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T O N E



Number 102

EgglestonWorks Nico Evolution

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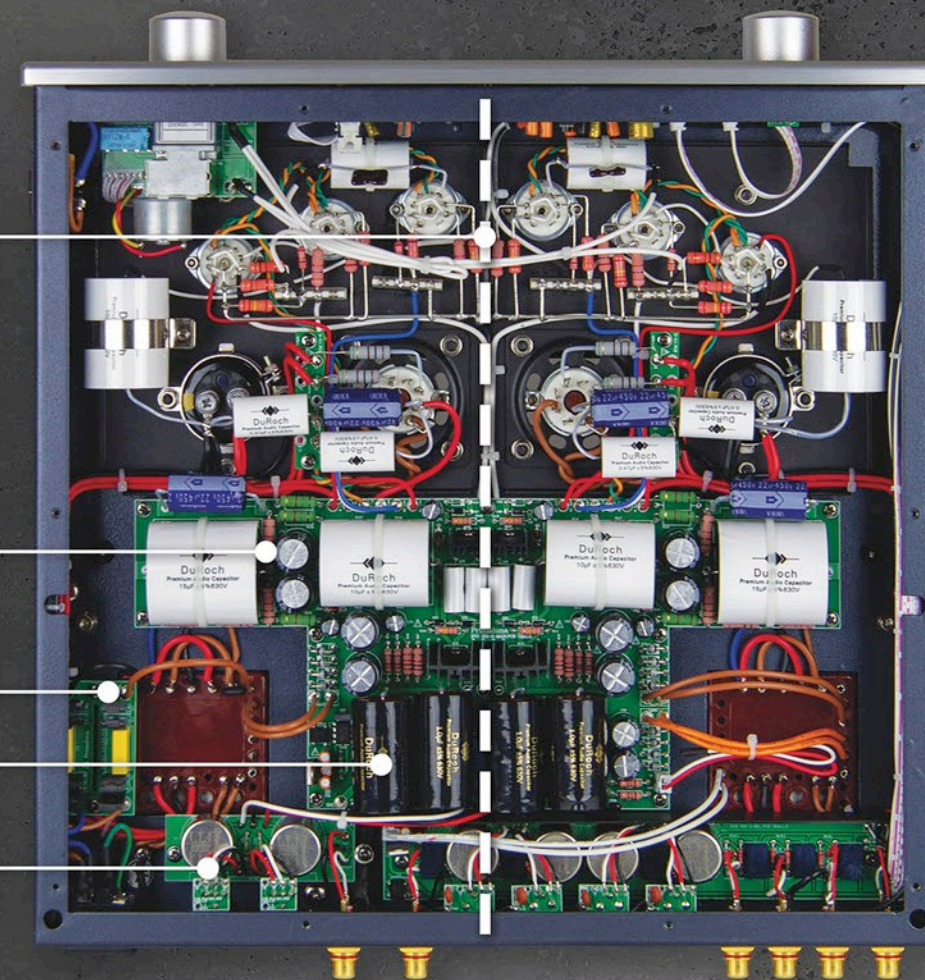
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In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...



A recent article in *Psychology Today* stated that in times of severe stress, we crave the familiar as a coping mechanism.

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There's just something about those big shoulder pads from the 80s, and the big hair accompanying it, that will always be comfort food.

And what better, to start off what is surely to be a cruel summer with this classic, albeit with a bit of a twist?

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TONE102.005

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It's what this hobby/pursuit is all about.

Michael Fremer, Stereophile, May 2020



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T O N E

Staff

Photography and Design - Man & Machine

Digital Retouching - Sean Zloch

Publisher - Jeff Dorgay

Music Editor - Jaan Uhelszki

Audio Historian - Ken Kessler

Senior Contributor - Rob Johnson

Analog Master - Richard Mak

Administration - Pamela Dorgay

Research - Earle Blanton, Ken Mercereau, Scott Tetzlaff

Musicologist - Tom Caselli



Contributing Writers

Juan Cavillo

Emily Duff

Anne Farnsworth

Ben Fong-Torres

Bob Gendron

Lawrence Devoe

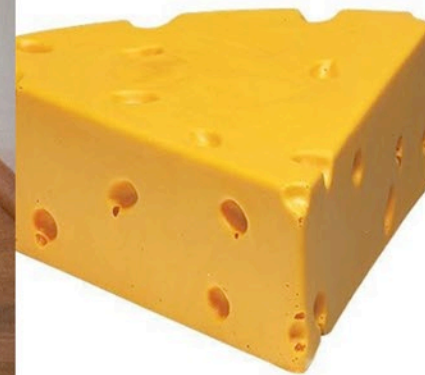
Michael Laurance

Eric Neff

Jerold O'Brien

Shanon Swetlishnoff

Cameron VanDerHorst



Questions and Comments: thetoneplayhouse@gmail.com

Advertising Inquiries: pr@tonepublications.com

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Egglestonworks Nico

Great sound to match your world.



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Old School

Jerold O'Brien and our publisher de clutter and talk digital's past



17 (and on...)

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Rega creates what is sure to be a future classic with their new io integrated amplifier

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FYNE ACOUSTICS
F500 speakers set the benchmark for budget performance



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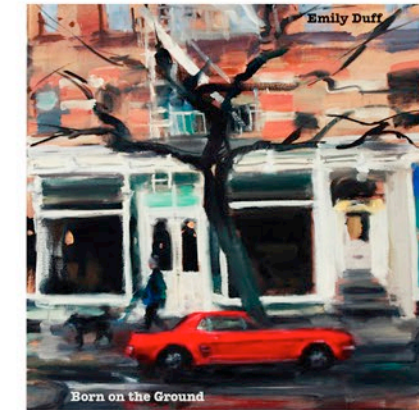
Get The Gear

Links to the gear (and our advertisers) in this issue.

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Last Word

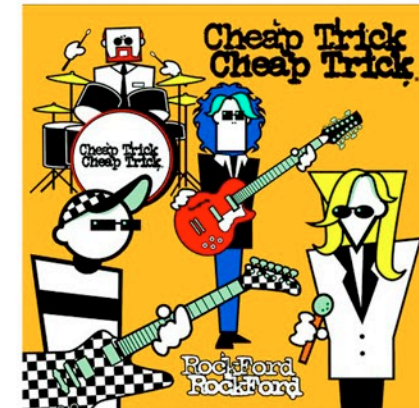
Homage to the lattes consumed to make this issue possible



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Emily Duff is channeling Sweet, keeping the faith, and telling us about her new album.



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Products in for **review** and on our near horizon.

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A Visit to Abbey Road Studios

An enthusiastic Beatle fan makes a pilgrimage to where it all began.

By Javier Huerta



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what's inside:



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Luxman L-509x- Stereophile, May 2018



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

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General Inquiries:
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new arrivals...

Javier Huerta joins us this issue with a spectacular tale about his visit to Abbey Road Studios in London, England - no doubt one of the most spectacular places in modern music history.

Huerta is a huge music lover and a massive Beatles fan - having seen LOVE in Las Vegas numerous times. His enthusiastic story makes me want to get on a plane to London right now. (well, maybe not right now!) Read all about it on page 77.



SUMIKO

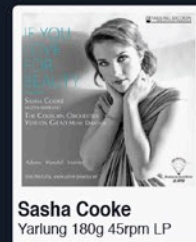
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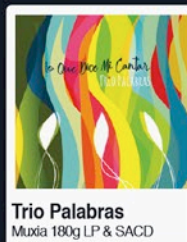
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Yarlung 180g 45rpm LP



Kenny Burrell
Blue Note Tone Poet 180g LP



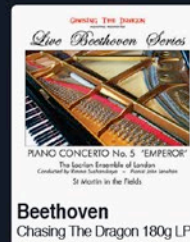
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Impex 180g LP & SACD



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Muxia 180g LP & SACD



Vanessa Fernandez
Groove Note 180g LP



Beethoven
Chasing The Dragon 180g LP



Cover Shot:

Much as I enjoy all things audio, there's a lot of crossover (pun intended) in the world of automobiles, as many of you know.

I'm always amazed by speaker manufacturers that go out of their way offering custom colors, yet so many speakers still end up black, beige, silver and white.

Time to shake that up a bit.

The artisans at Eggleston in Memphis, did a smashing job painting the Nico Evo speakers they sent our way in a vintage BMW color.

Well, that's one way to get my attention.

Shot in the studio, Nikon D800, 100 ISO, with a vintage 28mm Nikkor lens.

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no.102

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

Well, 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 RMAF next year.

Stay safe.

Our publisher revisits his Midwestern roots, thinking about his favorite dozen Cheap Trick tracks.

You can get the bobbleheads at:

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From *Cheap Trick* - Taxman, Mandocello

From *In Color* - Southern Girls, Downed

From *Heaven Tonight* - California Man

From *At Budokan* - I Want You to Want Me

From *Dream Police* - House is Rocking

From *All Shook Up* - High Priest of Rhythmic Noise

From *Lap of Luxury* - Don't Be Cruel, Ghost Town

From *Rockford* - Decaf

From *Sgt. Pepper Live* - Getting Better

From *Bang, Crazy, Zoom...Hello* -
When I Wake up Tomorrow



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100 Year-old digital The Wadia 170i

Well, in dog years, it's 100 years old. Yet that's how digital audio seems - back when cavemen painted the edges of their CDs green. That kind of thing. Back when getting Apple certification for a product was a huge deal, the now defunct Wadia spent a crapload of money and time to beat everyone to market with a docking station allowing you to bypass your iPod or iPhone's DAC and get the direct digital bitstream. Just as you would from a CD transport.

To think that so many people freaked out about paying \$379 for something that was a pretty incredible little bit of engineering. Not only do I still have my 170i - our publisher still has the final prototype. And he teases me about hoarding. Before all this pandemic stuff began, we were changing the diff fluid on my 73 2002Tii discussing obscure digital hardware. For a couple of guys that have known each other since college, we've both amassed a lot of hardware, software, and experiences over the years.



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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

"Tellurium Q Ultra Black II is a remarkably coherent and "well-timed" cable"

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

- Chris Kelly, The Ear

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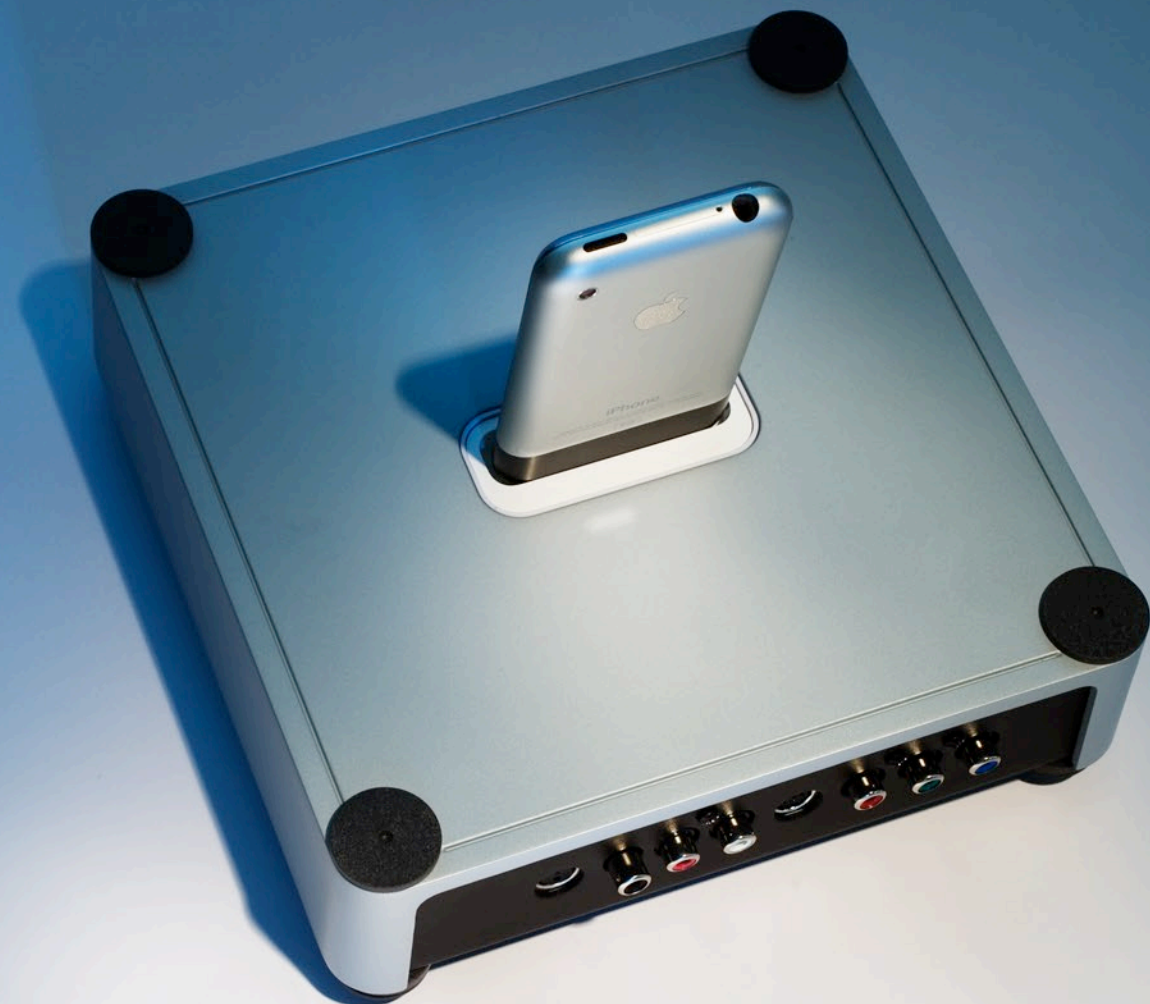
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Interestingly, we were also discussing spring cleaning. Somehow that topic always seems to enter our consciousness with incredibly greasy hands. "The Wadia 170," I remarked smugly. "I've still got the prototype," was the reply. Damn. Oddly, we both found them the same week and were equally impressed with the result after all these years. If you look way back, we put it on the cover of issue 15. Where does the time go?

Considering I still use my 160GB iPod Classic on a regular, this was the perfect place to dust off the Wadia and go for a spin. Not only am I still impressed with the 170i, considering just how good this combination sounds, it just gets me back into that crabby place again, wondering why Apple ever stopped putting that 60-pin connector on the bottom of their devices. Or the headphone jack. Don't get me started.

The first time I heard the 170i was at our publishers' place, where he had it plugged into the dCS Paganini stack, playing, of all things, BTO. I listened to the cymbals in "Blue Collar," and I was taken back at the fidelity of this new digital rig when he dropped the bomb - "you're listening to my iPod."



Flashing forward to my garage, with some bolts still to tighten, my 170i is now an integral part of my garage system - a freshly recapped Marantz 2270, an Adcom 6 disc changer, and a pair of rebuilt JBL L-100s (the originals, not the reissues). In the context of this system, the iPod and Wadia combination blows the 20-bit Adcom player out of the water. By a considerable margin.

Back in my main system, this still proves to be a great setup, though now with streaming - not terribly necessary anymore. Who takes the time to curate a group of albums to fit in the confines of 160GB in the year 2020? In this sense, the iPod almost feels like a giant mixtape.

But 100 years ago it was a small revelation, and a lot of fun.

Today many manufacturers are starting to make tube hybrid amplifiers. Some claim to be manufactured in-house, while in reality they are simply bolted together from sub-assembled "kits" produced in off-shore factories.

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A soul.

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In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

1999 Deluxe Edition - Prince

We're told that the 10LP version of this epic album is full of unlocked treasure, however prudence stopped us at the excellent 4-disc set, which is still available. Right now, we're kinda wishing it was 1999 again!



TONE102.023



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Organisation

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Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Jeff Dorgay

Really, Really Fine... The **FYNE F500** speakers

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soundorg.com



Beautiful Build

*Time Aligned,
concentric tweeter*



*Need great stands
to give their all*

We're doing it again, staying well under our goal price.

The opening bass line in the Doors "You're Lost Girl," gives you an immediate insight into Fyne's FyneFlute woofer surround technology. There's a lot of definition and a solid fundamental. The fun doesn't end there - their concentric IsoFlare driver system gives these speakers a level of coherence and imaging precision you'd expect to cost a lot more than the \$849/pair that the F500s will set you back.

Had I not heard *fantastic* demos of larger FYNE speakers at last years' RMAF and this year's Florida Audio Expo, I'd be picking myself up off the floor after powering up the F500s. It's easy to get carried away with high dollar speakers, but it's so exciting to hear products in the \$1,000 - \$2,000 range that gets so much right. The F500s make no glaring errors, and the overall tonal balance is fantastic. Remember, this is an \$849 pair of speakers.

Comparison to the other champs

Two long-standing favorites around the TONE studio for budget speaker benchmarks are the now discontinued Magnepan MMG and the KEF LS-50. Both reveal more music, with more fidelity than their modest price tags suggest. However, they both require top-notch amplification, and neither is terribly tube amplifier friendly. I've owned Magnepans for almost 40 years on and off, and I've always joked that they are great budget speakers, but need a \$10,000 amplifier to sound incredible. And they have been rarely if ever totally tube friendly. This is not the case with the F500s - they are extremely easy to drive, regardless of amplifier type.

1095

Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Jeff Dorgay

One of the most exciting aspects of the F500s is how well they integrate into your system. The F500s deliver more refinement as you improve your gear, but even those starting with a modest amplifier can expect great results. During the few days spent running the F500s in with my yard sale Nakamichi 410 power amplifier and 420 preamplifier, they deliver impressive results, even with this well worn combination.

Rotating in a Harmon/Kardon 630 and swapping the Nak amp for an original Dynaco Stereo 70 were all equally fun; this is a speaker no vintage audio lover should shy away from.

A days' worth of listening in my reference system with the Pass XA200.8s reveals the ultimate limit of what the F500s can deliver, but this is not a fair demo environment. Curiosity brings a broader range of component swaps than we usually do for this column, landing ultimately on the Rega Brio-R integrated (\$899) and the PrimaLuna EVO100 integrated (\$2,299), with the Gold Note XX streaming DAC and a set of Tellurium Q Blue speaker cables. The sensitivity of the F500s is rated at 87db/1 watt, yet they are some of the easiest to drive compact speakers we've used.

As far as concentric driver speakers go, the FYNE's have a voice more like a Tannoy than a KEF. The Tannoys have a slightly warmer voice with more tonal saturation, and the KEFs colder and in some ways slightly brittle in the upper mid/lower treble (both my LS-50 and Blades had this going on, though the Blade to a considerably lesser extent). The F500s and the larger FYNE speakers I've heard offer a more natural presentation. Again, much like the Eggleworks Nicos on our cover, the F500 trades wide range mediocrity for high-quality sound, with a bit less LF extension. A trade I'll take any day, as you can always add a subwoofer, but you can't eliminate a colored, boomy low end.

The fine point

Judging the F500s on an ultimate quality level, there's a little bit of cloudiness to the upper bass, and the really high end is rolled off a shade, as mentioned above. Of course, a single 6" driver can move so much air. But I could make these same observations about nearly any \$5,000 pair of speakers - the F500s are tip-top when compared to anything else near their price. The level of build and sonic quality that FYNE puts together here makes for some of the most exciting under - \$1,000 a pair speakers going, leaving me anxious to hear something a little further up the range.



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Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Jeff Dorgay

Running the gamut of usual test tracks, the F500s high points are stunning. Concentric driver speakers at time alignment/phase anomalies and the F500 is superb when listening to vocals, or acoustic instruments, heavily layered selections in particular. A familiar workhorse recording of Al DiMeola, Paco DeLucia, and John McLaughlin, *Friday Night in San Francisco*, quickly shows off how well these speakers keep the individual sound of these three guitar virtuosos intact. Most budget speakers render this recording with the guitars sounding like overdubs.

Pulling an old Windham Hill LP out from Liz Story (*Solid Colors*) reveals the tonal richness these speakers can deliver, with Story's Steinway full of body and decay. Finally, returning to DiMeola's "Morocco Fantasia" effortlessly shows off the speed that DiMeola is famous for.

Thanks to their high dynamic capacity, this is not a pair of speakers limited to acoustic guitars and string quartets - the F500s will play your favorite rock records with a much bigger acoustic footprint than you'd probably suspect out of such small cabinets. Their solid bass response provides an admirable foundation for hip hop and electronica tracks.

Tech bits

You can get more of a white paper overview of what makes FYNE tick here (<https://www.fyneaudio.com/f500-series/>), but suffice to say, this is not another me-too design. The attention to detail on the curved cabinets (available in dark oak, and black oak veneers along with black and white) carries through inside and out.

Pulling the magnetic grilles from the cabinet, and witnessing the level of craftsmanship inside, it's easy to see that these speakers are built with plenty of care. Keep in mind this is their entry-level speaker. While we did not bi-wire the F500s, we did substitute the factory jumpers for some upgraded Tellurium Q jumpers (strictly because they were there) and noticed yet another jump in clarity.



Engineered for Reality

Testing

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."

Technology

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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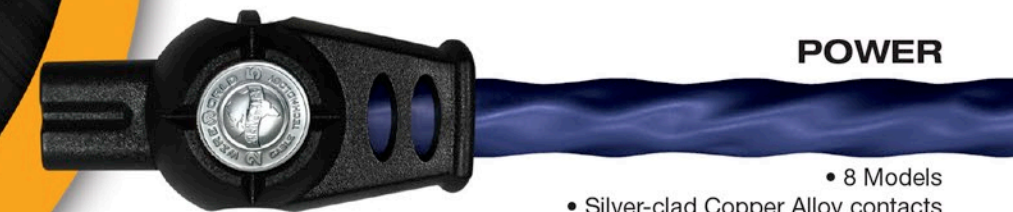
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Great sound for slightly more than a G!

By Jeff Dorgay



In our 13 x 15 foot room, the F500s perform equally well on the long or short wall. As you might expect, the wide wall encourages somewhat more soundstage width, and the short wall plays to more depth. Should you be able to add a subwoofer later, the long wall will give you the best of both worlds. The smoothness of the FYNE driver means these speakers will play well straight on-axis but have enough dispersion to work in a setup with less to zero toe-in. Their final resting place will be weighted by preference and environmental options. Their wide frequency response and dispersion means you have a lot of options, should you not be able to put your F500s exactly where they need to go for the best sonics.

The small footprint of the F500 will work with 24" stands if that's what you already have to work with, but if you are purchasing stands, we suggest a 28" stand for the best results.

A small miracle

The competition in the small speaker arena is fierce, but we must put the F500 at the top of our list. For all the exciting characteristics listed above, what really puts these speakers on the podium is the level of refinement they offer. FYNE gives you plenty of room to grow as well; should you decide you need a larger pair, these will integrate perfectly as rear channels in a multichannel setup. And yes, they make a matching center.

With so much attention on the mega speakers and their equally mega price tags, it's refreshing to hear a pair of speakers this good for such an approachable price. This is one of the easiest Exceptional Value Awards we've ever handed out.

Well done.

soundorg.com

REGA io

A Future Classic

\$595

rega.co.uk (factory)

soundorg.com (NA distributor)

It might strike some of you as odd to start a Rega review talking about Naim, but the comparison begs to be made. Naim's original Nait amplifier was a fantastic product, offering incredible musicality in a compact form factor at a price everyone could afford. It enticed thousands of audiophiles based on the above, and to this day, those still in possession of a working Nait cherish it. We've always been huge fans of Rega's \$900 Brio-R for the same reasons. While the Brio-R bests the vintage Nait in every way, it remains true to the concept of high performance, high value, and minuscule form factor. Though lacking the onboard digital section of something like the PS Audio Sprout (come on, this is Rega we're talking about), the sound quality of the Rega's discrete design and overall build quality is far superior. Rega says that the phono and amplifier section of this amplifier are straight from the Brio, so it's easy to hear where its brilliance comes from.

Lowering the stylus on the Rega P3 with Elys 2 cartridge, via a pair of FYNE 500 speakers makes beautiful music with a minimum footprint. Tracking through the first side of the purple bonus disc of Prince's One Night Alone is spacious and delicate. Even though the FYNE speakers only have a sensitivity of 87db/1 watt, they are driven and controlled by the 30 watts per channel offered by the io with ease. The io only offers MM phono, but it is of very high quality. There are plenty of standalone phonostages selling for the \$595 MSRP of the io failing to reveal this much music.

Different legos

Swapping the P3 out for a vintage Technics SL-1200 facilitates trying a few other MM cartridges from Sumiko, Clearaudio, and Shure. All offer equally fantastic results, so any cartridges in the \$50-\$500 range should be a good fit. The phono section of the io is extremely quiet, but Rega has been building great budget phonostages for decades. Experience makes the difference.



Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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Also included in the io is a front panel, mini headphone jack. Trying to stay in the budget ethos, a few phones from B&W, Grado, and an original pair of Audeze 2s make for great personal listening. Again, we can't think of a \$595 headphone amplifier with onboard phono stage that we've enjoyed this much. Apartment dwellers not yet ready for speakers would be smart to acquire an io as a headphone amplifier for now, adding speakers later. The io is the perfect building block to transition you from personal listening to full room listening. Merely move the front panel selector to the far right position to disable the speaker outputs.

In addition to the MM phono input, there are two more line-level analog inputs around back, so you can add a DAC/streamer, possibly a tuner, or maybe even a tape deck. Staying compact, we used the Gold Note DS-10 DAC/streamer to provide digital files to the mix.

Quiet quality

In the end, the amount of music that the io reveals is the value proposition. There have been a handful of notable low power solid-state amplifiers over the decades, and we submit the io for top billing. Most amplifiers at this price (and beyond) struggle just to drive a pair of speakers. The io sounds like a component you would expect to pay quite a bit more for. The key to building this much amp for this little, is Rega's corporate frugality, combined with major engineering chops, building nearly everything in-house. Having been to the factory a few times, their commitment to excellence and efficiency is amazing. They use a limited number of enclosures for the same products to minimize tooling costs, with as much raw material overlap as possible. Everything they do is refined, distilled, and simplified as far as it can, but no more. Finally, the highly skilled workforce at the factory assures things are built and tested to perform for the long term. The io is built with the same level of care that Rega's top components are.

Sublime sonics

Using the io as an anchor for a \$1,500 system will provide plenty of sonic bliss, but going upstream a bit proves just how much more this small amplifier is capable of. Swapping the FYNE speakers for the \$1,500/pair Wharfedale Lintons and even the \$4,000/pair JBL L-100 classics – both with excellent result illustrates how much resolution the baby Rega amp can muster. This amplifier could easily be paired with components costing a lot more.

The io provides a lot of bass control, offering a lot of LF definition when listening to bass heavy tracks. This was always an area that the original Nait lacked.

The ios' high frequency response (especially when listening with more revealing speakers) has a level of polish that you'd expect in a \$3,000 integrated. Again, there's something special about a high quality, low power amplifier used within the realm of its capability.



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Selecting tracks with multiple vocal layers shine through, and acoustic pieces give enough insight to feel natural.

The io is dynamic, and like the Brio-R, hits a wall. 30 watts only goes so far, and this amplifier does run into a wall when taxed. It does not clip hard though, it merely flattens out dimensionally. The solution is easy, keep listening levels modest or get a pair of very efficient speakers.

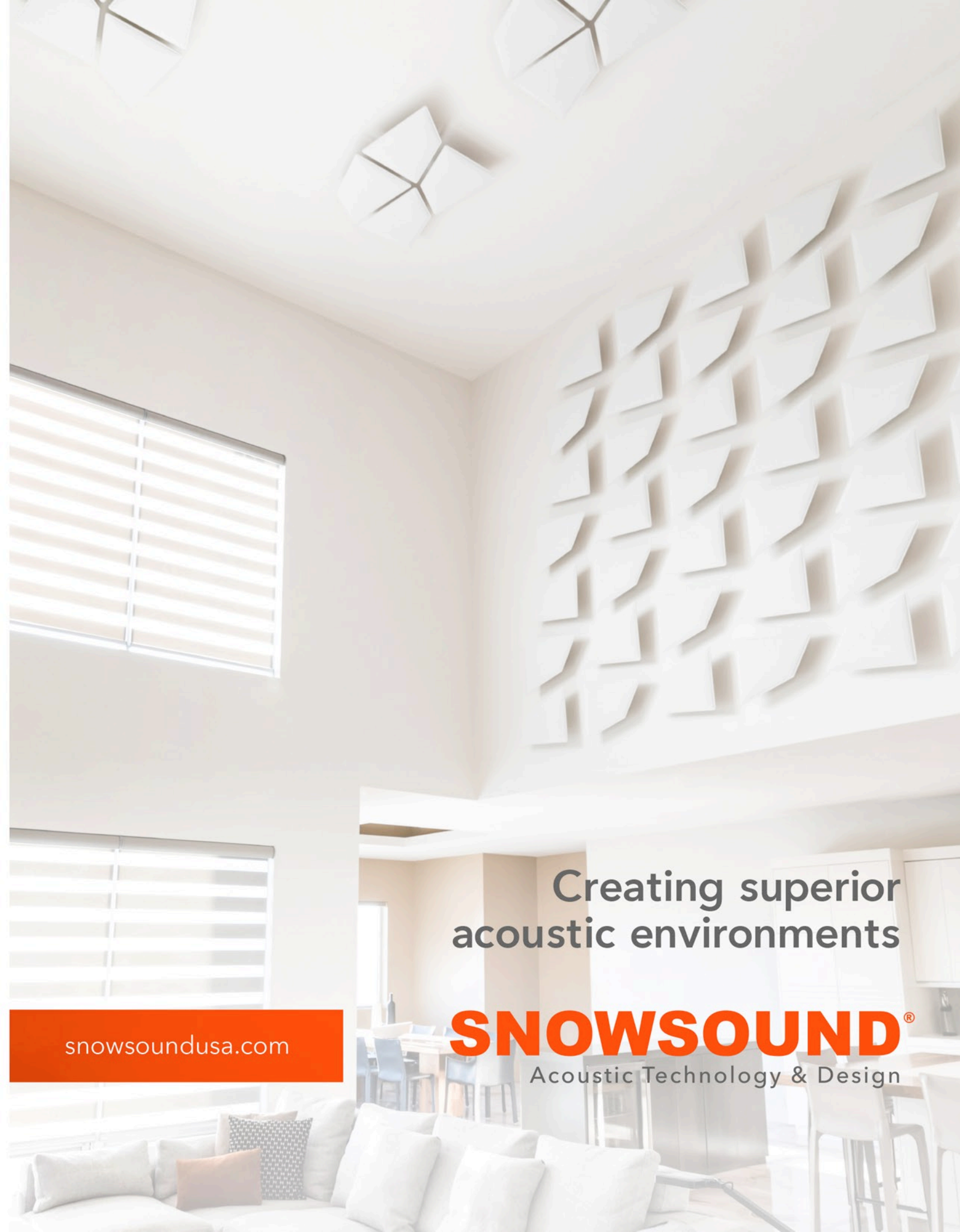
Head of the class

The Rega io is so good, one is tempted to summon up a cauldron full of well-worn audiophile clichés. While it is excellent at first listen, the toughest part of reviewing a component offering such a high level of performance is that it begs being connected to much more expensive ancillaries to experience the depth of its true capabilities.

You could grab a pair of budget speakers and a thrift shop turntable and live happily ever after with the io, but like that other legend from the UK, don't be surprised to see this one in the company of much more expensive components. Watch for the audio forums of 2050 to speak of this amplifier in hushed reverence.

Of course, the io is more than worthy of our Exceptional Value Awards for 2020, but even that doesn't truly explain a product that gets the essence of the music so right. Audiophiles beginning their journey here may be spoiled for a very long time.

I need one!



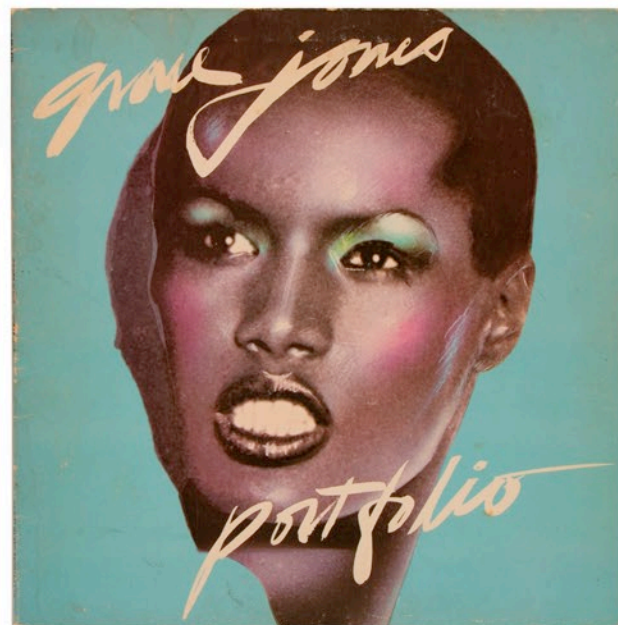
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Club Mix compilation expert, Scott Tetzlaff went the extra mile for this issues' playlist, coming up with a group of "cool electro-covers."

He says it's like musical comfort food for these troubling times. Relax and enjoy. This will lead to more at worst, and some good conversation at best.



Mollono.Bass & Ava Asante - Feeling Good

Yonderboi - Riders on the Storm

Trinity FM - Sounds of Silence (S.O.S.)

Freedom Dub - Emotional Rescue

Dolapdere Big Gang - Englishman in New York

Villa Black - Broken Wing

The Dynamics - Seven Nation Army

Sao Vincente - Angie

Durand Jones and the Indications - Young Americans

Ronald Langestraat - Lowdown

Grace Jones - La Vie en Rose

Cowboy Junkies - Sweet Jane



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"...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



MINE
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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 met so many of our readers from all over the globe, 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.



Fever Tree Tonic Water

\$27.36 (8 pack)
amazon.com

For those of you that like a great gin and tonic, these suggestions came from our friends at Cardas Audio. While Angela Cardas prefers the grapefruit flavor, we take the purist approach with the Premium Indian flavor. Crisp and refreshing.

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cascadedistillery.com

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

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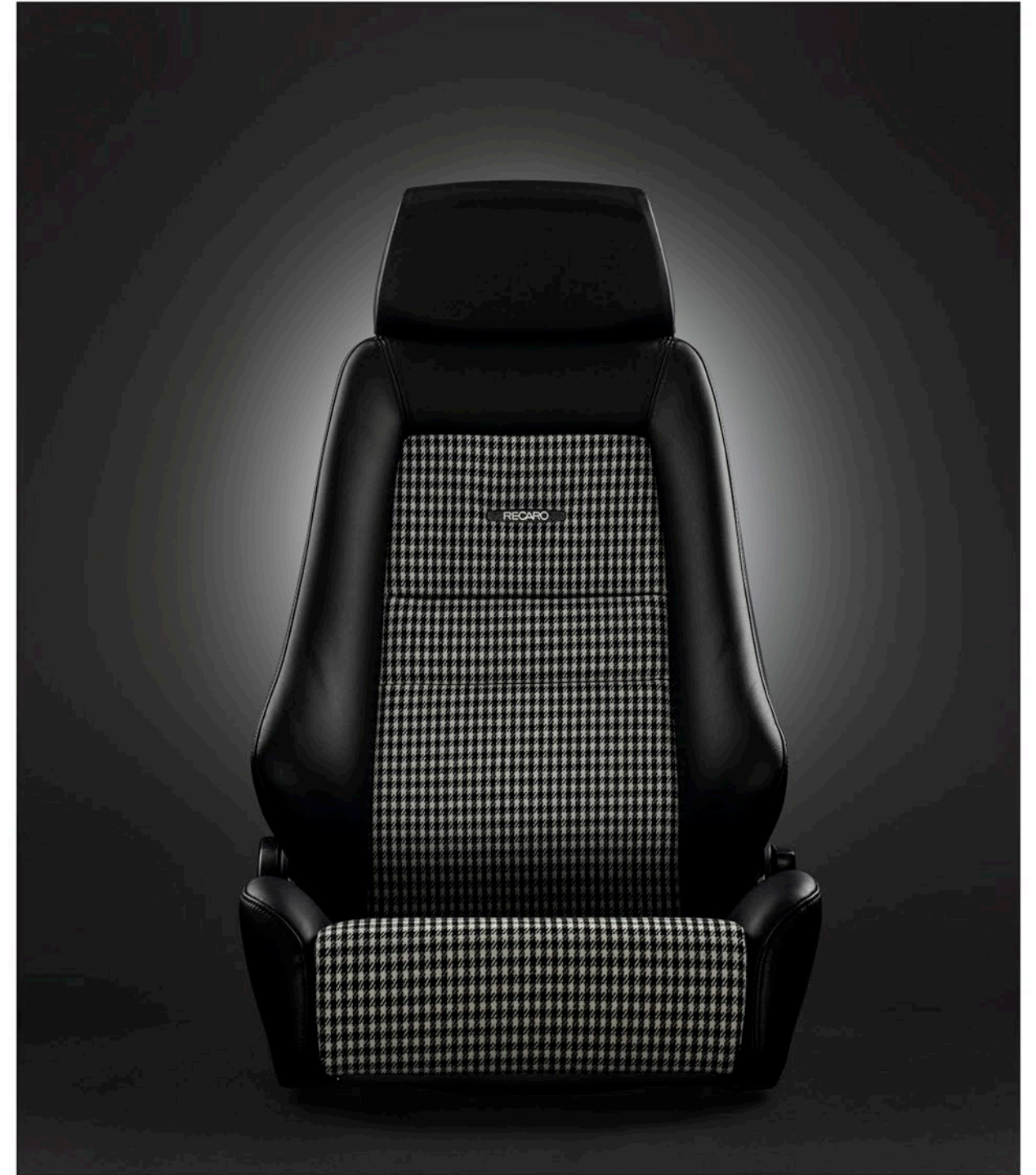
The latest from Recaro - The Classic Series

STBA

recaro-automotive.com

If you're restoring a classic European vehicle, the dilemma of recovering, restoring, or an aftermarket seat can always drive you to madness in the same way cables can in your hifi system! Recaro has just brought a new series of seating to market that looks to help keep a period correct look. Especially for Porsche, BMW, and Volkswagen.

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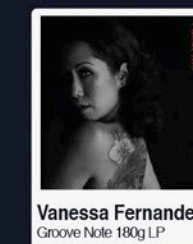
Kenny Burrell
Blue Note Tone Poet 180g LP



Jennifer Warnes
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Vanessa Fernandez
Groove Note 180g LP



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Chasing The Dragon 180g LP

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dotspretzels.com

The label calls Dot's Pretzels are the "Pride of North Dakota." Oddly enough, no one in North Dakota reads TONE In 15 years of watching our Google metrics data, we've only had one visitor from ND - once.

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Crazy. Happy snacking.



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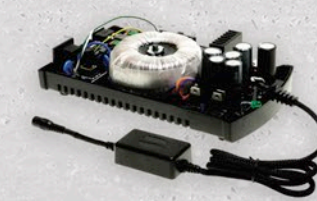
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Find out more about the benefits of granite enclosures, and the other advantages utilized by Acora Acoustics. Please visit <http://www.acoraacoustics.com>

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Civil Defense T-shirt

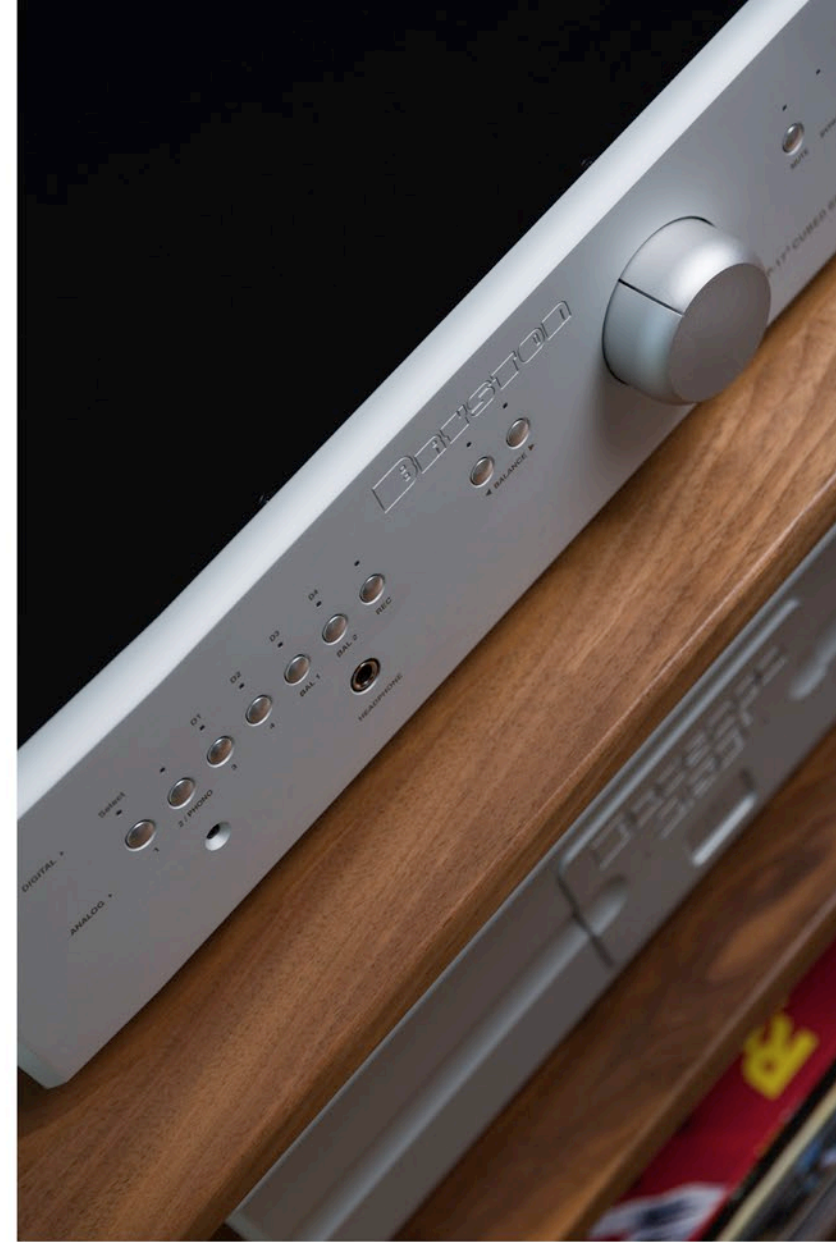
\$28

civilstandard.com

Whether you'd just like to be ironic, or remember the days when bomb shelters were a real thing, this could be fun to wear on your zoom calls!



TONE102.0575



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Soundstage! June 2017

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Paul Rigby
(The Audiophile Man)

GROOVY
8/10

HI-FI WORLD
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HI-FI WORLD
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New staff member Sean Zloch gets all the credit for finding this one, and this proves he fits in our group. He shares our love for Legos.

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"No reason to mince words: this is the best headphone amplifier I have ever used..."

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

"It's rare that you come across something that is so totally different. It's a beautiful design, flush with fun options that make it an absolute joy to play with, and it sounds absolutely fantastic to boot!"

Dave Hanson, EnjoyTheMusic.com



"...the Absolute is probably the most flexible headphone amplifier I've ever encountered..."

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"Fit and finish is impeccable, as I have come to expect from Manley..."

Al Chieng, Positive Feedback

"An absolute joy to use."

Steven Stone, HiFi+

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Gary Alan Barker, Headphone.guru

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Words and Photos By Cameron VanDerHorst

I've got the mind of a scholar, the heart of a poet, and the body of a journalist. I'm working on changing that last one, but when drinking beer is part of your job, it can be a challenge. Life is tough, man.

I spent my teens working at a golf course, and Michelob Ultra was always popular with the serious golfers there as a low-carb, low-calorie treat after a round. That memory had me wondering if there was a fitness-friendly microbrew I could try.

Apparently, Cleveland, Ohio's Platform Beer Co. had the same thought. Their Gymday IPA boasts just 98 calories and 3 carbs in a twelve-ounce can, while promising to be "aromatic," "bold," and "exhilarating." I picked up a six pack of the colorful cans and decided to put those claims to the test.

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



They weren't kidding. Gymday smells great from the moment you crack open the can, with a strong, pleasant citrus smell. Once I poured it into a glass, the creamy, honey gold color had me expecting a heavy beer, but it's light as a feather. As it turns out, it's a very easy-drinking IPA, great for a reward after leg day or an afternoon in a sweltering garage dropping a transmission.

I'm not the biggest fan of IPAs, believe it or not. I've had the displeasure of drinking quite a few microbrews with cute names that all end up tasting like I'm chewing on a Little Trees air freshener.

Gymday, on the other hand, retains that bold, crisp IPA taste, but with a smooth citrus finisher that kept me coming back for more. I enjoy grapefruit beers, and Gymday's IPA/citrus hybrid flavor is right up there with the best of them. They could absolutely get away with marketing Gymday as a citrus beer, and not a soul would complain.

With the gyms being closed, I can't speak for Gymday's efficacy as a "fitness beer." The fact that it's so light – and delicious – that I want to drink the whole six pack at once probably doesn't help my beer-reviewer belly, either.

Unfortunately, Gymday is a limited run. By the time you read this, it's probably too late to get your hands on any. However, the fact that Platform Beer Co. managed to offer a low-carb, low-calorie IPA that still tastes great is a triumph, and it certainly warrants a look at the rest of their offerings.

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audioresearch.com



My friend Andy “Ammo” Schneider is a true man of many talents. His day job for a large imaging software company is only a small bit of what he’s into.

A life long disciple of music and audio, he’s worked the retail counter and worked the crowd at Coachella as a drummer, or as he’s often referred to “a DJ’s percussionist.” Definitely an all around creative dude. If that isn’t enough we share a long love of automobiles.

As someone who’s always been someone known for finding creative solutions to problems and pitching in, the current pandemic has had him pondering the ultimate question of how do we make hifi both interesting and affordable?

Enter the Ammoflage collection.

Schneider has taken some pretty common pieces, available on the used market, at very low cost, and turned them into one off pieces of audio fine art.

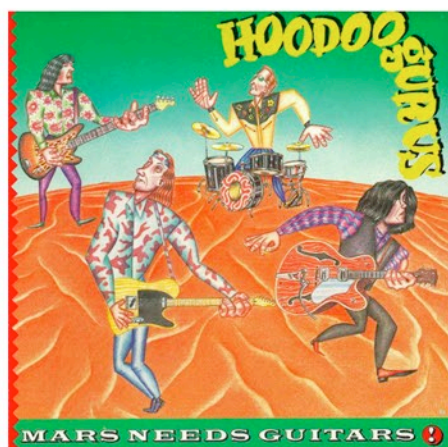
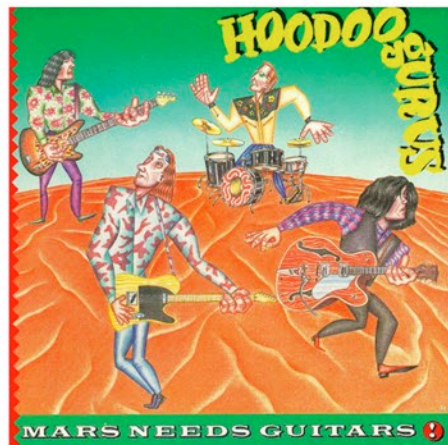
What began as hooking up friends with something beyond a one box solution, recently turned into a fundraiser for the Southern Poverty Law Center. His current crop of creations just raised over 30,000 dollars for this noble cause.

We’ve got an in-depth interview here, on the TONE website. This is a great story. And if you need something interesting and off the beaten path you can catch him at djandy@gmail.com.

Please tell him we sent you!

Can't Get It Out of My Head

Covid-19 Quarantine Edition 2 by Emily Duff



As you can imagine, living in NYC, the US epicenter of Covid-19, and sheltering in place in a 340 square foot apartment with two kids (1 tween boy and a desperate, teenage daughter, let's just call her Juliet, separated from her Romeo). Add to that a 6' 3" husband, a hound dog, a dozen guitars and parts of a drum kit. All that, makes for eclectic musical selections based on the ever-changing range of emotional lunacy. I'm practically in fits of hysterical laughter just writing out the details. In other words, it's a very "in the moment" vibe here and there is no theme or method to my listening madness. None. Musical Menopause is the name of my "show" and this DJ is seriously living in the moment. Tim Buckley's "Happy/Sad" also tidily sums it up, but the range is a lot broader and leans heavily on pure instinct. And so.....follow me and my gut as we play down those tunes that mean something in the moment and take me to a place that isn't the bowels of boredom and angst.

Heres the six I'm into:

"Death Defying" by Hoodoo Gurus - This came out in 2005 on their album Mars Needs Guitars! and was written by band member, Dave Faulkner. I would like to personally thank Dave for this jangly piece of power pop that reminds me that "If there's one thing that I've learned, It's the point of no return, And if that's to be our fate, Now's no time to hesitate." This song is so much about the lyric — especially this part: "All our friends are dead, Or they're dying, And our laughter only turns into crying, It's death-defying." Now, insert an inordinate amount of "Ooh-eee" background vocals and you have the perfect cathartic lyric lesson meets feel good sing-a-long set to the most uplifting 4 chords ever invented. Thank you Australia for a bloody good band that shows you a darkly optimistic time in true Aussie, "No Worries" fashion. The Doomsday Feel Good Song of the Year and yes, now is no time to hesitate.

I absolutely HATE list songs. Too many words to remember and usually a silly excuse to just jam and spew. I reckon that doesn't sound so bad, actually...jamming and spewing. But list songs seriously do my head in...except for this one. And especially now. REM's **"It's The End Of The World"** has been playing in my head in a continuous loop and it annoys me cause I'm not usually this trite or cliché but it's become a coping strategy for the current mess. The repetitive chorus is a mantra and it works. When you sing "It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine..." it's not the end at all.

Emily Duff is a singer you won't be able to get out of your head.

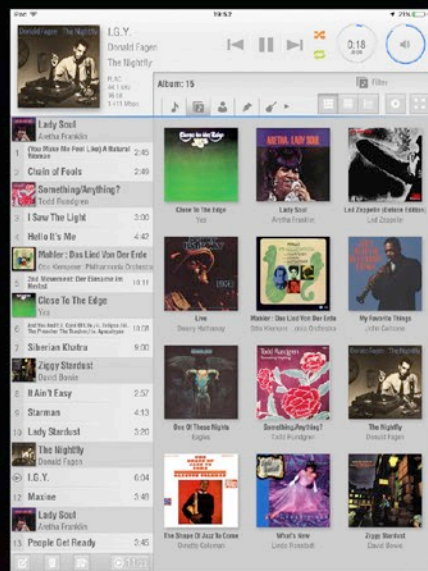
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Can't Get It Out of My Head

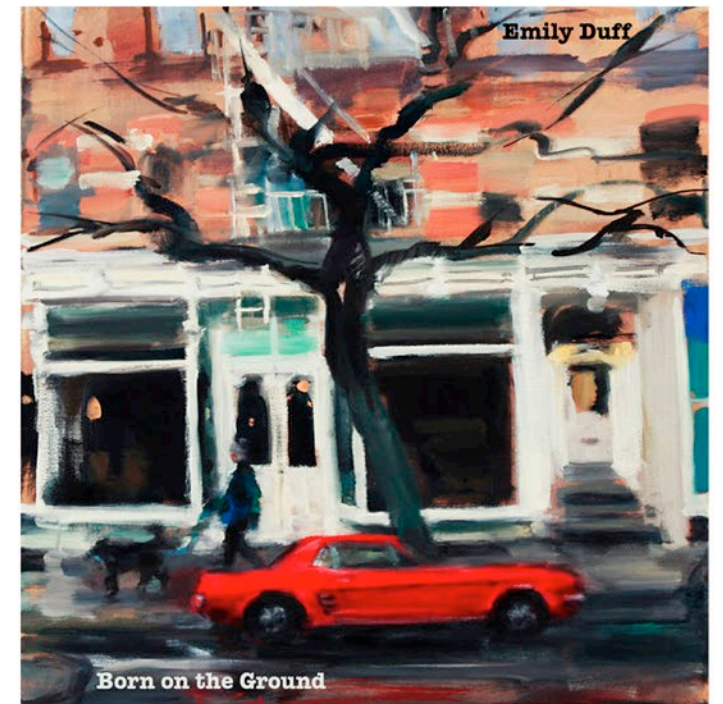
by Emily Duff

It's the beginning of something else we just don't know and ultimately, the I FEEL FINE part is what we all need right now. In the moment, dance around the living room, disconnect from the doom and just let go. You can feel fine too. Try it.

Decca's 1978 recording of Chopin's **Nocturnes & Impromptus** by Claudio Arrau is over 140 minutes of pure heaven. The Amsterdam Concertgebouw, where this performance was recorded, adds so much sonic embrace that on the right equipment and in the right listening space, you could astral project beyond a world of human error and insanity. This recording is as essential as breath and it provides more oxygen and confers more immunity to all who are smart enough to partake. If this record doesn't exist in your collection, I beg you to seek it out and experience it. Your health will benefit greatly!

The Sweet are a necessary guilty pleasure band for sure. As a matter of fact I know quite a few people who are embarrassed to admit that they listen to The Sweet. I am here to say that you need not be ashamed of your love for British Glam Rock from the 70s. It's okay and I completely understand. With song titles like "Wig Wam Bam," "Funny Funny," "Co Co," and "**Little Willy**," It might feel a bit "silly-silly" but give it a chance and dig what it can do for you. "Little Willy" is the song that's stuck in my head like an arrow right now and not only because it was one of the first pop songs I learned to play on the guitar but also "Cause little Willy, Willy won't go home, but you can't push Willy 'round, Willy won't go, try tellin' everybody but, oh no, Little Willy, Willy won't go home." Willy prolly knows that if he goes home, he's going to have to STAY HOME — and that's not really that much fun right now, is it? But hey....Home is where the Music is and where we can best flatten this thing so don't be like Willy but please listen to The Sweet and get this silly-ass perfect pop song stuck in your head too! Be well and let the music guide you safely home.

The White Sea is the title of the new record by Diane & The Gentle Men, fronted by NYC's own, Diane Gentile (Velvet Elk Records). The title track is pastoral and haunting which differs from the rest of the record that has a slightly more intrepid vibe.



Diane can do attitude and grit in her sleep. It's who she is in spades, but this track demonstrates her vulnerability and delicate side, amplifying her resiliency, humanity and versatility as an artist, performer and writer. This is a beautiful, lush track layered with emotion on every level. I highly recommend this record, Produced by Steve Wynn, Jesse Malin and Matt Basile and featuring guitarist, Jason Victor from The Dream Syndicate. Travel The White Sea and venture out into some new independent music from a soulful sister in NYC.

If I didn't mention my own new record I'd be an idiot....and I am no idiot. I have a brand new record out and I seriously Can't Get it Out of My Head...Oh Wait!!! I did!!! I got it out of my head by writing and recording it and now you can get it stuck in yours. It's called Born On The Grond and I wish you would go listen to it right now and BUY it too! Thanks y'all and stay healthy.....Real Music Lovers are survivors so drop that needle and dig.

Peace. xxx.

Setlist

The Greek Theater, Los Angeles - June 19, 2019

Photo by Karl Larsen



Noted rock photographer Karl Larsen just happened to be covering the Cult's Sonic Temple reboot last year, and their scorching set at the Greek Theater is the one all the classic rock aficionados agree was the highlight of the tour. Karl was kind enough to share his favorite shot of the night.

1. Sun King
2. New York City
3. Automotic Blues
4. Sweet Soul Sister
5. American Horse
6. Soul Asylum
7. Edie (Ciao Baby)
8. Fire Woman
9. Rise
10. American Gothic
11. Spiritwalker
12. The Phoenix
13. She Sells Sanctuary

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A Magical Tour Indeed: A Visit to Abbey Road Studios

Words and Images by Javier Huerta

You have to play the pianos!” my friend Luke tells me. I haven’t played a piano since I was 11. “Trust me, when they ask for volunteers, raise your hand. You’ll regret it if you don’t.” Wise words indeed.

Now, almost a year later, reflecting back on that evening of 10 August, having dinner with my good friend Luke and I was just 14 hours away from visiting Abbey Road Studios, as he had done earlier that day. It was an incredible coincidence that our families’ vacation coincided with the Abbey Road Lectures (and I’m sticking to this story, in case my wife ever reads this article).

I was as excited as a kid could be; after all, it’s not every day that you manage to sneak into what is arguably the most revered recording studios in the world. This is my story. A line from Al Stewart’s *Year of the Cat* sticks in my head – “On a morning from a Bogart movie, in a country where they turn back time.” Arriving at St. John’s Wood underground station, exiting through Grove End Road, this is exactly how I feel. It’s a warm, sunny day and the stroll to the studios barely takes five minutes through a peaceful neighborhood.

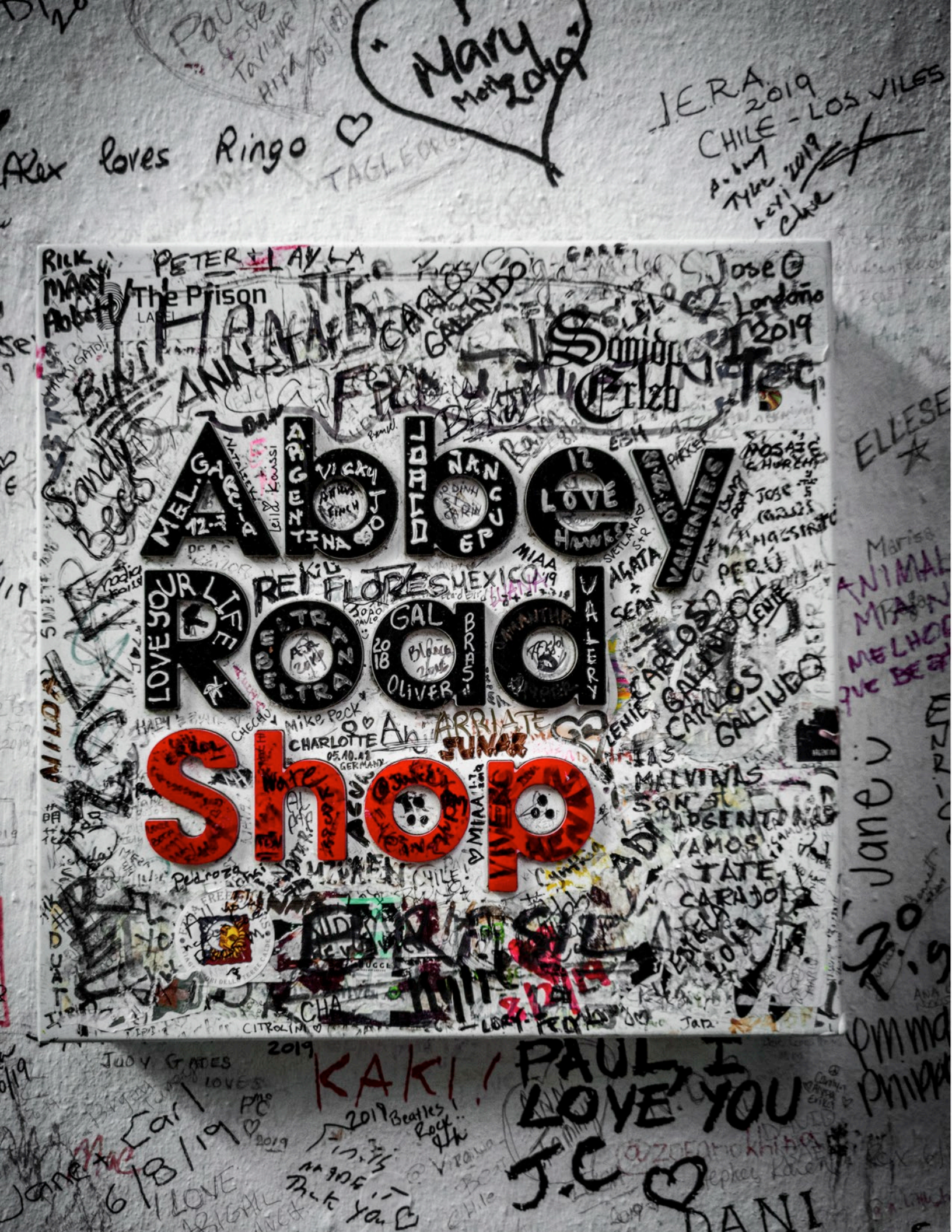
I imagine it looked similar in 1929, when EMI chose to house their new recording studios here because of the noise issues from nearby train stations. It’s a beautiful walk, setting the tone for your visit. At the corner of Grove End Road and Abbey Road sits the Edward Onslow Ford Memorial. To its right, to paraphrase David Gilmour, you’ll find the “Ghosts from the past, and from the recent past, and the distant past”: The Zebra Crossing, and the Studios.

Watching the passers by holding up the traffic to take their picture, I’m here 50 years and two days after the Beatles immortalized this spot. I can’t help but wonder, is this the world’s most repeated photo? Do people still do this for Elvis, Prince, or Michael Jackson?

I stop thinking for a second to forever burn my own momento; a scene that will live with me forever, getting in line outside the 1830s town house. The doors open at 10 a.m. and 30 people are already in front of me! Now, the Killers run through my head – “The good old days, the honest man, the restless heart, the promised land.” I’m about to have a pretty big experience. Passing through the gates, I receive a VIP access tag (which I lose three hours later) and am told to follow all instructions to the letter, or risk being tossed from the experience.

The townhouse seems small – the actual recording areas are on the back, right, and in the upper levels of the house. You can’t see any of the four studios from the street, surprisingly enough. I wish I could share some pictures of the inside of the town house, but the halls of the building are lined with copyrighted material, so any photos are forbidden. It’s not a problem, though – this isn’t the best part of the visit.

Luke had mentioned that “it felt small,” but entering Studio 2 felt like going through a portal to a parallel universe where Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Cliff Richard, Rush, Duran Duran, The Hollies, The Shadows, Deep Purple, and so many others never stopped playing. There was equipment to the left, right, and everywhere. Straight ahead was the Echo room, and past that even more gear and instruments.



Abbey Road

Between the keyboards and the gear is the old Studios air-raid shelter: the Studio 2 Echo Chambers. These were built during the 1950's with hard reflective surfaces and large pipes, to add a reverb effect, which is mixed back into the recording. One way to listen to its effect is on John Lennon's reverb on vocals on "A Day in the Life".

After a full examination of the lower studio floors, it's time to visit the control room on the upper level. This is an audio gearhead paradise: B&W Nautilus 801 Monitors, Classe Audio amplifiers, an AMS Neve 88RS 60 channel console – you get the picture.

Slightly to the left in the middle of the room, a staircase takes you to the Control Room. The depth, caliber, and story of the gear on hand was remarkable. This was a major part of music history, right here.

EMI BTR/3: The first stereo reel to reel tape recorder, used on all recordings and mastering jobs up to 1970.

TG12345 MK.II mixing desk (like the one used on Abbey Road and The Dark Side of the Moon!)

RS56 Curve Bender Equalizer, Fairchild 660 limiter and Altec RS124 compressor (used by The Shadows, The Zombies and The Beatles)

Ambiophony Speakers. 100 of them were placed in Studio 1, in order to raise reverberation times.

Hammond RT-3 organ, played by Billy Preston on *The White Album*

Challen piano (with an extra set of brass hammers – used on "A Fool on the Hill" and "A Day in the Life")

Steinway Grand piano (on loan from Studio 1)

Schiedmayer Celesta (featured on Pink Floyd's "Time", The Beatles "Baby It's You", "Goodnight" and on John Williams' "Hedwig's Theme".



Exiting the room I meet Tim, a sprightly Liverpudlian. In the 1960s his dad worked as a gardener for a gentleman who gave him the newest Beatles mementos and records. Only after a few years, Tim learned his dad was tending the gardens of one James McCartney! We make our way back to the studio and take our seats – it's time for Brian Kehew and Kevin Ryan to take the stage. I'm thinking Pet Shop Boys, "Now I sit with different faces, in rented rooms and foreign places."

Brian and Kevin possess extensive knowledge, and keep it lively. Again, no photos or recording is allowed. We are shown a British Pathe movie featuring the London Symphony Orchestra, Land of Glory, the first recording ever made at Studio 1.

Abbey Road

Even in mono, the acoustics of the room are obvious. Brian takes the opportunity to perform an experiment. A video of a tambourine being played back on the 3 studios (and the roof!). Studio 1 is big and epic; Studio 2 is more confined, with a warm reverb. 3 is dry, and well defined. The roof playback is anemic and lifeless by comparison. It's amazing just how much can be accomplished in this manner.

Brian and Kevin emphasize the innovation and inventiveness the Studios have displayed over the years. The original Alan Blumlein stereo tech demo is shown, explaining how he invented the process. He and his wife were distracted by not being able to place the dialog that was happening on and off screen properly. If you want to feast your eyes in it, it's here. (warning – it's really boring!). A second example is shown, when the pair explains how even with the Ambiophony speakers, reverberation times and acoustics were always an issue with Studio 1. For a time during the 80's, it was even used as storage space – and was going to be converted into a parking lot. If it wasn't for some acoustic work, and the fact that movie scores started being recorded there, we would not have this space today.

The story goes on, with mentions of Cliff Richards and the famous "Mrs. Mills." A joke about four famous lads, hauling from Liverpool, managed by Epstein and recorded by George Martin (Gerry and the Pacemakers!) is made... and then the talk finally turns to all things Beatles!

From double tracking, backwards masking, feedback, direct input, close miking, tape loops, multitrack recording, using speakers to record instruments, to playing drums at the end of a staircase, and recording them from far away (or even in tiny spaces!) – it was crystal clear why The Beatles never went on the road again.



They just loved to innovate and invent new, and better (or different) ways to do things, and the Studios, and its personnel, provided them a blank canvas to experiment upon.

And then, something happened.

Brian asks the magic words: "Who knows how to play a piano?" My hand shot upwards, but 20 more did. Three lucky fellows were asked to select the Challen, the Steinway Grand, and the Celesta. Only then I noticed how some keys were labeled with blue tape. Kevin then instructed the lucky participants to hit the marked notes on his cue. It took only 3 tries.

Out of those three pianos – the exact same pianos that roared the exact same way in the exact same place in 1967 – the final chord of "A Day in the Life" came out. I was pulled back in time for 10 seconds. First – the brutal, fast, precise, perfect attack. Then, the magic sustain – the warm and expansive acoustics of Studio 2; the insanely perfect tone. And finally, the natural decay of the instruments, complemented by the reverberation time of the studio. Bricks, acoustic treatment, the floor, the ceiling – it all came together, as we all sat down, perplexed, amazed, and speechless at the power, the immediacy, and the incredible magic of Studio 2.

I can compare this particular moment to a synthesized one. I'm a fan of LOVE, the Cirque du Soleil show. Last March, I attended the Magical Technical Tour, where we were shown the technology behind this production. 6,341 loudspeakers, including Meyer Sounds and JBL Concert Series arrays, plus 3 speakers per seat, powered by Crown amplifiers, on a quasi 25.1 channel configuration, with full room correction. Yet that massive rig doesn't close to what I heard at Studio 2. The exact same chord plays during the most emotional moment of the show (I'm not spoiling it) – and even that can't compete with the intensity and reality of 3 random strangers playing on the world's greatest recording studio. There's just no way to explain how beautiful the experience was.

I can safely say: that chord, to me, will forever be associated with Studio 2, and it became my favorite, most unforgettable part of my trip. 10 seconds of pure, distilled, unaltered magic.

Abbey Road

Once we regain our collective breath, the presentation continues with Norman Smith and Pink Floyd. Snippets from “Time” and “Money” were played, and once again, they never sounded better. A small correction to the lecture – the “Household Objects” experiment became part of *Wish You Were Here*, not *The Dark Side of The Moon* – and can be heard on the wine glasses effects on the intro to Parts I – V of “Shine on You Crazy Diamond,” and not on the cash registers and clocks on “Time” and “Money.” Those were recorded or looped by Alan Parsons.

Fast forward again to 2009, and the studio is in danger of being sold, and turned into an apartment complex, if not for the British Government, granting it an English Heritage Grade II Status.

Since then, Abbey Road has been working more on post-production, videogame music recording and other new technologies, such as “de-mixing” (we heard a terrific clip of “She Loves You”, where the team isolated George Harrison’s guitar). Also, two new spaces opened in 2017: The Gatehouse and the Front Room, and a Dolby Atmos Mix Stage for film post production, which will help Abbey Road move in newer and more exciting directions.

There can never be too much of a good thing, though. It was too soon when the lecture ended. Kevin and Brian signed a postcard for me, and I walked out of the studios.

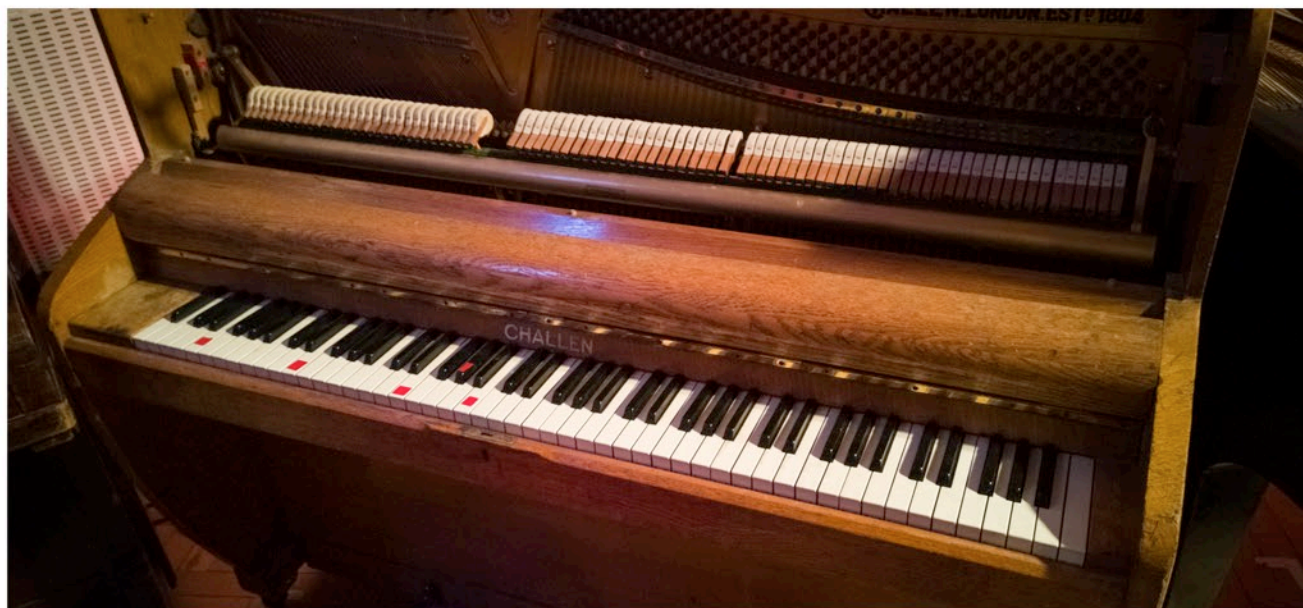
We are told how once you’ve listened to the acoustics of Studio 2, you could never unhear them.

I can now verify this statement. I’m currently listening to “All my loving” on my *The Beatles Mono Vinyl Box*, and Studio Two is there, in all its glory. The decay and reverb is as clear and present as it was during the playback samples I was fortunate to listen to.

One thing is clear to me: even though anyone can now have a DAW at home, and perform basic recordings and mixing, there’s something to be said about Abbey Road. There’s really no way to replicate this studio. Or its legacy. Its vibrancy. Or its vibe. And there’s no need to. It’s there, for anyone to use.

The Legend lives on. I’m left now with my memories, my autographed postcard, and a newfound appreciation for everyone who has been involved with this place. It’s so much more than a townhouse, or its recordings, or even The Beatles. It’s a living, breathing legend that still has some of its best days ahead. I’m glad I’ll be around a bit longer to listen to it.

And yeah, I regret not playing the piano.



An Analog Bakers Dozen: 13 Albums That Should be Reissued on LP



Sometimes, it seems practically everything is available on vinyl. Such is the torrid pace with which cult favorites, independent albums, and evergreen classics continue to see release and/or reissue on LP. Labels large and small, known and unfamiliar, unleash thousands of titles per year on a format that less than two decades ago everyone but ardent enthusiasts considered kaput.

And yet, despite myriad recent catalog-mining projects that have brought to market at least a majority of works on LP from artists major (Bruce Springsteen, Prince, Pink Floyd, Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Rush, Queen, Creedence Clearwater Revival, U2, Blondie, and Eurythmics, for starters) and more minor (Mark Lanegan, Siouxsie & the Banshees, Dinosaur Jr., Bruce Dickinson), a large volume of remarkable music remains unavailable in analog. And that's just rock and pop.

When it comes to a genre such as hip-hop, one could easily come up with 100 albums that warrant being reissued on vinyl. With rare exception (the catalog of Eric B. & Rakim springs to mind), labels remain either reticent or unable to bring efforts by the likes of artists ranging from Ice-T and LL Cool J to De La Soul and Chance the Rapper to LP. The fields of rock, pop, jazz, and even blues and classical have fared exponentially better.

Of course, a list is just a list unless supported with context, justified with reason, and animated with passion. True to that spirit, and to illustrate the abundant opportunities that exist for labels that prefer to play it safe—i.e., stick to the proven popularity and sales potential of rock—as well as highlight a few records that slipped through history's proverbial couch cushions, these 13 albums—discussed in chronological order according to their original release date—are ripe for vinyl. In the interests of commercial practicality, none of the titles tilt toward obscure or underground status. And while one or two may have appeared on an import LP in recent years, none have been available domestically—or on any pressing that could suitably be deemed “audiophile quality”—for at least a decade, if ever.

Scorpions *Lovedrive*

Years before the Scorpions gravitated to the lighter spectrum of the hard-rock wavelength in the late 1980s, the German band released a string of high-adrenaline albums steeped in magnetic riffs, soaring melodies, and power-chord promises. The first Scorpions work produced by Dieter Derks, 1979's *Lovedrive* represents the beginning of the group's heyday and a change to its prior sound. Three guitarists—Rudolf Schenker, Michael Schenker, and Matthias Jabs—more than make up for the departure of former lead six-string slinger Uli Jon Roth. Klaus Meine meets the guitar trident with formidable vocals and sends up each song with a passion appropriate for the carnal subject matter. The title track, “Loving You Sunday Morning,” and “Holiday” remain radio favorites, yet the searing deep cuts—such as the instrumental “Coast to Coast”—elevate *Lovedrive* to commercial metal's upper echelon.

Photo by Jeff Dorgay

As for the politically incorrect cover designed by legendary artist Storm Thorgerson and later banned in the U.S.A., where *Lovedrive* became the quintet's first charting album, Scorpions always had a sense of humor, and both frames of the sticky backseat scene deserve full-scale presentation on an LP jacket.

UFO *Strangers in the Night*

Live at Leeds, Cheap Trick at Budokan, Alive!, Made in Japan, Live and Dangerous, No Sleep 'til Hammersmith, Live Bullet, Europe '72, At Fillmore East—all iconic live albums so famously celebrated and discussed, many listeners can automatically fill in the name of the band responsible for their existence. They also regularly rank highly in “greatest” lists assembled by the music cognoscenti. A perpetual underdog by an equally overlooked British group, UFO's *Strangers in the Night* belongs in the same conversation. Anchored by the



soaring guitar wizardry of a then-23-year-old Michael Schenker, whose subsequent exit from the band triggered its downfall, and recorded at concerts in Chicago and Louisville, the 1979 set captures UFO at its peak and epitomizes shout-out-loud, raise-your-fist-and-yell, scream-your-brains-out rock n' roll. Not for nothing has Iron Maiden regularly used the heart-pumping *Strangers in the Night* version of “Doctor Doctor” as the lead-in to its concerts. Agile, sinewy, and expressive, Schenker's lines combine with Phil Mogg's meaty singing and drummer Andy Parker's vigorous beats in fluid fashion, resulting in a seamless flow and unstoppable energy that renders the work free of filler and excess. Notably, *Live in Youngstown '78*—a show originally recorded for *Strangers in the Night*—will be released for Record Store Day 2020.

Ozzy Osbourne *Tribute*

Dividing Ozzy Osbourne's career into phases seems as essential as evaluating Elvis Presley on the basis of what he did leading up to his film career—and then taking stock of what followed. Both artists ultimately transformed into self-parodies, with Osbourne now morphing from a sinister, working-class heavy-metal pioneer into the equivalent of a harmless, kooky uncle who does anything for attention. After getting fired from Black Sabbath, and long before he turned into a punchline, Osbourne nearly spiraled into irrelevance. Then he met Randy Rhoads. The pair made two proper albums together before Rhoads died in a plane crash in early 1982. Those efforts—*Blizzard of Ozz* and *Diary of a Madman*—changed metal. Recorded live in 1981 and issued in 1987, *Tribute* expands on Rhoads's studio accomplishments and showcases a musician whose innate technicality, accuracy, power, grace, speed, and classical-inspired vision served as a template for countless pretenders. Osbourne would go on to make many other albums—some redoubtable, others wince-worthy—yet he'd never again sound as alive, rebellious, and enthusiastic as he does here. Despite its recent inclusion in a pricey box set, it remains unavailable on standalone LP.

Living Colour *Vivid*

In a perfect world, politics would exist apart from music, but that's not how culture or society works. Released in 1988, *Vivid* can be considered a major success by most any measure. Living Colour's debut climbed into the Billboard Top 10, spawned three singles that received heavy MTV and radio airplay, sold more than two million copies, and helped land the band an opening slot on the Rolling Stones' tour. And yet, in an era dominated by hard rock, *Vivid* should have been a monster.



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Left unsaid is the band's members were African-American and wrote songs that addressed racial and economic disparities—not exactly express routes to mainstream fame. Whether prejudice played a role in curbing the ensemble's stardom cannot be proven. However, listening to the opening “Cult of Personality”—and witnessing guitarist Vernon Reid shred notes into dust with frightening, Michael Jordan-level intensity all the while threatening to overload any amplifier within earshot—suggests *Vivid* got short-changed. Factor in the well-placed funk, hip-hop, jazz, and heavy-metal accents throughout, and the album endures. A spitfire still awaiting a proper analog reissue.

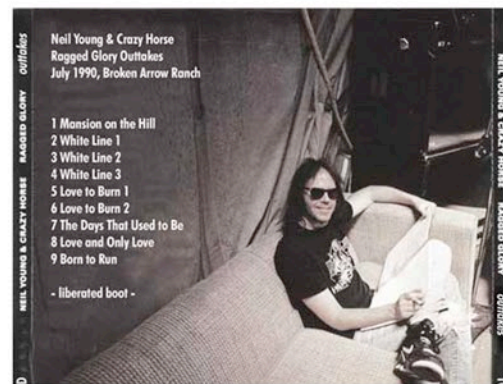
Danzig *Danzig*

By 1987, Glenn Danzig had already presided over two of the most cult-favorite bands in the underground: Misfits and Samhain. Both units dissolved. Enter producer Rick Rubin and his Def American label. Rubin, fresh from overseeing groundbreaking albums from Slayer and the Beastie Boys, distilled Danzig's howl-at-the-moon croon and black-mass lyrics into a bluesy, primal metal statement free of fluff or excess. Indeed, the stripped-down structures—from guitarist John Christ's steel-beam riffs to drummer Chuck Biscuits' bone-breaking percussion—simultaneously accentuate the simplicity and horror-business atmosphere of aptly titled songs such as “Twist of Cain,” “Possession,” and “Evil Thing.” Danzig also contains “Mother,” which would briefly catapult the band into the mainstream years later when MTV put a live version of the song into rotation. Metallica leader James Hetfield also guests on two tracks. The group recorded one more set with Rubin and, shortly thereafter, began to lose the plot. Akin to the aforementioned Osbourne, its front man descended into a morass of shlock. But 1988's menacing Danzig, which still feels spooked and spooky, and its follow-up *Danzig II: Lucifer*, merit first-time release on LP.

Neil Young *Ragged Glory*

Few artists have a deeper catalog available on vinyl than Neil Young. However erratic, his ongoing Archival Series boasts choice vault titles as well as fantastic-sounding reissues of many of his crucial studio albums. *Ragged Glory* remains the most glaring exception. Last issued on LP at the time of its release in 1990, Young's reunion with his longtime mates in Crazy Horse—and a record that foreshadowed the distortion-laden,

“alt-rock” movement that would soon explode—bursts with bright hope, catchy melodies, and mountain upon mountain of guitar. While different in tone, it stands up to ensemble's halcyon-era albums—including 1969's *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* and 1979's *Rust Never Sleeps*—and conveys a throw-the-doors-open garage-rock aura as refreshing as a cool lakeside breeze. Young and Crazy Horse's on-the-fly, warts-and-all, precision-be-damned approach suits the songwriting, be it the aw-shucks relief of “Country Home,” caution-to-the-wind stomp of “Fuckin' Up,” warm embrace of “Days That Used to Be,” or extended pledge of “Love and Only Love.” Young has hinted a deluxe reissue, complete with bonus tracks, could see release to commemorate *Ragged Glory*'s 30th b-day. But as with anything Young plans, don't bet on it.



Keith Richards *Live at the Hollywood Palladium*

The most memorable music Keith Richards has created since 1982 hasn't been with the Rolling Stones but with his band, the X-Pensive Winos. Recorded on December 15, 1988, *Live at the Hollywood Palladium* teems with spirited playing, ecstatic vibes, and a diverse 13-track set list that spans Richards' solo work to a few Stones covers, including early nuggets such as “Connection.” The snap-and-crack drum sonics alone are worth the price of admission, but even they pale next to the natural interplay and amicable chemistry of an ace ensemble that counts percussionist Steve Jordan, keyboardist Ivan Neville, guitarist Waddy Wachtel, saxophonist Bobby Keys, and backing vocalist Sarah Dash. Nearly every cut swaggers and grooves, from the reggae-laced “Too Rude” to the bustling soul of “How I Wish.” And the rendition of “Happy,” originally from the Stones' *Exile in Main St.*, practically prances in the theater aisles, with Richards and company goosing the coda into a loose-limbered jam. Inexplicably, the 1991 release remains out of print on all formats, and missing from streaming services.



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Rollins Band *The End of Silence*

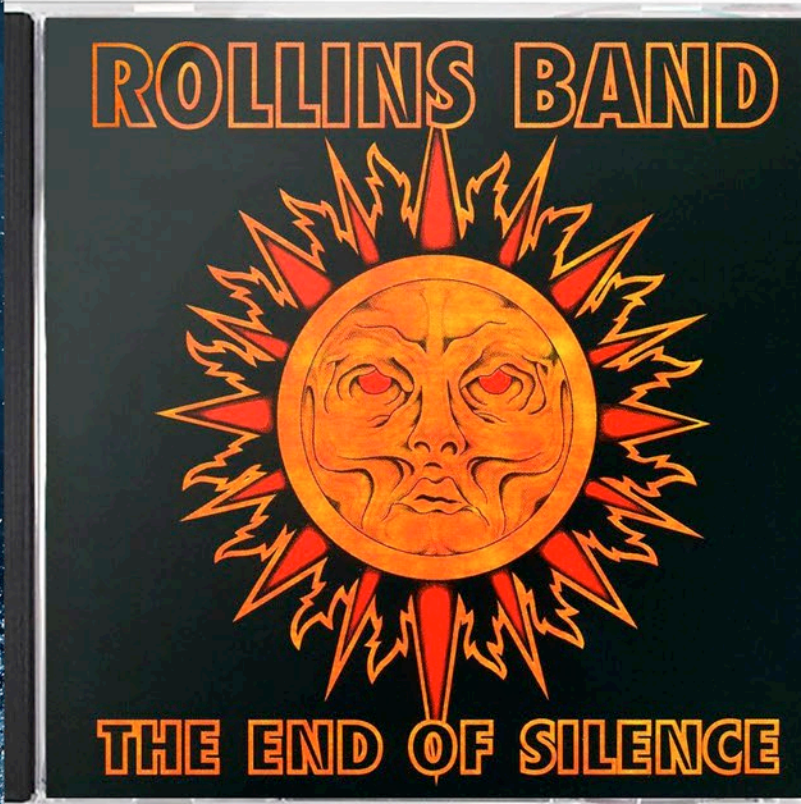
“I think you’ve got a low self-opinion, man/I see you standing all by yourself.” The bellowed, clarion-call, finger-pointing opening lines to *The End of Silence* portend the brute honesty, motivating introspection, and drill-sergeant ferocity that follows simultaneously stands at odds with the majority of the angst-filled, down-gazing themes embraced by a majority of early 90s rock. Experienced in one sitting, or even in morsels, *The End of Silence* is the equivalent of bench-pressing a 200-pound barbell—repetitively, with unyielding concentration and tireless might. A sonic and attitudinal assault, its physique and integrity mirrors that of its muscular and tattooed creator, Henry Rollins, whose fearsome barks and veins-popping yowls coincide with taut arrangements that stretch beyond the 10-minute mark on two occasions. A walloping blend of metal, punk, blues, and rock, the 1992 record makes no compromises and spares no feelings. Relatedly, Andy Wallace’s production hits and swings with the efficiency, impact, and force of a sledgehammer smashing into the side panel of an early 70s Lincoln Continental. Akin to most Rollins-associated albums, it has never been issued on vinyl.

Izzy Stradlin and the Ju Ju Hounds *Izzy Stradlin and the Ju Ju Hounds*

The first album Izzy Stradlin made after leaving Guns N’ Roses feels timeless. Nodding to the bare-bones rawness, raucous swagger, and organic soulfulness of the Faces and Exile on Main St.-era Rolling Stones, as well as the grit of classic urban blues, yet retains a contemporary vibe that avoids retro-chasing nostalgia, the 1992 set rides on the strengths of Stradlin’s songwriting, effortless rhythms, nicotine-flecked vocals, and natural connection with his bandmates. A pair of well-chosen covers (Toots & the Maytals’ “Pressure Drop” and Ronnie Wood’s “Take a Look at the Guy”) accompany nine originals. A handful of the latter harken back to the attack of his former outfit but most comfortably pause, reflect, echo, simmer, and stretch. Thanks to the open, straightforward production, you can practically trace the arrangements’ grooves and ridges as crafty hooks unfold in the background. Invaluable contributions from Ian McLagan on the Hammond B3 and Nicky Hopkins on piano, and the inclusion of “Shuffle It All,” a clinic in the art of tempo balance, descriptive lyrics, and build-and-release tension, further account for why Izzy Stradlin and the Ju Ju Hounds remains the high-water mark of the Indiana native’s solo career.

Patti Smith *Gone Again*

Fresh from setting the world afire with groundbreaking records and concert performances during the latter half of the 1970s, Patti Smith largely disappeared from the public eye for the better part of nearly two decades. Busy rearing children and writing poetry, the Chicago native released just one album in Reagan Era (1988’s earthy *Dream of Life*). But by the early 90s, Smith started working on a new studio record with the help of her husband, former MC5 guitarist Fred “Sonic” Smith. Yet his stunning death from heart failure in 1994 drastically altered Smith’s trajectory. Fighting heartbreak and devastation, and penning songs based on the handful of chords “Sonic” Smith taught her on guitar, she turned tragedy into salvation.





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Meditating on the loss of not only her soulmate but on the passing of her brother and close friend Robert Mapplethorpe, the vocalist’s healing “Gone Again” rages against the dying of the light, clutches hold of deep-seated spirituality, and affirms the need, want, and will to embrace life with full-stop enthusiasm. “Dead to the world/Alive I awoke” she sings, and there’s no doubting her conviction. Akin to Smith’s potent 2000 statement, *Gung Ho*, 1996’s *Gone Again* has never been pressed on vinyl—an error that warrants correction.



Photo © Steven Sebring

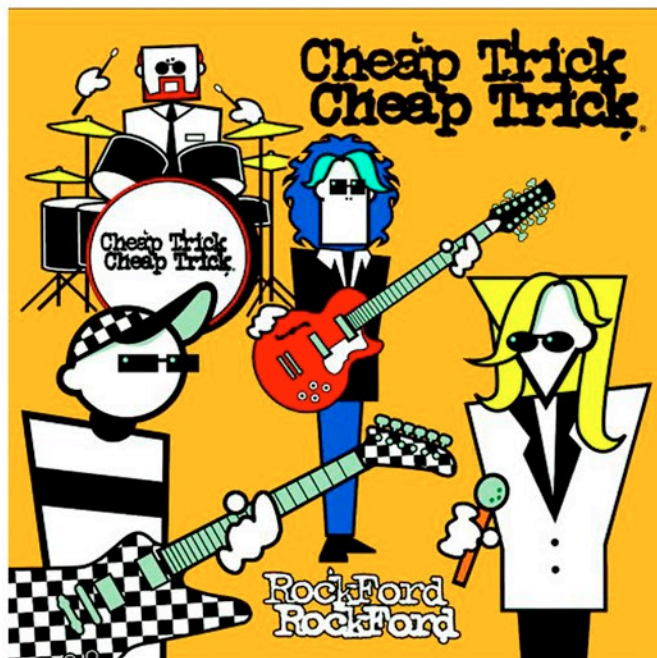


PJ Harvey
Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea

An album that prompts sweat to form on brows, *Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea* does more with less. PJ Harvey spells out the rousing record’s sentiment (and unmistakably sensual aura) on “This Is Love,” singing, quite unforgettably, “I can’t believe life’s so complex/When I just want to sit here and watch you undress.” Lord have mercy. Gritty guitars, grumbling bass, uncomplicated drums, and gauzy keyboards acid-etch landscapes teeming with drama, moodiness, shadows, violence, and plenty of sex. Confident, direct, lush, beautiful, cathartic, and happy, the Mercury Prize Award-winning 2000 effort comes across with sophistication of an exotic fashion supermodel and urgency of a heat gun peeling paint off walls. Announcing itself as another weapon in her dangerous arsenal, Harvey’s voice also projects with a fullness and roundedness absent on many of her earlier affairs. Speaking of the English artist’s prior works, many of her other finest hours—*Dry*, *Rid of Me*, *To Bring You My Love*, and *4-Track Demos*—have never appeared on vinyl. All deserve deluxe analog treatment.

Cheap Trick *Rockford*

Save for *In Color*, Cheap Trick's first four studio albums—staples for any rock library—as well as the band's career-making *Cheap Trick at Budokan* are available on LP in one fashion or another. Many fans, and most casual listeners, would consider those five records all the Cheap Trick anyone needs. Given the uneven path the band traveled for roughly 15 years (anyone remember the feeble-sounding *The Doctor* or 1990's prophetically titled *Busted?*), such thoughts are understandable. But the Illinois-based quartet finally righted its course, and by the end of the 20th century, reclaimed its power-pop throne after surviving a multitude of identity crises (and quite possibly, mid-life crises). The veterans' two most recent studio efforts, *Bang, Zoom, Crazy...Hello* and *We're Alright!*, instantly impress. Yet for all their appeal, they cede the spotlight to 2006's super-cohesive *Rockford*, which bubbles over with the group's hallmarks—punchy attacks, swooning harmonies, crunchy rhythms, economic concision, pervasive hooks. Produced in part by Jack Douglas and Steve Albini, it awaits its debut on LP.



sounds of Warren Ellis' convulsing violin and Jim Scavunos' off-beat percussion, the blow-torch instruments and sneering voices mushrooming into tension-filled clatter that confronts disappointment and discontent. *Grinderman* is savagely humorous and humorously savage, a liberating ruckus that wails at the top of its lungs and delights in derangement. Its second single, "No Pussy Blues," remains the gold standard for sonically and lyrically documenting sexual frustration, and "Honey Bee (Let's Fly to Mars)" provides a bookend by exploring unlimited possibility. *Grinderman* recorded an equally captivating follow-up in 2010. Cave has never come close to sounding as unhinged since. Reissues of both LPs are overdue.

Grinderman *Grinderman*

Nick Cave emerged from a decade spent crafting elaborate, and often intimate, music in electrifying fashion in 2007. Taking a hiatus from performing with the Bad Seeds yet teaming up with several members from the band to form *Grinderman*, Cave and company pounded out a primal debut in just four days. A throwback to Cave's earlier punk-and-speed-snorting era, the volatile record not only grants permission to be maniacally intense—it encourages such behavior and reactions. Frenzied, noisy, chaotic, yet somehow controlled, edgy songs buzz with the



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In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Tommy Bolin, *Private Eyes*

A great classic rock guitarist, whose life was cut way too short, Tommy Bolin only produced two real records, *Teaser*, and *Private Eyes*. Though there are some live bootlets and deluxe sets, this is the real deal.

The Speakers Corner remaster, shown here is our personal favorite.



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Gliding through the Supreme Beings of Leisure's *11i*, it's impressive at how much low bass these small monitors can muster. Often, when a small speaker is called upon to create low bass, it's a trade between quality and quantity. Not here - the Nico Evolutions go down deep enough to make most of you happy, and thanks to the speed and resolution of the LF energy provided, you can pair these with a high-quality subwoofer later should you so desire.

Including the stands with the Nicos obviously increases their price (and Eggleston is kind enough to send them filled, so you don't have to screw around with it later), but it assures setup success. One of the most significant issues with compact monitors is getting them on the right stand with an excellent stand to speaker interface. We've seen way too many speakers in this size range have their performance compromised by wimpy stands, or a stand not providing the right tweeter height.

Considering comparable speaker stands would probably set you back at least \$600 a pair, these stands make the Nicos an even better value.

Eggleston has enjoyed over 20 years of making high-quality speakers that have achieved accolades from reviewers, end-users, and recording engineers the world over. Their reputation is fully intact here, and much of the tech that goes into their flagship speakers is present here - at just under \$5k a pair.

A great recipe

As a listener who is always biased towards the coherence of ESLs, well-executed two-way speakers always capture my attention. With a 6-inch woofer and 1-inch soft-dome tweeter (both sourced from Morel) and an easy to drive 87db/1-watt sensitivity - these speakers work well with any amplification you've got at your disposal.

We tried them with a wide range of solid-state and tube amplifiers, from Pass, VAC, PrimaLuna, Nagra, and McIntosh - all with excellent results. The Nicos are very tube friendly when paired with our McIntosh MC275 (recently equipped with a quad of EAT KT88 diamond tubes). The Nicos are an interesting size, featuring a fairly narrow front aluminum baffle mounted to an exceptionally inert MDF cabinet, that is barely more than 8" wide, about 19" tall at its peak and about 16" deep.

Eggleston claims a weight of 28 pounds, but they feel much stouter than this. The stands weigh slightly more. Spikes are supplied to fine-tune the rake angle to perfection.

The cabinets are available in a few standard colors - black, beige, and white, but as they are coated with automotive paint, they can be finished in a custom color for an additional \$300. Knowing my love for BMW's, the Eggleston staff painted my review pair in Golf Yellow, that tennis ball color from an early 70s 2002Tii. Some will see it as yellow and others a bright lime. We can all argue about that later. What's not open for criticism is the level of finish applied to these speakers - when we reviewed the Emmas a few years ago, I was impressed with the finish, but these are a few clicks better. Obviously, the crew at Eggleston continues to refine their craft.

This is the level of finish you'd expect to find on a pair of Wilsons, Rockports, or REL subwoofers. I wish I could get these guys to paint the vintage 3-series I'm restoring! In addition to the finish quality, the cabinet joints exhibit a level of uniformity that also goes hand in hand with a much higher price tag.

It doesn't end there, around back is a finely finished, slotted, rear-firing port for the woofer, and a single pair of Cardas binding posts. The paint on the port goes all the way in, unlike a lot of cabinets we've seen, where this detail is scrimped upon. This is a pair of loudspeakers that you will feel good about writing the check for. Finally, basic black, magnetic grills are supplied, but the Nicos look so much better without, you may never use them.

Run in/setup

The Nicos sound great out of the box, with a slight edge that goes away quickly. 50 -75 hours, and they go from great to fantastic. Again, using the factory stands eliminates any guesswork that you don't have the tweeters at the right height. Initial break-in was in my 13 x 18 living room, powered by the Rivera AFM-25 Class-A monoblocks and APL-10 tube preamplifier, before moving into the larger 16 x 25 studio on the long wall, powered by several different tube and solid-state amplifiers. Though most listening was with the MC275 or PrimaLuna EVO400 with EL 34 tubes, these speakers offered great result with all the tube amplifiers at our disposal.

Like all the other Eggleston speakers I've heard, the Nicos have a slightly forward presentation, making for a lively, involving experience. This calls for almost no toe-in in my larger room - having them straight on axis proves too much of a good thing, but your room and taste will vary. The sweet spot ended up being about 8 feet apart and about 9 feet from the sidewalls, and the front baffle four feet from the wall. This makes for an expansive, three-dimensional result.

While the Nicos produce sufficient low-frequency information (with a claimed LF limit of 38hz) and perform admirably in a bigger room, they prove stunning in my 13 x 15 smaller room, pairing up with the Luxman L-550AXII, class-A solid-state amp. (25 watts per channel). Thanks again to the low-frequency articulation that the Nicos offer, and a little bit of room gain, these speakers provide a fulfilling small room experience like few other speakers. This is one of those few speakers that make such an excellent HiFi show presentation because they don't overdrive the room.

Further listening

Running through a series of tracks favoring low-frequency information from Massive Attack, Aphex Twin, and Snoop Dogg, the Nicos never disappoint. Those living on a diet of bone-shattering bass aren't going to buy a pair of 6-inch two-way monitors anyway. But, when your musical tastes turn to this flavor, you'll still be happy.

The Nicos excel in revealing a detailed and highly resolving musical picture of whatever recorded event you are listening to. At low to modest levels, they are very immersive, flattening out slightly when pushed to high levels. Again, to be expected from a monitor of this size. A 6-inch cone can only move so much air.

As mentioned earlier, the Nicos are slightly forward in their balance, but as someone who enjoys listening nearfield, this gives a big, almost planar headphone like experience. In comparison to something like a pair of comparably priced Harbeths, or even the less expensive Falcon LS3/5a. It all boils down to taste. If you'd like a pair of modestly sized monitors, with a broader frequency range and more sheer dynamic urge than the Brit-monitors, I would highly suggest the Nicos.

Keep in mind, these speakers are only slightly forward in their rendition, so you can achieve an overall tonal balance to taste (if necessary, of course) with some system fine-tuning and not leave the resolution that these lovely speakers offer on the table.

The resolving nature of these speakers makes them feel a lot more expensive than the price tag suggests. Whether tracking through heavily layered selections, either vocal or instrumental - they paint a big picture. Things don't get lost in the mix, and it's easy to see why recording engineers have such high praise for Eggleston.

Finally, these speakers offer a good deal of tonal correctness. It's easy to discern the sound of stringed and horn instruments and pianos sound as they should. I always tell readers and friends to find a speaker they can fall in love with and build a system around them. The Eggleston Nicos are speakers that can give you that relationship for a reasonable price, and thanks to the high level of quality they offer, they will grow with you as you upgrade components. The final icing on the cake is that you can have them finished to suit your environment for a minimal additional charge - a major bonus.

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Ironically, this review begins with the title track from the Kinks classic "Low Budget." However, low budget doesn't mean low quality. Just because you don't have \$60,000 to spend on a pair of speaker cables, doesn't mean you don't love music - right? These highly capable, yet diminutive two-way speakers do an excellent job unraveling this dense recording, keeping the vocals and harmonies intact.

Some audio enthusiasts associate the term "pace" almost exclusively with British speakers, yet these Canadian masterpieces are masters of keeping the musical pace of a recording intact. If you're new to the world of obscure audio prose, think of musical pace in the context of hearing live music. When you hear a group of musicians playing together, whether acoustic or amplified, the music blends together so that you don't really hear one instrument standing out (unless a particular player is soloing). Yet when you listen to recorded music on a HiFi system, on a less than awesome pair of speakers, perhaps the drums or the vocalist doesn't seem to "keep up" with the rest of the music. There are several reasons for that, and at least for me, pace is something that I notice more when it's not happening. I hope that makes it a bit clearer. Pun intended.

The Skylights do an excellent job with pace, and overall balance. Building anything to a price point means something has to be compromised. Totem resists the urge to emphasize any single aspect of the music spectrum, creating a \$1,000 pair of finely balanced speakers. If you've ever listened to Totem speakers at a HiFi show, you'll notice they always use high-quality amplification for their demos.

Totem speakers are very resolving, at the top of their class for the price. Unlike many modestly priced speakers that plateau fairly quickly, the Skylights are true to the breed in the sense that they keep revealing more musical information as the electronics behind them improve. The Skylights turn in an acceptable performance with the SVS Prime Sound Base (\$499), a PS Audio Sprout II (\$599), and a recently acquired vintage Marantz 2220B (\$150), so you don't have to have primo gear to build a nice system.

However, plugging them into the VAC i170 integrated is an ear-opening experience. The Skylights no longer sound like a great pair of thousand-dollar speakers. Mated with a small sub in the 13 x 15-foot room, they are installed, even better. You don't need a subwoofer to enjoy the Skylights, but should your involvement and budget improve, these speakers give you a lot of room to grow - that's value.

Further down the value path, the Totem Skylights are built at their Montreal facility - this is not a "designed in Canada, built in China" speaker, and it shows. The level of finish on the cabinets - from the joints to the way the drivers bolt in, is outstanding. Totem builds honest products.

This two-way system is available in a black ash veneer, mahogany veneer, or a white satin finish. Our review samples arrive in satin white, and I admit this has become a real favorite. Those with more traditional décor will probably gravitate to the black or mahogany, but in a newer home, the white cabinet blends into the background in a lovely manner.

You can get the full specs here but the diminutive cabinet of the Skylights holds a 5.75" woofer and a 1" soft dome tweeter, with a claimed sensitivity of 88db/1-watt.

As someone that doesn't make purchasing decisions based on spec sheets or measurements, the Totems perform well beyond what their conservative specs suggest. They deliver equally good performance via solid-state or tube electronics. Shaking the dust from a vintage Dynaco SCA-35 makes a heavenly, musically involving setup with the Skylights in a 10 x 12 room at a modest listening level.

Because the Skylights have a very gentle roll-off in their low-frequency response, they respond well to being placed close to the wall. This way, they can utilize room gain to achieve some extra bass grunt, without sacrificing the detailed, three-dimensional image they present. You'll know when you get too close to the walls when the upper bass becomes cloudy and nondistinct. We had excellent luck with the speakers about 8 inches from the wall using them without a subwoofer, delivering solid output down to around 40hz. Listeners in more compact rooms will really appreciate this.

The Skylights offer excellent vertical and horizontal dispersion, so they are not as critical of speaker placement as some, and this contributes to the large, coherent soundfield they generate. Yet, a little bit of fine-tuning when you get the chance will make for an even bigger musical window. We found toe-in to be more of a determining factor than rake angle with these speakers, and getting the distance between them just right will help you to get the maximum image size.

Going through a wide range of musical selections, both acoustic and electronic, reveals no weaknesses in the Skylights - no music is off limits. However, lovers of bass-heavy music may want to invest in one of Totem's excellent subwoofers sooner than later. You know who you are.

Refinement is the word that sums up the Totem Skylights best. As you move up the food chain with real HiFi manufacturers, the best offerings reveal more musical information without emphasizing one part of the musical spectrum over the other. These speakers provide that wealth of experience at an easily attainable price. After a few hours with the Skylights, you'll understand why Totem owners are as loyal to the brand as they are.





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Totem Skylight

The Good:

High performance/dollar ratio

Easy to set up

Wide range, stellar bass from a small cabinet

Not so much:

Nothing, actually

The Verdict:

Totem is famous for value, but they've outdone themselves with the Skylight



Golden Ear Brx Reference

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There's nothing like a pair of big speakers in a big room. It's often the missing part of the equation that can convince you at times that you are experiencing real music on a hi-fi system. In a big room, the spatial and timing cues arrive as they would if you were hearing live music. As we all know, not everyone has access to a large space and/or system. Enter the Golden Ear BRX Bookshelf Reference speakers. Grooving on Elton John's *Captain Fantastic* and the *Brown Dirt Cowboy*, via Riviera Audio's APL-10 preamp and AFM-25 power amp, the BRX's present a big, convincing sonic portrait in my 13 x 18 living room. Much bigger than their small size suggests.

We've always been big fans of Sandy Gross' Golden Ear speakers. If you want a long history of Mr. Gross, there are plenty of places you can find it out on the web. Suffice to say he's been in the speaker game for decades, and his current offerings have received acclaim nearly everywhere. Golden Ear is a champion of value and performance, building speakers with sparse, understated cabinetry that focus on performance.

His latest creation, the BRX Bookshelf Reference, tips the scales lightly at a few pennies below \$1,600 a pair, (sans stands) and as per usual with Golden Ear, come in gloss black. One color choice goes a long way at keeping inventory and costs down - another aspect of Golden Ear's commitment to providing maximum value. Gross suggests 30" stands to achieve correct ear to tweeter height, but this will depend on your seating height. Our living room has a very low couch, so 24" stands proved optimum, yet out in the studio with a more standard chair height, the supplied 30" stands were the way to go. Regardless of your choice, be sure the stands you choose are filled, as the BRX Bookshelves weigh 12 pounds each.

It's easy for the untrained eye to mistake the BRX for the Golden Ear Aon monitors. They share a similar configuration (small woofer, High-Velocity Folded Ribbon Tweeter, and side-firing passive radiators) but think of the BRX as the concept fully realized. Along with an upgraded crossover network, the BRX uses the same tweeter and a 6" woofer as the flagship Triton Reference, along with a 6" driver that is nearly identical to the one used in the Triton REF.

Big bass from a little box

Ok, say that ten times as fast as you can. If you've ever heard a pair of Triton REFs, but just didn't have a big enough room, the BRX will be your dream speaker. And, there's always one of Golden Ear's ForceField subs to round out the picture if you just have to have more bass. But reminiscing the passing of Kraftwerk's Florian Schneider, what better way to explore the LF capability of the BRXs? Those considering a pair of Tritons for the front and center channels of a theater system now have a perfect match for the rear channels, but make no mistake, these mighty monitors make a great anchor for a 2 or 2.1 channel system.

Swapping the 25 watt per channel Riviera amp for the 90 watt per channel McIntosh MC275 brings a bigger, beefier musical rendition, with a higher level of tonal saturation. The high resolving ability of the HVFR tweeter immediately reveals the differences between these two amplifiers, and in a chameleon-like way, delivers an entirely different sonic aesthetic. This is an essential aspect of a high-quality speaker, adding to the fun factor of the BRX - they will follow the lead of whatever electronics you place in front of them.

The BRXs go deep with "Musique non Stop," proving the ability of the side-firing passive radiators' ability to offer substantial bass (which gets even better in our 13 x 15 room) drive. Still, they do an incredible job with the trippy vocal effects in this record, placing processed vocals everywhere - not unlike the feeling you get with a pair of premium headphones. Changing the program material to the bass playing of Eberhard Weber's *Later That Evening*, shows off these speakers' ability to articulate the lower register, not just provide one note bass.

Mid to top, equally enticing

With much of the LF extension coming from passive drivers, the BRX is a two-way speaker, and this always makes it so much easier to integrate a woofer and tweeter. Midrange to top coherence has always been a strong suit of the Triton R, and the BRX is equally good, if not slightly better, because of its small form factor and smaller front baffle area. As you would expect from a top mini monitor, the BRXs disappear in your listening room with ease.

A journey through some acoustic standards, both jazz and classical, reveal just how well these speakers handle strings and percussion. That tweeter is quick, reproducing musical transients without smear or dulling down, making for a lively, realistic presentation. As with the full-sized Triton REF, the BRX has a slightly forward characteristic, and because they don't go down as deep, bring you a few rows closer to the stage.

Final thoughts on tech and setup

If you've taken the time to peruse the Golden Ear website, or have been Mr. Gross' guest at a HiFi show, you know he likes to place his speakers wider apart than some manufacturers, with a bit more toe-in than most. Ignoring his technique will give you slightly more image depth, but considerably less image width. Thanks to the wide horizontal dispersion of the Golden Ear tweeter, you can get away with this, so after a few laps with other models, I went straight to the "Sandy Method" with the BRXs.

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In both rooms, this ended up being about 18 inches from the back and sidewalls. This process is slightly easier before you fill the stands. Adjust about an inch at a time to get the best balance of room gain/bass reinforcement and clean, unclouded mid-bass, and you're about 90% there. Fill the stands, use a bit of sticky stuff for good measure and done.

With most listening done, and notes taken, the last bit of investigation centered around a broader range of amplification. The BRXs will be easy to integrate into whatever you've got on hand. We tried everything from the PS Audio Sprout II, all the way to the Pass XA200.8s. Quality amplification makes the difference, but if you've got about 20 watts per channel, you've got a place to start with the Golden Ear BRX.

A few years ago, there were only a few serious contenders for compact, high-performance speakers. Today, that list has broadened, and the Golden Ear BRX Bookshelf Reference is at the top of our list - sonically and aesthetically. We're going to keep them around to judge some of the other small speakers sent our way.

Golden Ear BRX Bookshelf

The Good:

Top fit and finish

A Triton in every way

Not so much:

Limited LF response, but you can choose the floor standing models

The Verdict:

Triton REF sound for those with smaller rooms. What's not to love?



Jern 12WS

\$2,998/pair.
jernspeakers.com

About a year ago, We reviewed the Jern 14EH speakers. These compact, cast iron masterpieces feature premium quality driver and crossover components, housed in stylish, curvy, yet functional shape. Where the EH model is meant to be full range, a small woofer can still only move so much air.

Enjoy the Experience



PASS

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

Still, these speakers were highly resolving, and thanks to an incredibly inert cabinet that weighs about 30 pounds, produce music eclipsing some much more expensive compact offerings. The 14EH also proves excellent in a tight, near field experience - say a desktop system, or video editing system, delivering immaculate vocals.

The W in 12WS stands for "wavecor," in reference to the special woofer made by Wavecor for this model. The 14 series uses a ScanSpeak driver. This is precisely what makes this speaker preferable in a small room. By rolling off the woofer, it's not making it go down as low as a FR configuration, pushing the woofer cone to break up when playing music with a lot of low-frequency content. The 12WS' woofer is rated -6dB at 65hz.

If you are a small room, anti-subwoofer music lover, the 14EH is going to be the speaker you'll want. But if you embrace the sat/sub concept and would like more ultimate dynamics, the 12WS is the ticket. At \$2,998 a pair, I'll go on record to say this is my new favorite mini-monitor. That's not to say the offerings I love that are all basically LS3/5a variations suck, but they are a different flavor. I won't kick you out of the listening chair if that's your preference - a few of my LS3/5a loving buddies found the Jern's "too modern" or "too resolving." Tomato, potato, you know how it goes.

It's like comparing a Mac 275 to an Audio Research REF 75SE. Both great amps with very different presentations. You're gonna probably love one and the other, not as much. Where the Brit monitors are more polite and slightly softer in presentation, the little Jerns are highly resolving without crossing the line to being harsh. Seriously, these are all small enough, you could theoretically have both, and put the pair you're not using up on a small but stout shelf, and change the system easily, depending on your mood. Some days you want to drive the Jaguar; some days, you feel like driving the M5. You certainly can't have that option with two pairs of gigantic floorstanders, without a tremendous amount of listening room real estate, so the Jerns offer a tremendous opportunity for fun.

Setup Options

Hans Ole Christenson, designer of the Jern speakers (and a good many studios and high end listening rooms as well), suggests placing the speakers about 2 feet off the ground about three feet from the sidewall and about a foot from the back wall for more full range results. Much like the 14EH, I did get a good result here. Still, I preferred having the speakers further out in the room with a subwoofer in the system - achieving marvelous results with REL,

Paradigm, and MartinLogan subwoofers. I'm not sure if it's the general roll off of the 12WS, the curved shape of the cabinet, or a combination, but these speakers proved easy to integrate with either of the subs. Achieving full range performance without being able to localize the subwoofer was done in short order.

Set up this way in a 13 x 15 room, with the listening chair about 7 feet back, the 12WS/sub combination produces a huge soundfield, with excellent dynamics. I must confess to being a big fan of the ScanSpeak tweeters, and the implementation here is outstanding. The final listening notes were taken with the Octave V110SE (with black box) amplifier and Cardas Clear cable. The dCS Vivaldi One provided all music used for evaluation. At modest to high levels, the Jerns with a small sub provide room-filling sound, and thanks to the refinement of these speakers, it's easy to mistake them for something more expensive.

A small system that plays anything

The Jerns have a very smooth overall tonality about them. To try and put their sound in perspective, the upper register has a similar feel to some of my favorite Sonus Faber and GamuT speakers (which also use Scan Speak derived drivers). They aren't as mellow as Vandersteen 2s, 3s, or early 5s, and are definitely a bit more laid back than current choices from Dynaudio and Totem. I hope that helps.

These speakers, especially with a good subwoofer (or two), should provide a highly immersive musical experience for nearly anyone's musical taste unless you really need to play music loud, loud. But there aren't any \$3,000 speakers out there that will give you resolution, refinement, and mega SPLs. That's going to cost a lot more.

The 12WSs do a particularly convincing job with the human voice, providing a natural and nuanced presentation. A favorite test for this is to compare the voice of Seal to that of Peter Gabriel. Speakers lacking sophistication, render both artists as nearly identical. Yet speakers with a more natural feel and no crossover issues show these two men to sound completely different. The 12WS passes with ease.

Listening to the twang of Link Wray's first album, the Jerns also produce a realistic level of decay, and this is a critical aspect of a high-quality speaker - instruments (acoustic or electric) have a lot of depth and texture. Again, contributing to the natural, fatigue-free sound they offer. This is a speaker you can listen to all day without succumbing to listener fatigue.



Finally, they do have high resolving power. A go to example are the shadowed overdubs in the Doors "Riders on the Storm." It's easy to hear Jim Morrison exhaling the chorus, way under the lead vocal. I'm sure you've got your favorites here.

A top performer

The Jern 12WS is a speaker I suggest if the points mentioned above are what you're looking for. Personally, I love the non-traditional enclosure shape and use of materials - but I'm a technology and design geek. You're going to love the way they look or hate them.

Realistically, a good pair of stands and an equally high-performance subwoofer to complement the Jerns makes this closer to a \$4,500 - \$5,000 investment, not just the \$3,000 for the initial pair, unless you already have these components at your disposal.

I always say, "fall in love with a pair of speakers and build a system around them." The Jern 12WS is undoubtedly an easy speaker to do just that with. Happy listening.

Jern 12WS

The Good:

Incredibly resolving

Super cool design

Not so much:

Need very rigid stands to deliver their best

The Verdict:

The Jerns deliver some of the most lifelike sound we've heard in a small monitor, delivering a huge soundstage and natural highs





Block Audio C-Lock SE D

\$119
blockaudio.com

We won't try and convince you that \$500 carbon fiber outlet plates are going to make your audio system sound better (and our publisher is batshit crazy about anything made out of carbon fiber), but here's an excellent \$119 outlet plate that adds to your system's functionality.

If you've upgraded your power cords, and perhaps even your outlets, you might have also noticed that some power cords with massive plugs can sag in the outlet, depriving you of the solid connection you've paid all that extra money for. This can also be an electrical and fire hazard, should something now fall against the exposed blades of said AC plug. And that's when bad things happen to good people.

Enter the C-Lock wall plate. The black anodized front looks very tidy, but what makes this special is the threaded socket that extends from the plate. Those using single plug outlets, can get a different version with only a single outlet in the center – perfect for those of you using dedicated lines for power amplifiers.

The socket looks almost like a camera lens, extending about 1/2-inch from the wall, for massive plugs, utilizing an o-ring inside for firm grip. What good is a high-perf power cord if it's drooping in the socket? You can order the C-Lock SE D without outlet, to use with an outlet of your choice, with standard outlet, or a Furutech outlet.

Highly recommended.

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EAT KT-88s

\$1,895/quad
europeanaudioteam.com

There are a few things in life I don't want to experience, because I don't want to know how incredible they are. I don't want to drive a Ferrari Enzo, I don't want to drink a glass of Macallans 60 and a few others. Years ago, Aston Martin lent us a DBS (a silver one, like the one James Bond drove in Skyfall) and after that week, cars sucked for a couple of years.

The \$1,895 set of EAT KT88 Diamond output tubes are like this. While there is still a wide range of NOS small signal tubes out there, there are precious few NOS power tubes left. When they do show up, the price is off the chart, and you're still left wondering if they will be any good when power is applied. NOS tube vendors don't offer warranties on these tubes, so it's a gamble even on the best of days. European Audio Team offers a warranty on their KT88s, a year, in fact. This alone stops me from shaking the dust from some 50 or 60 year old tubes, hoping they will be ok.

Let's get straight to it

Starting with a PrimaLuna EVO 100 integrated (that doesn't cost much less than a matched quad of EAT Diamonds) the change is dramatic. Dramatic to the level, that it doesn't even sound like the same amplifier anymore. However, putting a \$1,900 set of tubes in a \$2,300 amplifier is probably not going to be a value proposition for most audio enthusiasts.

Excited with initial results, there was a lot more listening to do. Fortunately, I've been listening to the incredible Octave VT110SE (with Super Black Box) integrated for almost a year, as well as my own VAC i170 integrated. These amplifiers both use a quad of KT88 tubes to produce about 80 watts per channel, offering a serious portion of money no object vacuum tube sound.



TONE102.119



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www.splicit.com



Rounding out the picture, a freshly restored Audio Research D-79 is the last amplifier in the test lineup. This is not completely an apples to apples comparison, as this amplifier came with the slightly different (though identical pinout) 6550 tubes from the factory. However, it's a pretty common upgrade among D-79 owners to swap in the KT88 tube in to get more punch and authority.

The Diamonds rule. All four amplifiers exhibit nearly the same, massive amount of change, and all in the same directions. Bass response is improved in every way – this is what will grab you in the first 10-30 minutes, should you spring for a set. There's not only more extension, but considerably more texture, definition and detail. As the Diamonds stabilize thermally, you'll hear the sonic landscape between your speakers get wider and wider, until it well exceeds what you are used to with whatever stock tubes you're currently running. It's incredible.

Listening to well-known favorite tracks, every amplifier the Diamonds transform every amplifier they are installed in. Aimee Mann's "Redvines" comes alive with her lead vocal jumping well out in front of the soundstage, where in the past she stays more in line with the speaker axis. The piano in the title track from Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach's *Painted From Memory* has a much more natural, less "audiophile-y" feel than ever before. The strings in this track, expand and float into consciousness, where they merely existed, buried in the mix before.

The final surprise

Listening to all of these great amplifiers was a revelation, but I wasn't ready for the final piece of the puzzle. Recently adding a McIntosh MC275 has been like a reunion with a long lost friend. This amplifier proved to offer the biggest change for the better with the EAT tubes.

After spending a lifetime evaluating audio components, first as a consumer, and then as a reviewer, there have been precious few surprises. It's a wonderful, refreshing thing when they do, which brings us full circle.

A quad of these tubes will still set you back a third of the MSRP of the MC275, but it's no longer the same amplifier, once equipped. This delivered the biggest gain, offering everything mentioned with the other four, but the slight veil that I had always attributed to this amplifier is now completely gone. Consider the \$7,900 MC275 with Diamond KT88s worthy of anything in the \$10k and above category. There's a level of delicacy that this amplifier offers that wasn't there before. Going back to the stock tubes is heartbreaking, like getting back into a normal car after living with an Aston Martin DBS.

The good news, is that the cost of a set of EAT Diamonds will set you back considerably less, and offer an equally stunning level of involvement. It's a big jump, but these tubes offer an improvement you can't achieve otherwise. Damn.

E.A.T KT88 Diamond Tubes

The Good:

The Best KT-88 you'll ever hear, and you can't unhear them.

Not so much:

Crazy money, but worth it.

The Verdict:

At first blush, the EAT KT88s seem extravagant, yet in a world of five-figure cables and equipment racks, this is a much more substantial improvement.



Who doesn't dig some Bossa Nova style as a great alternative to the Netflix in "Netflix and chill"? We submit that a little bit of this will get you through the night better than another cop show, or watching people hoard things.

Here's a list to get you started, but this genre is well represented, so you can start with any of these tracks, and let ROON do the rest.



Andy Summers, Roberto Menescal - Roxanne

Bossa Nova Nouveau - Feeling Love

Joao Bosco - Sinha

Albare - One Note Samba

Eduardo Machado - Risoto de Galo

Roshinha de Valencia - So Olhar

Djavan - Doris Gris

Itaiguara - Meu Rio

Ennio Mano - Arrow

Todd Rundgren - I Saw the light
(from *Todd With a Twist*)



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The Ansz PowerSwitch is equipped with a wealth of independent technical solutions and shows how much sound gain is still possible by focusing on the disturbance-free distribution of data. Even if the separate power supply for the active Ethernet cables is an innovative and exceptional approach, it is clear to me that the D-TC Supreme is the best-sounding switch that I have ever integrated into my network. So, the Ansz PowerSwitch not only performs high in terms of price but also in terms of outstanding sound! HIFI STATEMENT Netmagazine, April 2020

For a demonstration, visit our state of the art showroom or order online at hificentre.com

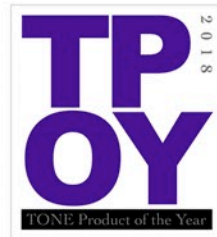


GOLD NOTE
il suono italiano



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

FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



McIntosh MC275

\$6,700
mcintoshlaboratories.com

Coming up on its 60th birthday, the MC275 truly deserves the word "legendary" applied to its description. Still using a quartet of KT88 output tubes, this amplifier continues with the same basic look it had in 1961.

Some things have changed for 2020, the speaker wire binding posts are now gone, as is the octal tube socket to power other devices. And, a set of balance inputs now grace the rear panel.

Those who don't approve of the new school green LEDs underneath the tubes, they can be turned off so you can bathe in the natural tube glow.



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

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PB-3000



SB-3000

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-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



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FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

Focal Kanta One

\$6,590
focal.com

We've been using the top range Kanta Three speakers as a reference in room two for sometime now, and have grown accustomed to their sound. But not everyone has room for a pair of floorstanders. Problem solved.



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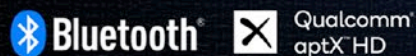
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FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



LSA T-3 Turntable

\$3,750
underwoodhifi.com

Underwood HiFi has just introduced a new turntable, that looks as intriguing as it sounds. This belt-driven table features a 9.5 inch Uni-Pivot tonearm featuring a DIN connector for easy updates.

Our full review will be out shortly.



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Naim Supernait 3

\$4,990
naimaudio.com

Naim's stunning Supernait has always been a compact powerhouse, offering flexibility and functionality, with the ability to drive a wide range of speakers.

Now, with an on-board MM phonostage, and the ability to connect on of Naim's external power supplies, the potential for expanding further is only a call to your Naim specialist away.

And then, you'll have a Super, duper, Nait 3.

Review in process.



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Uniti Star



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TIDAL



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Digital Input
(S/PDIF)



Multiroom



Qobuz

FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

Backert Labs Rhumba 1.3

\$4,400
backertlabs.com

Backert Labs is a small company focused on one thing, making great preamplifiers. And they succeed at this brilliantly.

Without giving their upcoming review away entirely, this tube preamplifier, is based around their patented "Green Force" technology, eschewing large electrolytic caps found in some other products.

The result is nothing short of a benchmark at this price.





Dynaudio Contour 20s

\$16,000/pair (with stands)
dynaudio.com

Dynaudio's latest Contour range builds upon what they've learned up to now, combining tech from past flagship models to create a miniature masterpiece.



SCULPTURE A



LE PHONO SE

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



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

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A.4 Silver



A.3



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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 phono stage and others.

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

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

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

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

Ana
MIGHTY SOUND



Naim UnitiStar

naimaudio.com
\$5,995

Naim practically invented the high performance all-in-one with their Uniti series. The current UnitiStar allows connectivity with everything but a turntable, yet there is an analog input for a (perhaps one of Naim's) phono stage should you choose to go there.

Add gorgeous yet highly functional casework, and the sexy volume control from Naim's Statement series, and this makes for a true high end anchor of your music system.



Formula xHD

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- 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

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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Scottsdale, Arizona - LMC Home Entertainment

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Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

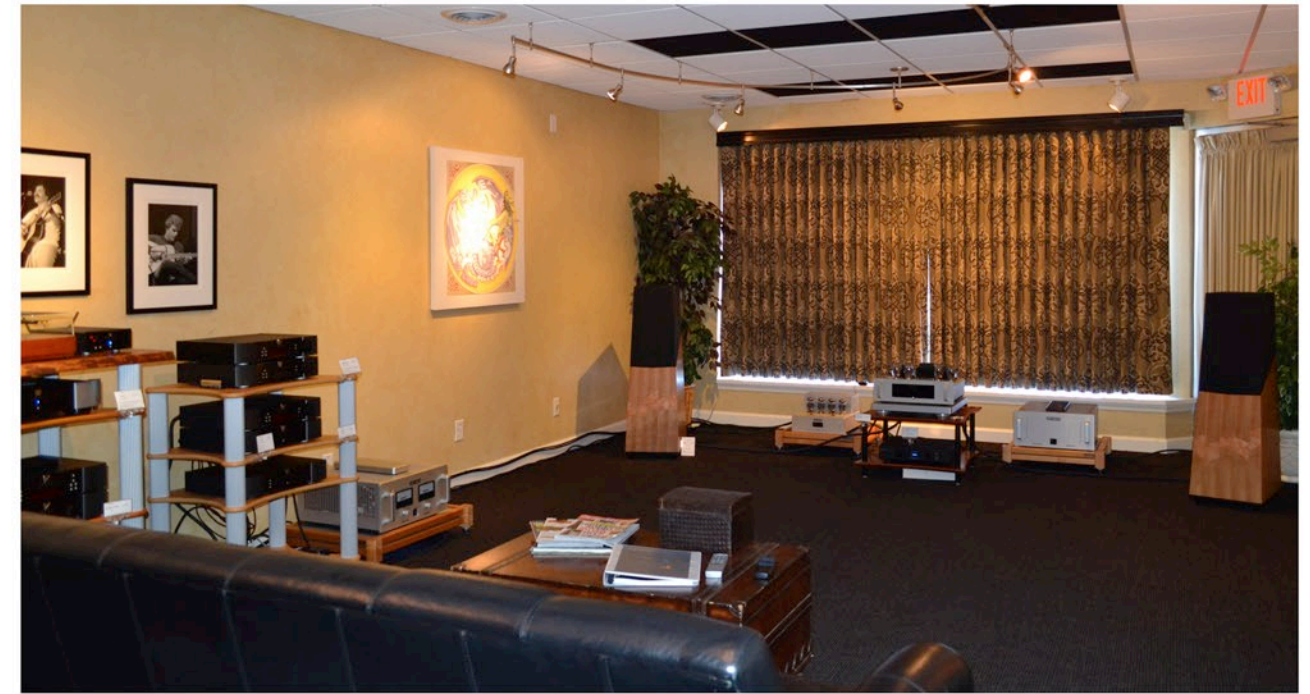
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Sarasota, Florida 34240

941.932.0282



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www.theaudioco.com
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Marietta, Georgia 30060

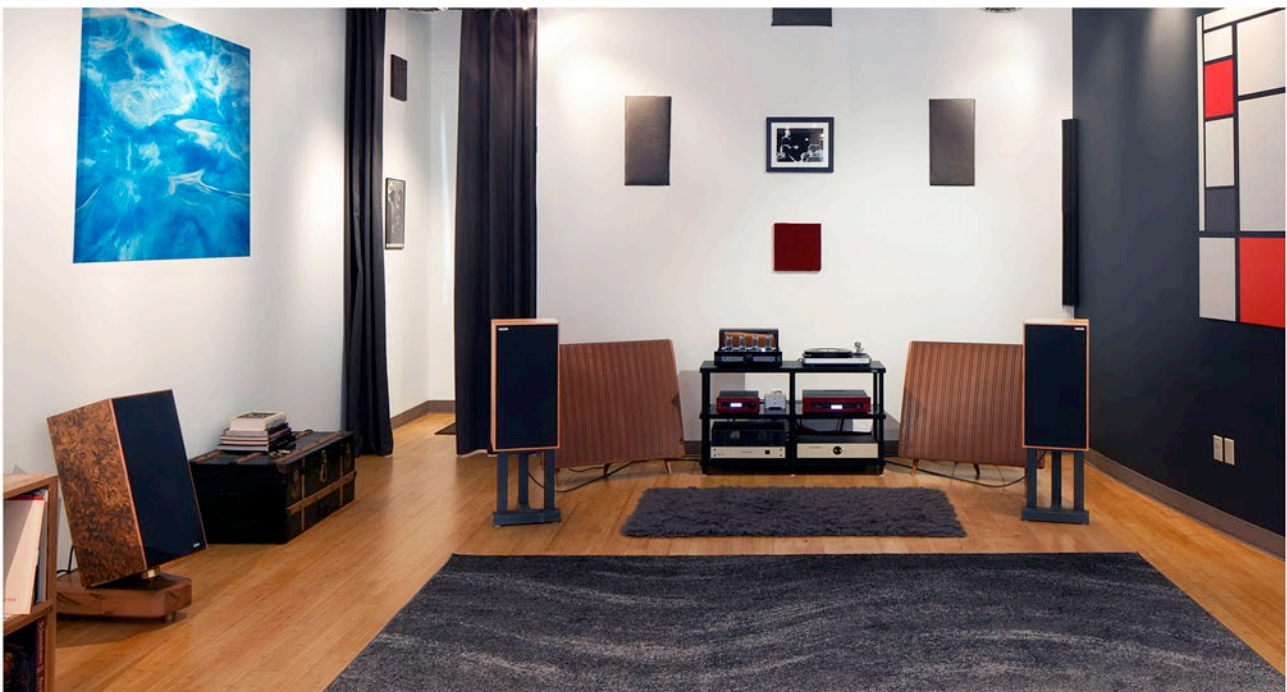
770.429.0434



San Diego, California - Deja VU Audio West

www.dejavuaudiowest.com
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San Diego, California 92111

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Gig Harbor, Washington - Gig Harbor Audio

www.gigharboraudio.com

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San Francisco, California - AudioVision San Francisco

www.audiovisionsf.com

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Austin, Texas - Whetstone Audio

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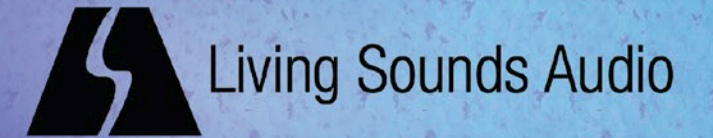
In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

T.Rex - Self Titled

Issue's done, time to dress up and go out. Wait, we can't do that yet. But in the meantime, we can put some T-Rex on and think of when times were much more carefree.

Watch for a future interview with MoFi sound labs on their SACD titles. We're hugh fans.



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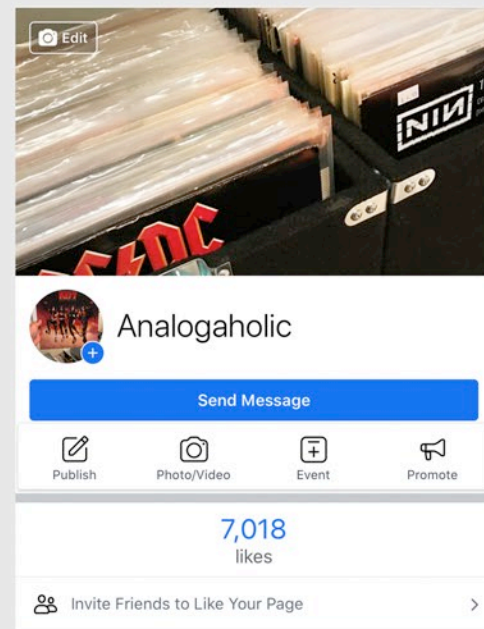
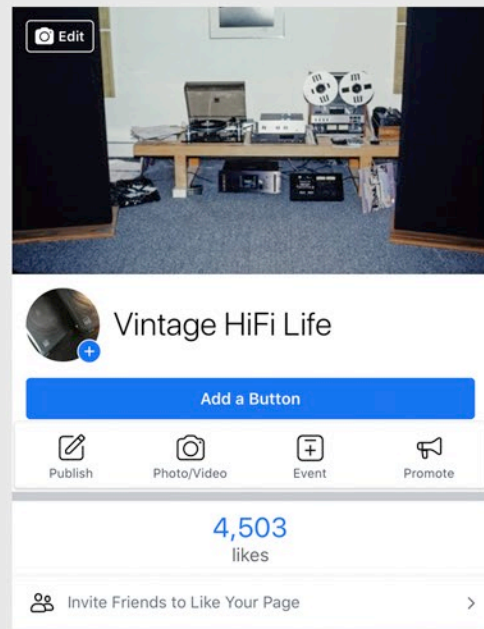
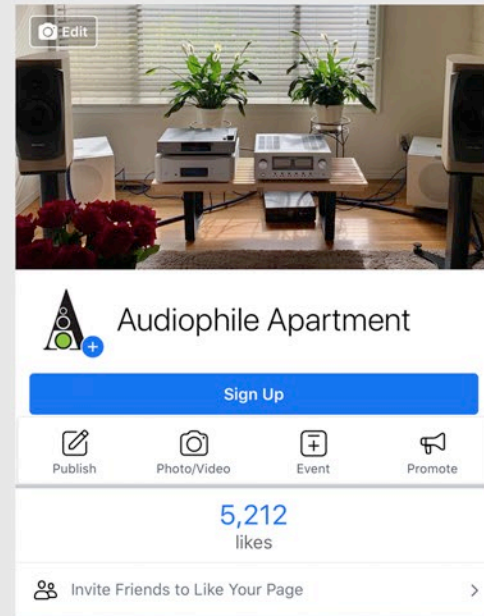
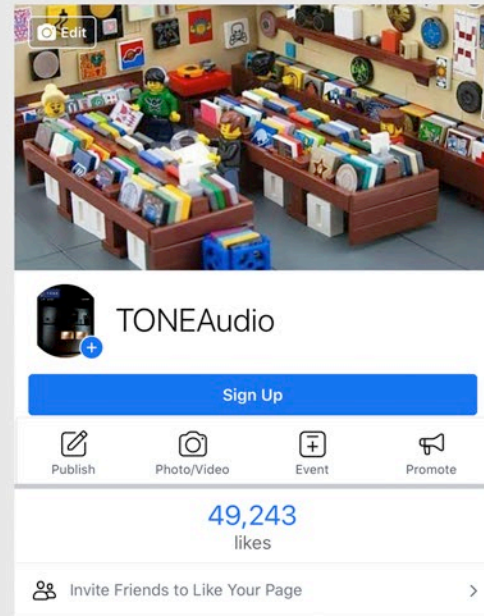
CORE POWER TECH AV

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HEAR THE HIDDEN DETAILS



We've tried to make it pretty easy for you to find us out on Facebook, and have divided up our pages to be a bit more subject specific.

Here they are with links. Just click on the page that interests you most. We look forward to hearing from you when you have a spare moment.

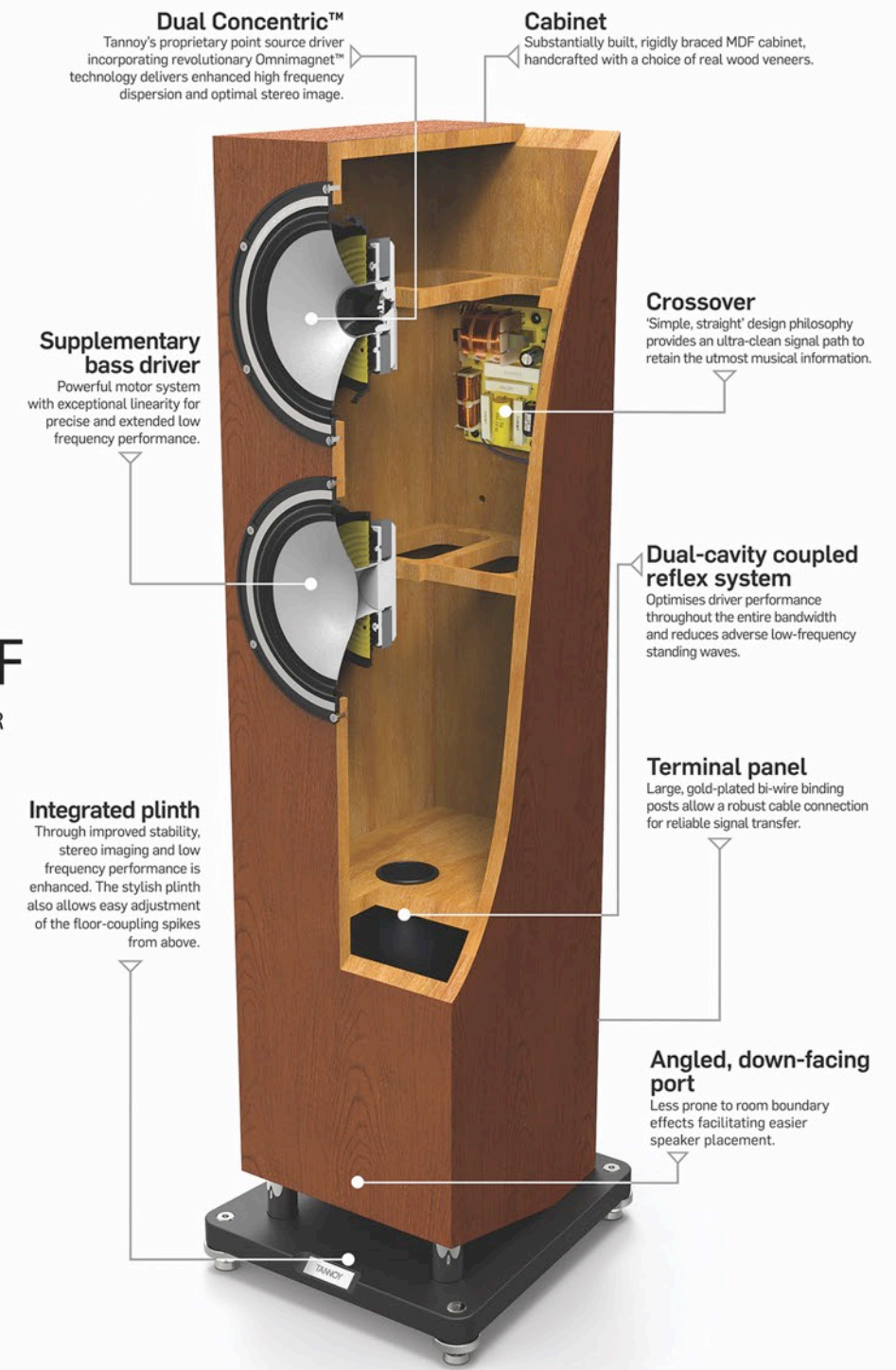


Revolution XT 8F

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

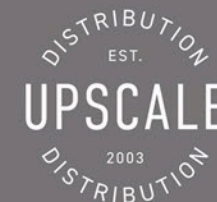
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TANNOY



"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



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ps audio
quad
quadraspire
rega
shinola
sme
sonos
soundsmith
stillpoints
technics
unison research
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Get The Gear: Where to find what you've seen in this issue.

Ana Mighty Sound	anamightysound.com	Core Power	underwood hifi.com
Analog Magik	analogmagik.com	dCS	dcsltd.co.uk
Anthem	anthemav.com	Dynaudio	dynaudio.com
Aqua Audio	aquahifi.com	Echo Audio	echohifi.com
Artisan Fidelity	artisanfidelity.com	Elusive Disc	elusivedisc.com
Audio Classics	audioclassics.com	Esoteric	esoteric-usa.com
Audio Research	audioresearch.com	Exogal	exogal.com
AudioVision SF	audiovisionsf.com	Focal	focalnaimamerica.com
AVID HiFi	avidhifi.com	Franco Serblin	francoserblin.it
Boulder	boulderamp.com	Gig Harbor Audio	gigharboraudio.com
Bryston	bryston.com	Gold Note	goldnote.it
Capture Cassettes	splicit.com	Golden Ear	goldenear.com
Cardas Audio	cardas.com	Grand Prix Audio	grandprixaudio.com
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HiFi Centre	hificentre.com	REL	rel.net
Kiseki	kiseki-usa.com	Rega	soundorg.com
Luxman	luxman.com	Snowsound	snowsound.com
McIntosh	mcintoshlabs.com	Sonus faber	sonusfaber.com
Manley	manleylabs.com	Sumiko	sumiko.net
MartinLogan	martinlogan.com	SVS	svsound.com
Musical Fidelity	focalnaimamerica.com	Tellurium Q	telluriumq.com
Nagra	nagraaudio.com	TONE Imports	toneimports.com
Naim	focalnaimamerica.com	Torus	toruspowers.com
Octave	octave.de	Totem	totemacoustic.com
PS Audio	psaudio.com	Underwood HiFi	underwoodaudio.com
Paradigm	paradigm.com	Upscale Audio	upscaleaudio.com
Pass Labs	passlabs.com	VAC	vac-amplifiers.com
PrimaLuna	primaluna-usa.com	Warwick Acoustics	warwickacoustics.com
ProAc	soundorg.com	Wireworld	wireworldcable.com
Pro-Ject	pro-jectusa.com		



I have some of the most engaging musical moments in my life outside the listening room. In the middle of spring cleaning, I've managed to find enough bits to put together a fun system for my garage.

Thanks to a little help from the crew at Echo Audio, the Marantz 2220B completes the picture perfectly. The Sony ES changer came from a garage sale, back when we still produced our "Slummin" column, and the A/D/S speakers came from a good friend, also doing some decluttering.

Where do you do your "alternate listening?"



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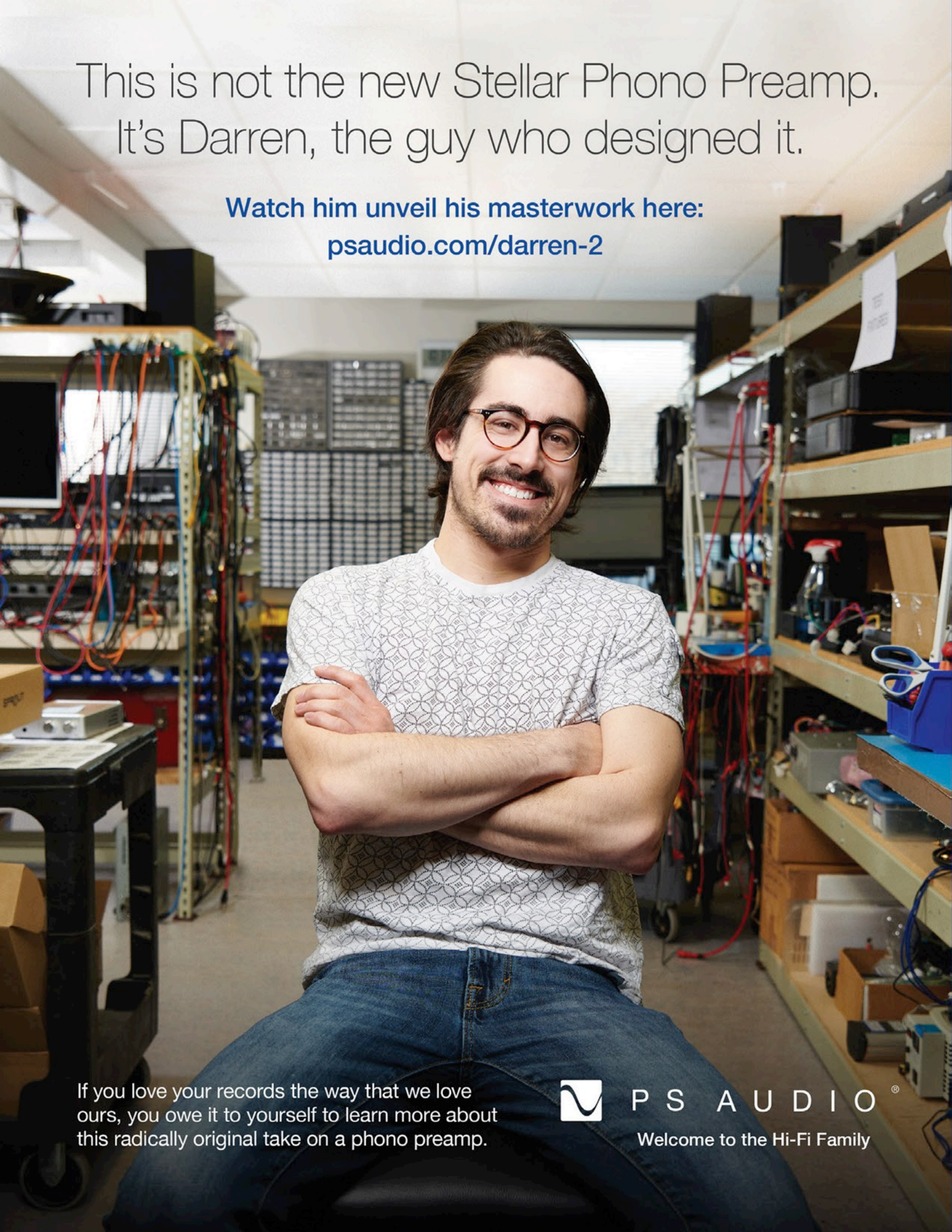
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Welcome to the Hi-Fi Family

Next issue, **103:**

Next issue, we'll have a number of great integrated amplifiers to peruse. Compact, yet high performance.

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. We hope you are weathering the storm!

Thank you for reading.



TONE