. Getting tube amplifiers to produce prodigious, powerful, yet defined bass is always an engineering triumph, the REF 160s far exceed past models in this regard. These are tube monoblocks that you might even suspect had some big heat sinks and output transistors, yet they retain that airy, magical quality that tubes always deliver.

Having been an ARC fan and customer for over 30 years, I feel that these amplifiers deliver the best musical balance of past efforts. As is typical with ARC, these amplifiers will need 400 - 600 hours to fully open up, once they do, the result is transcendent. The balance of musicality, speed, and tonal saturation is impossible to ignore. These amplifiers feel neither tube nor solid-state

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



—they just sound like music. Highly resolving and precise without being forward or harsh.

Monoblocks tend to produce a bigger, deeper sound field because of the physical and electrical separation, but the 160Ms again, go beyond what ARC has delivered in the past. Every three-dimensional cliché you can think of applies, yet is deserved.

Final talking points

Fortunately, the 160Ms don't weigh as much as the larger models in the REF range. At only 56 pounds each, mere mortals can lift them and move them into place. They are weighted a bit towards the back of the chassis because that's where the power and output transformers are. Enlisting the help of a friend is still a good idea. If there is one complaint, rear handles would be nice.

Though these amplifiers are designated "160M," they are rated at 140 watts per channel, which should be enough for nearly everyone. Those requiring still more power can step up to the REF 250 or the REF 750, but be prepared to be buying output tubes in bulk.

The familiar fan is still there to keep things cool, but again, ARC has dropped the noise floor on this component significantly. Where past ARC designs always made a bit of fan noise during the quiet passages, the REF 160Ms are genuinely silent.

Please click [here](#) for our full review. 🎵



The ARC REF 160M

The Good:

More power than 99% of you will ever need

Breathtakingly beautiful, yeah those meters

Neutrality rededfined



Not so much:

Beautiful as those meters are they are dust magnets. Keep the cats away

\$30k/pair means these are not for everyone



The Verdict:

Audio Research's best effort yet. After 40—plus years, they continue to improve the breed.

The Conrad-Johnson ART 27A

\$22,000

conradjohnson.com

At first look, the new ART-27A from Conrad-Johnson resembles their past designs: a slender gold chassis, transformers at the back and a few driver tubes and power tubes to go with. A pair of KT88s per channel, which is an interesting choice, as C-J has always gone either the 6550, KT120 or these days the KT-150. President and head designer Jeff Fischel explains that the output stage is built around a very special (and costly) output transformer from Lundahl, that is optimized for a triode output stage.

But then, closer inspection reveals a chassis devoid of the usual phillips screws that usually adorn a C-J product. Everything that is customarily painted is anodized and polished, and around back are a pair of pure copper speaker binding posts—the best ones that Cardas Audio makes. The rest of the details are inside—every single component part has been chosen for optimum fidelity.

This level to detail and implementation does not come by inexpensively. The ART 27A retails for \$22,000. By comparison, the 140 watt per channel ART 150 is only \$19,000. But this amplifier has a level of resolution and sheer sonic quality that even the mighty ART 150 does not, so if you have reasonably efficient speakers and can get away with 38 watts per channel. The ART 27A is the best of the best.

We have a full review in process that will go into much greater depth on all the tech bits that make the ART 27A so unique but suffice to say the sound is incredible, and on one level does not sound like past C-J designs as even the ART150 and ART300 do. Fischel goes on to discuss the “compromises that usually have to be made in higher-powered amplifiers, that do not need to be made here.”

The most significant part of the ART 27As design is its output stage powered by an independent, fully regulated power supply for each channel. Many tube amplifiers have regulated power supplies for the driver and inverter stages, but the ART 27A has a fully regulated high voltage power supply for each output channel—a big part of its incredibly lifelike sound.



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

[dynaudio.com](https://www.dynaudio.com)



The Conrad-Johnson ART 27A

As with all ART amplifiers, there will only be 250 of these produced. Every ART product we have used has been unique and a cut above the usual excellent job they do at C-J, but the ART 27A goes beyond. Well beyond.

This amplifier delivers 36 of the most glorious, pure Class-A watts per channel we've had the opportunity to experience. It is SET-like in delicacy, yet delivers up a lot more power, and thanks to the circuit design and implementation, incredibly articulate bass as well. Not what one expects typically from even the most exceptional vacuum tube designs. Bass always seems to be the final frontier, yet the ART 27A does an outrageously good job at providing extension and dimension to the lowest registers.

In the end, this is a paradox that only you can pass judgment on. Many will stop at the price and freak out. However, if you've got a high-quality pair of main speakers and are looking more for sonic quality than just a lot of power, the ART 27A is a real jewel in the right hands. 🎵

The Good:

Incredibly rich, detailed, grain-free sound

Painstaking attention to electronic and mechanical details

Limited edition, so you won't see em everywhere

Not so much:

Still only gold as a front panel choice

Top end of the price scale for 36 watts per channel

The Verdict:

The C-J ART27A is one of the world's finest 36 watt per channel amplifiers, but one of the most expensive as well. Though it has a limited audience, it will be a grail-level product for those that make the choice.

The VAC Sigma 170i Integrated Amplifier: It's all you need.

*\$10,000 (base amplifier). Balanced input (\$800 addl.).
Phono Stage (\$1,500 addl.). Glass and Steel tube cage (\$1,000 addl.)*

vac-amplifiers.com

Listening to the technical excellence of the recent Gentle Giant albums remixed by Steven Wilson, it's easy to hear the audible excellence in the VAC Sigma 170i integrated amplifier. This \$10,000 (\$11,500 with on-board MM/MC phono stage) masterpiece delivers a level of refinement that can't be achieved with separate tube components, especially when you consider the cost of additional mains cables and interconnects. It's the perfect choice for anyone wanting a vacuum tube-based system with a minimal footprint. But watch your back when you pick it up, it weighs about 80 pounds.

With integrated amplifiers making such a strong showing, it's no wonder the new Sigma 170i from VAC is such a home run. Producing 85 watts per channel, it's got more than enough juice to drive nearly any speaker as loud as you might need. Using it in my living room system with the Focal Stella Utopia EM speakers (94db/1watt) is stunning. Mated to these 120k/pair flagship speakers, the Sigma 170i is right at home, with enough power, detail, and dynamics to convince you this amplifier is worth much, much more.

It's hard to believe that this is one of VAC's entry-level products. Most manufacturers would be proud to have this level of performance in their flagship products. VAC's founder, Kevin Hayes torments me, promising even more performance with his bigger products, but I can't resist. We purchase the 170i for our permanent collection well before this review is finished. That's the highest compliment I can pay him.





And this is all before dropping a record on the turntable. Yes, the Sigma 170i features an on-board MM/MC phono section that is on par with a lot of outboard phono preamplifiers in the \$3,000-\$4,000 range. Considering it is a \$1,500 upgrade from the standard \$10,000 170i, this is a steal if you are a vinyl enthusiast. A simple, but high-quality circuit and minimal loading options (100, 200 and 470 ohms, which will work with the majority of the MC carts available) and no need for extra casework makes this an incredible value proposition. If you've got a turntable/arm/cartridge in the \$1,500 - \$15,000 range, this is all the phono-stage you need!

That being said, a vintage Technics SL-1200 with a NOS Audio Technica moving magnet cartridge, a VPI Classic ONE with Hana ML cartridge, and an AVID Volvere SP with Lyra Delos all proved excellent, and the 170i has more than enough drive and resolution to clearly tell the difference between all three. So, even if you're a budding analog enthusiast, this is clearly an amplifier that you can grow with,

should you decide to go down the turntable/cartridge upgrade path.

The remote is simple, merely having volume up/down and mute on/off buttons. In the day of increasingly complex (with ever-shrinking buttons) remote controls, this is a relief. There are two other options for the 170i; making one of the line-level inputs balanced (\$800) and a steel/glass tube cage. Those with kids and pets might have to have the latter, but the 170i looks so great without it, this one would be a tough sell. Seeing the tubes in all their glory is one of the most fun reasons to own a tube amplifier, right? Build quality is tip-top, with substantial yet straightforward aesthetics. The enclosure's finish is extremely well done, and the massive power and output transformers round out the picture.

In the end, the sound of the 170i is enthralling. With a tonal balance ever so slightly on the warm side, combined with a high level of resolution, this amplifier makes all-day listening a breeze. You will never grow tired of this



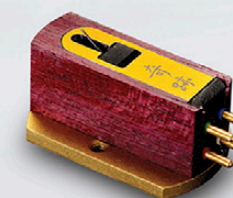
PrimaLuna HP
The World's Finest Tube Integrated \$4399



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



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

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



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



Upgrade to Focal Headphones.
We pay top dollar on all trades.
Exciting bundles available!



FOCAL
All Models in Stock

View a huge selection of used items on our website! We take trade-ins!

IN STOCK: ACOUSTIC ZEN, ANTHEM, AUDEZE, AUDIOQUEST, AURALIC, BALANCED AUDIO TECHNOLOGY, BELLARI, BENZ MICRO, BLUESOUND, BOWERS & WILKINS, BURSON AUDIO, CARY, CLEARAUDIO, DH LABS, DR. FEICKERT ANALOGUE, DYNAVECTOR, EAT, FOCAL, GRAHAM, HANA, HIFIMAN, ISOACOUSTICS, ISOTEK, JL AUDIO, KEF, KIMBER KABLE, KISEKI, KLIPSCH, KOETSU, LEHMANN, LUMIN, LYRA, MANLEY, MARTIN LOGAN, MONITOR AUDIO, MUSICAL FIDELITY, MUSIC HALL, MYSTÈRE, MYTEK, NAD, NOLA, NORDOST, ORTOFON, PANGA, PEACHTREE, PRIMALUNA, PRO-JECT, PS AUDIO, REGA, REL, ROTEL, SHELTER, SONUS FABER, SOUNDSMITH, SUMIKO, SUTHERLAND, TANNOY, VPI, VINCENT, AND ZESTO AUDIO

909-931-9686
upscaleaudio.com



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



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

one—it's resolving enough to draw you in, but smooth enough to be completely fatigue-free.

This amplifier has a lot of dynamic drive and bass grip and can drive 4-16 ohm speakers with ease. A wide range of speakers at our disposal all worked well with the 170i—starting with the new (15-ohm) Falcon LS3/5As, the JBL L-100 Classics (as well as a vintage NOS pair), the Focal Kanta 3s, and Manger 5s, we finished our listening sessions with the \$120k/pair Focal Stella Utopia Ems. An excellent time was had with all.

The VAC Sigma 170i Integrated Amplifier

The Good:

- Classic vacuum tube aesthetic
- Simple remote and operation
- Incredibly refined sound

Not so much:

Nope

The Verdict:

We bought the review sample.
That says it all.

85 watts per channel with two KT88s per channel should be more than enough for any speaker in the 86db/1-watt range and up. Thanks to VAC's auto-bias system, you won't have to spend any time adjusting output tube bias, making the thought of tubes that much more user-friendly. The rest of the tube compliment is five 12AU7s and a 12AX7 in the amplifier, with the phono stage using an additional pair of 12AX7s. This should make tube rolling and replacement easy and not terribly expensive.



Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Tone Playlists are sponsored by...

qobuz

Harry James—Cherokee

Pat Metheny/Lyle Mays—It's For You

Heart—Dog And Butterfly

Dire Straits—Telegraph Road

Rush—Subdivisions

Porcupine Tree—Anesthetize

Circle Jerks—Mrs Jones

Talking Heads—This Must Be
The Place

Go West—We Close Our Eyes

Tears For Fears—Year Of The Knife



Reader Darin Kong checks in with a mix of 80s and 90s tunes that completely fit the California road trip vibe.

audio physic

No loss of fine detail

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

The BAT VK5-56SE: A different take

balanced.com

\$8,495

Tube amplifiers all have a different tonal balance, a different flavor if you will. Some of this is due to circuit topology, some to tube choices. An exciting mix of art and science. Balanced Audio Technology has always based their tube designs on the massive, Russian 6C33 triode. The result is a very different sound than most typical pentode designs, usually dependent on the 6550/KT88/120/150 topology.

Because triode circuits by design usually have lower output impedance than pentode circuits, resulting in a higher damping factor, they have the potential of having better control over the woofer cone. This results in tighter, more powerful bass. BAT amplifiers have always been known for their fantastic bass drive, and the new VK56SE continues that path.



For those wondering the difference between the \$4,995 VK-56 and the \$8,495 SE model reviewed here, it is, on one hand, substantial, yet those needing to join the game at standard VK-56 level have an upgrade path. You can return your amplifier to BAT to be converted to either an SE model or monoblock amplifier, producing 110 watts per channel, instead of the stereo model's 55.

Both amplifiers are fully balanced, yet where the standard model uses a simpler input stage consisting of four 6SN7 tubes, the SE uses a pair of 6H30s and a pair of 6SN7s. The SE model also has a more sophisticated power supply. While we haven't heard the standard VK-56, our experience with past BAT amplifiers has shown them to always provide a linear upgrade path and a fairly substantial upgrade between standard and SE models. The standard models always deliver an incredible value, and the SE models, more refinement, building on the original design. We expect the VK-56/SE models to be the same.

One of the most delightful touches that has absolutely nothing to do with the sound quality is the addition of the arched rear handle to the back of the chassis. Though the VK-56SE probably won't break your back at just under 60 pounds, it has a weight bias towards the rear of the chassis, as nearly every tube power amplifier does. The handle makes this amplifier so much easier for one person to manage, and is a nice touch aesthetically. Win-win.

Speaking of bias, that's something you won't have to deal with here. All BAT amplifiers feature their own, patented approach to auto-bias, and it works brilliantly. Though slightly opti-



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



ATLAS
the performance connection
atlas-cables.com

Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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

mistic, BATs website says that this allows their amplifiers to “sound wonderful during the first few minutes of listening.” While the VK-56SE does indeed sound fantastic, it still takes a good 30 minutes to settle into its most enveloping nature. That’s just tubes.

As with other BAT amplifiers, the VK-56SE is fully balanced and only has balanced inputs. While some balanced power amplifiers will not deliver top performance with balanced to RCA adaptors (and some will not even provide full power when connected this way) the VK-56SE

will work with single-ended RCA cables using the proper adaptors.

The sound is big, beautiful, and luxurious. There’s just something different about a triode amplifier and the BAT amplifiers in particular that is unique. A high level of tonal saturation and wide, yet controlled dynamic swings makes for an almost larger than life presentation. However, this majesty is combined with delicacy, making for an amplifier that sounds like no other. 🎵

The BAT VK-56SE

The Good:

Big, bold sound

Auto bias means ease of use

That handle on the back panel is fab

Easily updated to monoblocks, very versatile

Not so much:

All tubes, so allow for space on your rack

The Verdict:

One of the most engaging tube amplifiers we’ve ever used. A TONE favorite.



The Octave V110SE:

German precision from start to finish

octave.de

\$8,495

Andreas Hoffman makes some of the world's finest tube amplifiers. They are robustly built and sound fantastic, bridging the gap between tube and solid state, entering a zone that is merely music. We have had this experience with every Octave amplifier we've ever used.

The V110SE with its accompanying Super Black Box lights up the Focal Stella Utopia EM speakers in a way that none of our other reference or vacuum tube powered review units have been able to accomplish, gripping these massive speakers with a combination of explosive dynamics and high resolution. Even more so with the Super Black Box in place. The V110SE has an MSRP of \$8,500 and the Super Black Box an additional \$1,900.

Tracking through the latest Billie Eilish album, *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* is particularly haunting, and full of deep, deep bass information. This record makes most tube amplifiers (for that matter most amplifiers, period) lose control, yet the V110SE is superb in

this sense. In addition, the atmospheric quality of this record, much like any of the Julee Cruise, or Anja Garbarek records, is not only preserved, but rendered in a massive, and spacious way. This is no small feat either.

Choice of voice

Vacuum tube amplifiers are very special in the sense that they all have a different, and usually more pronounced voice than solid state amplifiers. Vintage tube amplifiers gravitate towards a mellower, more romantic presentation with a somewhat over the top degree of tonal saturation. That's the tube magic that so many talk about, and the best part of that presentation (think 60s Dynaco, McIntosh, Marantz) is that none of your music will ever sound bad with an amplifier like this, but none of it will ever sound spectacular. That's the tradeoff.

Modern tube amplifiers lean more towards a more neutral overall tonal balance, though there is still quite a bit of range in their differing sonic presentations. Octave amplifiers have always been open, airy, and possessing the ability to paint a huge sonic landscape in front of your listening position. This big, deep, and dynamic presentation has always been their calling card.



The V110SE keeps the Octave reputation intact. While this amplifier has precious little “sound” of its own, it has a delicacy that nearly always requires vacuum tubes to achieve, yet offers a level of punch that few vacuum tube amplifiers can muster. Quite the combination.

Quality throughout

Some tube amplifiers have better reputations for reliability than others, but Octave products are top tier. Everything is overbuilt, and Mr. Hoffman’s amplifiers are as close to fool proof as can be.

Yet there is more underneath the chassis. Octave talks about their amplifiers being unaffected by speaker load, and again in our experience, their amplifiers have come closer to this ideal than any other tube amplifier we have auditioned. They call it ODT (Octave Dynamic Technologies) and to simplify, much of this is based around a power supply with great capacity, combined with improved output transformers and the ability to fine tune the amplifier to your needs.

First, you can change the output power optimization from high (110 wpc) to low (70wpc) and then change damping factor and gain from low (34db) to medium (37db) to high (38db). Octave mentions that the high setting is better for a pair of ESLs, which we verified with our Quad 2812s and Acoustat 1+1s, medium better for traditional cone speakers and low with horn speakers—also verified with the Pure Audio Project horns.

One of the toughest parts of using a vacuum tube power amplifier is the guessing game you play with the speaker to amplifier match. Thankfully, Octave makes this a thing of the past.



Finally, the sound

These technological improvements make for an amplifier that is amazingly quiet for an all tube design. The V110 SE also keeps its composure at high volume, while providing thoroughly engaging sound at low volumes. The additional power supply reserve of the Super Black Box, only emphasizes this even more. The Super Black Box adds \$2,500 to the MSRP and is a nice upgrade once you get used to your V110SE, and gives you an easy upgrade path. 🎵

The Octave V110SE



The Good:

Super neutral presentation

The airiness and spatial perspective you expect from tubes

Top build quality

Upgrade path and speaker load flexibility like no other

Not so much:

It is a tube amp, so you will need to provide for adequate ventilation, along with pet and kid proofing

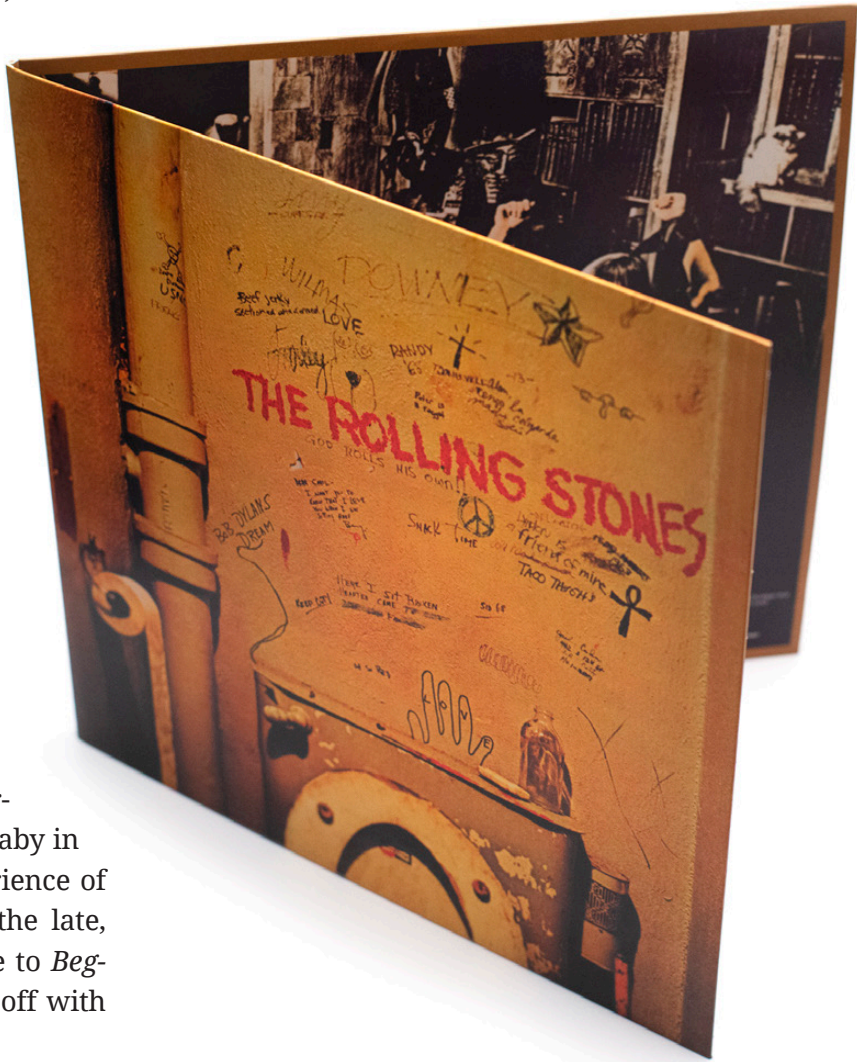
The Verdict:

If the idea of a tube amplifier that isn’t overly tubey sounding appeals to you, this is the best thing going.

Can't get it out of my Head By Emily Duff

I get asked to do way too many tribute shows. I always say no. It's my hard and fast rule; I am a songwriter after all. I write my own songs and sing them, or I write the songs other people are cutting & singing. Please don't ask me to perform anyone else's songs. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I'm a snob. I love a great show and I worship great songs. I dig them so much, I became a songwriter. I have my heroes and sheroes and a growing list of writers I look up to with awe and admiration. My lack of participation in the recent trend of Extravaganza Tribute Concerts is much more "basic" than that. I have a really hard time remembering other people's lyrics and that leads to panic and anxiety, two emotions I do not appreciate, associated with "my JOY." This column is inspired by the fact that recently I broke my rule and said yes to THREE tribute shows which lead me down this path of records from writers and artists that I just cannot get out of my head, truth be told and panic aside, I am very glad I did.

The Rolling Stones need absolutely no help from me to market or advertise their catalogue of hits. God Bless them all on this never-ending tour and may Mick's newly improved heart go on beating forever! Their fans have a rabid intensity that build communities connecting all over the world, bringing people together for all the right reasons. I found myself inside that Holy and Faithful Circle of Shedoobie recently, while performing "Prodigal Son" at Coney Island Baby in the East Village, NYC. A wonderful experience of biblical, bluesy story-telling written by the late, great Rev. Robert Watkins. This leads me to *Beggars Banquet*. Its 10-song track list kicks off with



the percussive "Sympathy for the Devil" and closes with "Salt of the Earth." Everything in between has soul, purpose and is surprisingly organic and rootsy with just enough tpae hiss to satisfy my lust for a Lo-Fi Rock & Roll "vibe." "Factory Girl" is a standout track for me in that it epitomizes the English Folk sound with all it's tabla-rific blend of eclectic psychedelic open tuning Celt-Rock. This record might have been recorded in 1968 but it stands tall in my list of records that transcend the test of time - so raise your glass and "let's drink to the hard-working people...." for this music is truly the "Salt of the Earth."



FOCAL
LISTEN BEYOND

THE POWER OF STYLE

Focal showcases the beauty of wood on its loudspeakers

THE DELICACY OF OAK FOR SOPRA

The smooth, uninterrupted lines of Sopra No 2 and No 3 are enhanced by the creamy combination of an ivory front with light oak sides and the rich pairing of a chocolate front with dark oak sides. The naturally light wood shines under Focal's signature high-gloss finish.

THE SPLENDOR OF WALNUT FOR UTOPIA

For the prestigious Utopia III Evo, Focal acquired a batch of exquisite French walnut cultivated from a century-old tree in the Ain region. Sealed beneath a satin finish, this brown-veined tawny yellow wood exhibits stunning nuances of color and character amongst its plentiful knots and irregular grain. Scala Utopia Evo and Maestro Utopia Evo are both available in an elegant light finish or an extravagant dark finish.

MADE IN
FRANCE

By Emily Duff Can't get it out of my Head

Leon Russell wore many hats, literally and figuratively. His appearance alone, long hair everywhere, bell bottom blues and skinny-boy-sexy hunched over a piano, was always a strong magnet for this hippie lovin' flower child. From the minute I set eyes on Leon playing "Song for You" on Don Kurshner's Rock Concert, I was hooked on his writing and his personal style. When I was asked to perform "Groupie" (*aka Superstar*) at a recent Show at City Winery, NYC, I was both flattered and surprised. The most popular version of this song was the Carpenters' version and I did not fall into that musical easy-listening genre.

The version I knew best was from Bette Midler's 1972 masterpiece, *The Divine Miss M*. My mother played this record endlessly and I absorbed it like body lotion, hydrating my thirst for great songwriting and deft vocal interpretation by a singer that broke all the rules, elevating the piano bar, cabaret, bath-house show to a level that drag queens will thank her for till their wigs fall off! I found my LP copy, listened to "Superstar," and found that I couldn't stop listening to all the tracks. From the moaning and plaintive, "Do You Wanna Dance," all the way thru to the Andrew Sisters' *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*, Bette shows us that if a song is great.... you can genre hop, skip and jump it to a higher ground. The coincidence here is that I will be singing "Hello in There" for a John Prine Tribute in No-

vember and that song is on here too. Bette sure knew how to pick 'em!

But that version of *Superstar* was not the version I was asked to learn. The version I was supposed to "learn" was the original version by Delaney & Bonnie from *D&B Together*. Bonnie Bramlett. Now that's more my style. An artist who recorded in Muscle Shoals, AL, like myself, and who gravitated toward blues, gospel rock & country soul. Now you're talking!! This record stirs my soul in ways that feel like being surrounded in sonic



THE COMPONENTS OF EXCELLENCE: LASTING VALUE

Before you buy a new audio component, consider why some people would rather own a used McIntosh than a new anything else.



Made in the USA

"The best source I know 'for all things McIntosh' is Audio Classics in Vestal, New York. They do a lot of restoration work on McIntosh products and are an authorized McIntosh dealer and service center."

Jim Hannon, VP/Group Publisher & Senior Writer, *The Absolute Sound*

Timeless design. Legendary construction.
Sound investment.

www.AUDIOCLASSICS.com
AUDIO • HOME THEATER • STEREO

3501 Vestal Road • Vestal, New York 13850 Call 607-766-3501 or 800-321-2834

Hours: Monday–Friday 8-5:30 EST – Other Hours by Appointment



TOTEM
Discover yours

TORRENT
TECHNOLOGY

The new V2 woofers are a dramatic advancement of our famous 7" Torrent driver. Evolved and meticulously developed over the past 10 years, exclusively by Totem, they are at the very top of the world's dynamic speaker pyramid.

The New Element Metal V2 ... A state-of-the-art musical experience!

Can't get it out of my Head By Emily Duff

amniotic fluid for me. Nourishing, protected and loved. The performances, the tunes, the production, it all hangs together like a finely tailored suit of birth-day-clothes. "I Know How it Feels to be Lonely" gets my vote for BEST SONG on the record because it touches me in a way that a woman deserves to be touched by a song.... I will let you just think about that for a while so we can jump tracks to "Groupie (Superstar)," which was co-written by Bonnie Bramlett and is the perfect example of a Story Song. Emotion for days with the ability to insert your very own life and situation into the track. As a matter of fact, all the songs I have been talking about are Story Songs which brings me to my final choice of records for this column....

A recent release from John Paul White on Single Lock Records, called *The Hurting Kind*. I promised myself I wouldn't even mention *The Civil Wars* (Oooops!) cause John Paul has moved well passed this and has proven himself a fully formed solo artist and brilliant songwriter. This record has stunning moments of "feels like Orbison," Lennon & McCartney, and many other touchstones, while still retaining its own voice and integrity. Beautiful performances from all musicians, especially string arrangements and production that respects the songs while lifting them to

a place where you feel the studio doing what it's supposed to do. It's always refreshing to hear that on a record. Players who can play, writers who can write and singers who can sing, inhabiting a song so deeply that you find your way inside of it as a listener, blurring the lines of where the listening stops and how you find yourself actually "living the lyric." Thank you for inviting us in, JP. It's this generosity that breeds true fans, and I for one, certainly appreciate that Southern hospitality. This record reads like Faulkner and sounds like Summer Rain. Brand new & classic straight out the gate! BUY IT.



A HIGH FIDELITY <STEREO> RECORDING



JOHN PAUL WHITE **THE HURTING KIND**



Setlist:

Photo by Pamela Dorgay



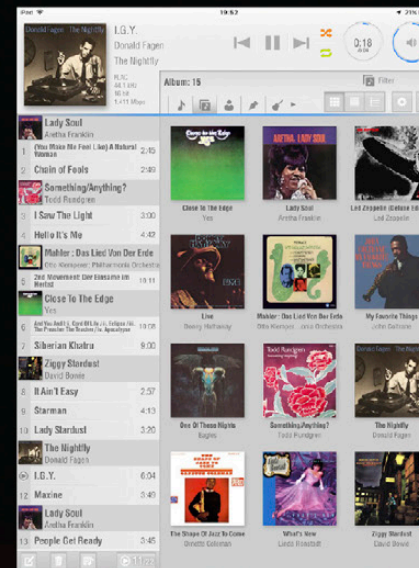
Beck. Sunlight Supply Amphitheater. Vancouver, Washinton. July 11, 2019.

With Spoon and Cage the Elephant as opening acts, Beck had to be on his game—and he was, hitting the stage running hard, opening with a full on psychedelic light show and a rousing rendition of “Loser.” And it just got better from there. He left to the confetti shower you see here.

- 1 **Loser**
- 2 **The New Pollution**
- 3 **Que Onda Guero**
- 4 **Girl**
- 5 **Black Tamrourine**
- 6 **Mixed Bizness**
- 7 **Think I'm in Love**
- 8 **Lost Cause**
- 9 **Blue Moon**
- 10 **Saw Lightning**
- 11 **Wow**
- 12 **Devils Haircut**
- 13 **Up All Night**
- 14 **Where it's At**
- 15 **One Foot in The Grave**

ESOTERIC

2018
**TP
OY**
TONE Product of the Year



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>



Quality Meets Quantity

“THE REL 212/SE DOES **DEEP** AND IT DOES **LOUD**. ODDLY, IT ALSO DOES **SUBTLE** AND IT DOES **BRASH**, TOO. AND SOMETIMES IT MANAGES TO DO BOTH AT ONCE. IF YOU TRULY “GET” DEEP BASS, IF YOU LIKE YOUR KIT TO BE ON SHOW RATHER THAN HIDDEN AWAY AND — ABOVE ALL — YOU FEEL THAT URGE FOR **TRULY ENERGETIC AUDIO**, THEN THE REL 212/SE IS ACTUALLY **GOOD VALUE**. ” | ADAM RAYNER, HOME CINEMA CHOICE

Join the Pursuit™

rel.net

Experience the 212SE's Twin long-stroke 12" Continuous Cast™ Alloy Bass Engines and dual 12" passives
Visit rel.net to learn more about REL and find an authorized dealer near you.

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

AVID Acutus Dark

\$12,995

avidhifi.com

Those longing for a matte black version of AVID's award winning Acutus turntable now have their prayers answered. Featuring nearly all of the technological advances in vibration control that AVID is known for, the Dark looks to be a major bargain in destination turntables.

If you've had a chance to sample an AVID, you know they all share a level of dynamics and finesse that's tough to beat. Combine that with simple setup, and compatibility with a wide range of tonearms, makes for a formidable record playing machine. We've been using AVID tables as reference components here at TONE for over a decade.



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

Wharfdale Linton
\$1,499/pair with stands
mofidistribution.com

The Wharfdale Lintons have been the hit of the show circuit for the last year, and for good reason. These speakers are without question, one of the best value in hifi today. Whether you are a newcomer to the world of audio or a seasoned vet, these iconic British speakers serve up a lot of sound with few competitors at their price.



elusive
DISC

Visit Us Online at elusivedisc.com



Graham
Phantom Elite &
Phantom III Tonearms
\$6,99.99 - \$12,99.99



Nordost
Blue Heaven
Power Cord
\$219.99



Integrity HiFi
Tru-Sweep Anti-Static
Dust Cleaner/Sweeper
\$259.99



VPI
HW-40 40th
Anniversary Turntable
\$14,999.99



Clearaudio
Jubilee Panzerholz
MM Cartridge
\$899.99



Audioquest
Tornado High-Current
AC Power Cord (6ft.)
\$1,299.95



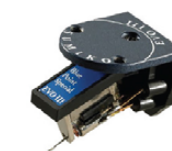
IsoAcoustics
ISO-PUCK Mini
Equipment Isolators
\$99.99 (Set of 8)



Sieveking Sound
Omega
Headphone Stands
\$179.99



Audioquest
DragonFly Cobalt USB
DAC + Preamp + HP Amp
\$299.95



Sumiko
Blue Point Special
Evo III MC Cartridge
\$548.99



Nitty Gritty
Record Cleaner
Model 2.0 (Solid Oak)
\$544.99



VPI
HW-16.5
Record Cleaner
\$699.99
(Packages Available)



Epos Acoustics
K5 Bookshelf
Speakers (Black)
\$494.99 (Pair)



Final Audio Design
E5000 Earphones
\$278.99



Audio Technica
AT-ART7 Dual
Moving Coil Cartridge
\$1089.99

vpi
made in u.s.a.

G
GRAHAM ENGINEERING, INC.

audioquest.

NÖRDOST
MAKING THE CONNECTION

clearaudio

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US:

- Friendly and Helpful Customer Service
- Expert Packaging and Quick Delivery
- Great Selection of High End Equipment
- Over 10k Unique Records In-Stock



KirmussAudio
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic
Record Restoration System
\$875.00



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Mytek Brooklyn + DAC

\$2,199

mytekdigital.com

Mytek's Brooklyn + DAC is an excellent DAC, but so much more. It offers a fully functioning headphone amplifier, as well as having an MM/MC phono stage (a bonus \$20,000 phono stage, no less) on board. Finally, its RCA and XLR outputs allow it to be used as a line preamplifier as well, so if you need no more than your turntable and digital source, all that remains is a power amplifier and speakers.

The Brooklyn + also features an input for an external 12VDC power supply and word clock in addition to the AES/EBU, coax SPDIF, USB and optical digital inputs. This is a very compact and versatile device indeed.



"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.



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

PrimaLuna EVO 100

\$2,295

primaluna-usa.com

PrimaLuna's smallest integrated amplifier is now part of the EVO series, with many of the production advances in the PrimaLuna lineup incorporated within. Where our original ProLogue One only produced 32 watts per channel, the EVO 100 now produces 40 watts per channel, but it is not able to accommodate the bias requirements of the KT150 tubes, like the larger EVO models.

While a few of the premium touches are absent in the EVO 100, the core tech that makes PrimaLuna great is still here. Like every other PrimaLuna amplifier, the EVO 100 is painstakingly hand wired, point to point, with bespoke output and power transformers. We've just started listening, but it's clear that the EVO 100 is a winner.



LUXMAN since 1925

“The Ultimate”

Brings the Future to the Present
Preserves the Legendary Musical Pedigree



SUPER AUDIO CD PLAYER

D-08u

CONTROL AMPLIFIER

C-900u

STEREO POWER AMPLIFIER

M-900u

www.luxman.com

LUXMAN

General Inquiries:
Luxman America Inc., 27 Kent Street, Unit 122
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
Tel: +1 (518) 261 6464 Email: sales@luxmanamerica.com

Luxman Japan Head Office:
1-3-1 Shin-Yokohama, Kouhoku-Ku
Yokohama 222-0033, Japan
Tel: 045 470 6991 Fax: 045 470 6997

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Anthem MRX520

\$1,399

anthemav.com

We don't spec a lot of theater systems here, but when we do it for friends, it's nearly always with an Anthem receiver at the heart of the system. They offer incredible value, major flexibility, and Anthems patented ARC™ room correction.

With five discrete 100 watt amplifier channels and a 5.2 preamplifier section, featuring two subwoofer outputs, this is the perfect way to start a high quality theater system that won't break the bank. A bevy of inputs and outputs assures that you can connect everything you need to achieve maximum audio and video flexibility.

Our review will be up on the Audiophile Apartment section of our website shortly, but to show our appreciation for the MRX520, our publisher has purchased the review unit for use in his own home. Enough said.

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

Contact The Sound Organisation
today for your closest retailer.



rega

ProAc
perfectly natural

Quadraspire

THE
CHORD
COMPANY

BRISTON

kii
Face the Music

support@soundorg.com
(972) 234-0182
soundorg.com

The
s)und
Organisation

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

Musical Surroundings Nova III \$1,500, (external Linear Power Supply—addl. \$650)

musicalsurrroundings.com

Now in its third generation, the Nova phonostage is quieter, more dynamic and more musical than ever before. Adding the external power supply takes its performance even further, but can be added later as budget permits. Even with both units in your system, the form factor is tiny, so the Nova III fits anywhere.

This single input phono stage is all solid state, with a maximum gain of 65db and a very wide, fine, range of adjustments to suit the MM or MC cartridge of your choice.

The sound and vision of Scandinavia

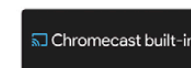


Prisma provides multi-room/multi-zone connectivity and control for playback of stored and streamed media, wired or wireless, all managed from a mobile device through a dedicated system control app.

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



Authorized North American Distributor

MOFI DISTRIBUTION

mofidistribution.com

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



PS Audio Stellar Phono

\$2,499

psaudio.com

After designing so many incredible digital products, PS Audio returns to their roots (they began with a phono stage, many years ago) with the Stellar Phono. This two input phonostage features all discrete (no op amps) circuitry and up to 70db of gain to accommodate any phono cartridge.

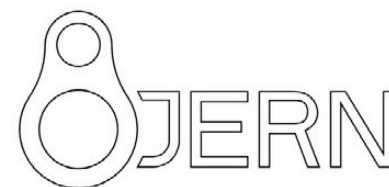
With balanced and RCA inputs, the Stellar Phono will integrate into any system with ease. What's piqued our interest is the continuously variable loading for the MC section.

PS Audio has always offered a high performance/value ratio. We're looking forward to sitting down and listening to the Stellar Phono.

Welcome to The Iron Age.

Introducing Jern Speakers

jernspeakers.com





www.francoserblin.it

Francis Serblin

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Aqua LaScala Mk II DAC

\$8,500

aquahifi.com

The current version of Aqua's original Optologic DAC, the new LaScala Mk.II features a similar FPGA based D to A conversion architecture as their premium Formula DAC. Beautifully executed, this DAC processes everything up to DSD 128, but has no MQA capability. Multiple inputs including an I2S input, makes the LaScala II easy to integrate into your digital workflow.

Combining all of Aqua's technology with a vacuum tube output stage makes for a highly un-digital sounding DAC. Don't let the relatively compact form factor fool you, when you pick it up, you'll see what we mean.

All of this is wrapped in a beautifully machined front panel, wrapped in a grey Nextel powder coated case. A lovely change from the standard black you see elsewhere.

Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Gold Note CD 1000 MKII Deluxe

\$6,000

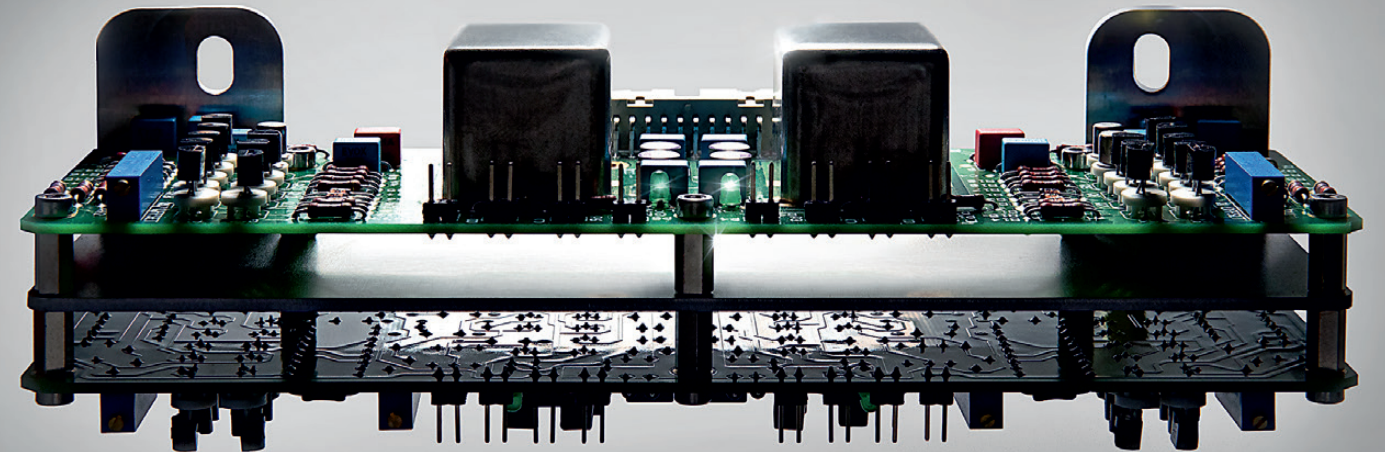
goldnote-it.com

With so much attention being paid to the vinyl record, the CD has been making a quiet comeback, as more music lovers want physical media. The Gold Note CD 1000 gives you the best of both worlds, with a high-performance DAC built in along with the CD transport.

The deluxe version we have here, is built around the Burr Brown PCM1792A DAC chipset, while the standard model utilizes the PCM1796. The deluxe version also offers a USB input to go along with the SPDIF RCA and TOS optical inputs. Both can be combined with Gold Note's external power supply and Vacuum Tube Output stage, for a modular approach.

Finally, it is available in either the gold you see here, silver or black finish.

New level of sonic performance
Master-quality sound.



Formula xHD | new upgrade analog module rev. 2



Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



Audio Solutions Figaro – M

\$7,500 pair
highendbyoz.com

The Figaro M has compromised the area of finished wood in their cabinets, offering something a bit more utilitarian than their top products, but haven't scrimped a molecule on the drivers and crossover networks. Audio Solutions is new to the US, but these are some speakers to watch in the future. Another show darling, everywhere we've seen these demonstrated, they've provided stunning sound at a very affordable price. Review next issue.

elusive
DISC

Visit Us Online at elusivedisc.com



Audio Technica
AT-OC9XSH Dual
Moving Coil Cartridge

\$648.99



Nordost
QKore3
Ground Unit

\$3,499.99



Clearaudio
Balance V2 MM/MC
Phono Stage (Silver)

\$3,499.99



VAS
Nova Special MC
Cartridge w/Stylus

\$1,799.99



Audio Desk Systeme
Vinyl Cleaner Pro
Record Cleaner

\$3999.99



Audioquest
Niagara 1200 Low-Z
Power Noise-Dissipation System

\$999.95



Cayin
A-50T MKII Tube Int.
Amp w/MM Phono Stage

\$1,899.99



Equi-Tech
1.5RQ Power
Conditioner

\$4,699.99



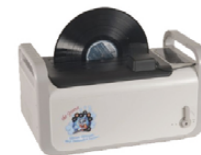
Hana
ML Microline
MC Cartridge 0.4mV

\$1,199.99



IsoAcoustics
GAIA I Speaker
Isolators (Set of 4)

\$599.99



KirmussAudio
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic
Record Restoration System

\$875.00



Stax
SR-009 Ltd. 80th Anniv.
Open Back Headphones

\$3,824.99



Music Hallt
Aztec Blue Turntable
Platter Cork Mat

\$89.99



Klaudio
KD-CLN-LP200
Ultrasonic Record Cleaner

\$4,799.99



Music Hall
MMF-3.3 Turntable
w/ Ortofon 2M Red

\$699.99

ISOACOUSTICS

SUMIKO

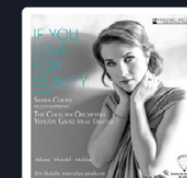
NITTY GRITTY™

Sieveking
sound

epos

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US:

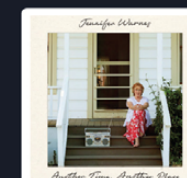
- Friendly and Helpful Customer Service
- Expert Packaging and Quick Delivery
- Great Selection of High End Equipment
- Over 10k Unique Records In-Stock



Sasha Cooke | Love For Beauty
Yarlung 180g 45rpm LP



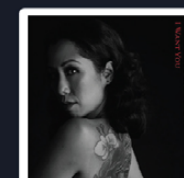
Kenny Burrell | Introducing
Blue Note Tone Poet 180g LP



Jennifer Warnes | Another Time
Impex 180g LP & SACD



Trio Palabras | Mi Cantar
Muxia 180g LP & SACD



Vanessa Fernandez | I Want You
Groove Note 180g LP



Beethoven | Piano Concerto
Chasing The Dragon 180g LP

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Tone Playlists are sponsored by...

qobuz

Fleetwood Mac—Gypsy

Jennifer Warnes—Why Worry
I Am The Big Easy

Michael LeGrand—The Jitterbug
Waltz

Amy Winehouse—Take the Box

Frank Sinatra – The Way You Look
Tonight You Make Me Feel So Young

Stan Getz—The Girl From Ipanema
Three Little Words

Depeche Mode—Personal Jesus



Impex Records Abey Fonn has eclectic taste to say the least, but that's a requirement for a record producer. She just dropped us a note from the Hong Kong hifi show with a taste of some of the tracks in heavy rotation lately.



CLEARAUDIO

HIGH END | MADE IN GERMANY



CONCEPT WOOD



JUBILEE MM



PERFORMANCE DC WOOD



OVATION



INNOVATION



JUBILEE MC



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. 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—so 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 must 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 been 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 in between. 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.



HDPREAMP
WINNING AWARDS

BEST SOUND OF 2018 MUNICH HIGH END SHOW



NAGRA

nagraaudio-hd.com • contact us at (800) 813-1663 • rene.laflamme@nagraaudio.com

US dealers: The Audio Salon, Santa Monica CA | Audio Salon, Miami FL | David Lewis Audio, Philadelphia PA | EarsNova, New York NY
David Michael Audio, Detroit MI | Don Better Audio, Cleveland OH | Goodwin's High End, Boston MA | JS Audio, Washington DC
Musical Artisans, Chicago IL | Music Lovers, San Francisco CA | Ne Plus Ultra, Austin TX | Arizona Hi-Fi, Phoenix AZ
Canada dealers: Audio Eden, Toronto ON | Element Acoustics, Vancouver BC | Filtronique, Montreal QC

Dealers That Mean Business: LISTINGS

Austin, Texas: Whetstone Audio

2401 E 6th St. #1001
Austin, Texas 78702

512.477.8503

whetstoneaudio.com



Portland, Oregon: Stereotypes Audio

1401 SE Morrison Street, Suite 115
Portland, Oregon 97214

503.280.0910

stereotypesaudio.com



3000 SERIES
SUBWOOFERS

Reference Subwoofer Performance Hits New Lows.

Room-shaking output, subterranean low frequency extension and pinpoint control at a breakthrough price.

New 13-inch high-excursion SVS driver with flat edge wound split-wind voice coil generates seat-shaking bass with unerring accuracy and crisp speed in transients.

Sledge STA-800D2 Amplifier with fully discrete MOSFET output rated at 800 watts RMS, 2,500+ watts peak power unleashes massive amounts current to fully maximize on the potential of the robust 13-inch SVS driver.

Groundbreaking SVS Subwoofer Smartphone App manages volume and custom presets for one-touch tuning for movies, music and more. Also controls parametric EQ, low pass filter, phase, polarity, room gain, port tuning (PB-3000 only) and more.



Critics agree, 3000 Series subwoofers deliver unrivaled performance.

"Even at reference levels, the subwoofer didn't break a sweat—each bass note hit with power, precision, and speed. I was completely blown away by my experience. It has no equal at its price."

-Sound & Vision

"Refinement and musicality that is genuinely excellent but still delivers seismic levels of low frequency energy."

-AVForums

"The bass I heard bordered on the difficult to believe -- very fast, very tight, very deep, with more than enough output to fill my room with sound-pressure levels that would satisfy the most demanding bass heads."

-Soundstage



Learn more at svsound.com





STORIED SOUND FOR EVERY MOMENT.

THE NEW 600 SERIES

Bowers & Wilkins

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...



Another Time, Another Place Jennifer Warnes

Being that we've been using Jennifer Warnes's rendition of "The Ballad of the Runaway Horse" for years now, to fine tune speakers, it was time to find a different group of her songs. Her latest record finds her back in top form. And who knows, maybe a track from this record might end up as our speaker set-up choice for the upcoming decade?

Dealers That Mean Business: LISTINGS

Sarasota, Florida: Suncoast Audio

7353 International Place, Unit 309
Sarasota, Florida 34240 **941.932.0282** suncoastaudio.com



New York City, New York: Noho Sound & Stereo

62 Cooper Square
New York, New York 10003 nohosound.com





Cardas Audio

Established 1987



Iridium Power



Iridium Interconnect



Iridium Phono



Iridium Speaker

www.cardas.com

PASS

Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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

Dealers That Mean Business: LISTINGS

Wauwatosa, Wisconsin: Ultra Fidelis

7125 West North Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

414.221.0200

ultrafidelis.com



Portland, Oregon: Echo Audio

5904 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy.
Portland, Oregon 97221

888.248.3246

echohifi.com



Dealers That Mean Business: LISTINGS

Marietta, Georgia: The Audio Company

146 South Park Square NE
Marietta, Georgia 30060

770.429.0434

theaudioco.com



San Diego, California: Deja VU Audio West

4848 Ronson Ct. Ste E
San Diego, California 92111

858.412.4023

dejavuaudiowest.com



WARWICK 
ACOUSTICS



DESIGNED TO AMAZE

The Sonoma Headphone System from Warwick Acoustics.
Nine awards in twelve months, isn't it time you gave them a listen?



www.warwickacoustics.com/headphones

Sonoma™ and its logo are trademarks of Super Audio Center, LLC, Colorado, USA and are used under license.

Dealers That Mean Business: LISTINGS

Morton Grove, Illinois: Quintessence Audio

5701 W. Dempster Street
Morton Grove, Illinois 60053
847.966.4434 quintessenceaudio.com



Scottsdale, Arizona: LMC Home Entertainment

15507 N. Scottsdale Road, Suite 135
Scottsdale, Arizona 85254
480.403.0011 Lmche.com



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



Vancouver, Canada: HiFi Centre

433 Carrall Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 6E3

888.232.9995

hificentre.com



Gig Harbor, Washington: Gig Harbor Audio

3019 Judson St. Suite D
Gig Harbor, Washington 98335

503.280.0910

gigharboraudio.com



Responds
naturally to you



Wireless adaptive
noise cancellation



Smart power with
a 22-hour battery life

Bowers & Wilkins

bowers-wilkins.com

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Older George Michael

Since installing the dCS Vivaldi ONE as a reference front end, a lot more shiny discs have been getting played these days. As one of Sony's SHM series, this disc has far better sonics than the original, or anything you might be streaming. Sometimes it's refreshing to go back to the source.



PrimaLuna®

Music Illuminated™

"PrimaLuna's DiaLogue Premium HP is an integrated amplifier whose sound quality approaches that of pairings of reference Class A preamps and power amps. PrimaLuna has another winner"

— Robert Deutsch, *Stereophile*



\$4399

DiaLogue Premium HP Integrated Amplifier

The finest tube integrated at any price. Any.

All four PrimaLuna components reviewed by *Stereophile* are rated Class A, meaning *the best without regard to cost*.

- ProLogue Premium Integrated \$2399
- DiaLogue Premium Integrated \$3399
- DiaLogue Premium HP Integrated (pictured) \$4399
- Award-winning preamps and poweramps also available

PrimaLuna has won more Editors' Choice Awards from *The Absolute Sound* than any other brand.



Go to primaluna-usa.com to get an inside look at our products. You will understand why critics around the world say PrimaLuna makes the best-engineered, best-built, and best-sounding components you can buy at any price. info@primaluna-usa.com 909.931.0219

Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

Tone Playlists are sponsored by...



- Lana Del Rey—Doin’ Time
- Zero 7—Don’t Call It Love
- Tame Impala—Boderline
- The Head And The Heart—Missed Connection
- Beck/Cage The Elephant—Night Running
- Hembree—Two Sides
- Foals—On The Luna
- Mansionair—Violet City
- Broken Bells—Holding On For Life



Quintessence Audio’s David Weintraub calls this playlist “Summer 19,” and says it was compiled while sailing or otherwise overlooking the ocean with a good beverage.



FOCAL
LISTEN BEYOND

SPECTRAL 40TH

To celebrate our 40th anniversary, we imbued some of our most cutting-edge technology into a classic blast from the past...

This three-way bass-reflex loudspeaker perfectly represents our pioneering heritage of research, design, and expertise.

Like its illustrious Focal predecessors from the 90s – Futura Antea and Spectral 913.1 – Spectral 40th flaunts its signature yellow K2 drivers, updated to take advantage of our current expertise. This new model comprises a next-generation M-profile inverted-dome tweeter, extremely resilient and highly-dynamic speaker cones, a carefully designed crossover with meticulously selected components, a Powerflow™ port, and finished in a beautiful 40th Anniversary Walnut cabinet with a High-Gloss Black two-inch baffle. The well-dampened MDF cabinet features an entirely non-parallel network of partitions and bracings to prevent and dissipate virtually all vibration distortions.

Spectral 40th honors the world of High Fidelity with vibrant, expressive sound at any volume level, regardless of the musical genre, providing hours of listening pleasure.

MADE IN FRANCE

Focal.com ||| USA distribution by Focal Naim America ||| CANADA distribution by Focal Naim Canada ||| Contact us for more information: 1 866-271-5689 / info@focal-naim.com

Last Word

Our parting thought to ponder.

This is Spinal Tap—The movie.

How long has it been since you've watched this classic film about the trials and tribulations of a hard rock band? Pushing its 40th anniversary, Tap is still relevant today, both in life and in music. Even if you're too young to get all the references, a viewing is always worth at least a few good laughs, and considering how far our society has come in terms of political correctness, this one might not even have seen the light of day in 2019. Relish its crudeness.

GRAND PRIX AUDIO Monaco Turntable v2.0

A new achievement in analog



"Let the record state that this is the finest turntable I've experienced, at any price."

-Jeff Dorgay, Tone Publications

Music deserves innovation

www.grandprixaudio.com



Socially Speaking

TONEAudio's Online hangouts

If you want more TONE all the time, we're doing our best to disperse more content all of the time on numerous platforms. Just click here to follow us on our main Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/TONEPUB2/>

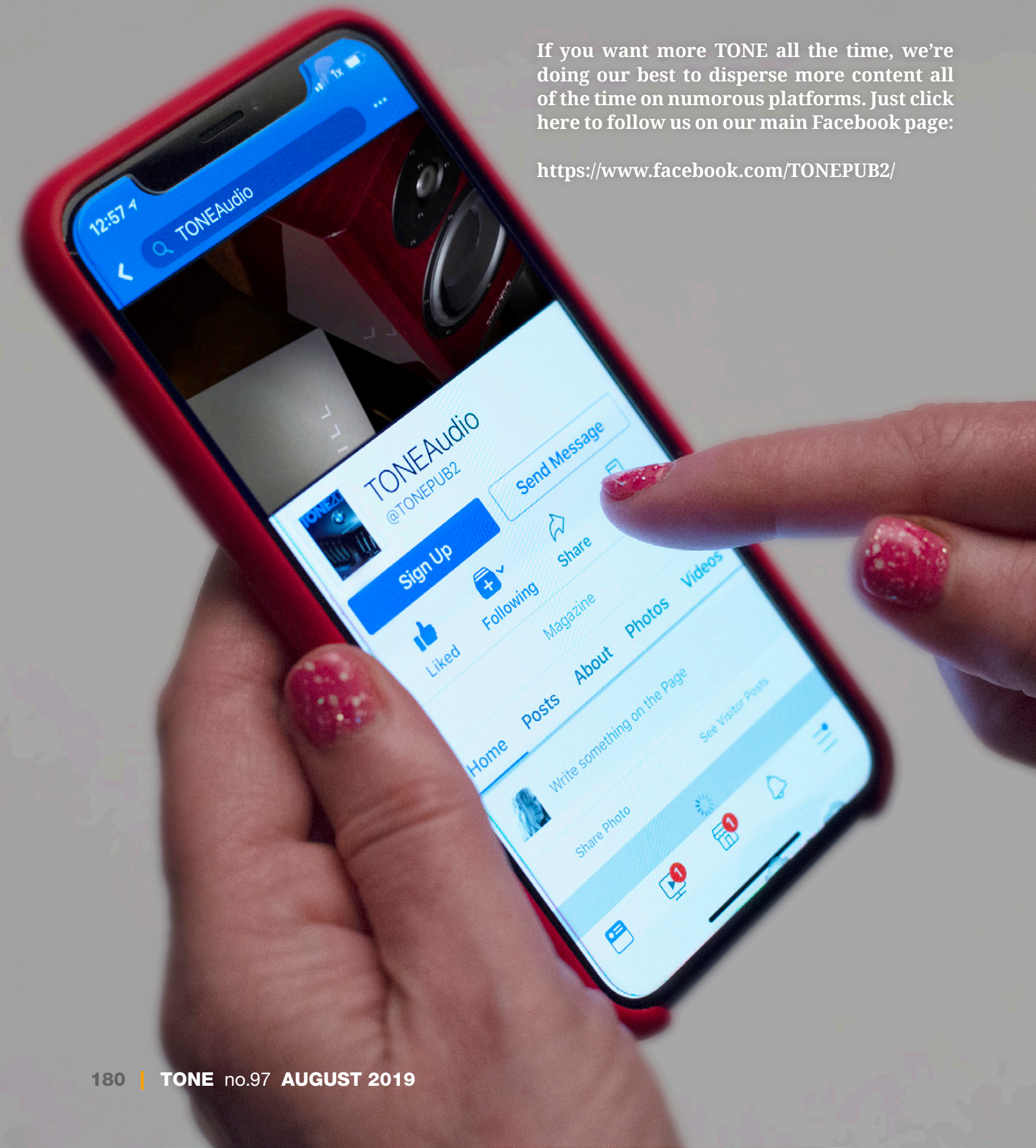
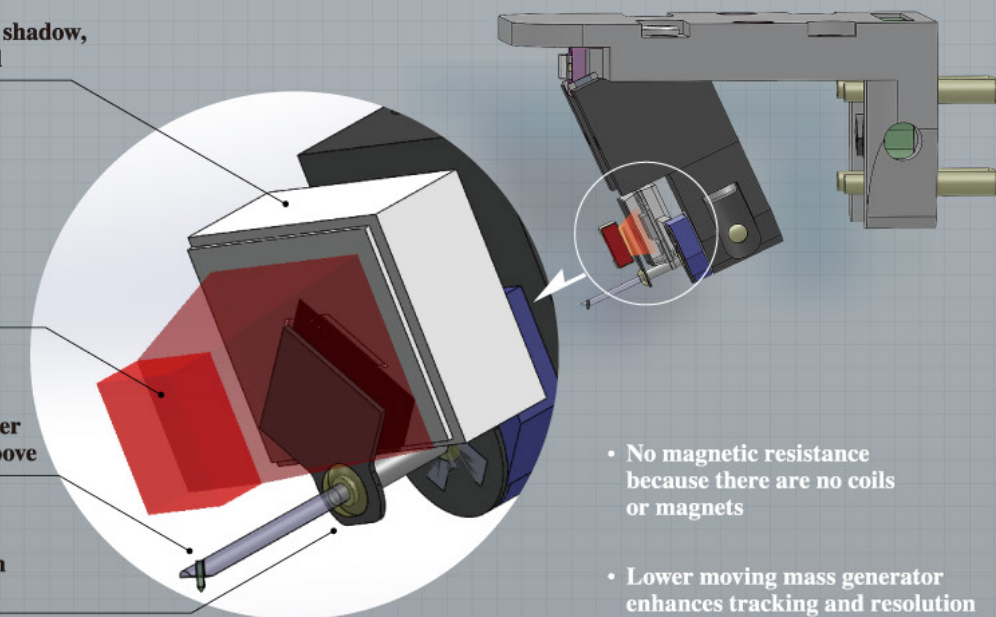


Photo diode detects light and shadow, converting to electrical signal

LED Light source

Stylus/cantilever moves shutter when tracking the record groove

Shutter modulates light beam by stylus movement



- No magnetic resistance because there are no coils or magnets

- Lower moving mass generator enhances tracking and resolution

DS Audio Phono Cartridges

Pure Analog

No Lasers

Not Digital

It's Got a Needle

Internationally
Acclaimed & Award
Winner

Handmade in Japan

DS Audio

MUSICAL
SURROUNDINGS



(((AudioVision
san francisco
welcome to the hifi show

θ
AUDIOVECTOR

Handmade in Denmark since 1979



Inspiring Loudspeakers that are designed
to be easily placed in any room!

from less than \$1500 a pair and up

1628 california st. (on the cable car line)
san francisco, california 94109

www.audiovisionsf.com

abyss
alta audio
audeze
audio physic
audiovector
dali
davone
dynaudio
elac
focal
gallo
gamut
grado
hifiman
jl audio
kef
mrspeakers
psb
raidho/scansonic
rel acoustics
triangle
warwick acoustics
wilson benesch
yg acoustics

anthem
antipodes
arcam
astell & kern
atoll
audioquest
bel canto
bluesound
cardas
chord electronics
clearaudio
crystal cable
deqx
devialet
dr. feickert
eat
funk firm
h.r.s.
ifi
integra
kiseki
lyngdorf audio
lyra
marantz
margules
mcintosh
moon by simaudio
nad

naim audio
nordost
nuforce
octave
ortofon
pear audio
primaluna
pro-ject
ps audio
quad
quadraspire
rega
shinola
sme
sonos
soundsmith
stillpoints
technics
unison research
woo audio

Get The Gear: Where to find what you've seen in this issue.

Abyss	abyss-headphones.com	Cardas Audio	cardas.com
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
Audio Classics	audioclassics.com	E.A.T.	vanaltd.com
Audio Physic	vanaltd.com	Echo Audio	echohifi.com
Audio Research	audioresearch.com	Elusive Disc	elusivedisc.com
Audio Solutions	highendbyoz.com	Esoteric	esoteric-usa.com
AudioVision SF	audiovisionsf.com	Exogal	exogal.com
Audolici	audolici.com	Focal	audioplusservices.com
AVID HiFi	avidhifi.com	Franco Serblin	francoserblin.it
Boulder	boulderamp.com	Gold Note	goldnote.it
Bowers & Wilkins	bowers-wilkins.com	Golden Ear	goldeneear.com
Bryston	bryston.com	Grand Prix Audio	grandprixaudio.com

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

Get The Gear: Where to find what you've seen in this issue.

Hana Cartridges	musicalsurrroundings.com	PrimaLuna	primaluna-usa.com
HiFi Centre	hificentre.com	Primare	mofielectronics.com
Jern Speakers	jernspeakers.com	ProAc	soundorg.com
Kanto Audio	kantoaudio.com	ProJect	pro-jectusa.com
Kiseki	kisekiusa.com	REL	rel.net
Linn Audio	linn.com.uk	Rega	soundorg.com
Luxman	luxman.com	Simaudio	simaudio.com
McIntosh	mcintoshlabs.com	Sonus faber	sonusfaber.com
MartinLogan	martinlogan.com	SVS Subwoofers	svsound.com
MoFi Electronics	mofielectronics.com	Tellurium Q	telluriumq.com
Musical Fidelity	audioplusservices.com	Tone Imports	toneimports.com
Nagra	nagraaudio.com	Totem	totemacoustic.com
Naim	Audioplusservices.com	Upscale Audio	upscaleaudio.com
Octave	octave.de	VAC	vac-amplifiers.com
PS Audio	psaudio.com	Vitus Audio	highendbyoz.com
Paradigm	paradigm.com	VPI	vpindustries.com
Pass Labs	passlabs.com	Warwick Acoustics	warwickacoustics.com

This is not the new Stellar Phono Preamp.
It's Darren, the guy who designed it.

Watch him unveil his masterwork here:
psaudio.com/darren-2

If you love your records the way that we love
ours, you owe it to yourself to learn more about
this radically original take on a phono preamp.



P S A U D I O ®

Welcome to the Hi-Fi Family

Coming in issue **no.98**

- **Speakers, lots of them**
- **Focal Stella Utopia EM**
- **Manger Z1**
- **Falcon LS3/5a**
- **Wharfedale Linton**
- **And more...**



T O N E