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When it comes to making the best recordings in Music City, Nashville-based Chuck Ainlay is likely involved. He has spent more than 30 years engineering albums for such major artists as Mary Chapin Carpenter, Sheryl Crow, Steve Earle, Mark Knopfler, Lyle Lovett, Willie Nelson, Taylor Swift and Lee Ann Womack. Plus his vast experience with leading-edge technology has enabled him to work on GRAMMY® winning albums like Miranda Lambert's *Platinum*, George Strait's *Troubadour*, Peter Dinklage's *Fingerprints* and Dire Straights' *Brothers in Arms – 20th Anniversary Edition (surround mix)*.

Chuck's engaging and collaborative approach to recording and mixing has made him a trusted partner to numerous music creatives. All of which is why dCS is proud to honor Chuck Ainlay as the latest recipient of our dCS Legends Award.



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T O N E



Number 101

Bowers & Wilkins/Volvo XC90

Introducing the New

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from GoldenEar Technology®



*“Everything that earned the Triton Reference Tone’s Product-of-the-Year-Award, in a gorgeous, super sounding, more compact and even more affordable package!”*

*“...an important debut...the speakers certainly bring Triton Ref bonafides to a lower cost segment, with glowing hand-rubbed piano-black lacquer cosmetics and impressive internals.”*

—Neil Gader, *The Absolute Sound*

GoldenEar Technology is pleased to announce the introduction of the new Triton One.R. This extraordinary new reference quality loudspeaker is a smaller, less expensive follow up to the Triton Reference. The T Ref has been compared with speakers selling for over ten times its surprisingly affordable cost. It has had a remarkable response from both music and hifi enthusiasts as well as press and reviewers from around the world, who have bestowed upon it innumerable Speaker-of-the-Year and Product-of-the-Year awards. Now the T One.R is here for your ultimate delight. Al Griffin raved, “The powerful sense of atmosphere that the One.R speakers conveyed conjure up memories of my time with the Triton Reference.”

*“...a pair of Triton One.Rs really kick the width of the soundstage into overdrive, spreading the wall of voices far beyond their physical placement in the room, with undeniably enhanced clarity and articulation.”*

—Dennis Burger, *HomeTheaterReview.com*

We developed new drivers for the T Ref, which incorporate advanced technologies for better sound, and brought these advancements into the Triton One.R. The new Reference Folded Ribbon Tweeter, with 50% more neodymium, is silky smooth and ultra high resolution. The new Focused-Field magnet structures deliver better control and higher efficiency. The new internal wiring, with a special critically perfect twist, provides better coupling and more coherent blending of the drivers. The new wiring topology further improves clarity and definition. And the very special film caps in the crossover make faster transient response a reality. The list goes on and on: long fiber lambs wool, accelerometer optimized bracing, special internal damping pads.... Everything contributes to T One.R’s remarkable ability to recreate a huge soundstage and deep three-dimensional image. And the voicing, which our engineers labored so long and hard over, makes the T One.R a proud follow up to the Triton Reference.

*The 1600 watt built-in powered subwoofers can be musically delicate or simply rock your world!*

There are three newly designed racetrack shaped active subwoofer drivers on the front of the cabinet, which have special polymer impregnated nomex cones, in order to minimize cone breakup when strongly driven. Huge magnet structures are utilized in order to better control cone movement and improve transient response. There are four quadratic planar infrasonic radiators. They extend the low frequency response and are inertially balanced (two on each side) in order to minimize cabinet movement, resulting in clearer, more detailed sound. Combined with the 1600 watt sub amp and advanced 56 bit DSP, the built in powered bass section is superior to most stand-alone subwoofers, and of course, you will have two subs, one in each speaker. Al Griffin raved about, “...intense and gut-punching slam...I didn’t once feel a need for additional subwoofers.”

*“If I could pull a Spinal Tap and push the Triton One.Rs Value rating past our usual maximum, I’d do it in a heartbeat.”*

—Al Griffin, *Sound & Vision*

The gorgeous cabinet is painstakingly finished in hand-rubbed piano black lacquer. Its signature narrow profile looks incredible, helps it to disappear visually, and delivers important imaging advantages. It presents itself as an exquisite, sleek, ultra-high-performance lifestyle loudspeaker that delivers tremendous value and sound quality comparable to speakers selling for many times its cost. And unlike most speakers that are only good for two channel listening, or home theater, the Triton One.R, like all GoldenEar speakers, is engineered to excel at both.



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# In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...



What's the first record to start a new decade with?

Crazy as it may seem, the Who's latest album, merely titled, "Who" is an amazing rock record.

Then you realize just how long these two guys have been making music.

Where most of the Who efforts of the last 20 years have been forgettable, this one feels right at home in their famous discography.



TONE101.005

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T O N E

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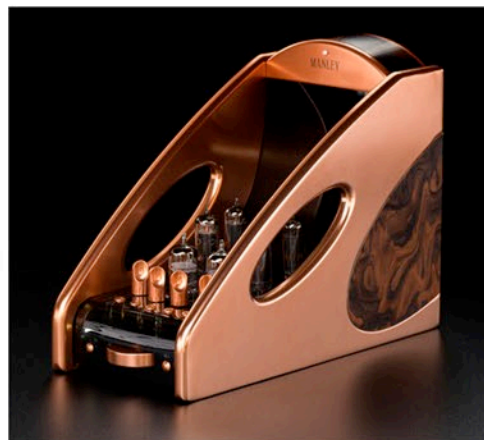


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# 75

## Headphone Art

**Manley** brings a very wacky, yet surprisingly functional shape to amp design...





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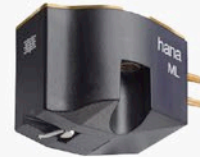
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Ultrasonic Cleaner  
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**Music Hall**  
MMF-3.3 Turntable  
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## new arrivals...

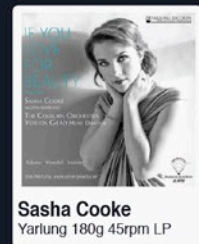
Cam VanDerHorst is a freelance auto & motorcycle journalist from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He's a lifelong music lover who spends his free time playing drums and ukulele.

Since childhood, he's always listened to music with the same Denon DRA-75VR his parents bought new back in the 1980s. He's looking forward to joining our team and broadening his horizons.



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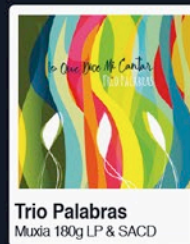
**Sasha Cooke**  
Yarlung 180g 45rpm LP



**Kenny Burrell**  
Blue Note Tone Poet 180g LP



**Jennifer Warnes**  
Impex 180g LP & SACD



**Trio Palabras**  
Muxia 180g LP & SACD



**Vanessa Fernandez**  
Groove Note 180g LP



**Beethoven**  
Chasing The Dragon 180g LP



mise-en-scene



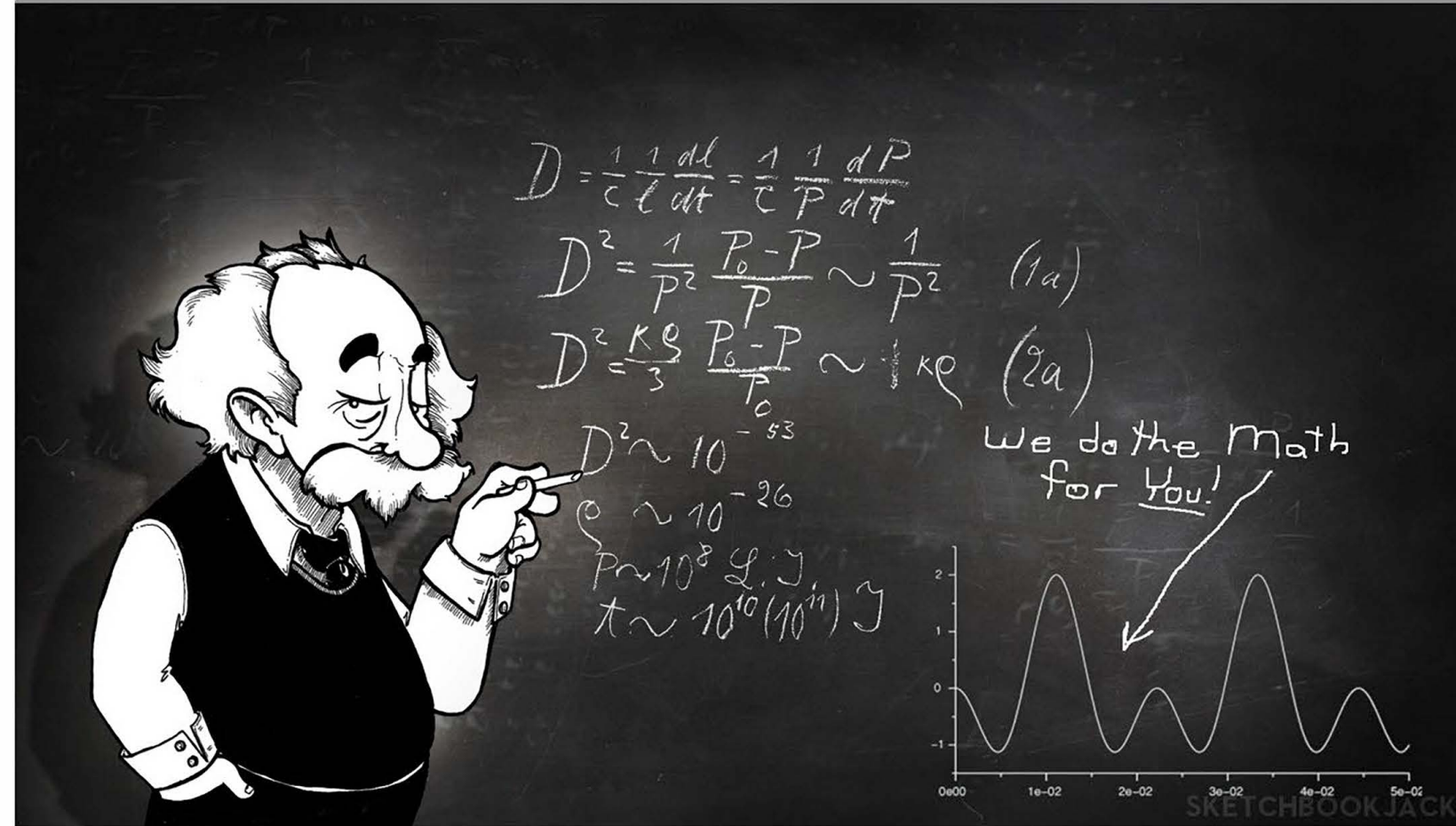
### Cover Shot:

**A** beautiful morning in the Pacific Northwest is always a great excuse for a drive out in the country.

Coffee in the cupholder, and a playlist of your favorite tracks gets the creative juices flowing.

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# no.101

## P u b l i s h e r s   L e t t e r

**W**ell, this certainly wasn't the publishers letter I wrote a few weeks ago, when we were starting to assemble the issue. It was all happy new year, post issue 100, had fun at the Florida Audio Expo, and so on. Making a lot of plans for all the things we were going to ramp up. This situation in China seemed way off the radar.

For our friends, readers, and industry partners in Asia and Europe, life's gotten pretty weird and complex. Thanks to social media and FaceTime, I've been able to talk to a lot of you, and I hope that you remain vigilant in this time of crisis. Same for all of you here in North America. We're not through the thick of this yet, and we have no way of knowing quite what the ultimate result of this is. Some of you are even like us here in Washington state, on temporary quarantine and/or lockdown.

I truly hope we don't lose a single one of you throughout this. Without making any kind of value judgement on the situation, all I can do is stay busy here at TONE. We'll do our best to get more reviews up on our website in the months to come than ever before, along with the launch in earnest of our YouTube and Podcasting channels. If nothing else, maybe we can offer a moment of levity in the temporary darkness. And by all means, feel free to pop in to our Facebook discussions – send me a PM and let me know how you're doing.

Until the day that Record Store Day is back in action, and we can all freely buy toilet paper, I wish you all the best. If this runs its course, and we're all on the mend by fall, drinks will definitely be on me at Axpona later this year.

Stay safe.



# Playlist: What Our Readers Are Into



- Slayer** - South of Heaven
- Metallica** - The Four Horsemen
- Venom** - Black Metal
- Possessed** - The Exorcist
- Bathory** - Chariots of Fire
- Sacred Reich** - Ignorance
- Anthrax** - I Am the Law
- Exodus** - A Lesson in Violence
- Testament** - Practice What You Preach
- Corrosion of Conformity** - Vote With A Bullet
- Death** - Suicide Machine
- Judas Priest** - Painkiller
- Iron Maiden** - Hallowed be My Name
- Megadeth** - Peace Sells

He may be under lockdown, but he's as brutal as ever. Our former music editor Bob Gendron returns to give us a handful of his favorite old-school metal tracks.

Turn it up. Or else.

no. 1

Chicago

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# Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

Text and Photos by Paul DeMara

## The Luxman K-05

The 1990s were an interesting time for music formats. CD's were hot, vinyl was dead, and cassette tapes were the primary way people listened to their tunes while driving. Fast forward to 2020, and cassettes are cool again. When I visit many of the local music stores in my area, cassettes are proudly displayed next to vinyl and CDs. Type the words "Cassette Decks Vintage" on Facebook, to view thousands of enthusiasts sharing their stories.

For the passionate audiophile, cassettes may seem like a sub-standard analog format versus reel to reel or vinyl. However, cassettes offer something that vinyl doesn't - the ability to create analog mix tapes of your favorite tunes. It's easy to spend a good 3 or 4 hours making a 90-minute mix tape while fussing over the song selection and recording levels. What do you get for this investment in time?

Making a mix tape brings me closer to the music in a way that a Spotify playlist does not.

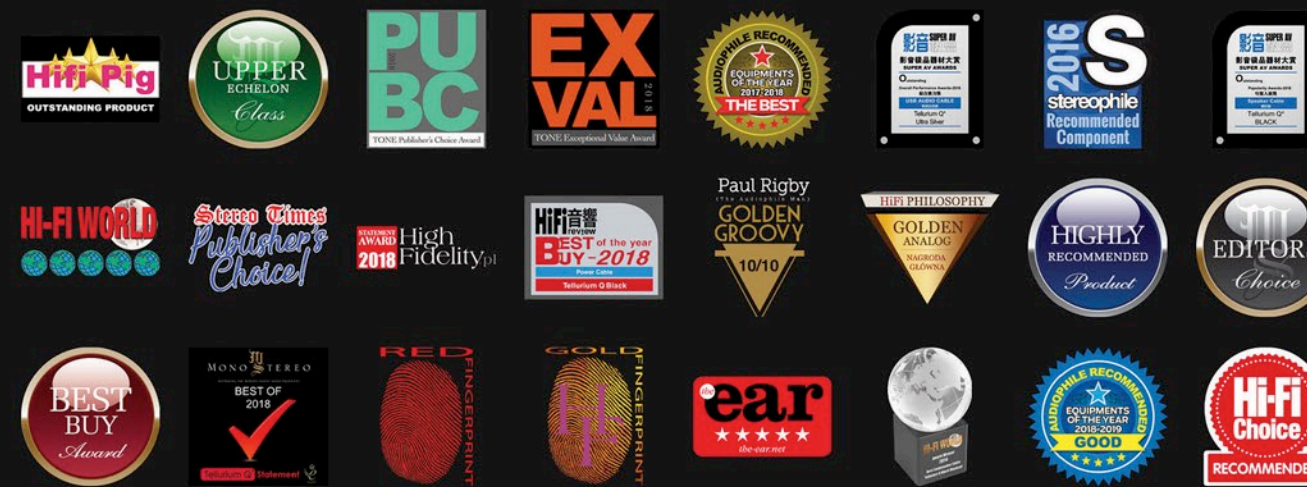
## Compromises

A good friend of mine who designs audio gear is quick to remind me, "Everything is a compromise." He is absolutely right. Cassettes are a compromise from reel to reel, but going down the R2R path to make analog mix tapes requires a significantly more substantial investment in hardware and software. Perfection in audio doesn't exist, but a premium deck with premium tape, crafted with care, offers a positive, emotional listening experience. (Interestingly, while writing this article I happen to be listening to a 1997 pre-recorded cassette, Diana Krall - *Love Scenes*)

Audiophiles, by nature, are often looking for "the best of the best." The Nakamichi Dragon is a grail to many, and it's certainly a fantastic deck, but there are other options. I submit the Luxman K-05 is one such option. You don't get auto-reverse, automatic azimuth adjustment, and several other features with the K-05. What you do get is superbly engineered Luxman electronics, including their proprietary "duo-beta" feedback bass extension technology.



TONE101.019



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- Jon Myles, HiFi World

"The differences were stunning.....What I can state is that the Ultra Black II cables are currently the best I have heard in my system."

- Ian Ringstead, Hifipig.com

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- Jason Kennedy, HiFi +

"I have yet to hear a speaker cable which delivers timing like this one."

- Chris Kelly, The Ear

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# Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

Text and Photos by Paul DeMara

Their cast metal tape transport with dual capstans and dual bearings, crystal-controlled user variable transport motor speed control, accurate analog VU meters, automatic electronic tape bias equalizer with manual adjustment, and most importantly, micro aligned tape heads all add up to an industry-leading upper frequency response. Some say the equal or superior to the mighty Dragon.

The K-05 tape heads naturally magnetize during playback inhibiting treble response, requiring regular tape head demagnetizing using a unique tool. Luxman's engineers took care of this issue, and it is built-in on the K-05, something I didn't notice until after I purchased mine. Every time you power up the K-05, there's a few second delay while an A/C signal is delivered to the heads, automatically demagnetizing them. You still have to clean the heads every 10 hours or so.

Specs don't reveal the tone of a piece of audio gear, but they can offer insight into how much effort went into the engineering of a product. Luxman, as they do with all their products, chose to focus on technical excellence with the K-05. The better specs that result from tighter quality control and construction, cost more to build. Everything in engineering is a compromise. For reference, the K-05 has an extended frequency response of 15 Hz to 27,000 Hz (metal tape), with a wow and flutter of 0.022% along with signal to noise ratio of 60 dB with the Dolby noise reduction switched off. The THD is 0.5%. Listening proves their efforts were worth it.

## Sonics and use

I'm a low to medium volume listener, and at 90db and under, I'm hard-pressed to hear a difference between source material and something recorded with a good chrome or metal tape. This is easily confirmed using headphones with the source/tape button while using an audiophile-grade source like MoFi vinyl on my turntable. It's important to note that you can tweak the auto-bias settings with the manual bias control to achieve your version of perfection. Keep in mind less bias (left of center)

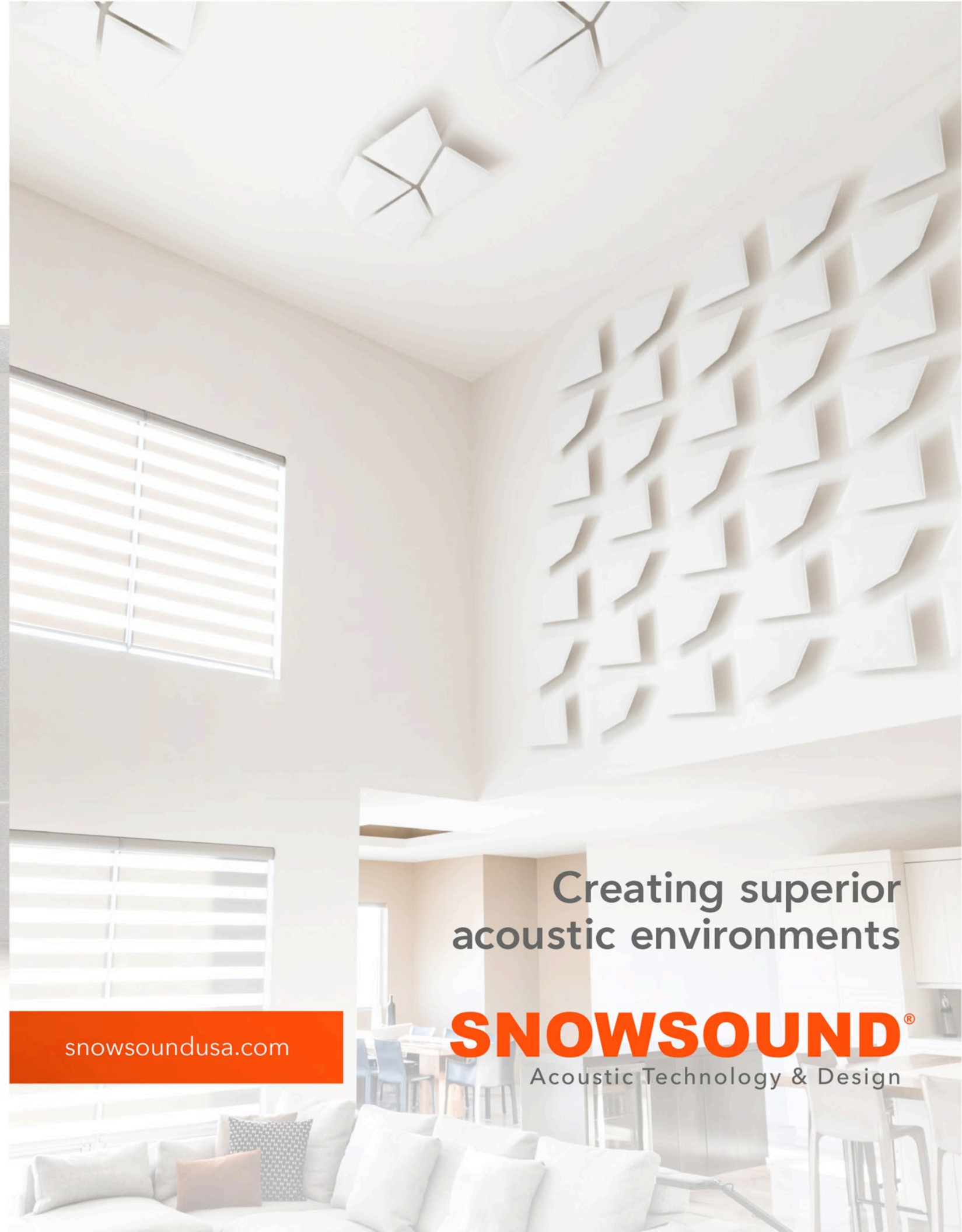
offers enhanced treble but weaker bass, more bias (right of center) improves bass but decreases treble.

The biggest paradox with cassettes is noticeable hiss at higher volume levels. (Hiss effectively defines the noise floor) To minimize this, Dolby B and C are available on the K-05. I'm not a big fan of Dolby noise reduction, but the Luxman engineers did it right with the K-05; when you engage Dolby B or C, there is no treble roll-off. This is a common problem with other decks, particularly with Dolby pre-recorded tapes, because of calibration errors. I tend to listen to pre-recorded cassettes with the Dolby B turned off. The sonic signature and pace of my favorite tracks still comes through to be engaged.

The K-05 captures more than enough musical nuance to provide serious emotional involvement, where the compromises made with other cassette decks often do not. My background in electronics sends me to the circuit design first. Luxman uses a sophisticated multi transistor tape head amp in this deck where many other manufacturers get by with a simple 2 or 3 transistor design. This circuit offers enhanced dynamic range and a lower noise floor along with low-frequency waveform phase integrity. This is the technical stuff that translates to great sound.

## Thoughts on the user interface

As shown in the pictures, the Luxman K-05 is champagne gold with black letters, which for my old eyes, is far easier to read than white letters on a black background. The big, well-lit analog VU meters remind me of an earlier time. The tape transport and automatic bias controls are touch buttons. Slider controls are in place for left, and right recording levels as well as a master control for smooth fade in / fade-outs when making recordings, flanked by a row of metal knobs below the record level controls allowing various record/playback adjustments.



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# Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

Text and Photos by Paul DeMara

The transport responds quickly and quietly to any request. Two buttons I regularly use are the “auto rewind” & “auto-repeat” buttons. If you don’t feel like getting up to turn over the tape, engaging these buttons cause the deck to reverse at the end of a tape and then play from the beginning.

The variable speed control is another rare feature. Not every cassette out there is aligned to the same speed, and this control allows fine-tuning pitch.

## These are details you generally don't find on other decks...

Finally, the tape head has a special narrow width gap that holds the little pad on the cassette tape behind the tape away from the tape head. This removes some of the tape head scratching that can occur from pad pressure. The dual capstans rotate at slightly different speeds to create the required tension on the tape head, as it is on pro-grade reel to reel decks.

Just as specs don't tell you much about tone, they don't tell you anything about the mechanical feel of a component, you can only get this from hands-on experience. The K-05 weighs almost 25 lbs., and all of the controls have a solid, weighty, positive feel. Luxman even included two extra lamps in the box for each meter. As with today's Luxman components, the K-05 feels like a luxury item that has been meticulously cared for during assembly.

One thing that's hard to quantify is the “feel” of a piece of audio gear. The K-05 weighs in at 11.5 Kg or ~25 lbs. and pressing the controls or adjusting levels has a smooth solid feel. The Luxman engineers paid close attention to how the analog meters look and included 2 lamps for each meter. (I can imagine everyone now looking at their cassette decks to check how many lamps were included) The deck also sports metal knobs and a 3D look using different materials. “Solid” is probably the most straightforward description.

To conclude, the K-05 is one amazing piece of early 80's engineering, produced from 1983 to 1985. 35+ years later, this deck still gets kudos from cassette enthusiasts. It doesn't have the notoriety of the Nakamichi Dragon, but that's the point. This is a deck that cassette connoisseurs lust after and never sell. The challenge is finding one – clean ones are fetching upwards of \$4,000 these days.



TONE101.023

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# In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

## *The Complete U.S. Bearsville Singles* - Todd Rundgren

What better way to start the issue than with that box set you had to have at last year's Record Store Day, then promptly forgot to play?



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# 1095

Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Michael Laurance

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*None to speak of*

**M**ichael does it again, keeping us well below the \$1,095 price point with the new Motion 15i speakers from Martin Logan. As one who's owned every significant MartinLogan ESL speaker for the last 35 years, I'm always amazed at how much of that core sound they've been able to include in their more "traditional" speakers. - publisher.

### Let's begin

The sharp and stunning thick, red, walnut cabinets of the slightly trapezoidal MartinLogan Motion 15i speakers elevate the level of design you'd normally expect in an \$850 pair of speakers. Steering away from a traditional square box (like nearly all of their competitors), they feature brushed aluminum front baffles, with arced grilles – an obvious homage to the curved ESL panels that have made MartinLogan famous with audiophiles the world over. Nice as the grilles look, I've left them off to enjoy the 5.25-inch woofer and the Folded Motion tweeter. These speakers are always conversation pieces, much like my collection of vintage radios. On the rear panel they feature a port for the woofer, and oversized binding posts that do not require a tool to snug down to your favorite speaker cables.

# 1095

Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Michael Laurance

## Listening

Like past Motion speakers, the Motion 15i is easy to place in your room – put them on the stands and go. I end up with the 2-way bookshelf monitors eight feet apart and about 16-inches from the wall behind them, toed-in just slightly. Moments later, music and magic. David Bowie's "Sue," from the Blackstar album instantly proves these speakers can easily decode complex music.

This track is an absolute sonic circus, and the mini Martin Logans throw a massive soundstage in all three directions, with an abundance of separation - not just in the stereo track, but between the instruments themselves. There is individuality in what I'm hearing between the many layers in this heavy mix, all while higher notes swirl above my head.

The aluminum cone, 5.25 – inch woofer demonstrates its true merit playing very smoothly through the busy bass intro on Carly Simon's "You're So Vain." As she whispers "Son of a gun" over that line, the overall balance of the Motion 15i's again shows through. Simon's voice is clear, and a little to the right. Piano, which I find most difficult for speakers of this size to successfully reproduce, comes through distinctly. Even as the song becomes full and loud, the MartinLogans never lose their smoothness.

The level of resolution offered by the Motion 15is begs for a long analog listening session. Tracking through some of my favorite Peter Gabriel and Rush tracks makes for a fantastic experience. Each artist provides a unique challenge, with Peter Gabriels' music dense and complex, with Rush adding thundering dynamics to the complexity. Most budget speakers collapse under this kind of pressure.

*Moving Pictures* is sounding well-balanced on the Motion 15i's, with all instruments coming through evenly. Geddy Lee's Fender bass is punchy and clear, while his vocals roll smooth over the tracks. Neil Peart's drums roll from left to right as he runs the kit. Alex Lifeson's ES-335 is smooth and creamy, just as it should be. Besides my appreciation for the Motion Series, I believe my Rush fandom is showing through here, as well.



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# 1095

Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Michael Laurance

The current generation of MartinLogan Motion speakers builds upon the strengths of the last – these are high performance/high value speakers, clearly benefitting from decades of MartinLogan voicing their electrostatic speakers. The Folded Motion tweeter has a similar, if somewhat smaller feel than a full ESL panel, and the aluminum cone woofer is uncolored, blending well with the tweeter – no small feat. In the end, the MartinLogan 15i is a small speaker that plays larger than its modest size suggests, and looks great doing it.

And at just under \$850 a pair, a fantastic bargain.

[www.martinlogan.com](http://www.martinlogan.com)

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# Playlist: What Our Readers Are Into



- Massive Attack** - *Teardrop*
- Dj shadow** - *Midnight in a Perfect World*
- Mr. Scruff** - *Get a Move On!*
- DJ Cam** - *Love Junkee*
- K&D** - *Bug Powder Dust*
- Zero7** - *In the Waiting Line*
- Mr. Oizo** - *Flat Beat*
- Tricky** - *Murder Weapon*
- Dzihan / Khamian** - *Stiff Jazz*
- Squarepusher** - *Beep Street*
- Herbalizer** - *Something Wicked This Way Comes*
- Daft Punk** - *Harder, Better, Faster*

We're bringing Scott Tetzlaff's Club Mix column back next issue. In the meantime, here's a partial playlist to start you off with.

You can get the rest here:  
<https://open.qobuz.com/playlist/2818845>

no. 2 Scottsdale

TONE Playlists are sponsored by:



## THE NEW LOOK OF PROVEN PERFORMANCE

If a loudspeaker is famous for its performance, why change it? MartinLogan's new **Motion® Series** achieve the same superior performance as previous generations, with lifelike clarity, exceptional accuracy, and dynamic range.

A stylish new enclosure design updates the look, with performance-enhancing internal bracing, reinforced baffles, new fabric grilles, and a choice of three beautiful finishes.

"...the vocals sounded eerily lifelike, and the instrumental timbre was natural, with a depth so palpable I could practically reach my hands into it."

**David Martson**, *The Absolute Sound*, on Motion 60XT

[martinlogan.com](http://martinlogan.com)

# The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...

PS Audio Stellar Phono  
\$2,499

[psaudio.com](http://psaudio.com)

**P**S Audio actually started their product offering with a phono preamplifier, so this isn't as odd as it might seem for a company known lately more for their power conditioners and DACs than analog.

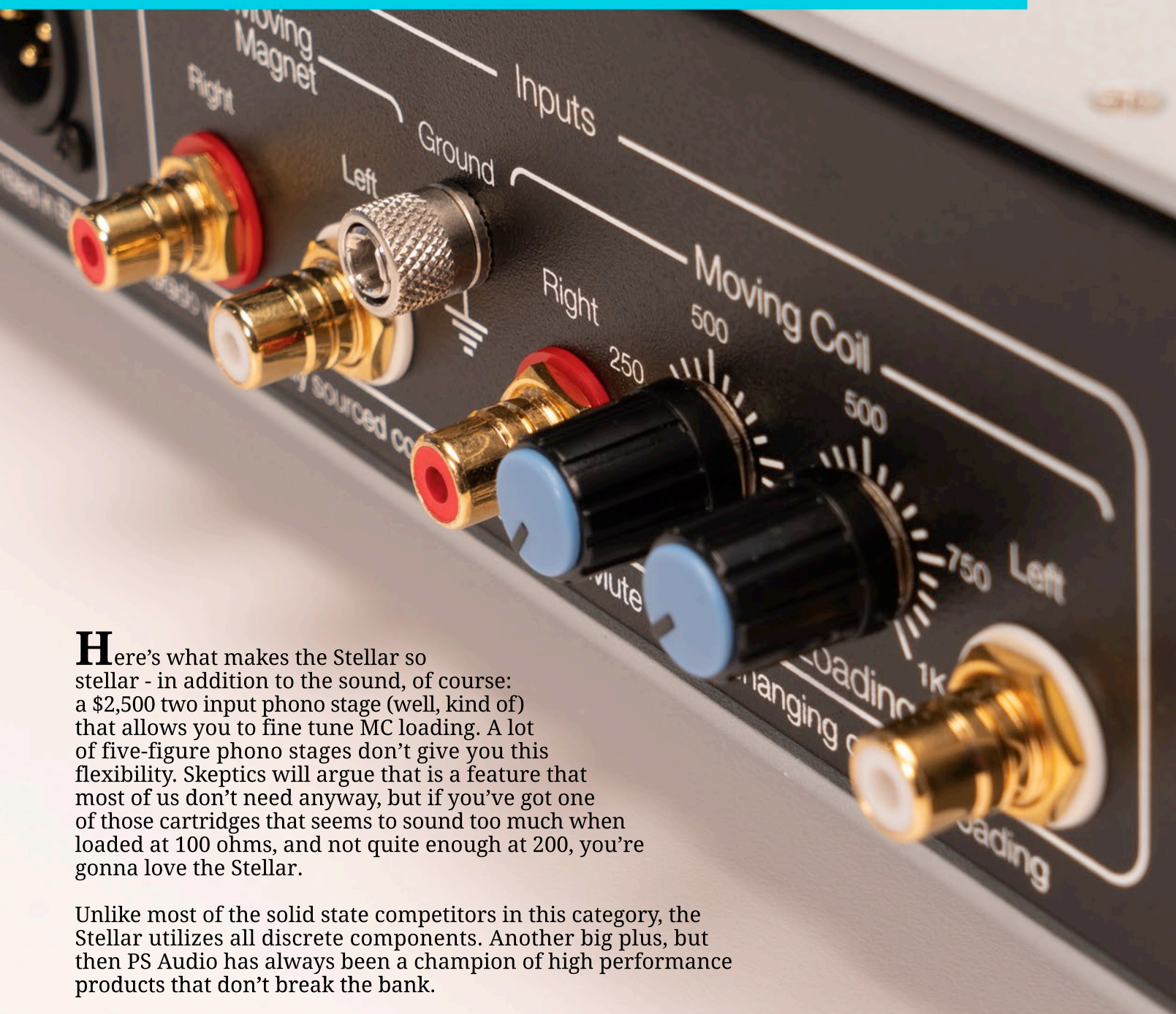
Rest assured, their analog roots run deep.



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# The Journeyman Audiophile

Sound for a bit more than a G...

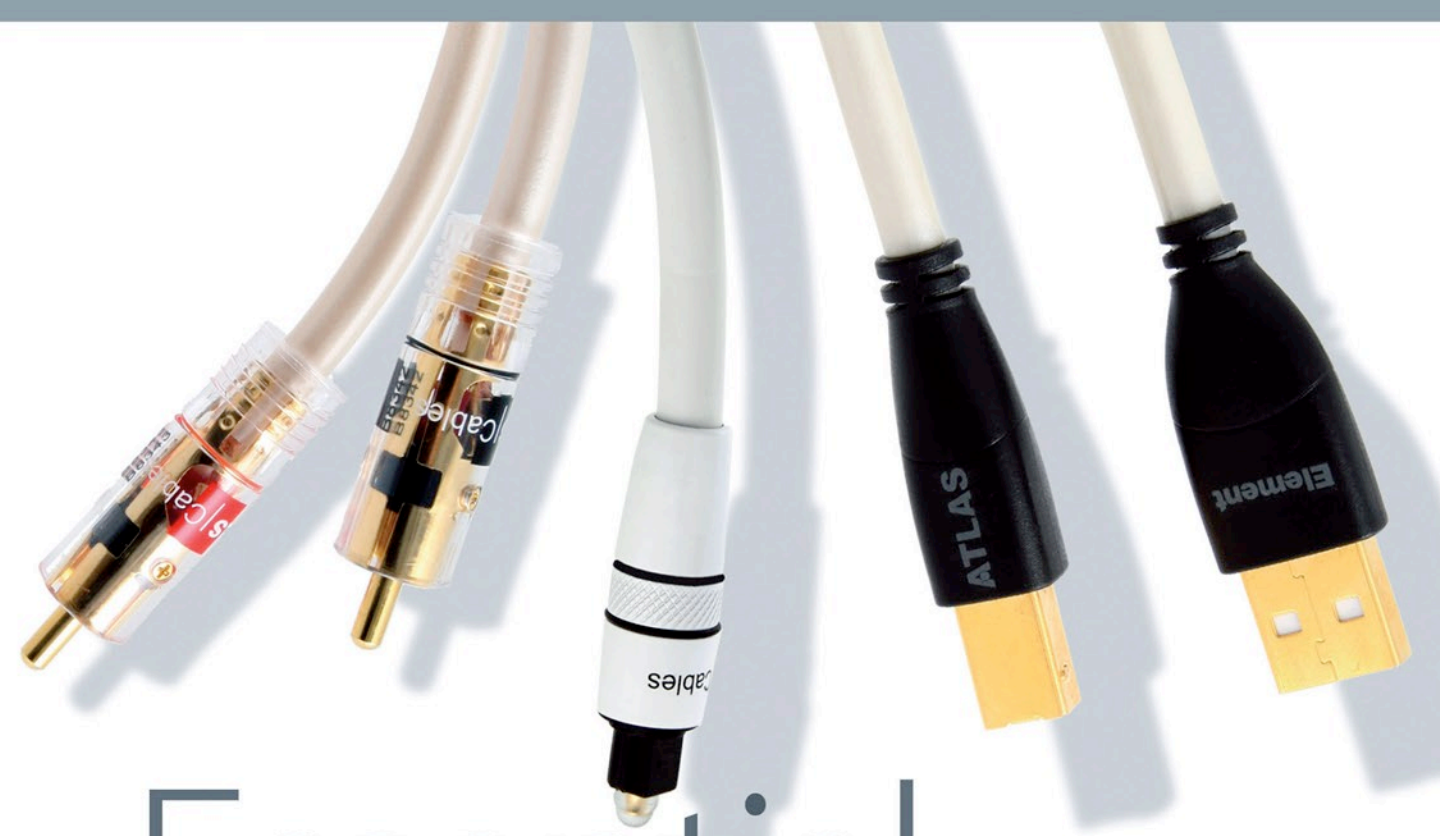


Here's what makes the Stellar so stellar - in addition to the sound, of course: a \$2,500 two input phono stage (well, kind of) that allows you to fine tune MC loading. A lot of five-figure phono stages don't give you this flexibility. Skeptics will argue that is a feature that most of us don't need anyway, but if you've got one of those cartridges that seems to sound too much when loaded at 100 ohms, and not quite enough at 200, you're gonna love the Stellar.

Unlike most of the solid state competitors in this category, the Stellar utilizes all discrete components. Another big plus, but then PS Audio has always been a champion of high performance products that don't break the bank.

Saving the best for last, the sound is class leading, and the Stellar takes a serious shot at some phono products we've heard costing twice as much. Staff member Lawrence Devoe has a full review here on our Cartridge Dude site, so feel free to click through to read a more in-depth analysis.

If you're looking for a quiet, musical, highly adjustable \$2,500 phono stage with two inputs, the Stellar is at the top of a very short list indeed.



# 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.

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

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**ATLAS**  
the performance connection  
[atlascales.com](http://atlascales.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 16th year, I'd say our readers are playful and inquisitive to say the least.

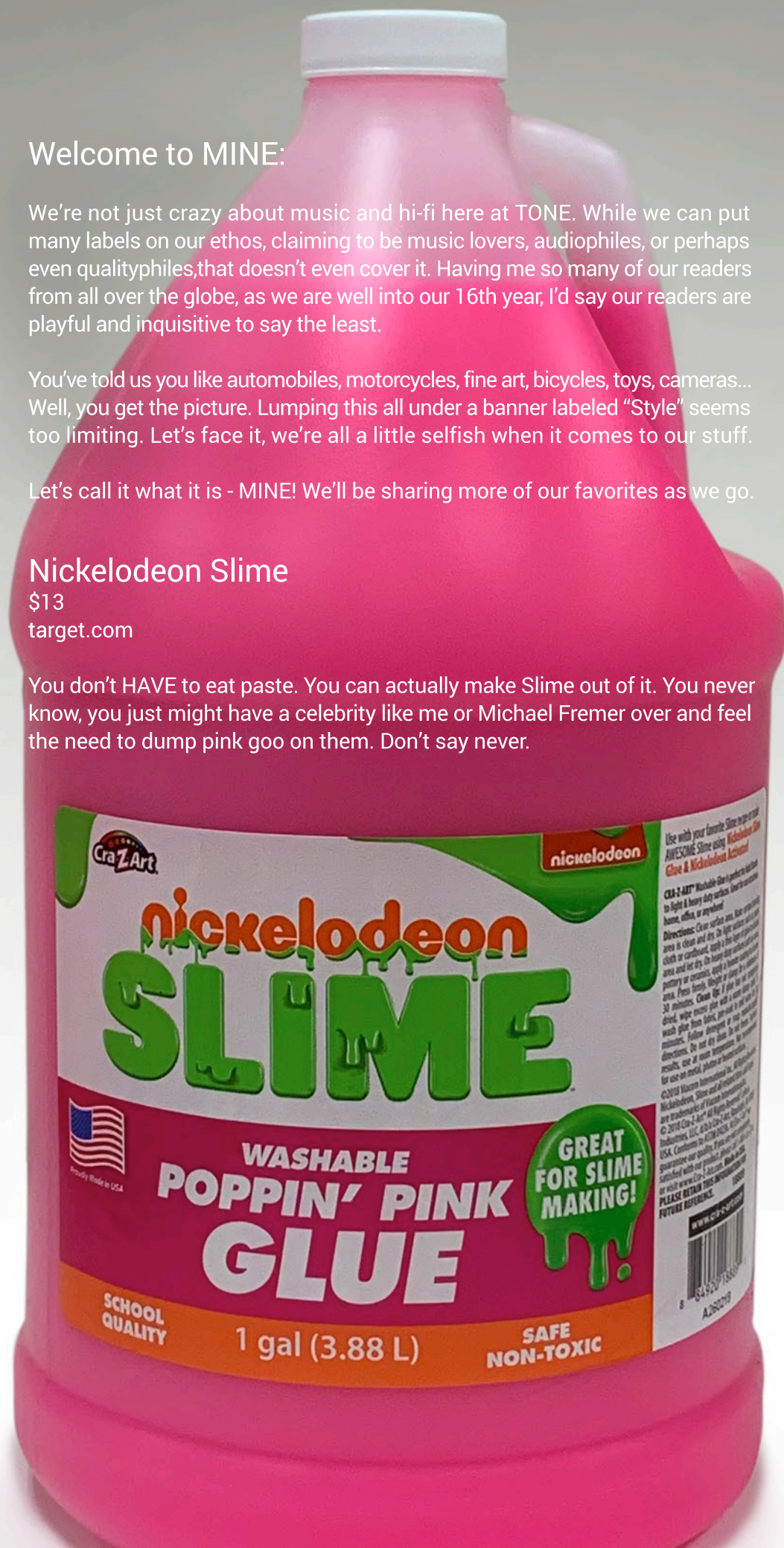
You've told us you like automobiles, motorcycles, fine art, bicycles, toys, cameras... Well, you get the picture. Lumping this all under a banner labeled "Style" seems too limiting. Let's face it, we're all a little selfish when it comes to our stuff.

Let's call it what it is - MINE! We'll be sharing more of our favorites as we go.

### Nickelodeon Slime

\$13  
target.com

You don't HAVE to eat paste. You can actually make Slime out of it. You never know, you just might have a celebrity like me or Michael Fremer over and feel the need to dump pink goo on them. Don't say never.



## 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*

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**MINE: it should be yours**

Motorsport Maps - Track Specific

\$40

[motorsportmaps.com](http://motorsportmaps.com)

If you're an amateur racer, or just an enthusiast, these guides to your favorite racetracks are pretty cool. They offer great insight in to track dynamics, and give you a good idea at how to approach the corkscrew, in this case!



WEATHERTECH LAGUNA SECA  
**RACE TRACK GUIDE**

**MINE: it should be yours**



### Voigtlander 40mm f1.4 Nokton

\$399  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Leica cameras are wonderful things. Objects of desire. Usually out of reach financially. Yet, the M8 and M9 cameras are becoming realistically priced on the secondary market, and if you don't have to have f1.2 APO lenses, this is a camera you can have a lot of fun with, because it forces you to take pictures *the Leica way*. That means slow and deliberate.

In a world of "fixing it in Photoshop," you'll either dig the Leica way or pass. If you're still on the bus, or thinking about getting on for a ride, the Voigtlander 40mm lens is a nice way to get used to the functionality of the camera without a substantial cash investment. It's reasonably sharp, free of distortion and throws backgrounds out of focus nicely. Our editor becomes visually angered by the word bokeh, so there you go.

This is a great daily driver, and considering you can probably find an M8 body for under a thousand bucks these days, you can wander the streets with a Leica, not worrying about the zombies chopping your hand off, as they might for a new M10 with 50mm f1.2 APO combination.

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Willing to stand in front of vulcanized rubber pucks, shot at high speeds, hockey goalies are known for being slightly eccentric—and for having strong personalities.

And there's no better way for netminders to express themselves than by way of their equipment. Scott Battram has been helping 'tenders achieve that goal for decades. His Canadian-built pads, gloves, and blockers epitomize custom and feature the finest details, graphics, and color schemes in the biz.

Just look at this Misfits-themed setup. Then let your imagination run wild.

Glove combos  
begin at \$900 Canadian

# MINE: it should be yours

## Lego CREATOR™ Fiat 500

\$99

[lego.com/fiat500](http://lego.com/fiat500)

Ok, ok. If you've been reading TONE for any length of time, you know we love Legos. And you know our publisher loves Fiat 500s – new and old. We thought we were crazy and that it was “just us,” but it turns out a lot of our readers, young and old share our passion for the colorful plastic bricks. (though not as many for Fiats...) Maybe it's that OCD that we all seem to have a little bit of, maybe it's the sheer fun.

With all the excitement over the various Star Wars kits, and now even the apartment of the Friends show being immortalized in bricks, something a little more quaint – the classic Fiat 500. Not the new one, but the original.

If you've ever owned one of these little cruisemobiles, chances are it still has a soft spot in your heard. Chances are equally good that it's rusted away somewhere. These days on Bring a Trailer, a very clean Fiat 500 can fetch upwards of \$15,000. So here's a nice example that you can build yourself, and re-live the memory without the pain. If you look close, Lego got the engine compartment pretty close to the real thing!



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# MINE: it should be yours



**Braun BNE001BK**  
\$70  
amazon.com

Way back before we had smartphones with calculator apps, we had actual calculators as standalone devices. By the mid 1980s when Braun's Dieter Rams designed the (soon to become legendary) Braun ET66-calculators, like digital watches, had become bloated, geeky, and full of buttons.

For those merely needing to perform basic mathematical tasks, the capability of the ET66 fit the bill perfectly. And for those of us valuing aesthetics with an equal fervor, nothing else would do. You could easily head over to your local Target and buy a blister wrapped, basic calculator for \$4.99, but it was a throwaway device that probably would be lost or malfunction before the original battery expired.

The ET66 was a calculator for life, earning a spot in MOMA's permanent collection. Vintage collectors still readily pay up to \$100 for a perfectly working original. Like some of today's finest audio components, we could have a heated discussion about the merits of the original vs. current issue.

But there's no argument that this product fits the phrase "form follows function" better than most. And it's no coincidence that the layout of the ET66 is the model for the calculator app on the iPhone.



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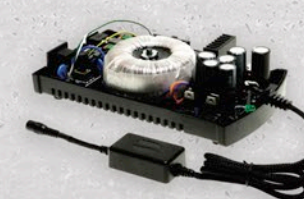
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# MINE: it should be yours



**16-inch MacBook Pro**  
(starting at..) \$2,399  
[apple.com](http://apple.com)

Space may not always be the final frontier, but it is often an agonizing choice between weight and functionality.

Visual content producers always need more desktop real estate, and often the worst part of working mobile is that tiny screen.

Many of us still lament the passing of the 17-inch MacBook, but that was one heavy bit of hardware to lug on a transatlantic flight - nearly 7 pounds! Laugh at that until you've spent two hours in line at Heathrow, waiting to clear customs.

The new MacBook Pro is fantastic, with power only dreamed of a few years ago, a full Retina screen, and it only weighs 4.3 pounds.

That's progress.



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# MINE: it should be yours

## The Grypmat

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grypmat.com

Even if you're not an automotive enthusiast, the Grypmat is a great way to keep your tools sorted when working. It comes in a squishy, sticky, rubbery material that won't scratch anything, and stays right where you put it. Plus, the bright orange color makes it easy to find in a sea of visual noise. And if you are a car enthusiast, you'll love that a spare 10mm socket is included with every Grypmat!



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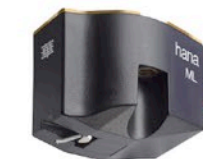
**Cayin**  
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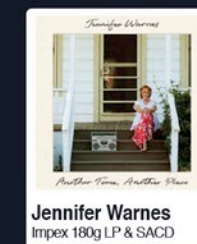
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# MINE: it should be yours

## PowerUp 3.0

\$49.99

poweruptoys.com

As a kid, I obsessed over my paper airplanes. They served as my poor-man's pilot license. While I don't make many paper planes these days, the PowerUp 3.0 rekindles many fond memories. The PowerUp 3.0 allows its owner to motorize his or her airborne origami and remote-control it via a Bluetooth connection and an iPhone or Android app.

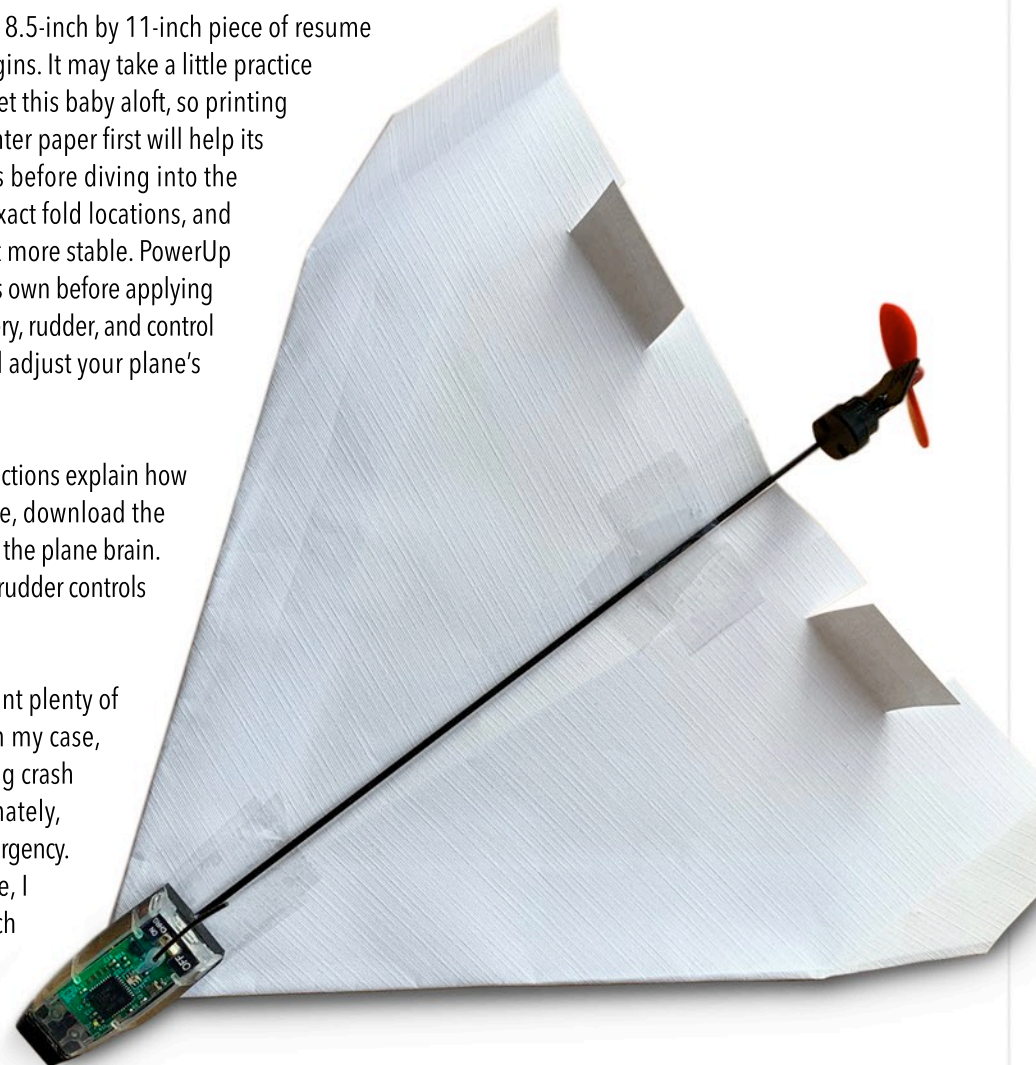
The PowerUp kit includes a couple of paper templates, and folding instructions, to create a PowerUp-compatible airplane. Each folded flyer offers ratings that indicate the resulting airplane's maneuverability, battery longevity, and potential speed. While the "Cardinal" configuration provides the slowest rate of battery consumption, one must sacrifice some agility and speed. I opted for the "Invader" with better maneuverability and, of course, the cool-and-clandestine sounding name. PowerUp's website offers additional templates in case neither option is satisfactory, and you prefer to personalize a tiny stealth bomber. They also sell other accessories to customize your beloved aircraft.

After printing the Invader template onto an 8.5-inch by 11-inch piece of resume paper for durability, the folding process begins. It may take a little practice to obtain the precision folding needed to get this baby aloft, so printing the plane template onto a thin piece of printer paper first will help its creator get the hang of the folding process before diving into the "good paper." Templates show a user the exact fold locations, and where to put tape to make the final product more stable. PowerUp notes that the plane must be airworthy on its own before applying the integrated motor, USB rechargeable battery, rudder, and control module. Be sure to do some test flights and adjust your plane's rear elevators as needed.

With a flight-ready papercraft in hand, instructions explain how to affix the motor assembly. Once complete, download the app which facilitates a reliable connection to the plane brain. Once prepared, you'll have both throttle and rudder controls at your fingertips.

Be careful when flying your plane. You'll want plenty of space, so an outdoor airport serves best. In my case, the very first flight resulted in a cartwheeling crash that broke the rear propeller in two. Fortunately, PowerUp includes a spare for just such an emergency. After sliding the new prop onto the spindle, I readied myself to juice the throttle and reach for the skies once again.

-Rob Johnson



TONE101.055



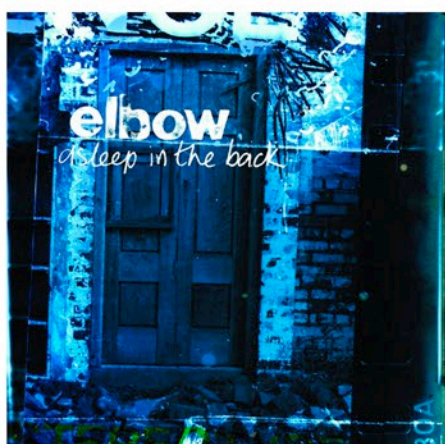
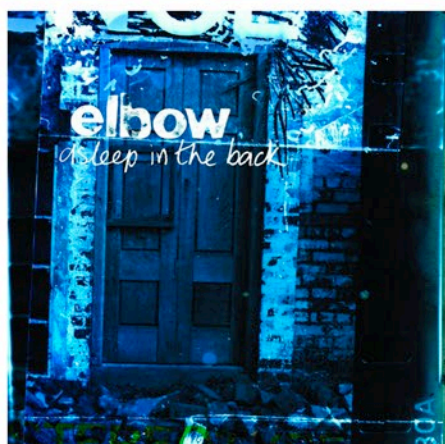
She told me I need  
to listen more.

The  
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# Can't Get It Out of My Head

Covid-19 Quarantine Edition by Emily Duff



As I write this as I am “sheltering in place” in my 340 square foot apartment on Hudson Street in Greenwich Village, NYC with my children, husband, hound dog and a well curated arsenal of guitars I call “friends.” As I type, there are refrigerated trucks idling outside of our city’s hospitals housing the corpses, now capitulated to the virus because the morgues are all full. As I sit here thinking about music I remember my friend, Steve, a gifted musician, who died this morning from coronavirus. And at this very moment, I hear the distinct call of a cardinal at my window trying to tell me that Spring is here and that I should be pleased. Hopeful. That sound, on any other day, pre-virus, would be hopeful. Today, along with the 9/11 blue sky I spy past the bird-feeder, it feels like an irony too difficult to bear. But the “music” of the cardinal persists and suddenly I feel my spirit lifted.

## My tears dried, and I smiled.

That damned bird reminds me that where there is music, there is always hope. There is always life and there is always another day to look forward to another song because songs are the stories of all of our lives. Universal themes set to rhythm and melody. With a little luck and a few genius riffs, and drum solos with vocals that reach deep inside and touch us, we are changed and we are healed. So here are the songs that I am using to help me cope and get me up on my feet swearing that I will, with every last healthy cell in my body, never give up being HOPEFUL. Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay tuned in to those frequencies and tones that calm and cure.

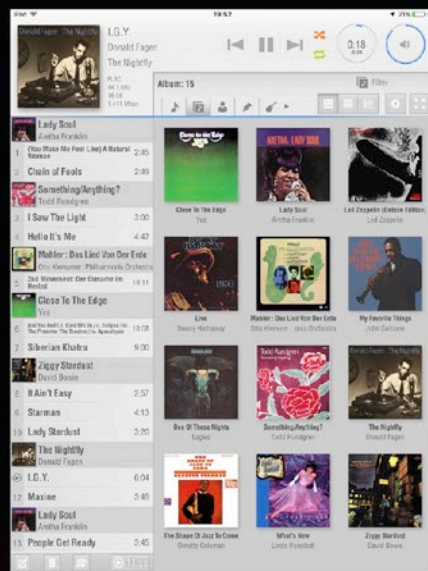
*Asleep in the Back* by Elbow - The entire record strikes a chord in my soul that turns my fear buttons off and flips the faith switch in my head. Released in 2001, I first heard the record in 2002 when I was in Melbourne Australia. It’s one of those records you want to drive around to. Sonically it’s landscape and emotion in the same way that I look at Talk Talk’s record, *Spirit of Eden*. A concept album about birth, this life affirming record must be consumed as a whole meal, and it is delicious. Bon appetite!



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# ESOTERIC



Esoteric SoundStream App

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

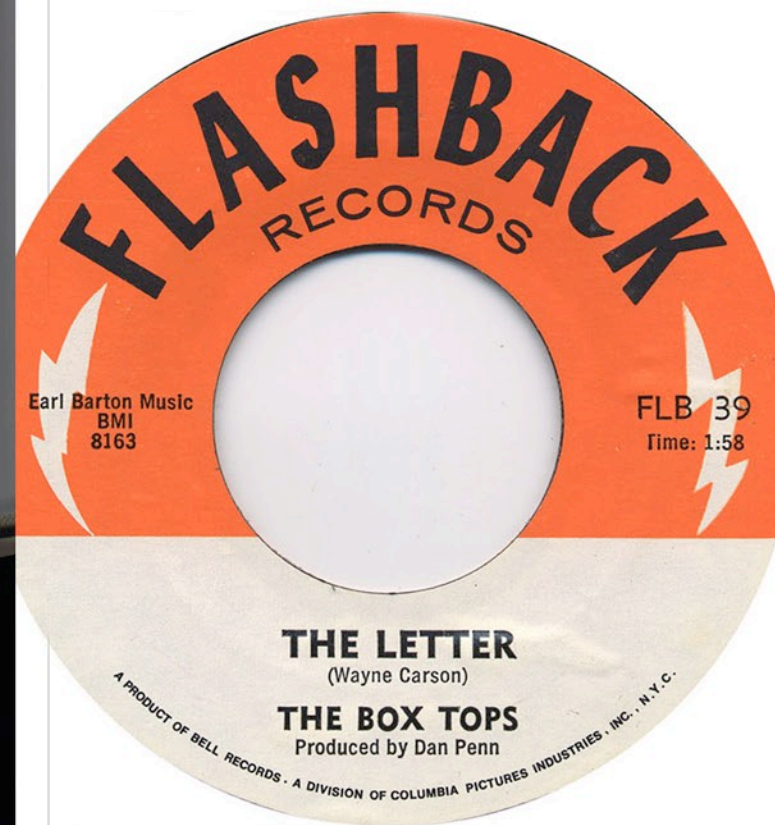
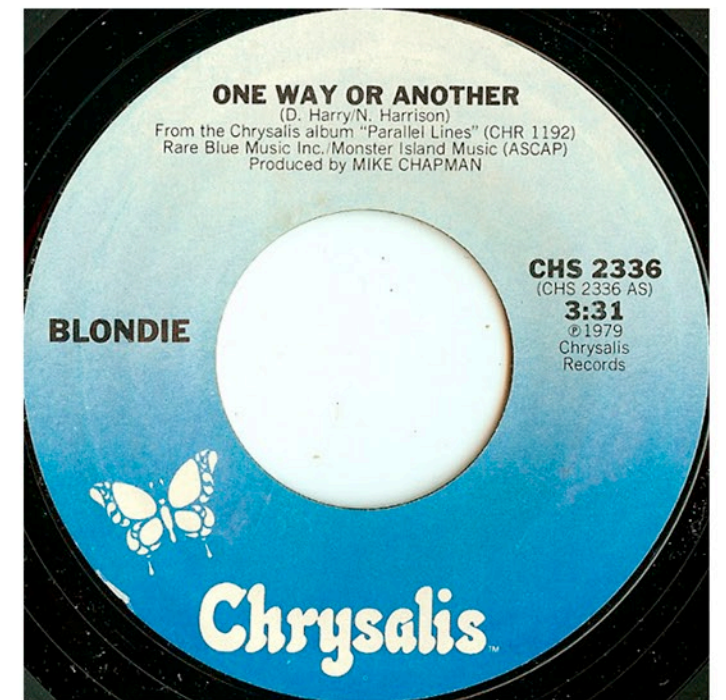
*No wonder TONE is recognizing the N-01 as the "TONE Product Of the Year" for Digital. We Thank the folks at TONE for this honor.*

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

## Can't Get It Out of My Head

by Emily Duff

"Hold on" by Alabama Shakes is a white knuckle anthem I refer to as a mantra. Brittany Howard's vocal combined with that riff, are so solid you can jump on top of them like a trampoline and get completely high. This track puts my head back on pretty quick, and I recommend it to anyone who feels like they are teetering on the edge. Life affirming and a perfect rock/pop hit mixed so that the "mids" keep you levitating with belief. Try it!



Blondie's "One Way or Another" brings the listener into a New York style new wave time machine straight to the legendary CBGBs. You can almost feel that apprehension in your body knowing that you need to pee and cannot bear to enter that toxic rat trap of a bathroom where one of my old friends most definitely contracted something not as deadly as what we are facing today...or maybe not. This "hit" has impending creepy doom all over it, but still manages to feel positive AF. Straight out of the glory days of NYC, it gives me girly chills every time. That Debbie Harry is still making great music and looks the way she does at 70 years old, comforts this 50 something NYC rocker who played her first show at CBGB long long ago.

"The Letter" by The Box Tops might be a strange song to turn to in times of trouble but coming in at 1:47 (the shortest Number 1 single in history), it allows me to sing-a-long at the top of my lungs in a way that feels like American Bandstand Dick Clark's my best friend jukebox therapy. 16 year old Alex Chilton's vocal should be hailed as one of the greatest recorded vocals of all time. 1967 Memphis groove for days, written by Wayne Carson and produced by the legendary Dan Penn, this classic single just personifies blue-eyed soul at it's best and never fails to make me feel just like the title of the B side single, "Happy Times."

### One way or another, We Will Get Through This, too.

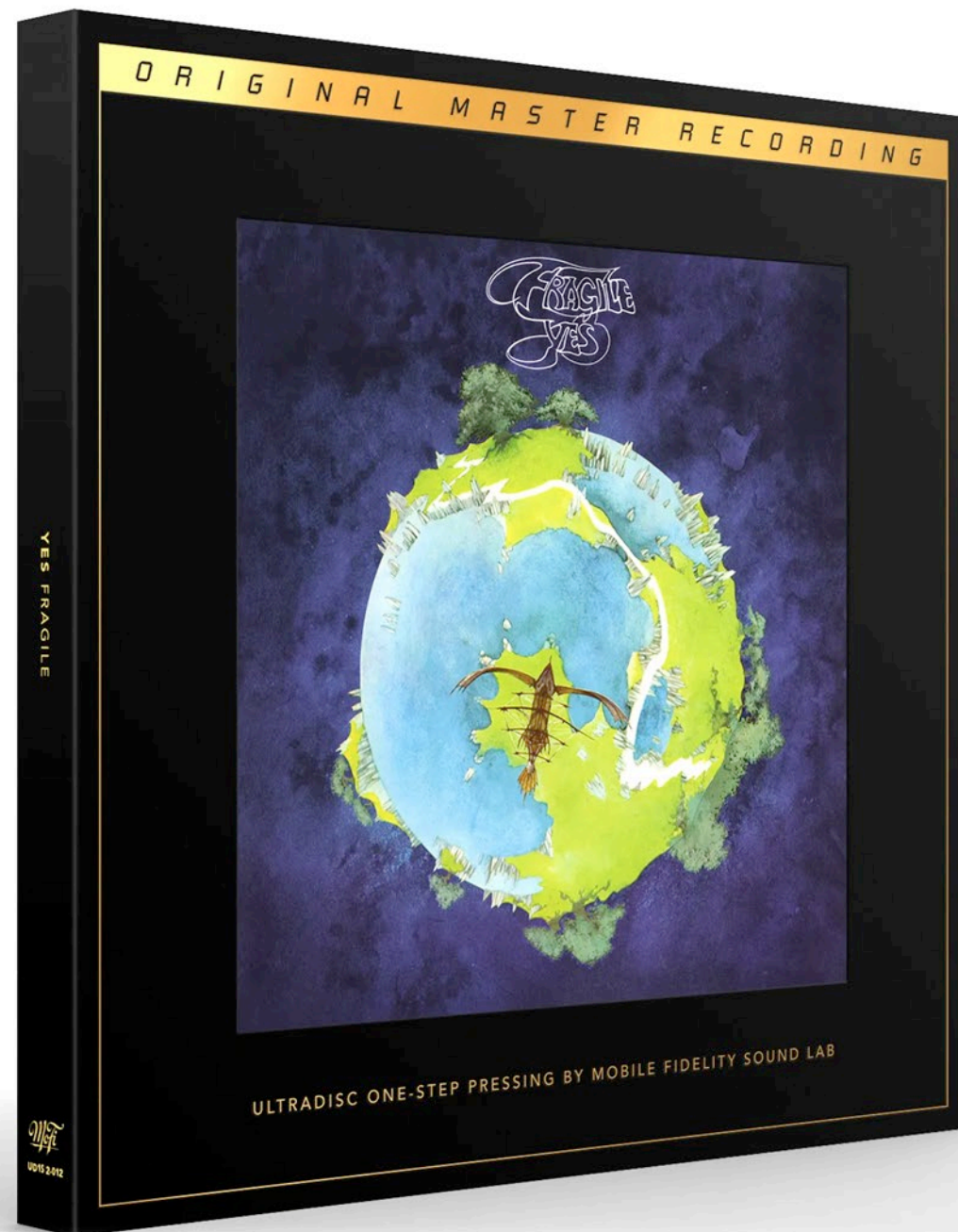
# In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

## Yes, *Fragile*

Gulity as charged on the “Hey Boomer” jokes. But I have to say that being around to see Yes in their prime, perform this record was pretty exciting.

Now as one of MoFi’s ONE STEP pressings, this truly is the ultimate copy of this prog classic. If this is your thing, get one while you can.



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In case you missed it on the TONE website!



### McIntosh MAC7200

\$7,500  
mcintoshlabs.com

Oh, this may look like a current McIntosh integrated, but look closer - It says *receiver* on that glowing front panel. With 200 watts per channel, a full functioning DAC (that can take the DSD stream directly from a McIntosh DAC so equipped), phono stage and an AM/FM tuner, the MAC7200 rules the formats!

Throw in those big, blue meters, add a pair of speakers and a turntable to round out the system. It's even ROON ready, so nothing is out of reach. A compact, yet still heavy powerhouse. Read our in-depth review here.

# Engineered for Reality

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Wireworld Cable Technology was founded with the unique mission of perfecting audio cables through objective listening tests. Far more revealing than normal cable comparisons, these tests compare cables to virtually perfect direct connections between components. Robert Harley, editor of *The Absolute Sound*, described this "Cable Polygraph" as, "illuminating insight into exactly how each cable affects the sound."

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Cable Polygraph testing led to the DNA Helix conductor geometry (US Patent No. 8,569,627). Layered flat conductors with parallel strands prevent the 'eddy current' losses caused by twisted and solid conductors, providing superior preservation of musical detail, dimensionality and dynamics.

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In case you missed it on the TONE website!



### The Nagra Classic Preamplifier

\$17,500  
nagraaudio.com

Often Nagra's HD line gets all the glory, and they are the best of the best.

For those who still love the form factor that made this Swiss company a legend, the Classic series is equally incredible, yet in a much more compact form factor.

We've spent quite a bit of time with the Classic series and are very smitten with the range.

[Click here to read the full review.](#)

TONE101.065

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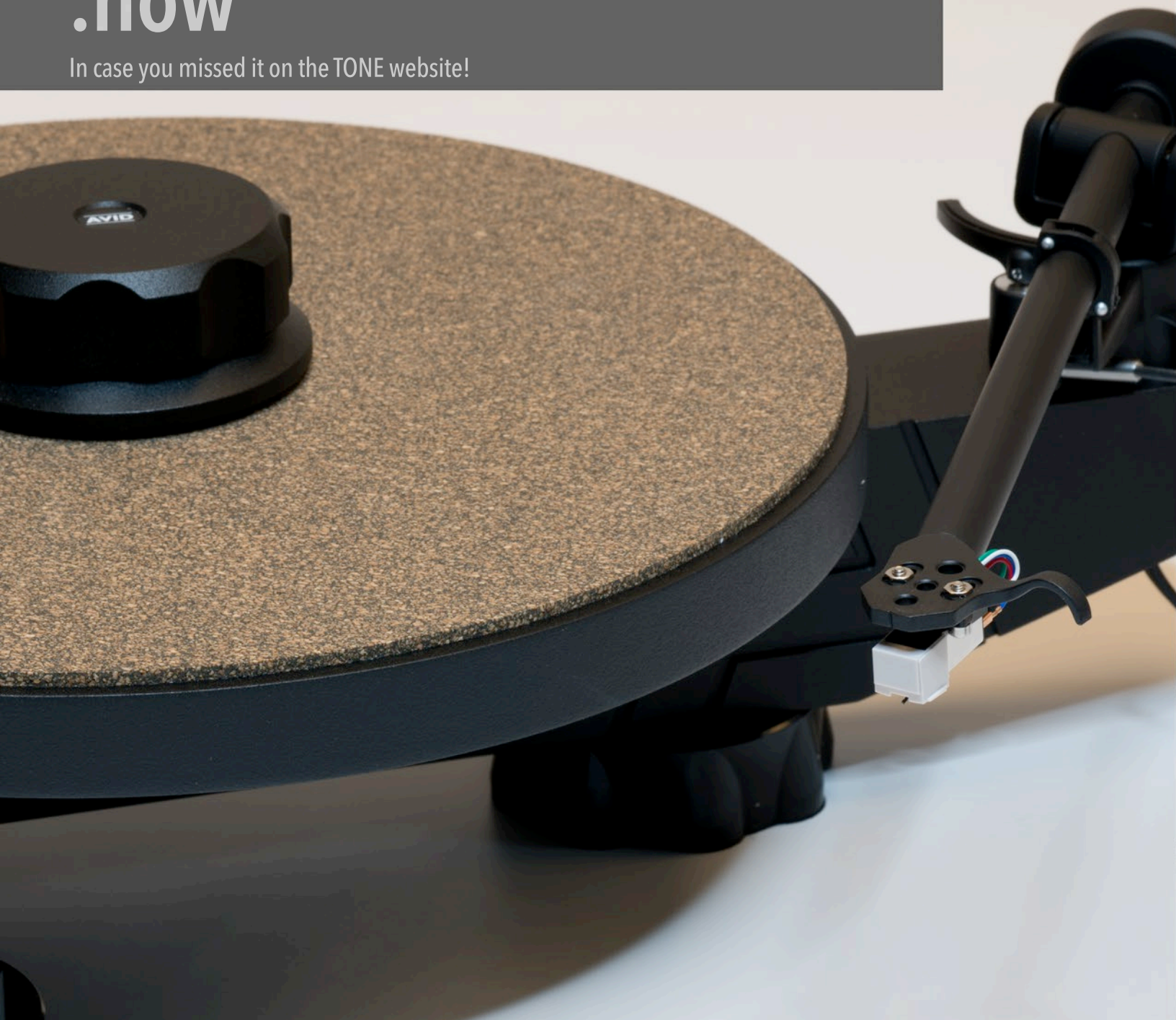


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In case you missed it on the TONE website!



### AVID Ingenium Plug and Play

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avidhifi.com

Avid's "entry" level table still provides a level of data retrieval that you'd expect from a much more expensive model. We've got a full review here.

And if you want more performance, they offer an aluminum platter upgrade! Yes, it's fantastic, and yes you can read about that here!

# Tone Imports

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TONEIMPORTS.COM





# Shanon Says...

Audio musings from the Great White North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff



## McIntosh MA352 \$6,500

[mcintoshlabs.com](http://mcintoshlabs.com)

Christmas came a little late for this girl, on a bitterly cold Ontario January day when the McIntosh MA352 landed on my doorstep. A proud owner of its predecessor, the MA252, my goal was to compare them from an avid listener's perspective.

The MA352 is indeed formidable, with its polished stainless steel chassis, monogrammed heat sinks, and caged, glowing tubes, lit from underneath with green LEDs. Keeping with the timeless McIntosh motif of glass faceplate and big blue meters making a bold statement. The massive heat sinks barely get above tepid even during extended play, but they do need room to breathe.

Having a bigger footprint than the MA252,

measuring 17-1/2" (44.5cm) x 9-7/8" (25.1cm) x 20-1/2" (52.1cm) and weighing in at a hefty 66 lbs (29.9 kg), it might just take two people to safely lift and move into place. Keep the weight in mind in regards to your rack.

The thoughtfully packed box also includes the remote control, power cable, owner's manual, tubes and cages safely in protective foam. It took about an hour to totally unpack the MA352, drop it into my current home audio system, and power it on. Moderately priced at \$6,500 US (\$8,700 CA), there is a lot of value for those wanting classic McIntosh look, feel and sound, with plug and play convenience.

### Bigger indeed

McIntosh takes the best aspects of the MA252 and makes them even better. The MA352, with a preamp section containing a pair of 12AX7A and a pair of 12AT7 tubes mates to a direct-coupled solid-state amplifier pushing out 200W at 8 Ohms (320W at 4 Ohms.)

Stopping right here would be enough, yet the MA352 offers more inputs than the 252, with two balanced and three unbalanced. A headphone jack is on the front panel, and in addition to the same gold-plated speaker binding posts featured on the MA252, a pair of subwoofer outputs, a preamplifier out and a home theater pass through also lurk on the rear face.

The MA352 has the same patented Power Guard technology protecting the MA252, but McIntosh steps it up with the addition of their fuse-less short-circuit protection, Sentry Monitor, and high drive headphone amp with Headphone Crossfeed Director. On the front panel, small knobs allow manual adjustment of the 5-band tone control for total sound customization with the flexibility of +12 dB. The MA352 remembers the settings for each input, including the option of adjusting gain by +6 dB. The inclusion of data ports for source component connection is a nice addition. The handy remote is bigger than the one for the MA252 but without being chunky or challenging to use. Not only are 'on the fly' adjustments to features such as volume, balance, input and gain from your listening chair seamless, but you can have control over additional components with one remote.

### Setup and run in

Out of the box, the MA352 has impressive clarity, but is slightly constricted, as most brand new components are. After about 100 hours it goes from great to really great, with more air throughout the tonal range, more smoothness on top and a better defined low frequency register as well. The MA252 is the first McIntosh product containing tubes to include Power Guard technology. This innovative design monitors the output signal for over driving and makes "real time" micro adjustments to the input signal to prevent clipping that could potentially ruin your speakers. The MA352 steps it up including Sentry Monitor which shuts down the output stage before the current draw goes beyond safe levels and then resets automatically. When Power Guard is activated, the tubes will flash the same amber color as seen during the 15 seconds of tube warm at start up and then return to their normal green.

Rush seems perfect to push this technology and my Focal 826s a bit. Ok, so I play a lot of Rush and I like it loud. Letting loose on some hard rocking tracks and scaring my cat in the process, every attempt to find distortion or weakness is unsuccessful. There is a brief 'holy shit' moment when cranking out a 96/24 version of 'Witchhunt' and Neil Peart pounding the skins makes tubes flash orange in tempo. The quality of the sound never falters. The 352 remains stunningly clear and detailed with loads of power to spare. With the MA352's impressive 0.03% THD and IMD, you'll be hard pressed to find any distortion even at window shaking volume.

### Supporting cast

For this review, an Acoustic Solid Vintage Exclusive TT with Hana ML is used for the majority of the vinyl, paired with a Gold Note PH10 and PSU10. All digital music is put through a Chord Qutest DAC in the highest resolution possible. For the onboard MM phono stage, a Rega RP6 fitted with a Grado Prestige Gold MI is used. For those who implement low output MC carts, the only drawback is that the MA352's phono is only for MM. Higher output MC carts (0.6mV) are compatible with this excellent phono stage, making this truly an all-in-one set up. However, the MA352 handily amplifies the MI cart with all the dynamics, separation and detail possible. Some time with revealing Focal Elear open-backed phones offers an excellent listening experience with even more precise detail, separation and total immersion into the music than my standard rig – this is a very engaging headphone amplifier.



# Shanon Says...

Audio musings from the Great White North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff

**T**rying out the Home Theater pass through on a 4K TV, a pair of Focal 716s and some music related documentaries is easy to accomplish and makes the MA352 a real team player for those having to incorporate everything into one system. This seems like the perfect time to take the tone controls for a spin, and they are indeed a blessing for less than phenomenal recordings. Try em', you'll be glad you did!

## Final impressions

Going back and forth between vinyl and HD FLAC selections gives the MA352 a chance to shine. Comparing tracks from Warren G's, *Regulate...G Funk Era*, Beck's *Hyperspace*, Nick Drake's *Five Leaves Left*, and Supertramp's *Crisis What Crisis* all reinforce the MA352's dynamic ability. Digital HD versions of Eva Cassidy's "Autumn Leaves," Pink Floyd's "Fearless," and Sarah Vaughan's "Whatever Lola Wants," do a better job at showing off the inner nuance (long a McIntosh hallmark) this amplifier is capable of.

While the MA352 can play loud on command, two things are readily apparent – it does an equally engaging job at low volume, and the combination is resolving enough that both digital and analog files are rendered with equal ability. The emotional component I find so important is here in full force.

The most noticeable difference between these two great amplifiers comes down to the extra power (and resulting headroom) the MA352 packs. This difference is apparent when the Focal 826s are switched out for a pair of Focal Aria 936s. With the MA252, the details and separation are just as life-like as with the smaller 826s, but the bass and midrange are a bit thin. Although the highs are sweet and clear via the smaller amplifier, the authority of the MA352 is more engaging. Even the mids are more enjoyable via the bigger amplifier, with more demanding speakers. For those that ask, that would be the sage advice I'd offer – more sensitive speakers, you'll probably be fine with the MA252, but if you really like to rock and have somewhat less sensitive speakers, the MA352 is the one that will make you happy

The MA352 has an immersive quality, a focused yet detailed warm sound that makes it easy for a planned hour or two listening session quickly turn into a six or eight hour one. I found this out quickly, playing album after album and losing track of time, more than once. With its short break in time, flexible options, and incredible sound, the MA352 is a great value for anyone looking for a powerful integrated amp with unique McIntosh style.



TONE100.037



# 212/SE



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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

## The Manley Absolute Headphone Amp Head-Fi's Fox Terrier

\$4,499  
manley.com

If you happen to be a dog person and you've ever owned or spent time with a Fox Terrier, you already know where I'm going with this. If you aren't, Fox Terriers are spunky yet robust little dogs that pack the maximum amount of dog fun into a compact package. Just when you thought I'd be making a car reference, I fooled you.

Ha!

Absolute is an excellent name for this headphone amplifier because it does absolutely everything.

*Enjoy the Experience*



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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

If at first blush, you find the shape unconventional, it's meant to be a headphone stand too!

How cool is that? (And pretty darn thoughtful too.) At \$4,495, the Absolute is priced on the low end of premium headphone amplifiers. Seriously, this one is all you need, with outputs for standard 1/4" plugs and balanced, the Absolute powers anything you can connect up. Even better, the Absolute can be used as a two-channel linestage, with two line-level inputs, which is enough for nearly anyone with a DAC and a phono stage to build a mega two-channel system around. Grab a Manley power amp, your favorite speakers, and rock on.

So, you're either getting an awesome headphone stage with a free preamp, or vice versa. The Absolute is worth the asking price as either, offering such high performance and flexibility that I'd suggest buying it as a preamplifier, even if you don't listen to headphones at all. Besides, you know, once you have the capability, headphone curiosity will get the better of you.

## Options, options, options!

Fox Terriers like to go for walks, chase balls, jump around, do whatever looks like fun. They aren't one-trick dogs, and neither is the Absolute. The level of adjustability is incredible, and this is what makes the Absolute so easy to enjoy whatever headphones you might be using. Those with diverse headphone collections will really appreciate adjustments for feedback, impedance, and tone controls.

Before you get grouchy about tone controls, remember - Manley makes some of the finest studio equalizers in the business, and their expertise is in full effect here.

Considering how much variation there is with all the different phones, you're going to love the tone controls, once you take them for a drive. The Grado P-2000s are a little bright for me, and the original Audeze LCD-2s benefit from goosing the bottom ever so slightly. Everyone else, you're out of luck, but with the Absolute, you've got a much bigger headphone sandbox to play in.

Honestly, EveAnna Manely does a way better job at explaining all the technical aspects of the Absolute, [here on the Manley website](#).





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## INSPIRED PERFORMANCE

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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

**T**his where all the fine print lurks fully describing this engineering masterpiece to the molecular level. And I'll be darned if that fox terrier EveAnna Manely doesn't have a couple of great words in the copy that I needed to drag out my dictionary for! Arf!

But seriously, this is no me-too headphone amplifier. Even if you don't read all the technical stuff that went into this product (and you should), you merely need to touch it. It feels like a ten thousand dollar piece. A ten thousand dollar masterpiece. In silver, copper, and black, with hand-rubbed burl wood accents. It appeals to the qualityphile as well as the audiophile, and we haven't even started listening yet.

The minute you flip the switch, the cool factor goes through the roof when the tubes come to life. Again, common-sense rules the day with a tube complement (2-12AX7s and 4-6BQ5s) that won't break the bank when it's time to retube. Of course, you can roll tubes to your heart's content, but this time, I just sat back, enjoying the Absolute with the factory tubes.

### And more options

If the OCD baiting options of tube rolling don't get you, the ability to twiddle the tone controls, change output loading for low, medium, or high Z phones, and choose single-ended or push-pull class-A operation will. Fortunately, with headphones, you don't have to get up, mosey to the preamp, flip switches and head back to your listening chair to hear the result. I'm guessing that fully exploring the settings the Absolute has to offer will result in severe productivity loss on more than one occasion.

The majority of my listening sessions were with the Focal Utopias, an old-school pair of original Audeze LCD-2s, and the current Diana Phi's. But I'll come clean - I really love the slightly warm, slightly vintage yet up to date sound of Manley electronics. So does David Crosby.

And a gaggle of engineers around the world. There's a natural, organic feel to the Absolute that I can listen to headphones nearly all day. And I'm not a headphone guy. That's why I'm making the Manley Absolute my new reference.

### Sonic splendor

Rather than go on and on, listing tracks you neither know nor like, we'll leave it at this: as mentioned above, the overall balance of the Absolute is one of slight warmth, yet with tons of resolution. It's a much harder trick to get headphones to disappear on your head than speakers in a room, yet this is the one thing the Absolute does better than nearly every headphone amplifier I've had the chance to audition. And that's the highest compliment I can pay it.

Be careful, you'll forget you have headphones on and pull your Absolute out of the rack! I'm not kidding. Even my old Koss Pro-4aas that I've had since high school worked great with the Absolute, delivering a better performance than a tattered pair of 45-year-old headphones should. Yep, I'm an old dog.



TONE101.080



# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

"...these things sound just as elegant as they look.  
Or is it, they look just as elegant as they sound?  
Either way, the results are genuinely impressive."  
High Def Digest



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## Speaking of speakers

While the Absolute is worth every penny Manley Labs asks for it, it's the bargain of the year if you use it as a line preamplifier for a two-channel system. This is precisely what I did next, putting it in my living room system, which at the time was sporting a \$140,000 pair of Focal Stella Utopias, dCS Bartok DAC, and a PrimaLuna EVO400 power amplifier. Wowowowow.

The Focals, even after over 1000 hours of break-in, are a bit forward in too small of a listening room. Yet with the helpful adjustments that Focal provides, those tone controls on the Absolute allowed me to dial it all in to perfection. Should you use your Absolute in this context, you'll love the remote that is included. When unboxing the Absolute, before I realized you could use it as a preamplifier, I had a big question mark floating over my head. Like that odd clue you get reading a Stephen King novel that doesn't make sense till the end of the book, when it all makes sense. And if you don't use it as a preamp, you can certainly put it to use messing with whoever is using your Absolute.

I told you Fox Terriers were mischievous.



“Rega’s new P10 is by far the company’s most sophisticated, refined, quiet, and subtle-sounding turntable yet.”

Michael Fremer, *Stereophile*, March 2020

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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

The World Needs a Pair!  
CEntrance Cerene DB Headphones

\$179  
[centrance.com](http://centrance.com)

**I**f you've been paying attention to the personal listening market for the last few years, you've noticed how damn expensive headphones have become. \$1,000 bucks for a set is nothing today. While I've got nothing against the four-figure phones, that's out of reach for a lot of music lovers. Unfortunately, just like the traditional world of 2-channel audio, products priced at the entry-level of the spectrum are too often disappointing.

# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

## Excellent first impression.

Not here. These phones grabbed me the minute I put the Cerene DB phones on to audition a handful of tracks on my laptop, via ROON. Though we have a range of headphone amplifiers here from budget to ridiculous, it's nice to start a review with a laptop or tablet, because that's where a lot of portable listeners consume music. Not everyone jumps in the game with a \$5k Astell & Kern player.

Starting with a laptop or mobile device also gives a great insight into how user-friendly a pair of phones are - expensive or not. We've always been surprised at some of the more spendy offerings and how poorly they fare, plugged into a MacBook. The Cerene DB passes this test with ease, as it quickly checks all the other boxes.

For \$179. Seriously, this is what the audio industry needs more of. Good sound, excellent construction, and a price tag that nearly every music lover can afford.

Going all the way up the scale from a MacBook Pro, plugging the Cerene DBs into the front of our dCS Bartok, and then to the Manley Absolute Headphone Amplifier via the dCS Vivaldi, they definitely reveal more music. Using these with a premium source shows just how good the Cerene DBs are. In this context, they offer more bass grip and extension, along with a cleaner, clearer, and better defined top end, with a more expansive sound field, as it should be.

## Balance is the key

However, the overall tonal character doesn't change as one plugs into higher quality sources. That's the magic that the Cerene DBs offer. I've yet to hear a pair of phones at anywhere near this price offering such great overall tonal balance. Too many phones we've auditioned have a tipped-up HF response (disguised as resolution, the same trick a lot of speaker mfrs try) that gets fatiguing, fast.

The rest of the tonal scale is equally well resolved. The Cerene DBs have solid bass response, that is

fast and articulate - again something almost always missing from lower-priced phones. There is a beauty about a single driver headphone, well-executed (as it is here) that always feels more like music. Tracking through a wide range of musical selections that are primarily vocal or vocal and acoustic instrument oriented in nature, really showcases this aspect of the Cerene DBs. The coherence on tap makes it easier to get a clear musical picture. A long line of funk tracks, beginning with the Brothers Johnson's, "Blam!" illustrates how well the Cerene DBs can follow a rapid bass line. Yep, these phones do it all.

Changing program material to a production context, I used the Cerene DBs to edit our first batch of "Guilty Pleasures" podcasts, and again, they were perfect. They are equally non-fatiguing from a mechanical standpoint too - only weighing in at 364 grams (about 13 ounces.) Even after a couple hours of editing, the Cerene DBs are still comfortable to wear.

Switching the Cerene DBs for some top phones from Abyss, Audeze, and Focal, it's easier to see what you get for four figures - but that's not a fair comparison, merely a data point. Cerene DBs offer so much overall balance and musicality, it only takes a few minutes of settling in, to not miss the expensive cans.

## A true real-world product

CEntrance put every cent into the production of these headphones, and it shows. Nary a fancy case or expensive box in sight. They don't even include a mini to ¼" headphone adaptor. Impressive - nothing but performance.

After living with these for a while, and comparing them to about 20 other phones, all over the price spectrum, the CEntrance Cerene DBs come out on top. This is a mid-grade headphone masquerading as an entry-level product - and that's good for everyone.

We are happy to give these one of our first Exceptional Value Awards of 2020.



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- Massive toroidal transformers
- Four power on/off options
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# Find Your Adventure: Listening to Live Grateful Dead

Special to TONE, by Bob Gendron



Photo by Paul Ryan/Getty Images

**I**n the early 1990s, Jerry Garcia, the Grateful Dead’s lead guitarist/vocalist, and the unofficial figurehead whose every onstage movement would be analyzed and interpreted during his final years, famously equated following the group to joining the circus. He observed what many fans who dedicated decades to the band already knew: American life had grown predictable, dull, routine. Listening to live Dead proved anything but. It still does—particularly in these challenging times.

Getting by in the face of difficulties drove not only the Dead’s faithful to embrace the music, but champion the experience, unknown, and freedom that accompanied every concert. The ethos is perhaps best crystallized in the climactic words to “Touch of Grey”: “We will get by/We will survive.” Taking on special meaning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the lines from the Dead’s only Top 10 hit—and the 1987 song that transformed the band from subcultural favorites to a group played on MTV, embraced by generations not even alive when the ensemble formed in the mid-1960s—have always resonated with Deadheads, who adopted the triumphant message as a credo of resilience, hope, and what-else-can-we-do-but-persevere spirit.

Just as importantly, the lyrics—as well as the savvy balance of realism and humor in the song, which details problems ranging from unpaid rent to illiterate teenagers and kerosene-giving cattle—serve as a communal bond, a fact underscored by a chorus that changes from the singular “I” to the collective “we” in the final stanza.

In times of self-quarantine and shelter-in-place, with people seeking diversions and escapes, turning to the Dead to provide needed adventure feels more rewarding and welcoming than ever before. Of course, given the collective performed more than 2,300 shows during its tenure as the Grateful Dead (to scuttle argument and preserve authenticity, any Dead-related offshoot since Garcia’s August 1995 passing qualifies as a different entity), gaining entrance into its world can seem both easy—and intimidating given the trove of available material and potential thought that “Touch of Grey,” a tune that still serves as many listeners’ sole association with the Dead, exists as an outlier.

To clarify, yes, the hit single stands as an oddity in that mainstream channels like radio and the mass media never warmed to the group before. Yet it is not an outlier in terms of being misrepresentative of the Dead’s overall body of work. Give any number of other studio-recorded songs—“Uncle John’s Band,” “Sugar Magnolia,” “Bertha,” “The Music Never Stopped,” “Hell in a Bucket,” “Throwing Stones,” “Standing on the Moon,” “St. Stephen,” “Shakedown Street” included—a quick listen, and common denominators such as catchy melodies, group harmonies, and concise hooks immediately become apparent. They all also function as conduits to a deeper dive into the Dead’s vast live annals, an odyssey that overflows with adventure, imagination, and rewards.

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Anticipating by more than two decades the control many artists now assume over archives, the Dead began opening its concert vault in 1991. The band's Dick's Picks CDs span 36 volumes and gave way to the still-active Dave's Picks, a numbered and limited series that recently registered its 33rd entry in the form of an energetic performance from October 1977. Comprising hundreds of discs and hours of music, they constitute a fraction of a library that extends to the Road Trips volumes, which focus not on individual shows but song highlights. (Side note: Arguably the least popular of any archival Dead releases, the discontinued series represents an anathema to many Deadheads and, to a certain extent, to the band itself, which tended to view every concert as its own story complete with arcs, moods, on-the-spot responses, and, naturally, distinctive audiences.)

In partnership with Rhino Records and other labels, the Dead have also issued standalone titles that commemorate signposts like special events (the closing of the Winterland venue, for instance) and significant holiday shows. But for completists and fanatics, nothing eclipses the lavish box sets that commemorate specific concert sequences and tours—and come packaged with multi-thousand word essays, ornate booklets, and an assortment of ephemera. Two weighty sets chronicling the band's Spring 1990 tour, a miniaturized steamer trunk containing every date of the Europe 1972 trek, and a First Nations-themed collection detailing 1973-74 Pacific Northwest shows serve as evidence that digital physical media still has a place in the world.

Navigating the live Dead landscape can initially feel like taking in the Louvre's art collection within a three-hour window. Where to begin, and what to see?

Thankfully, streaming services contain a wealth of material and, since the Dead placed a premium on audio quality throughout its career, the music sounds vibrant and lifelike, with remarkable instrumental separation, robust bass, and wide-ranging dynamics. After all, how do you argue with a band that invested untold thousands in the Wall of Sound PA system—a feat of engineering designed to eliminate intermodular distortion, which involved hundreds of JBL speakers and dozens of McIntosh amplifiers.

Akin to other highly creative types who refused to be content with a single approach, and who continually aspired to innovate, the Dead also went through multiple evolutions all the while staying firmly grounded in roots, blues, country, and rock n' roll. A rotating array of keyboardists, the presence of background vocalist Donna Godchaux during a majority of the 1970s, the temporary hiatus of percussionist Mickey Hart, and Garcia's experimentation with MIDI all factored into the sound. And just as no period is without errant performances—indeed, the Dead's willingness to take chances, venture into improvisational territories often explored only by jazz artists, and reimagine musical theory led to occasional flaws, which more often than not add character and dimensionality—several eras tower above others.

By the same token, spans often dismissed—a bulk of the 1990s, for example—harbor overlooked gems. Relatedly, the stereotypical view of the Dead as a group whose songs all last 40 minutes due to mindless jamming is readily dismissed as fantasy by practically any concert. Unlike many contemporary jam bands, the Dead emphasized the importance of songwriting and nurtured a combination of chemistry, skill, experience, versatility, and scholarly aptitude—not to mention a deep-seated connection to traditional American music—that remains unequalled.



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**F**or evidence, look to Cornell 5/8/77. Long regarded as the Holy Grail of Dead performances, it encapsulates nearly all the group's trademark strengths, is included in Library of Congress' National Recording Registry, and is sourced directly from Betty Cantor-Jackson's soundboard tapes. (It's also available as a 5LP box set put back into print after the initial, limited pressing sold out so quickly, many fans were never able to order it.) Another can't-miss portal into the Dead's universe can be found in the guise of Veneta, Oregon 8/27/72: The Complete Sunshine Daydream Concert. Playing in wilting temperatures hot enough to effect the tuning of its instruments, the group taps into a cosmic subconscious, delivering a three-hour journey steeped with dance-baiting grooves, exploratory rhythms, and transportive psychedelia. The 31-and-a-half-minute rendition of "Dark Star" remains legendary in a history teeming with myth.

For a different spin on 1972, seek out any of the group's spring European shows from that year, particularly 4/6/72 from Jahrhundert Halle in Frankfurt (billed as Europe '72 Vol. 9). They mark original pianist/organist/vocalist Ron "Pigpen" McKernan's final appearances and provide insight into how well the band adapted to personnel changes—carrying on when confronted with adversity. Sticking with the 1970s, you cannot go wrong with Dick's Picks Volume 4 (capturing the complete third sets of 2/13 and 2/14/70), Dick's Picks Volume 8 (chronicling 5/2/70, which includes an acoustic set), One from the Vault (8/13/1975), Red Rocks 7/8/78, or Dave's Picks Volume 31 (12/3/79). Nota bene: The stalwart consistency the Dead maintained for most of the 1970s started to slip after 1977. Again, it's possible to find treasure from any year—even the early and mid-1980s, largely forgettable span during which Garcia's health declined and drugs got in the way (part of the monster 30 Trips Around the Sun, the 7/31/82 date from Texas shines)—but 1978 onward constitutes a turning point. Hit-or-miss results became more frequent.

However, Garcia's recovery from a diabetic coma—he needed to relearn the guitar, and timbre of his voice softened—in December 1986 preceded a strong run that commenced in 1988 and witnessed the Dead espouse a gospel-like spirituality.

Cue up Hampton, VA, October 1989 (two complete shows) or Robert F. Kennedy Stadium: Washington, D.C., July 12 & 13, 1989. Then ease into the early 1990s, abundant in riches, with Wake Up to Find Out (3/29/90, an inspired collaboration with saxophonist Branford Marsalis) and Dick's Picks Volume Nine (9/16/90). To understand the Dead's otherworldly connection with the Northeast, turn to Saint of Circumstance: Giants Stadium, East Rutherford, NJ 06/17/91—one of just two Dead concerts recorded to 48-track analog tape and part of a larger, indispensable overview of the band's later-era guises, Giants Stadium 1987, 1989, 1991.

As for the 1960s, the beginning of the long, strange trip? The group spent 1965-1966 finding its footing with blues- and R&B-drenched fare. For the Dead at its rawest, and in harmony with the age's Acid Test mentality, a swath of perception-altering selections—Fillmore East 2/11/69, Dick's Picks Volume 16 (11/8/69), Dick's Picks Volume 26 (4/26 and 4/27/69)—convey primal energy and unhinged electricity. The granddaddy audio document from the age is Fillmore West 1969: The Complete Recordings. While it might be hard to find on a streaming site (and costly in physical form), Fillmore West 1969 provides a generous taste of a burgeoning band that led promoter Bill Graham to regularly remark, "They aren't the best at what they do, they are the only ones at what they do."

No matter where you start, or continue, the Dead offers distinctive thrills, refreshing solace, emotional release, and a sense of genuine community—as well as the reassurance that, yes, we will survive.



## Only A Few Engineers Become Legends

In the world of music production, there's a select group of recording engineers who have strived throughout their career to deliver the highest quality listening experience possible.

Over the course of his 30 year plus career, renowned engineer Tony Faulkner has made more than two thousand classical recordings which have been distributed worldwide by a long list of major and independent music labels. These albums, which have enjoyed much commercial success and won numerous awards, include acclaimed titles including *Berg Early Songs with Jessye Norman*; *South Pacific with Dame Kiri te Kanawa and Sarah Vaughan*; *Sibelius Symphonies with Sir Colin Davis*; *Gorecki Symphony of Sorrows with Dawn Upshaw*. And in 2005, Tony's recording of pianist Evgeny Kissin's Scriabin, Medtner, Stravinsky won the GRAMMY™ for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (without orchestra).

A pioneer in digital audio, Tony also heads his own production company and has served over the years as a consultant to a number of technology firms and manufacturers. All of which is why dCS is proud to honor Tony Faulkner as the latest recipient of our *dCS Legends Award*.



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Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

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# Swill

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Words and Photos By Cameron VanDerHorst

I can't speak for how Rolling Rock tasted before 1987, but I can tell you what happened once Anheuser-Busch bought the brand from Labatt's in 2006. By the end of the year, production had moved to Newark, New Jersey. Within a few years, the intricate latticework on the silk-screened bottles was gone, replaced by a solid white sign printed on a sticker. Gone, too, was the premium taste.

Rolling Rock starts off sweet and fruity, with a hint of cinnamon. It's somewhat reminiscent of a sugary breakfast cereal. Before you can ascertain which breakfast cereal, that initial sweetness is overpowered by a slightly sour wheat flavor. Despite its strong wheat finisher, it's a smooth, refreshing, easy-drinking beer. Like the people of Pittsburgh, it's equally agreeable after mowing the lawn on a hot, humid summer day or after shoveling the driveway after a bitter cold January blizzard.

It doesn't taste good or bad - it's entirely inoffensive. Rolling Rock is the liquid embodiment of the apathetic idiom/mission statement "it is what it is." There is absolutely nothing wrong with Rolling Rock, it just isn't what it *could* be -- what it *used* to be. What it *ought* to be.

Decades of unsympathetic ownership from large brewing conglomerates (first Anheuser-Busch, then InBev) has gradually softened the taste of what was, at one time, one of America's finest pale lagers. I often think about what Rolling Rock would have tasted like to my grandfathers and their drinking buddies, in much the same way that others wistfully daydream about attending Woodstock or watching Babe Ruth play in his prime.

www.rollingrock.com

Legal Stuff: While we all enjoy consuming adult beverages, (if you're of legal age, of course) TONE and Cardas Audio ask you to be responsible...



# Swill

Sponsored by Cardas Audio

Copy and photos by Cameron VanDerHorst



**T**here's a special moment in a young man's life when he finds *his* beer. In the college towns and working class neighborhoods of this great nation, a man is defined by his particular brand of domestic lager. I'm a Rolling Rock man.

The Tito brothers began brewing Rolling Rock in the small town of Latrobe, Pennsylvania in 1939. For decades, Rolling Rock was enjoyed by the locals -- steelworkers, glassblowers, coal miners, and cannery workers -- as something of a high-end treat. It was a beer imbibed by the sort of men they used to write folk songs about.

In the late 1980s, the family brewery was bought by Labatt's, who set about preserving the brand's heritage while taking the flavor of Latrobe, Pennsylvania nationwide. By all accounts, they did a great job of keeping Rolling Rock true to its roots while giving one of America's oldest microbreweries national exposure.



**"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 B135<sup>3</sup> integrated at 135 watts per channel, the venerable 4B<sup>3</sup> at 300 watts by two channels, to the incredible 28B<sup>3</sup> 1000 watt mono block.

## Control

For the first time, Bryston brings Cubed Series to the front end. Our new BP-17<sup>3</sup> Preamplifier features the Salomie Circuit from input to output reproducing higher resolution than ever before.

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# Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

- The Association** - Along Comes Mary
- The Grass Roots** - Midnight Confession
- The Doors** - Touch Me
- The Turtles** - Happy Together
- The Byrds** - Turn!Turn! Turn!
- The Cowsills** - The Rain, The Park, & Other Things
- The Guess Who** - These Eyes
- The Zombies** - Time of the Season
- The Animals** - Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood
- Classics IV** - Spooky



“You’ve Got Mono”

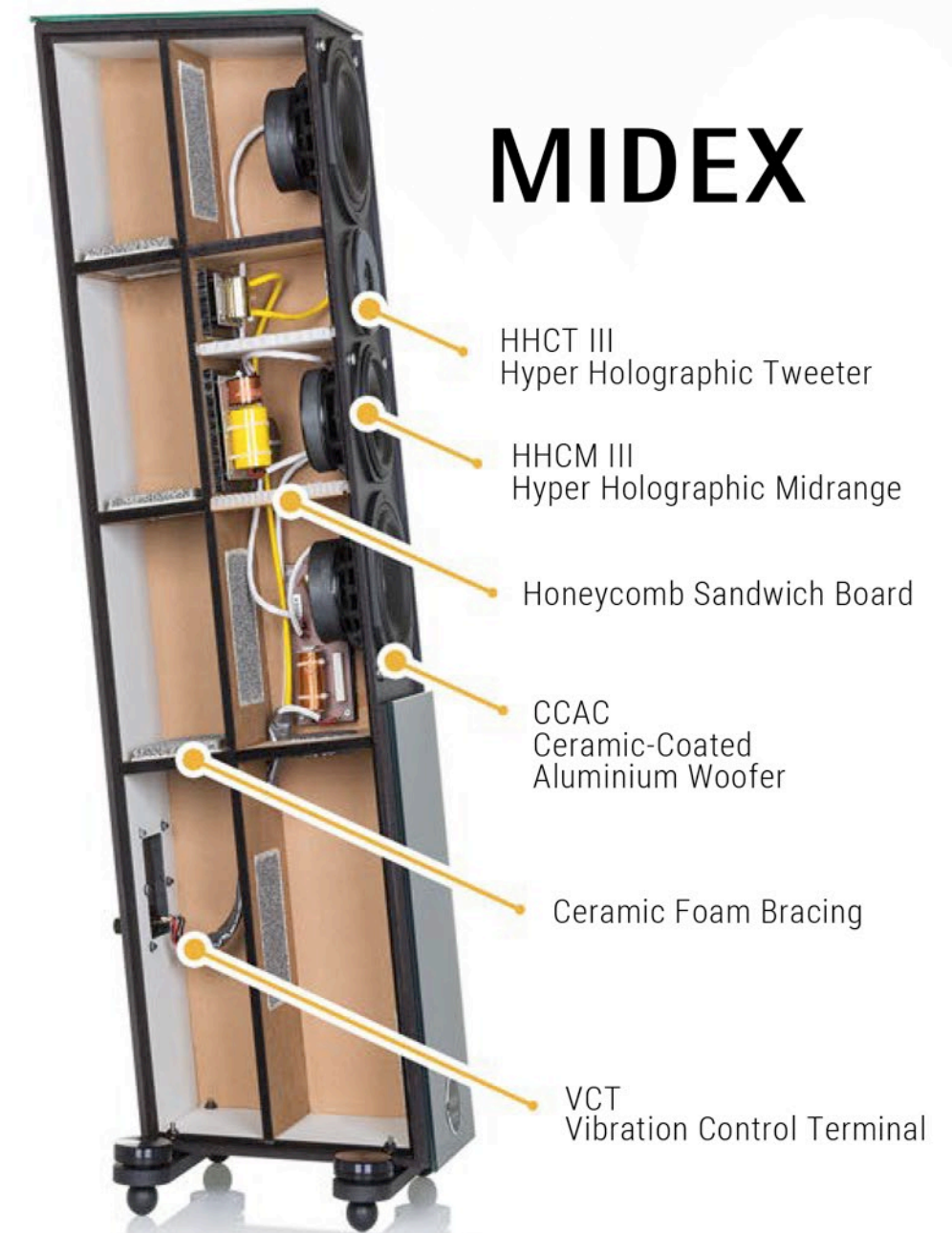
Our newest contributor Cameron VanDerHorst has this to say, “ We hope you’ll excuse our sick sense of humor. Here’s ten tracks from the early days of multi-track stereo recording – when the hobby we know and love came into its own. This selection of sunshine pop and psychedelic rock is full of tight arrangements, thought-provoking lyrics, and infectious melodies to expand our minds and give us a taste of summer (even if we’re stuck inside). It’s musical comfort food that will keep you cozy until the fever breaks. Regardless of whether you listen to them in mono or stereo.

no. 3 Oregon

TONE Playlists sponsored by...



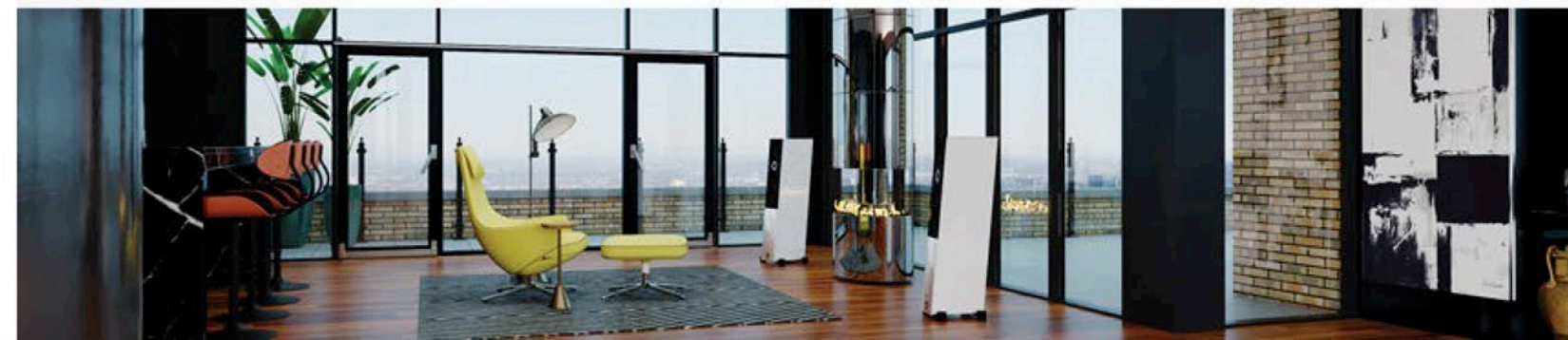
“Wonderfully rich....  
absolutely flawless...  
energetic at low volumes.”



## MIDEX



Distributed by VANA Ltd.



**Cover Story:  
Mobile sound  
at its finest...**

**Volvo XC90 w/  
B&W Diamond Audio**

\$70,000 - over 110k  
[volvocars.com](http://volvocars.com)

Volvo has *always* stood for safety, but lately, they have become known for performance, and now, a luxury brand. Didn't see that coming in my college days, driving a 244DL with a "Save the Lungfish" bumper sticker.

The new XC90 SUV can be ordered in a variety of trim, powertrain, and what concerns us here - sound system levels. In this case, we are evaluating the Diamond audio system from Bowers & Wilkins.

We've had the opportunity to sample this system in the 5 and 7-series BMW. It is definitely at the top of the heap in terms of sheer sound quality and its ability to generate massive sound pressure levels in the cabin.

Perhaps the Volvo engineers *don't* want you to head to an IASCA meet straight away, in the service of safety, but know this: the system in the XC90 rocks.

Our test car arrives in a pearl white, with an oyster interior. Gorgeous, but this will be high maintenance should you choose tis interior option and choose to wear anything but khakis. (ask me how I know this)

While you can get a T5 version of the XC90 with a modest 4-cylinder engine that Volvo claims 30 mpg on the open road. Our experience with BMW and Audi SUVs that mate a small engine to a massive SUV usually provides dismal in-town mileage and less than awesome performance.

We aren't left to suffer that fate. Volvo is kind enough to deliver the plug-in hybrid (400hp/472tq) T8eAWD, with very perky performance. Forget about the hybrid part of this equation as an environmental choice - the electric motors combined with the turbo gas motor are what make the XC90 perform like a much lighter car. Volvo has done as good a job as any here, and in terms of comfort, ergonomics, and ease of use, they easily surpass their German and British rivals. This is by far the most pleasureable premium SUV we've ever experienced.



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Designed for Monobloc  
amplifiers and subwoofers



**D**rivers will no doubt want to take things a bit further and equip their XC90 as a "Polestar edition," with more power, sportier suspension, and massive Brembo brakes - never a bad idea. Ask any racing driver, you can never have too much stopping power.

That said, our non Polestar XC90 feels much nimbler than its 4500 pound weight would suggest.

As you'd expect from Volvo, visibility is top-notch, and you can rest assured everyone in the soccer team will be more than comfy in this one.

Music lovers pursuing a more solitary environment will appreciate the cabin.

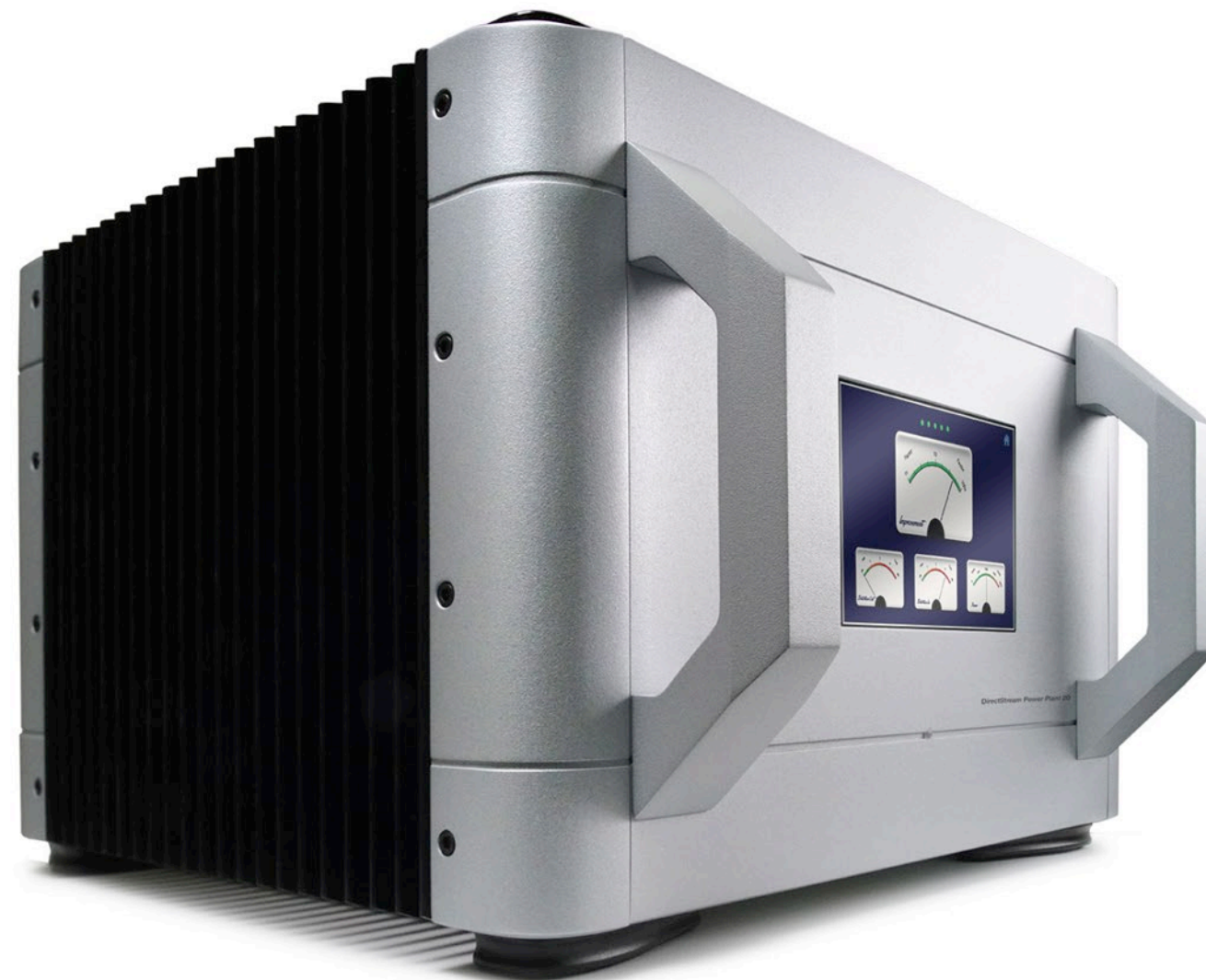
Aside from the comfiest seats our publisher has ever sat in since his beloved SAAB 900 Turbo, the XC90 is a vehicle that you can drive coast to coast and never feel ruffled.

This car is Bentley quiet.



## 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.

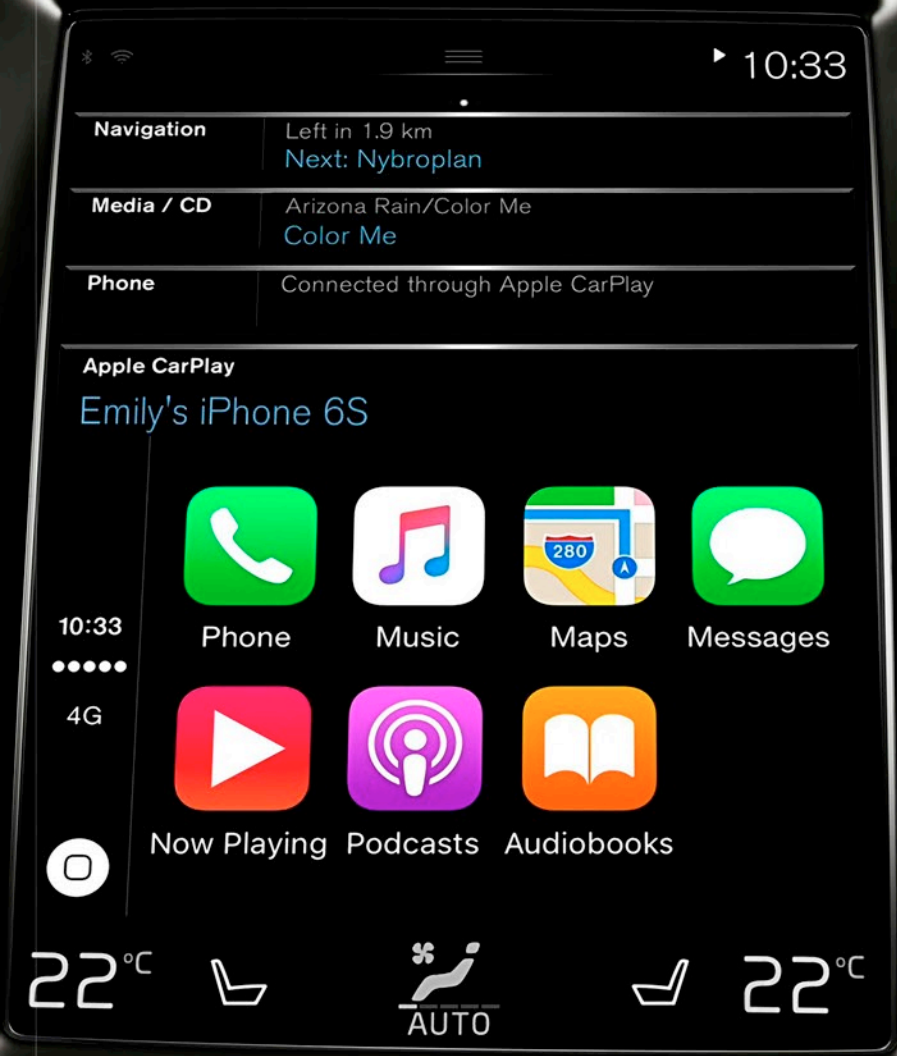


"Nothing does a better job at supplying clean power to my reference gear than the P20."  
-Jeff Dorgay, TONEAudio

 P S A U D I O

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Bowers & Wilkins



Fun as the XC90 is to drive, what makes the journey is the Bowers & Wilkins system.

With 19 drivers and 1400 watts at your command, you might find yourself lost in the music, missing your destination.

Good as the implementation of this system was in the BMWs, it delivers an even higher degree of drama in the Volvo. I suspect that every time their engineers model another cars acoustics, they find out more.

Listening to a handful of high res tracks, via a hard wired (USB) Astell & Kern player is lovely - the B&W Drivers integrate perfectly in this car. I've heard a lot of home systems that don't sound nearly this good.

While it is easy to stream from your smart phone, especially via CarPlay, this system is so resolving, you'll hear a big difference between 320kb/sec and your higher resolution files immediately.

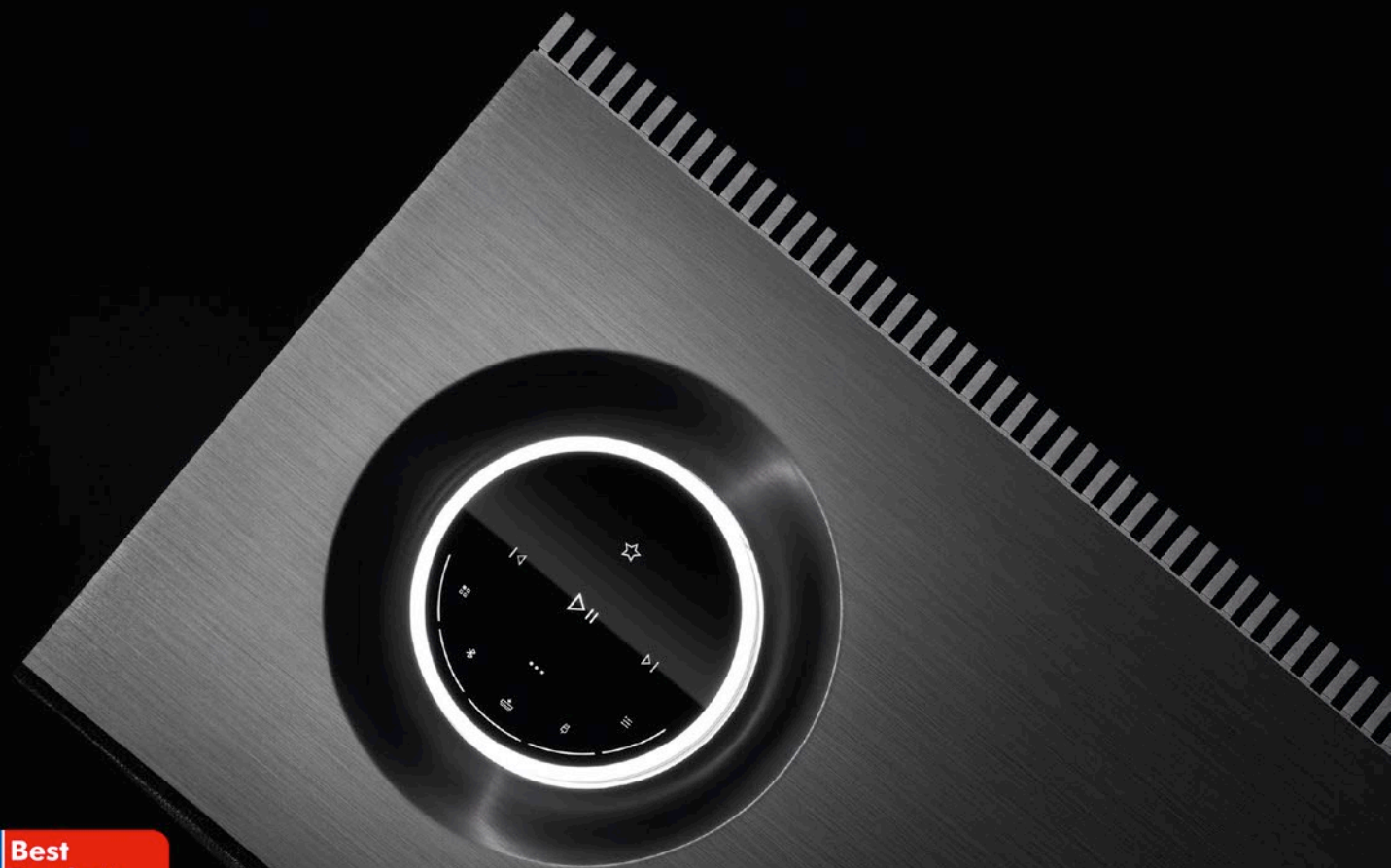
Thanks to the super-quiet cabin, the B&W system creates a huge, and three dimensional soundfield in the car. Regardless of genre, there is nothing that sounds less than breaktaking. As I said with the 7-series review: the diamond tweeters used in the mobile application sound more natural than the ones used in their 800 Series home speakers.

This is the best \$3,500 upgrade you will ever make to your new Volvo.



# Excellence Remastered

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The premium wireless speaker your music deserves.



“With the Mu-so 2nd Generation, Naim has taken that winning formula [Mu-So] and reinvented it, packing in both extra features and more sound quality, utilising completely new drivers co-designed with Focal, making this even more of a one-box solution for room-filling music”



# Setlist

Revolution Hall , Portland, Oregon - January 29, 2020

Photo by Rob Sample



Howard Jones doesn't have the pompadour that he did in the 80's, but Rob Sample tells us he still has "a lovely voice." Mixing up the set with a couple of covers, and a few deep tracks, Jones gave the crowd a heavy infusion of the stuff they all knew, loved, and sang along with when they had big hair and shoulder pads.

Some days, we can all use a little more of that.

1. Pearl in the Shell/Saturday Night
2. Assault and Battery
3. Don't Always Look at the Rain
4. What is Love?
5. Specialty
6. The One to Love You
7. Too Shy
8. No One is to Blame
9. Fallin' Away
10. You Know I Love You, Don't You?
11. Oh! Darling
12. Hide And Seek
13. Like to Get to Know You Well
14. Life in One Day
15. Everlasting Love
16. God Only Knows
17. Things Can Only Get Better

## 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.

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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.

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audio

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Over the years, the TONEAudio team enjoyed many opportunities to evaluate Focal speakers, including their stunning flagship Grande Utopia Evo. While Focal's cost-no-object speakers offer a revelatory musical experience, most of us will never have the financial means to own a pair, or have a room large enough to host them.

Of course, Focal understands this reality and offers many other price-performance speaker options in their lineup. The Chora 806 bookshelf speakers we feature here retail for \$990 (plus optional stands, \$290), demonstrating Focal's commitment to offering high-quality and financially-friendly speakers. While these stand-mounters serve well as a stereo pair, those looking for a line of matched speakers for their home theater setup will find the Choras equally at home.

## Focal Chora 806

\$990, stands optional - \$260

[focal.com](http://focal.com)





## New Flagship Integrated Amplifier

L-509x



*“The L-509X is one of the most intimate-sounding, dynamic, texturally nuanced, truthful purveyors of music of my experience.” Ken Micallef*

Luxman L-509x – Stereophile, May 2018



*“A bang up to date design, in both engineering and sound... simply special”*

Luxman L-509x – Hi-Fi News, January 2018

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**H**ifi shows often concentrate on massive flagship speakers, choosing to take a pass on more accessible models.

Focal has more to be proud of than most, because they make some of the world's top entry level products - thanks in a big way to vertical manufacturing.

Doing everything in-house offers a superior edge, because far fewer design compromises have to be made at any price point. But in a speaker at this level, it allows Focal the ability to offer much more performance and quality.

Time and money is not wasted, getting parts from other sources, along with the quality and consistency struggles involved. Keep in mind, the same people that build the Grande Utopias, build the Choras.

Focal has made all the right choices with the Chora line of speakers. Keeping the cabinets simple, all the tech has gone into the sound. Comparing these to the Stella Utopias we have in for evaluation, the lineage is clear.

Rob Johnson has a full report online. You can read that by clicking here.





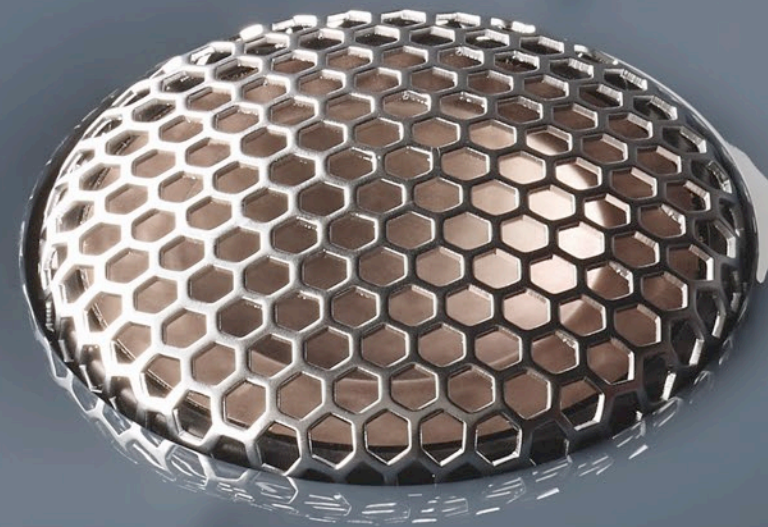
*"No one offers a better combination of high performance, classic good looks, and functionality in a compact form factor than Nagra does with their Classic Line. When you want maximum performance in a minimal footprint, this is the way to go!"*

Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio

**NAGRA**

SWISS INNOVATION SINCE 1951

# Focal Chora 806



FOCAL

**The Good:**

- A lot of Utopia DNA inside
- Easy to set up, fast break-in
- Very dynamic
- Support from rest of Chora range

**Not so much:**

- Basic cabinetry

**The Verdict:**

The Focal Chora 806 is a class leader. This kind of performance is only available from a company like Focal, with such a vertical design and manufacturing base.

A best buy!

# Audio Research PH9 Phono stage

\$7,500

[audioresearch.com](http://audioresearch.com)

**A**udio Research is a company that goes quietly about their business making great products with little fanfare. That's a big reason their gear enjoys a near fanatical following and incredibly high resale value. Some of their products are worth more now than when they were new!

## The PH9 is one of those special products.

The PH9 takes advantage of ARC's core tech, based on a hybrid FET/tube topology that began with the PH3/PH3SE years ago. As with all current preamplifiers and phono stages, the mighty 6H30 tube is at the heart of the PH9, with a trio of them in the gain section, and another used with a 6550 in the power supply. Unlike the REF Phono 3, the PH9 features single ended (RCA) inputs and outputs along with a standard 15A IEC socket.

audio research  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

audio research  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

OPERATE LOAD 500 STEREO

VACUUM TUBE PHONO PREAMPLIFIER  
MODEL PH9 HIGH DEFINITION

OPTION

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MENU

POWER

**D**on't let the single input stop you from thinking the PH9 is a major player.

Those of you with MC phono cartridges in the .4mv-.5mv range will have no issues working with the 58db of gain the PH9 offers.

Combining the brawny power supply and three 6H30s powering the output stage, the sound of the current PH9 is remarkably close to that of the last generation REF Phono 2. (within limits, of course)

We've got a full analysis on the way at our new [cartidgedude.com](http://cartidgedude.com) site.

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Fire V2



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[totemacoustic.com](http://totemacoustic.com)

*Some of us never quit....*

Reel to reel isn't the only revolution.

If you've always enjoyed making a mix tape, but are tired of the crazy prices for NOS cassettes, now there's an answer.

Try the new Capture C-60 cassettes, from Splicit.

It's a Type 1 tape, with plenty of range, to capture the nuance on your favorite LPs or CDs.

Hence the name.

[www.splicit.com](http://www.splicit.com)



## Audio Research PH9 Phono stage

### *The Good:*

A major performer for all but the lowest output MC carts.

Bold and dynamic. Hybrid design is incredibly quiet.

All adjustments available via the front panel.

### *Not so much:*

Lack of balanced operation will be a deal breaker for some.

### *The Verdict:*

For but those on the bleeding edge of analog, this is a perfect destination phono stage from a company you know and trust.



**PS Audio  
BHK Signature  
250 Amplifier**

\$7,499  
psaudio.com

PS Audio has been on a roll for a few years now, building award-winning gear, and bringing top-shelf performance at realistic prices to audiophiles everywhere.

## **And they've been doing it for a long time now...**

This company has always been rebellious, challenging the top players. Even back in the late 1980s and early 1990s they were the first mfr. to produce an outboard DAC - and their CX200 power amplifiers changed more than one mind on what a world class power amplifier had to cost.

While their 300 watt mono version of this amplifier has been getting a ton of coverage, we submit, this one is the thinking audiophile's choice.

## 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



**H**ere is the key to the scrumptious performance of the BHK 250: a pair of 6922 tubes in the input stage.

For all of you that used to pair a tube preamplifier with a solid-state power amplifier (or have considered it to get the best of both worlds, the BHK 250 does it all on one chassis.

Considering how many headphone amplifiers and DAC's now have variable line outputs, the BHK 250 is a fantastic choice for those wanting a minimal system, but maximum performance.

We had excellent luck using the BHK 250 with PS Audio's own DirectStream DAC, and a wide range of speakers. RCA and balanced XLR inputs make it easy to integrate the BHK 250 into your system.

But don't let the compact chassis fool you, the BHK 250 has a massive power supply inside, and weighs about 75 lbs.

Combining the tube input with a Mosfet output stage makes for an amplifier that sounds tube-like, yet has the drive and control you expect from a large solid-state amplifier. The solid-state output stage, and it's ability to deliver high current, gives you a wider range of speakers to pair with it. There was nothing here that posed a problem for the PS amp - even a few of our vintage ribbon and ESL speakers were glorious with the BHK 250.

If you just have to have more power, you can step up to the BHK 300 monos.

Tone contributor Eric Neff uses these as his reference, and is quite fond of them.



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The Fyne Audio F1 Series is a family of exquisite high-end loudspeakers that blend our award-winning technologies and long standing audio know-how into an unrivalled music experience for the home. Featuring our top of the range Isofl are™ point source drivers and signature BassTrax™ low frequency system cleverly integrated into machined aluminium plinths, the F1 Series delivers class leading audiophile performance with breathtaking detail, dynamics and imaging. Designed, manufactured and hand finished in deeply lacquered walnut veneer and piano gloss black or white cabinets at our UK headquarters, the F1 Series are the UK's Fynest loudspeakers.

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SOUNDORG.COM/FYNE



## PS Audio BHK Signature 250



### **The Good:**

Killer value (and on sale too..)

Versatile, with XLR and RCA inputs

Plenty of power - drives anything

### **The Bad:**

Unless you just can't wrap your brain around a hybrid amp, none

### **The Verdict:**

This amp was incredible at \$7,499.  
It's an outright steal at \$5,999



# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## Goal Zero Yeti 1400 Lithium Power Station

\$1,800  
goalzero.com

What began as a green solution for my garage, over at MYBMW Habit, became an audiophile treasure by accident.

Next month we'll have fully put the Yeti through it's paces with a wide variety of gear, primarily to discover just where it's weak spot is.

So far, it sounds fantastic and can be powered by solar panels too!

This could be a new trend and you saw it here first!



roon

TIDAL

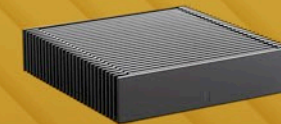
qobuz

CDs

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# 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.



PB-3000

SB-3000

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](http://svsound.com)



# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## Cambridge Audio Alva TT

\$1,699  
[cambridgeaudio.com](http://cambridgeaudio.com)

This is an incredible product for the casual or serious vinyl enthusiast.

This direct drive turntable adds an installed MC cartridge, and as a big bonus, offering Bluetooth streaming capability, making it the perfect party turntable.



We Are  
**Young.**

We Are  
**Fun.**

We Are  
**KINPlay**



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Discover yours

[totemacoustic.com](http://totemacoustic.com)

 **Bluetooth**  **Qualcomm aptX HD**

Meet the wicked sounding Totem KIN Play all-in-one music system. Stream tunes from your phone, kick it old school with a turntable, connect your gaming console and a whole lot more!

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## **Dynavector 17DX Karat MC cartridge**

\$2,250

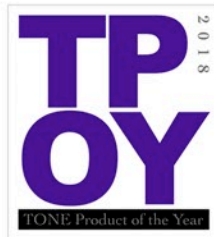
[dynavectorusa.com](http://dynavectorusa.com)

Looking more like a futuristic spacecraft than a phono cartridge, the latest version of Dynavector's famous Karat series features a solid diamond cantilever. We go all the way back to the original Ruby Karat, so this is going to be a very interesting journey!



## IS-1000

### ALL-IN-ONE



Gold Note is a pretty special kind of Italian audio company. We have been lucky to have a great team of engineers being able to design a complete line of audio gears.

The 25 years of experience in designing 100% in house has led us to developing a unique amplifier capable of great sound.

IS-1000 is also very smart and offers a lot of user friendly, easy to use features. We thought about the needs of the contemporary audiophile and decided to formulate our answer in a new all-in-one unit. Therefore, IS-1000 is a new generation amplifier created to be a whole stereo system on its own.

It can be matched with everything from the web as well as a turntable and a CD player, enjoying real "High End Audio" as a new refreshing experience, hassle and cable free.

Unlike other All-In-One products of brands mostly A/V oriented and built with consumer technology, IS-1000 is designed as a pure high-end audio premium amplifier. Every component has been selected for this purpose making it able to cross the bridge between a traditional High-End audio integrated amp and a modern All-In-One unit.



[www.goldnote.it](http://www.goldnote.it)

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Totem Skylights

\$1,000/pair  
[totemacoustic.com](http://totemacoustic.com)

You can get these in black too, but the lovely satin white finish (with matching white grilles) just seems lighter and brighter.

Regardless of your color choice, Totem hits it out of the park in the \$1,000/pair category, concentrating on performance while keeping the cabinets simple, functional and elegant. Did we say how much we love the white?

Watch for our review very soon.

# Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

**Crash Test Dummies-**  
When I go Out With Artists

**XTC-** Books are Burning

**Elvis Costello -**  
My Science Fiction Twin

**Todd Rundgren -**  
Who's Sorry Now?

**Del Amitri -**  
Driving With The Brakes on

**George Michael -**  
Older

**Bruce Springsteen-**  
Human Touch

**Prince -** Sexy MF

**Mudhoney-**  
Touch Me I'm Sick

**Lenny Kravitz -**  
Stop Draggin' Around



Much as some of us like to slag off the 80s, arguably, there was a lot of great music from that generation, and equally the 90s. Here's a few of our publishers faves from that generation.

no. 4 Washington

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Contact your local Audio Research Dealer for an audition.

audioresearch.com

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Rivera AFM-25 Monoblocks

\$13,995 each  
riveralabs.com (factory)  
toneimports.com (US importer)

These hand built hybrid monoblocks are unique, in having a vacuum tube input stage with a high current output solid state output stage, capable of driving loads down to .5 ohms in full Class-A mode. They remind us of a certain vintage pair of monoblocks that it was rumored you could weld with. We didn't try that, but our vintage MartinLogan speakers go down to .7 ohms and the AFM25s did a fabulous job.

As they are with the other speakers at our disposal. We'll have a full report on just how special these amplifiers truly are.

TONE101.135

# SCULPTURE A

## LE PHONO SE

Working strictly as a class A single ended device with no feedback, our phonostage 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.

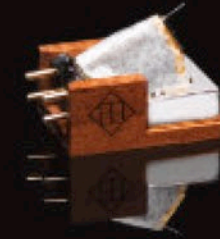
Le Phono SE, a solid-state design without the usual issues of tube electronics.

info@  
anamightysound.com

Ana  
MIGHTY SOUND



A.4 Silver



A.3



A.4 Copper

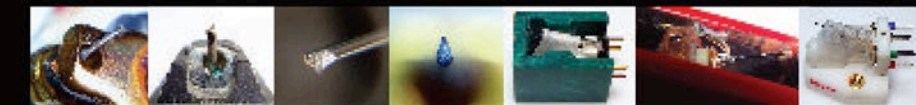


made by Ana Mighty Sound

## 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.



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 ?

It is the perfect companion of our Le Phono Single Ended phonostage 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.

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.



# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## McIntosh MC901

mcintoshlabs.com  
\$17,500 ea.

Many McIntosh fans we've met really like to rock, often having massive systems full of power amplifiers, and walls of big, blue, power output meters. It's not uncommon to see a tube power amplifier used for the mid/high range to get that extra smoothness and sparkle that tubes do so well, and a solid-state amp for low end grunt.

The MC901 gives you both on one chassis. Get some help lifting these - you need two. At least.



# Formula xHD

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



## Unconventional DNA



La Voce S3 dac



La Scala Optologic dac



Formula xHD dac



La Diva cd transport

aquahifi.com

aqua  
acoustic quality



[www.francoserblin.it](http://www.francoserblin.it)

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Luxman L-509 X

\$9,495

[luxman.com](http://luxman.com)

Much fun and full of delicacy as the lower powered (and equally heavy) Luxman Class-A integrated amplifiers are, some of you need more power. For you, the 120 watt per channel L-509 X should fulfill your needs.

Exquisite in every sense, as is every single Luxman component, this amplifier is truly a destination product.

And we'll do a quick contrast and compare with the 550 that is still here.

# Dealers That Mean Business:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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**GOODWIN'S HIGH-END**  
BOSTON, NOVEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

**FILTRONIQUE**  
MONTRÉAL, NOVEMBER 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**MUSICAL ARTISANS**  
CHICAGO, DECEMBER 6<sup>th</sup> AND 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**EARSNOVA**  
NEW YORK, MARCH 2020





# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## San Francisco, California - AudioVision San Francisco

www.audiovisionsf.com

1628 California Street

San Francisco, California 94109

415.614.1118



## Austin, Texas - Whetstone Audio

www.whetstoneaudio.com

2401 E. 6th. Street #1001

Austin, Texas 78702

512.477.8503



## 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.



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# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Vancouver, Canada - HiFi Centre

[www.hificentre.com](http://www.hificentre.com)

433 Carrall Street

Vancouver, BC V6B 6E3

888.232.9995



## Gig Harbor, Washington - Gig Harbor Audio

[www.gigharboraudio.com](http://www.gigharboraudio.com)

3019 Judson St. Suite D

Gig Harbor Washington 98335

253.228.6021



# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Marietta, Georgia - The Audio Company

www.theaudioco.com  
146 South Park Square NE  
Marietta, Georgia 30060

770.429.0434



## San Diego, California - Deja VU Audio West

www.dejavuaudiowest.com  
4848 Ronson Ct. Ste E  
San Diego, California 92111

858.412.4023



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Jeff Dorgay, ToneAudio



www.warwickacoustics.com/headphones

# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Sarasota, Florida - Suncoast Audio

[www.suncoastaudio.com](http://www.suncoastaudio.com)

7353 International Place, Unit 309

Sarasota, Florida 34240

941.932.0282



## New York City, New York - Noho Sound & Stereo

[www.nohosound.com](http://www.nohosound.com)

62 Cooper Square

New York, New York 10003



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## Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

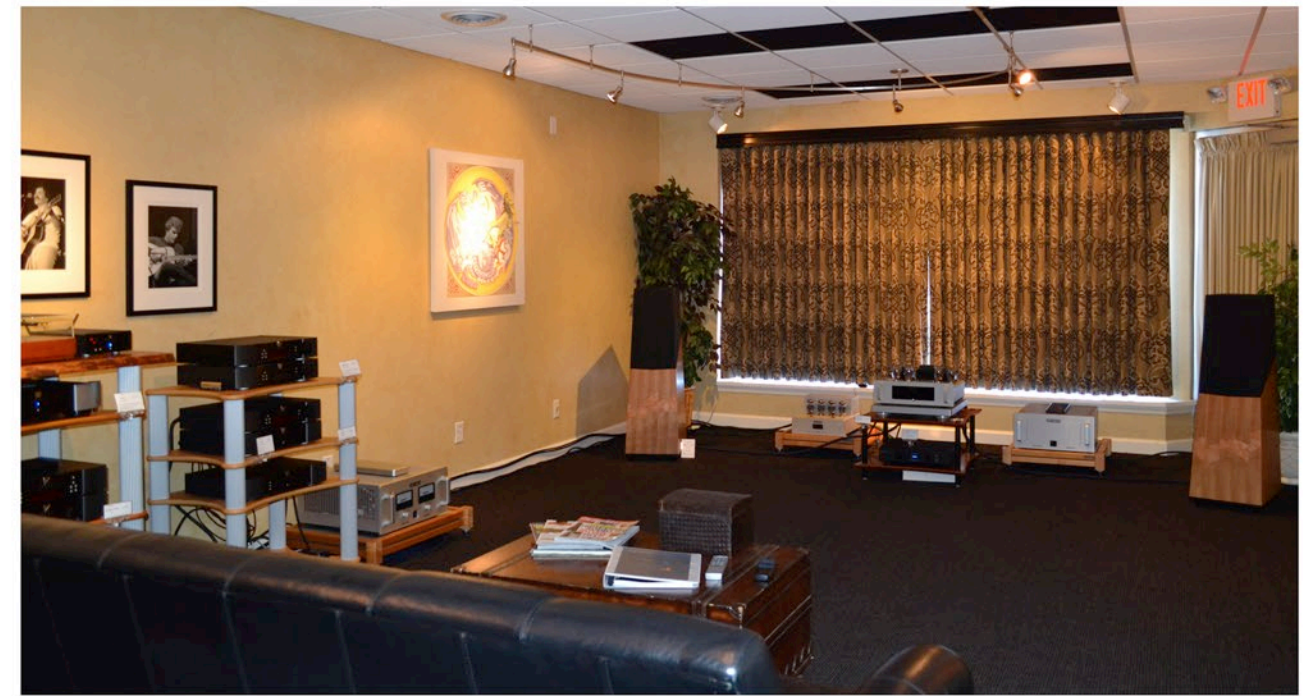
### Wauwatosa, Wisconsin - Ultra Fidelis

[www.ultrafidelis.com](http://www.ultrafidelis.com)

7125 West North Avenue

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

414.221.0200



### Portland, Oregon - Echo Audio

[www.echohifi.com](http://www.echohifi.com)

5904 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy

Portland, Oregon 97221

888.248.3246



# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Morton Grove, Illinois - Quintessence Audio

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

847.966.4434



## Scottsdale, Arizona - LMC Home Entertainment

lmche.com  
15507 N. Scottsdale Road, Suite 135  
Scottsdale, Arizona

480.403.0011



# In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

UK - *Danger Money*

Here's a freindly, public service reminder to keep those hands washed. We want to see you all alive and well when we can all start congregating again!



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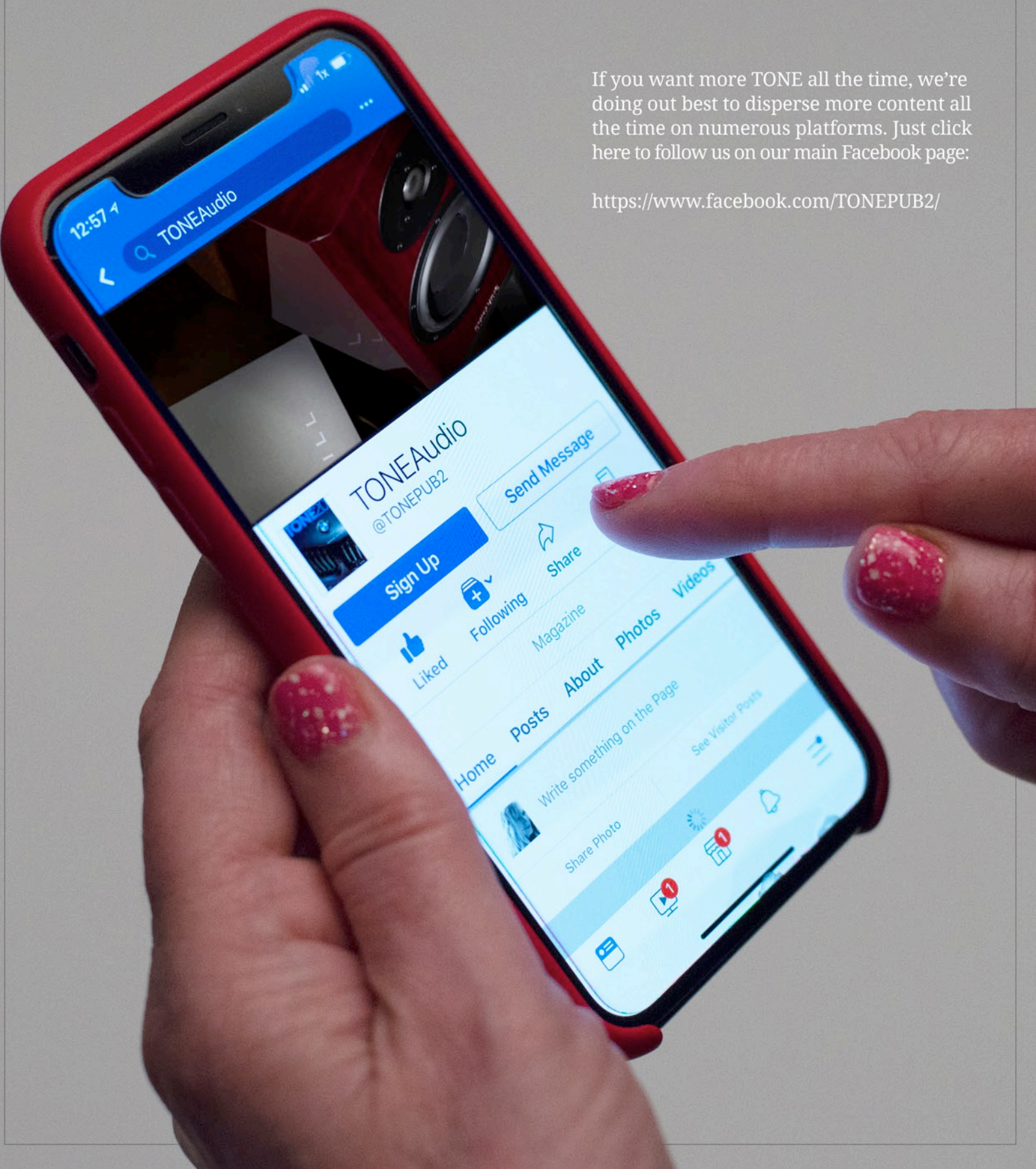


# Socially Speaking

TONEAudio's Online hangouts

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

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

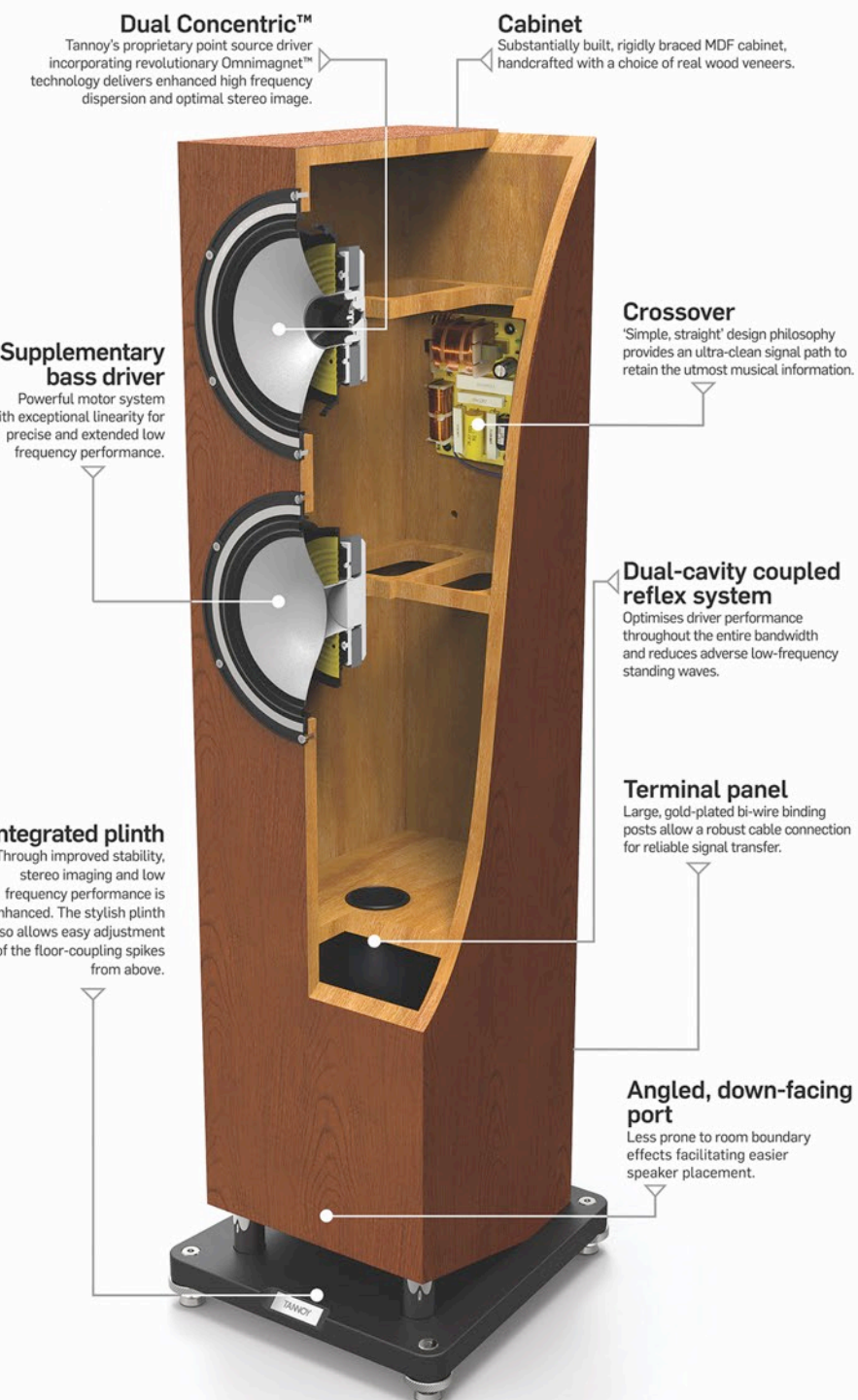


## Revolution XT 8F

THIS \$10K SPEAKER IS JUST \$2300 PER PAIR

AVAILABLE IN  
GLOSS BLACK  
GLOSS WHITE  
DARK WALNUT  
MEDIUM OAK

# TANNOY



"The Tannoy Revolution XT 8F was Robert Harley's top discovery at the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show. His first impression was as follows: 'After listening to it and looking at the real wood enclosure, I guessed the price at \$7000 to \$10,000. The Revolution XT's price was then revealed to be just \$2600 per pair!' After living with the 8F happily for several months, I was ready to declare it a sensational entry-level loudspeaker. But I see that I need to slightly amend that statement—the only thing entry-level about it is the price. The real wood veneers and level of finish don't suggest an entry-level product, and sonically it performs to a much higher standard. I'm in total agreement with Robert's assessment: The Tannoy packs a virtuoso midrange that is competitive with speakers approaching \$10k retail!"  
— DICK OLSHER, THE ABSOLUTE SOUND



AudioVision  
san francisco

welcome to the hifi show



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jl audio  
kef  
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rel acoustics  
triangle  
warwick acoustics  
wilson benesch  
yg acoustics

anthem  
antipodes  
arcam  
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ifi  
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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.

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Anthem	anthemav.com	E.A.T.	vanaltd.com
Aqua Audio	aquahifi.com	Echo Audio	echohifi.com
Artisan Fidelity	artisanfidelity.com	Elusive Disc	elusivedisc.com
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Audio Physic	vanaltd.com	Focal	focalnaimamerica.com
Audio Research	audioresearch.com	Franco Serblin	francoserblin.it
AudioVision SF	audiovisionsf.com	Gig Harbor Audio	gigharboraudio.com
AVID HiFi	avidhifi.com	Gold Note	goldnote.it
Boulder	boulderamp.com	Golden Ear	goldenear.com
Bryston	bryston.com	Grand Prix Audio	grandprixaudio.com
Capture Cassettes	splicit.com		
Cardas Audio	cardas.com		
Clarus Cable	claruscable.com		
Chord Cable	soundorg.com		
conrad-johnson	conradjohnson.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.



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

<b>Gryphon</b>	<a href="http://gryphon.dk">gryphon.dk</a>	<b>Qobuz</b>	<a href="http://qobuz.com">qobuz.com</a>
<b>HiFi Centre</b>	<a href="http://hificentre.com">hificentre.com</a>	<b>REL</b>	<a href="http://rel.net">rel.net</a>
<b>Kiseki</b>	<a href="http://kiseki-usa.com">kiseki-usa.com</a>	<b>Rega</b>	<a href="http://soundorg.com">soundorg.com</a>
<b>Luxman</b>	<a href="http://luxman.com">luxman.com</a>	<b>Snowsound</b>	<a href="http://snowsound.com">snowsound.com</a>
<b>McIntosh</b>	<a href="http://mcintoshlabs.com">mcintoshlabs.com</a>	<b>Sonus faber</b>	<a href="http://sonusfaber.com">sonusfaber.com</a>
<b>Manley</b>	<a href="http://manleylabs.com">manleylabs.com</a>	<b>Sumiko</b>	<a href="http://sumiko.net">sumiko.net</a>
<b>MartinLogan</b>	<a href="http://martinlogan.com">martinlogan.com</a>	<b>SVS</b>	<a href="http://svsound.com">svsound.com</a>
<b>Musical Fidelity</b>	<a href="http://focalnaimamerica.com">focalnaimamerica.com</a>	<b>Tellurium Q</b>	<a href="http://telluriumq.com">telluriumq.com</a>
<b>Nagra</b>	<a href="http://nagraaudio.com">nagraaudio.com</a>	<b>TONE Imports</b>	<a href="http://toneimports.com">toneimports.com</a>
<b>Naim</b>	<a href="http://focalnaimamerica.com">focalnaimamerica.com</a>	<b>Torus</b>	<a href="http://toruspowers.com">toruspowers.com</a>
<b>Octave</b>	<a href="http://octave.de">octave.de</a>	<b>Totem</b>	<a href="http://totemacoustic.com">totemacoustic.com</a>
<b>PS Audio</b>	<a href="http://psaudio.com">psaudio.com</a>	<b>Underwood HiFi</b>	<a href="http://underwoodaudio.com">underwoodaudio.com</a>
<b>Paradigm</b>	<a href="http://paradigm.com">paradigm.com</a>	<b>Upscale Audio</b>	<a href="http://upscaleaudio.com">upscaleaudio.com</a>
<b>Pass Labs</b>	<a href="http://passlabs.com">passlabs.com</a>	<b>VAC</b>	<a href="http://vac-amplifiers.com">vac-amplifiers.com</a>
<b>PrimaLuna</b>	<a href="http://primaluna-usa.com">primaluna-usa.com</a>	<b>Warwick Acoustics</b>	<a href="http://warwickacoustics.com">warwickacoustics.com</a>
<b>ProAc</b>	<a href="http://soundorg.com">soundorg.com</a>	<b>Wireworld</b>	<a href="http://wireworldcable.com">wireworldcable.com</a>
<b>Pro-Ject</b>	<a href="http://pro-jectusa.com">pro-jectusa.com</a>		



# Last Word

Our parting thought to ponder.

**I**t doesn't matter how busy I am, I've always got time for a great pair of vintage speakers.

When staffer Jerold O'Brien and I were dropping a few things off at Echo Audio, we couldn't help but notice these mid-century beauties.

Jbl No.38s "Lo Boys" I believe they were called.

One of Kurt's friendly sales people said, "wanna give em a listen?"

Do I?

Imagine a mellow pair of L-100s, a vintage McIntosh tube receiver, a tape deck playing a long tape of your favorite hard bob tunes...

\$1,500 will take you there. Go to [www.echohifi.com](http://www.echohifi.com) and buy these before I do.



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*-Jeff Dorgay, Tone Publications*

Music deserves innovation

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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](https://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.



PS AUDIO®

Welcome to the Hi-Fi Family

Next issue, **102:**

Sorry for the delay on 101 - we're back in the groove and adjusting to life during lockdown. We hope you're doing the same!

More reviews, more fun to come. Keep an eye out for our YouTube channel and our podcasts.

And as always, drop on by our Facebook page and let us know how you are...



TONE