

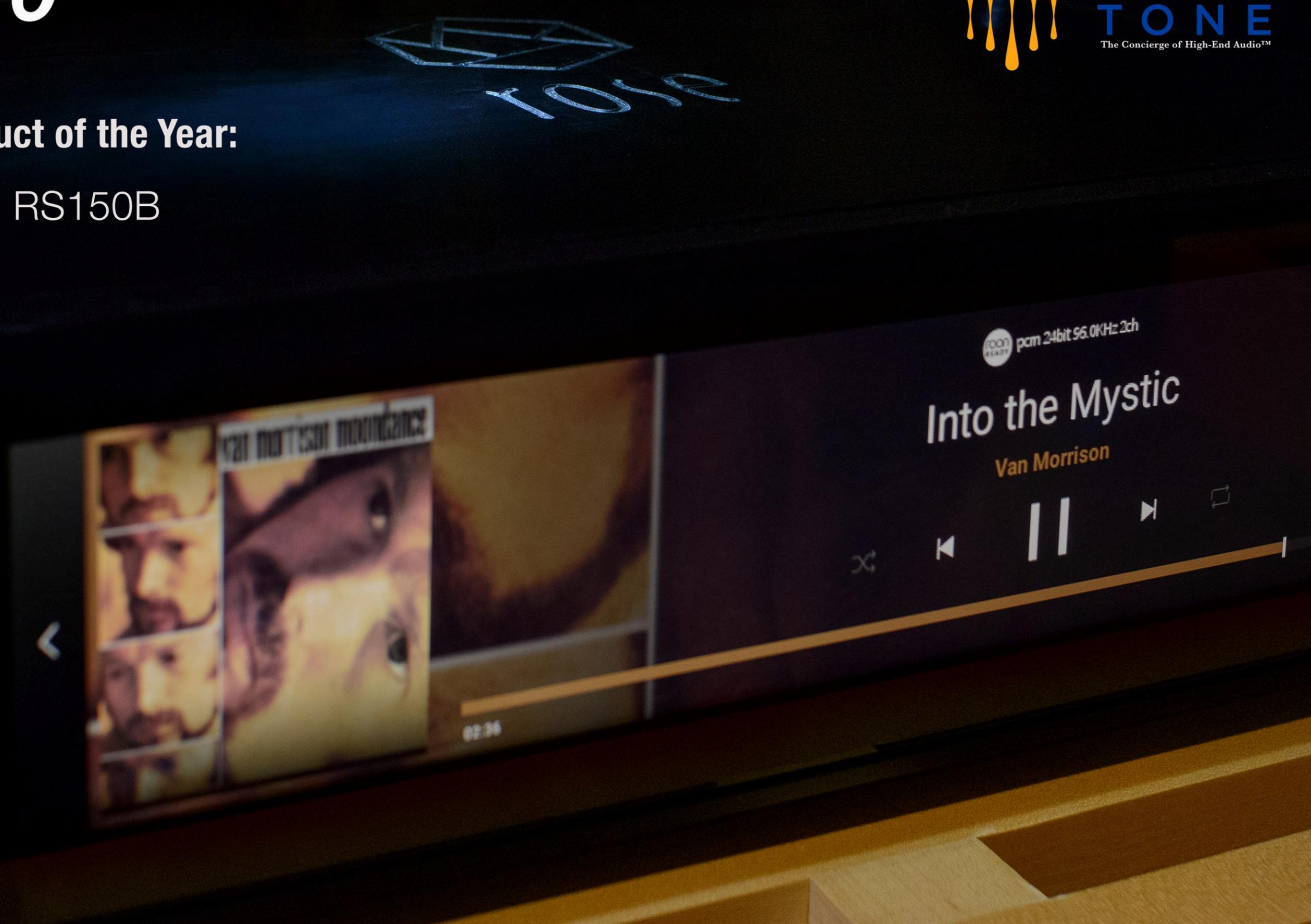
# NO.110



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-Hi-Fi News (EISA Member)



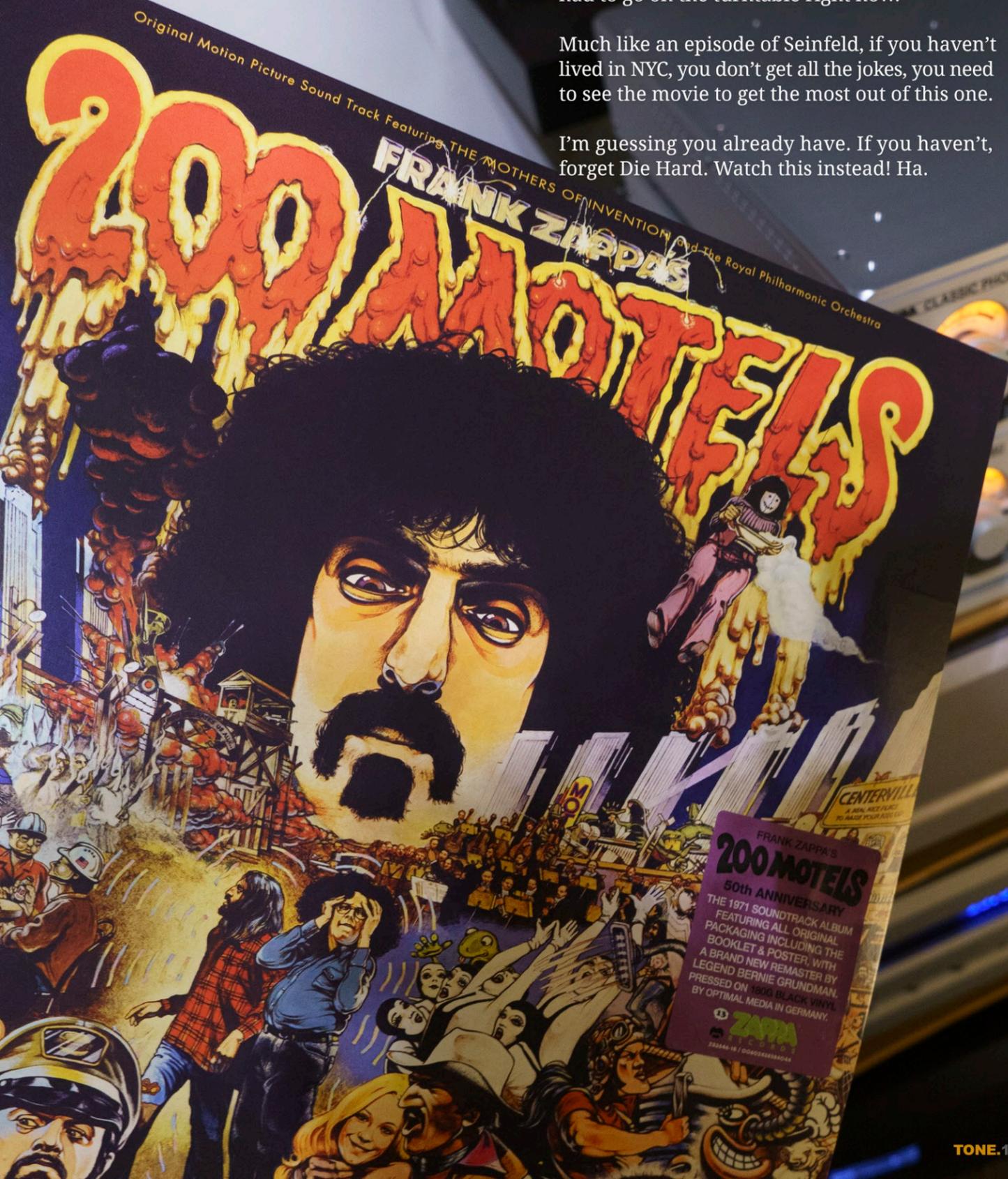
# INHouse

The soundtrack  
of the issue.

I usually end the issue with Frank Zappa, but when this treasure arrived in the mail, (UME said it wouldn't arrive until *after* Christmas) it had to go on the turntable right now.

Much like an episode of Seinfeld, if you haven't lived in NYC, you don't get all the jokes, you need to see the movie to get the most out of this one.

I'm guessing you already have. If you haven't, forget Die Hard. Watch this instead! Ha.



## Trust Your Ears



Wilma Cozart Fine, lead producer of the Mercury Living Presence catalog during the 1950s and 1960s, conducted her professional career in the recording industry according to this simple philosophy: "Trust your ears." Wilma's ability to remember the sound she heard at a recording venue was legendary. She became remarkably proficient at judging a recording's verisimilitude to the live musicians. Her first goal was always to preserve the sound of a performance's "Living Presence"—capturing the event as she heard it in the concert hall.

She worked closely with her husband, recording industry pioneer C. Robert (Bob) Fine. He provided his music-driven engineering expertise and offered a constant stream of innovations in equipment and techniques. Together, they set out to tape a series of classical recordings that were as closely faithful to the original sound as the technology allowed. Wilma produced over 200 classical records, many of which are still considered references for lifelike music reproduction.

When it came time to remaster the Mercury Living Presence catalog for CD, she brought the same exacting standards to this new media as she demanded when producing the analog originals. As Wilma considered the equipment she'd use to convert the analog master tapes to digital, she eschewed products used by most engineers and producers of the time and searched for a better solution. After evaluating several alternatives, she ultimately chose the then-new *dCS* 900 for its high resolution, musicality, flexibility, and unique ability to produce 24-bit files—technology *dCS* pioneered.

Now, as part of the 70th Anniversary of the Mercury Living Presence label's inception, Decca Records has released the entire digital catalog to the major streaming services, allowing more music lovers than ever to access and enjoy Wilma Cozart Fine's legacy of vibrant, timeless classical music, lovingly recorded.



Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the first Mercury Living Presence Recording.  
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*Michael Fremer, Stereophile, May 2020*



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T O N E

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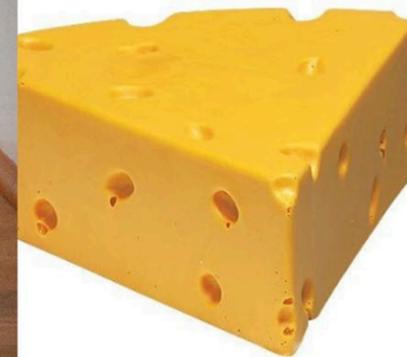
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# 36

## Cover Story

Products of the Year

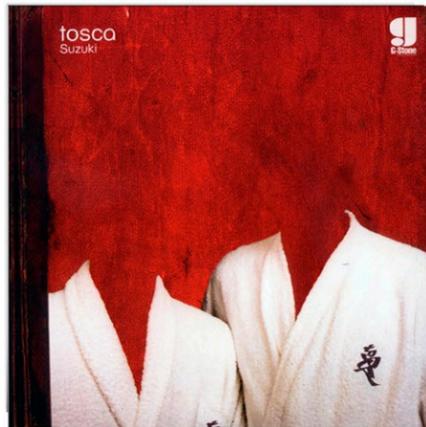
HiFi Rose redefines the hub of the new hifi system.



# 51

## Exceptional Value

Ten products we feel go above and beyond their price points.



# 12 (and on...)

## Playlists

Our readers, staff, and industry friends **share** what they are listening to with you. Sponsored By Qobuz

# 69

## #toneaudioapproved

Talk is cheap. These are the ones we wrote checks for.



# 21

## Shanon Says

Shanon McKellar is back, and she's spent a lot of time listening to the **Six Acoustic York** phonostage. It's a great Canadian product our entire staff loved.



# 16

## 1095 - Gear for about a G

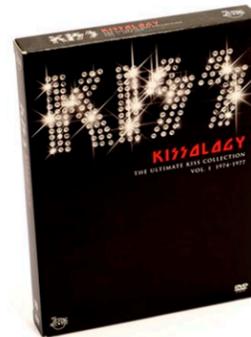
Dynaudio's new EMIT 10 is a stunner.



# 85

## MINE: It Should be Yours

You can't live on music and hifi alone, so here are some things to spice up your existence.



# 29

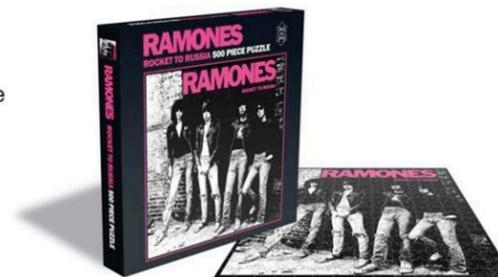
## Setlist

Lookin' back on a great evening with Todd Rundgren, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

# 91

## Dealers That Mean Business

TONE's list of approved dealers. These are the folks you can trust your hard earned dollars with.



# 30

## Merch Table

Ramones Jigsaw Puzzle But is it punk rock?

# 101

## Get The Gear

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

# 100

## Last Word

Who wouldn't want a pair of original AMT-1s?



# 81

## Future Tense

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

# Harbeth XD

"...nothing short of stunning..."

Jeff Dorgay *Tone Audio* on the C7 XD



603-880-4434



what's inside:



# 24

## Cartridge Dude

This issue, the Cartridge Dude is re-united with an old friend, and it's awesome.



### — Formula xHD rev. 2 —



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*“It's simply magnificent. It is revealing without being trying, lush but not bloomy, and above all capable of captivating musical sound.”*

Review: Andrew Everard  
Lab: Paul Miller

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aqua  
acoustic quality

what's inside:



# 13

## Old School...

We've been having so much fun, interacting with our readers and vintage gear, which has led to some amazing finds.

This Dynaco Stereo 400 amplifier, came from a church in Wisconsin, still working strong after 40-plus years.

Big thanks to friend and contributor Todd Sageser for the lead on this one.



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**new arrivals...**

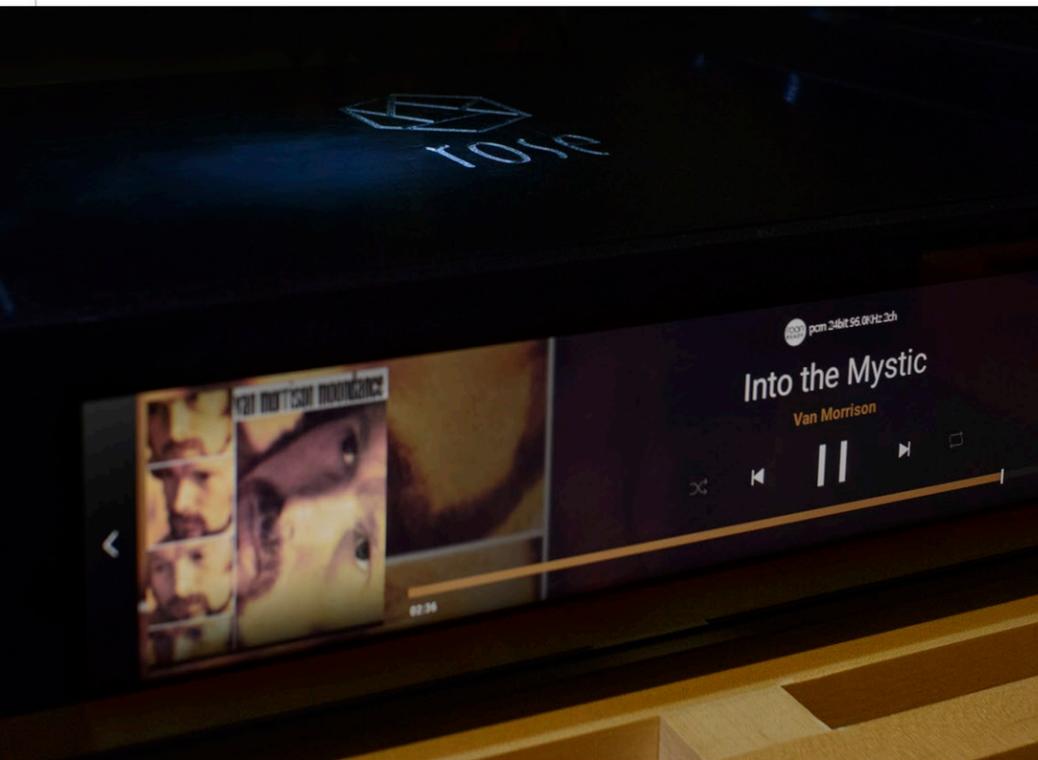
**N**o one new this issue.

Just the same crew, you've been hanging with.

We hope you had a great holiday season, and wish you all a prosperous, healthy and drama-free (as possible) 2022!

Thanks for reading.





Cover Shot:

**T**his issue's cover features the new RS150B Reference Streamer from Hifi Rose.

Our Product of the Year-Overall for 2021.

Image captured with a Nikon D800, 28mm f2.8 Nikkor AI-S lens @f8, 1/250th sec. ISO 3200.

The Classic Nelson Bench by Herman Miller.



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# no.110

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

Issue 100 was a milestone for a lot of reasons, but oddly enough it felt like my 50th birthday. Before I was 50 years old, I used to think, "I'm might live to be 100, and if so, my life still isn't half over." But once the big 5-0 hit, I'd think to myself, "I'm not going to live to be 101, so it's probably downhill from here."

My running joke with people when I'm getting coffee, buying car parts, or doing anything revolving customer service and they say, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" I always say "Make me 50 again." I'm not greedy. As the digital ink dries on issue 110, I feel the same way. I'm not going to be here for issue 200.

But it would be fun if someone did keep it going. Weird.

Moving right along with our usual columns, it's awards time again. Wow, the year always goes by fast, and for some reason, the pace of 2021 has felt hyper accelerated. Even more than normal. No travel, no trade shows, yet we've been busier than ever. So it's time to make the agonizing choices of what products flames shine a little bit brighter than the rest. I try hard to bring you great possibilities, so it's always tough to narrow it down to the ones that stand out that much further.

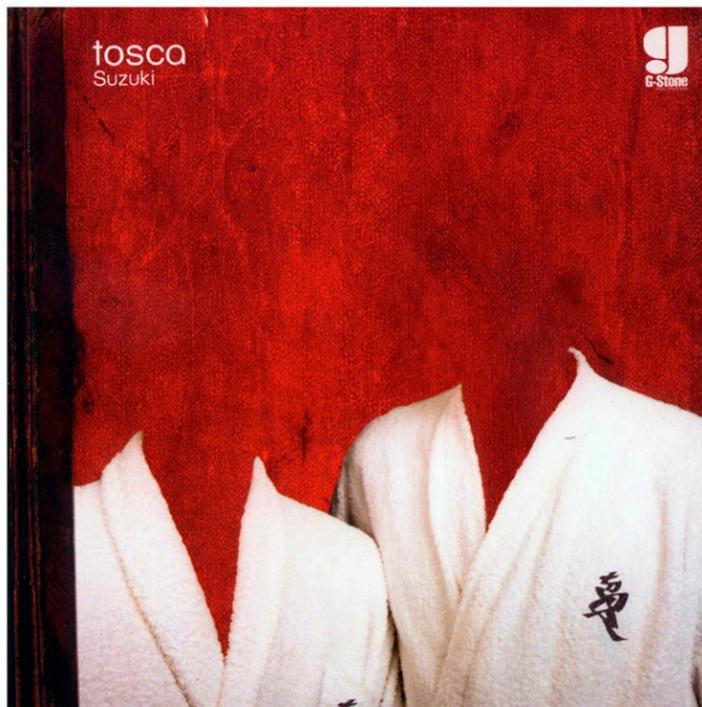
When I started TONE back in 2005, I vowed I would not allow a component in our pages unless I would write a check for it myself. I can happily say that I've stayed true to that mantra. I hope you enjoy (and approve of) the choices we've made.

Sorry this is a bit of a short note, but it's holiday time, and I'm a little bit of a Grinch. And you thought all the bright lime green accents were a coincidence! Also, that's why I handed out a few more awards this year...

As always, stay safe, my friends. Here's to 2022.



**B**ig thanks to coffee buddy and TONE reader Kerry Craig for some of his favorite electronica tracks. A few of these will give your subwoofer a workout. Pour a cup and get ready.



**dZihan & Kamien** – Arabesq

**Tosca** – Suzuki

**Jens Buchert** – Plastic Heart

**Blackfish** – Sea Traffic

**Cantoma** – Cosmopole

**Espresso Del Lago** – Cinquo Dias

**Fragile State** – Hoop Dreams

**Imada** – On A Chill Pill

**Guardner** – The Mesh

**Jean F. Cochois** – Point Lookout

**Nacho Sotomayor**– Mirror Room

**Nor Elle** – Deep Breeze

**Praful** – Sigh

**Thievery Coporation** – Treasures

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## **Dynaco** Stereo 400 (and 410)

The big solid-state amp you could *build*.

\$100-\$1,000 (current market price)

**I**n the early 70s as speakers got increasingly smaller and less efficient, (not to mention high power output transistors were getting more available) high powered solid-state amplifiers started enjoying a rise in popularity that has continued to this day.

There were a few choices back then, the Phase Linear 700, and later the Phase Linear 400 are a couple that instantly come to mind. David Hafler, the mind behind Dynaco's legendary tube components did not design this one, that task went to another legendary audio designer, Jim Bongiorno. He would later go on to Great American Sound (Ampzilla) and later on, Sumo. Near the end of his life in 2013, he would bring Ampzilla back.

The Stereo 400 hit the market in 1972. You could purchase an assembled version for \$599, which just about \$4,000 in today's currency. Those wanting to save a few bucks, and enjoy the pride of building it themselves could save a cool \$150 by building their own Stereo 400. An additional \$100 put the Stereo 416 in your hifi rack, and this amplifier was essentially similar, but had double the number of output transistors. The 416 had turbo cool (for the day) LED output indicators, and the 400 had none, but it could be upgraded with a "meter kit" for another \$79.95.



The Stereo 400 was pretty beefy, at 53 pounds. Stereo Review's Julian Hirsch bench tested the Stereo 400, measuring 248 Watts per channel into an 8-ohm load and 352 Watts per channel into 4-ohms. Nothing like the massive solid-state amps of today, doubling all the way down to 2-ohm loads, but still very powerful.

With high power came the ability to easily destroy speakers, and when high powered solid-state amplifiers were driven to clipping back then, tweeters went right out the door. I even saw a customer in the hifi shop where I was employed, bring a JBL L-100 in with the woofer cone frozen in the *out* position. The customer remarked, "I was just playing it. I don't know *what* happened." When asked what amplifier was used, "One of those dynamo amps." Hmmm



As high power was a fairly new concept for the time, one of the primary features of the Dynaco Stereo 400 was its Dynaguard power limiting system. This depended on the PC-29 Dynaguard board that held the protection circuit and a pair of 15 amp relays. This is probably the weakest link on what is otherwise a robust amplifier.

When these amplifiers were new, you could buy the Dynaco 410 version, with no output level controls, meters, or Dynaguard protection for \$399. Or, as they said in the advertisements, "under a dollar a watt!" Woo hoo.

Chances are if you have a non-working Stereo 400, the Dynaguard circuitry is the problem, and the nearly 50 year old power supply capacitors will need to be replaced as well. If they haven't failed yet, they will. A number of vendors on Ebay will sell you an upgrade kit for under \$200, and this will probably get you most of the way there. The relays are tough to find (but not impossible) and the level controls on the front panel will either need major cleaning, replacement, or even elimination.

*Enjoy the Experience*



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**S**tereo 400s in great working condition, that usually have had some degree of service work fetch upwards of \$1,000 these days, while non-serviced and non-working ones can go as low as \$150, which is what we paid for our example. It's also very important to stress with this amplifier, more than some of the other vintage pieces we've seen, front panels and casework for the Stereo 400 is nearly non-existent. If you take the plunge, find the cleanest one you can, and if you are having it shipped, be sure the seller knows how to pack a 53 pound amplifier (with a very thin faceplate) without damage. Budget for at least another \$125-\$175 in shipping.

Surprisingly, our version sounds pretty good. Initial listening is somewhat noisy, so first step will be to clean the input level controls and at least replace power supply capacitors.

Legendary Dynaco guru Frank Van Alstine says that they are no longer rebuilding the Stereo 400 because they are "a nightmare to take apart, and some of the necessary parts are no longer available."

Considering that Van Alstine's Vision SET400 stereo amplifier is a mega bargain at \$1,699, this amplifier is not a tremendous value for \$1,200. They still sound like 50 year old amplifiers, and you're still staring down an amplifier full of 50 year old parts that could take a dump at any time.

However, we all know that part of the lure of vintage gear is the heritage and memories that come along with it. And if that's the case, party on.



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## Dynaudio Emit 10 Speakers

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As a nod to Dynaudio's Mike Manousselis, I always start Dynaudio speaker auditions with Joy Division. Cranking "Twenty Four Hours" is no audiophile track by any stretch of the imagination, but this densely packed and dynamic recording always gives a good first listen. The smallest of the Emit range barely tips the scale at \$799 a pair yet deliver an incredible sonic punch. These are my new favorite small-budget monitors, and at this price, you can quickly put together a fantastic \$2,000 HiFi system.

Ironically, Roon takes me to the Clash's "Career Opportunities" next. Maybe there is a ghost in the machine after all. A long string of punk and punk-ish tunes follow from Black Flag, Iggy, Patti Smith, and others, convincing me that the small Emit 10s can really rock.

Easing out of this playlist with DEVO's *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are DEVO!* produced by Brian Eno has a considerably broader sonic landscape, with a lot of random, electronic, and twinkly bits in the mix. The small Dynaudios ace this test with ease, rendering a three-dimensional image filling the 10 x 13 room in which they reside.



## Clear Beyond Interconnect

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**T**racking through some vocal-heavy cuts reveals plenty of midrange appeal as well. Jordan Zevon's "Studebaker" is particularly haunting, and you can easily hear Rickie Lee Jones breathing at the beginning of "Easy Money" from her debut album. Ok, audiophile-ish music boxes ticked.

Finishing up with some Robert Plant and Led Zeppelin with "The Rain Song" and his latest duet with Alison Krauss on Merle Haggard's "Going Where the Lonely Go" are both very engaging.

Dynaudio always builds things with an entire system in mind, accommodating two and multi-channel users, so you can use the Emit 10s as the anchor of a great small room or desktop system. Thanks to the larger bookshelf Emit 20, floor-standing Emit 30 and 50 (along with the 25C center channel), these can combine with one of Dynaudio's small subwoofers to build a killer theater system on a reasonable budget too.

Remember, this is the same country that's famous for Legos.



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Moving the Emit's into my larger 13 x 18 living room, they produce a larger image. These small cabinets still deliver admirable bass, but I'd consider a sub here. Not having one of Dynaudio's small subs on hand, an SVS Micro 3000 was added to the living room system with excellent results. Seriously, the Emit's and a small subwoofer are more than room-filling in a medium-sized room.

Finally, should you need to place these rear-reported speakers on an actual bookshelf or close to your walls, the included foam port plugs help the Emit's to deliver a smoother bottom end.

The Emit's are built around a coated, soft-dome fabric tweeter true to the Dynaudio heritage. The Emit's use Dynaudio's Cerotar tweeter, and though they are assembled in China, the speaker is designed at Dynaudio's Skanderborg, Denmark facility. The same engineering team that builds every Dynaudio speaker is instrumental in the Emit's design. I currently use a pair of Dynaudio's Confidence 20 speakers and having reviewed a number of their other speakers over the last 15 years, it's clear the entire essence is here in spades.

Here's the rub. Like all Dynaudio speakers, the Emit 10s are very easy to drive, so they will pair with anything and deliver an outstanding performance, even with budget amplification. Trying a few vintage solid-state receivers, along with a couple of sub-\$500 integrated amplifiers from NAD, proves these speakers are fantastic anchors to a reasonably priced system. If we stop the listening right here, the Emit 10s are off the chart good.



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

Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio

**NAGRA**

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**E**njoyable as the Emit 10s are, I wasn't prepared for how much performance they are capable of. Swapping out the budget amps for my Cary 805 SET monoblocks was amazing, and putting these \$799 speakers in the context of a \$30k system built around the Confidence 20s, the Emit 10s shine even brighter. Switching back and forth between the two speakers, it's easy to hear where all the engineering choices have been made - and that's a good thing. I can easily imagine these speakers in a system with a restored Dynaco Stereo 70 or any other small tube amplifier at your disposal.

The black, white, or walnut cabinets are straightforward and get the job done. As mentioned earlier, when building a speaker at this price, every dollar spent affects the outcome. It's clear that Dynaudio has chosen performance and functionality while still maintaining the efficient aesthetic that makes Danish design a benchmark.

In a world flooded with sub-1,000 dollar speakers, it's easy to get lost with all the choices. And there is a lot of rubbish. Because Dynaudio is one of the few speaker manufacturers that designs and builds virtually everything in-house, they can put so much more into a budget speaker than someone merely picking from a parts bin. Having been to the factory, I assure you, Dynaudio is just as passionate about building you a great pair of speakers for \$799 as they are a pair of mega floor standers for six figures. The Danes have an incredible sense of purpose.

Social media critics complaining about good sound being out of reach need go no further than Dynaudio's Emit 10s. These speakers raise the bar for what can be accomplished at this price.

Even though this issue is going live at the very end of 2021, we award the Dynaudio Emit 10s our first Exceptional Value Award of the new year a week early. They are very deserving.



**1095**

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— Kevin Hayes, VAC

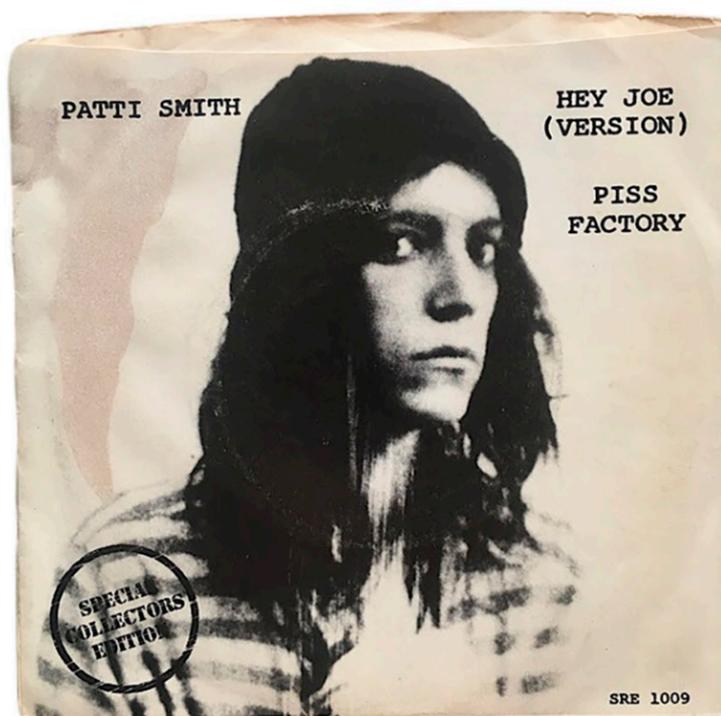
"The show was well organized, attendees were plentiful and interesting, with many new faces we don't see at other shows."

— Jeremy Bryan, MBL North America

**L**ate Night Garage Playlist  
-Jeff Dorgay

Somehow, knee deep in grease and frustration brings the urge to listen to the most non-audiophile of musical selections. You might even call them guilty pleasures.

Trying to free rusty bolts is not the time for Diana Krall, it's more like time for Skynyrd. Perhaps you know what I mean...



Lynyrd Skynyrd - Saturday Night Special

Styx- Blue Collar Man

Bob Seger - Turn the Page

Bruce Springsteen - One Step Up

Scorpions - Bad Boys Running Wild

Kiss - Two Timer

Thin Lizzy - Romeo and the Lonely Girl

Deep Purple - Highway Star

Patti Smith - Piss Factory

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\$400  
[sixacoustic.com](http://sixacoustic.com)

**M**uch has changed in our world this past year, including the last name of yours truly, but when it comes to great-sounding music on vinyl and great gear to enjoy it with, well, that is a comforting constant. During these unprecedented times, the York phono preamp was released by Six Acoustic, based in Ajax, Ontario, Canada. This small Canadian audio manufacturer with over 70 combined years of audio experience in the wheelhouse offers thoughtful engineering geared for quality time in the listening chair. Six Acoustic developed their first functioning prototype in 1986, when the owner, Steve Meszienyl, helped start the company with his father. Proudly sourcing out components and fabrication locally, the York is an authentic product of great Canadian ingenuity and design. Six Acoustic originally had industrial audio applications in mind, but with a shift to the consumer Hi-Fi market, have quietly developed the D class X-1200W amp and the York to deliver clean quality sound.

In true Canadian style, the York arrives in a simple, unassuming box, not necessarily making a bold entrance with many bells and whistles. Instead, the York, in a soft matte silver finish, presents a demure size, at 16.5 cm (6.5 inches) wide, 18.3 cm (7.2 inches) deep, and 3 cm (1.2 inches) high, and weighing only 600g (1.3 lbs). It is unobtrusive enough to easily fit into any setup and at first glance, may be deceiving in its uncomplicated design and size. The front panel is clean and straightforward, with toggles for power, a knob for adjusting gain, and a small button for switching between MM and MC. The rear panel has an RCA input and output, ground lug, and an input for the wall-wart AC power supply.



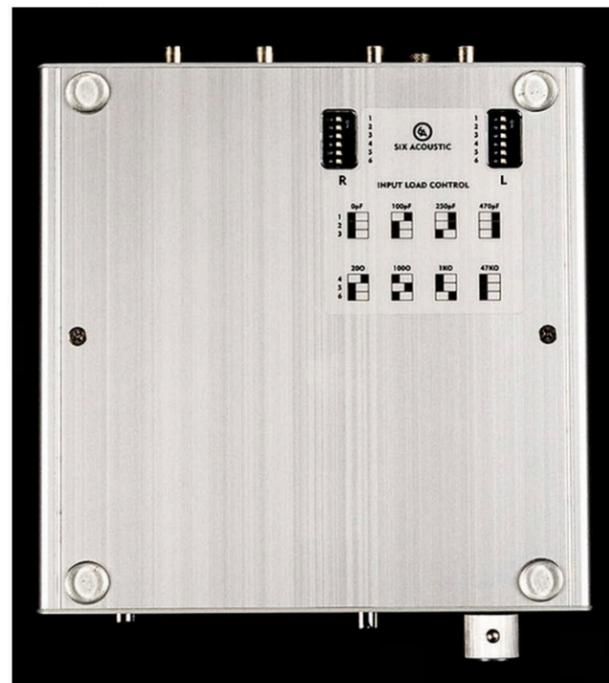
# Shanon Says...

A pencil-sized tool is supplied for adjusting the input loading control. DIP switches on the underside of the unit allow for an adjustment of 0 pF to 470 pF capacitance for MM cartridges and 20 to 470 ohms impedance for MC carts. The RIAA curve is the only built-in EQ setting.

Fine gain control can be achieved from the simple knob on the front panel, making a range of 36 – 52 dB for MM and 56 – 72 dB for MC available.

Changing from MM to MC requires only pushing a button. The York offers excellent sound without the sticker shock, coming in at 400 dollars. (At this second, the exchange rate between Canada and the US is close, but this is subject to change at any time.)

After a short burn-in of about 12-15 hours, I put the York to work with my reference TT, an Acoustic Solid Vintage Exclusive, fitted with a Hana ML and a stack of great vinyl featuring Canadian artists. The York is set with 0 gain at first, loaded to 470 ohms. During the first few albums, it does not take long to appreciate the York's THD + N of <0.001%, as there is absolutely no discernable extraneous noise between tracks.



However, when one of my favorites from The Tragically Hip, Road Apples went on the platter, this modest phono amp made this avid listener sit up and take notice. There is a fun, lively bounce to the percussion and bass, with full forward vocals and a clear presentation of the instruments. Moving onto some jazz tracks from a Japanese pressing of Oscar Peterson and Dizzy Gillespie, the delicate nuances in the horns and piano on "Caravan" are fulminate and exciting. There is a life-like quality, with fine details that complete the crisp warm sound. The York brought these giants of jazz right into the room.

Spinning Bruce Cockburn's album, *Waiting For a Miracle*, demands headphone listening.

TONE110.022-Shanon Says

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

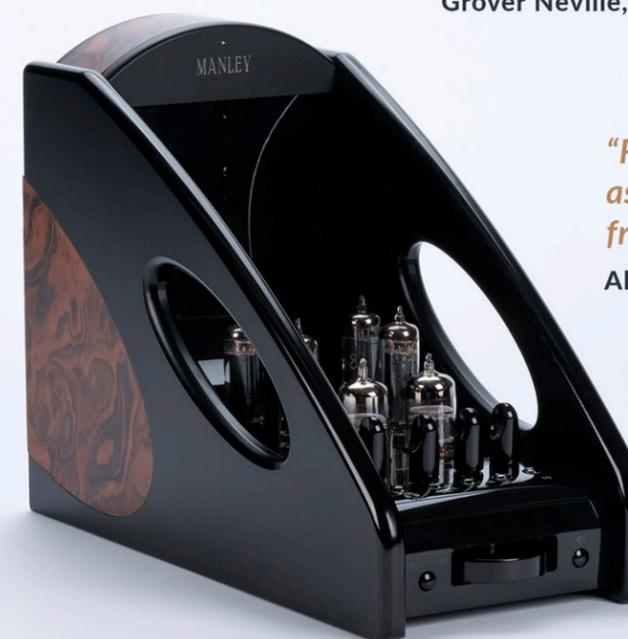
Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

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

Grover Neville, InnerFidelity

*"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



*"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+

MANLEY  
LABORATORIES, INC.

*"It does what an audiophile amplifier is supposed to do...to say it is musical is to barely scratch the surface."*

Gary Alan Barker, Headphone.guru

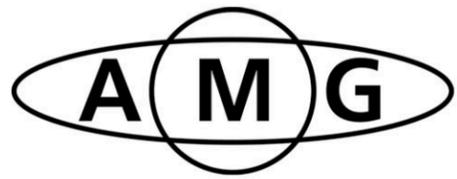
absolute  
HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER



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Handcrafted in Chino, California



# FORTE TURBO

**ABSOLUTE PRECISION AND UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE**



Hand made in Germany by master machinist Julian Lorenzi, the Forte Turbo is AMG's reference-level flagship turntable. The Forte is machined from a solid aluminum billet and incorporates AMG's celebrated oil-damped bearing, decoupled spindle, 24v DC brushless motor, upgraded linear power supply, and reflex clamp.



FORTE POWER SUPPLY

12JT TURBO TONEARM

OPTIONAL ENGRAVED FINISH



Sierra Sound represents excellent analog audio products from around the world, such as AMG, Benz Micro, ViV Laboratory, and more. Contact us at [sierrasound.net](http://sierrasound.net) to find a dealer near you.

Shanon Says...

Going back and forth between a great pair of tried and true Grado SR80s and my reference Focal Elears, every bit of warmth, separation, and detail comes to life in a big way. The controlled, delicate guitar is punchy and impactful. Listening to the track "Laughter," the full impact of the York's sound ticks all the boxes. This phonostage really shines with vocals and subtlety, something not generally accomplished at this price.

Cranking it up a bit with some vintage prog-rock, Rush's 2112 hits the platter and the York delivers. Sorry not sorry to my poor neighbours when "Temples of Syrinx" is played at near concert level. The York presents the hard-hitting drums and bass evenly, with guitar and vocals punching through smoothly. The well-balanced forward soundstage and crisp presentation makes it tough to take this classic off the turntable when it's complete.

Safe to say, I am thrilled with what the York brings to the table. While this compact phonostage has nearly all the magic inside, perhaps the next iteration could have some marks around the gain control. The smooth front panel makes it tough to reset, should you be an analog lover like me with more than one cartridge at their disposal. This is a very small point of contention, and anyone seeking a great addition to their analog front end at an approachable price will enjoy what the Six Acoustic York has to offer.

To prove just how enthusiastic we are about the York, we are awarding it one of our Exceptional Value Awards for 2021, and the #toneapproved Award as well. (Contributor Richard Colburn has purchased the review sample and has his review up on our Cartridge Dude site. Please click here if you would like to read that.



## The Ortofon Concorde Century Phono Cartridge

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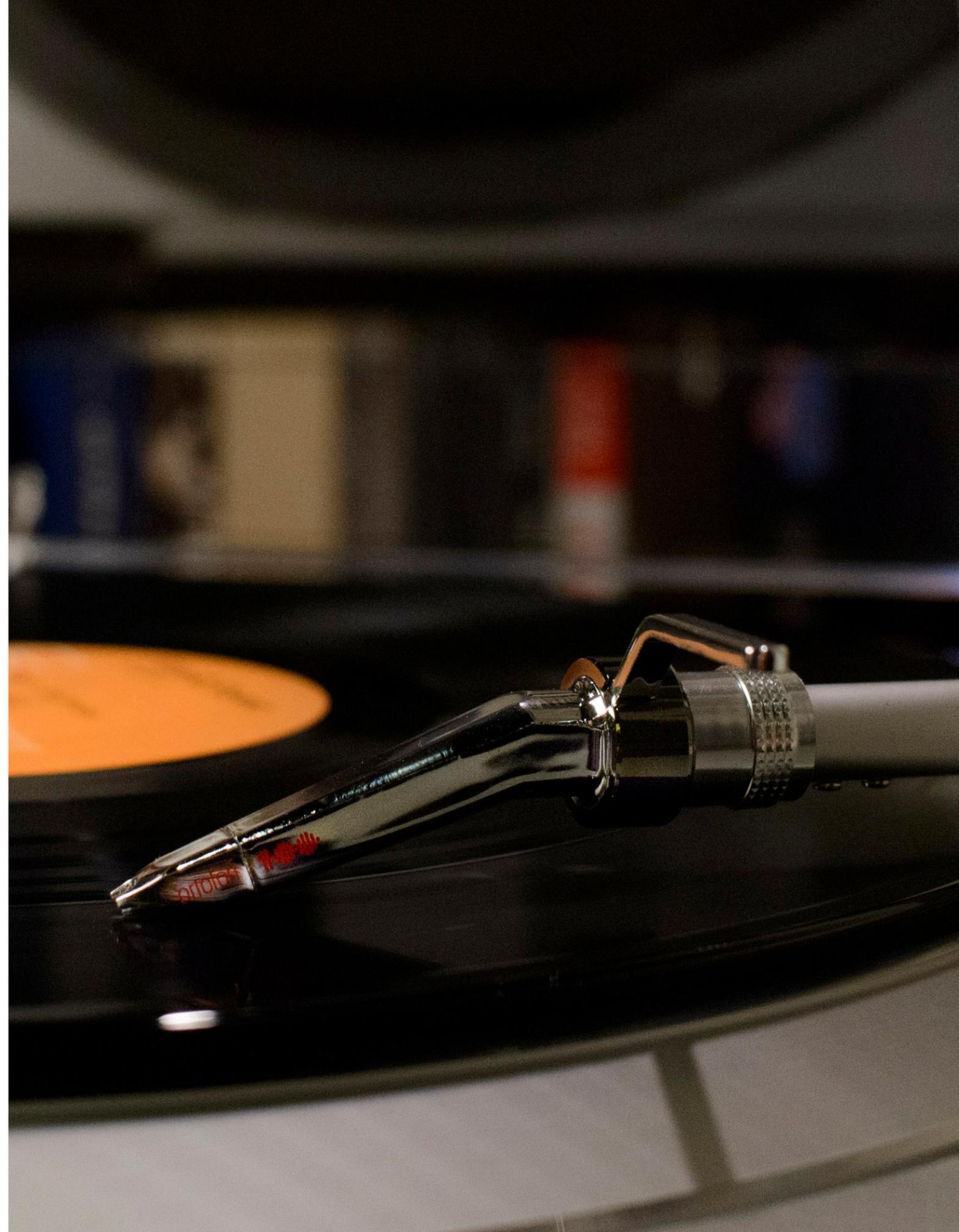
*This one's not for DJ's.*

\$700  
ortofon.com

**40** years ago, I worked in a HiFi shop selling Technics turntables by the truckload to help finance my education. When our shop had their annual “24-hour Midnight Madness Sale,” those of us with the stamina to stay on the sales floor for the entire duration made the big bucks. Though I was using Ortofon’s MC20 on my Technics 1200, the original Concorde 30 was a great way to blast a fully set up 1200 out the door. People have always been set up adverse when it comes to cartridges, and the Concorde concept is the perfect solution. Yes, we’ve been breaking those tiny wires for decades. Thanks to the Concorde, that’s not a problem.

Designed by industrial designer Jan Tragardh, the original Concorde created in 1979 was awarded the Danish Industrial Design award that year. Like the airplane with the same name, the Concorde was way ahead of its time for several reasons. In addition to being a low-mass design, it eliminated the need for wires and a headshell. The Concorde was an incredible upgrade for those of us who didn’t even know what VTA was back then.

Initially, this cartridge was based on the internals from the Super OM series, utilizing similar coils and stylus assembly from the OM30. It didn’t take long for the DJ community to pick up on this cartridge because the midnight madness in a club also requires quick turntable setup. Merely plugging in a new Concorde was a revelation. Responding to this, Ortofon began producing versions of the Concorde featuring higher output and more robust stylus assemblies. These cartridges remain in production today and are one of the top MM cartridge values going.





# CartridgeDude

If you're sitting down for a second, reflect on this. For the 100th anniversary of the company, Ortofon decided to produce the Ortofon Century cartridge in 2018. 1000 of these were built, and there are still ample stocks of them left. Priced considerably above the DJ versions, this MM cartridge has a lower 5.5mV output, whereas the DJ versions have 6-8mV. The Concorde MkII Scratch generates 10mV, but that's another animal entirely.

The Century is an authentic HiFi cartridge with coils made of silver-plated copper wire, and a nude, fine line diamond stylus. In addition, the Century offers the highest compliance of any of the OM and Concorde cartridges. This demanded going straight to the last track of Joni Mitchell's *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. "Jericho" is infamous for inner groove distortion, and we've used several big bucks cartridges that can't handle this track. If you don't have a suitable test record, chances are a clean copy of this record is out there for about five bucks on Discogs, and it's a great test for mistracking. Think you have your cartridge setup, right? This one is the destroyer of smiles.



MAKE  
BRILLIANT  
MUSIC

Needless to say, the Century breezes right through, and even after a few minutes' reveals what an entirely musical cartridge it is. At \$700, the Century is priced higher than the other Concorde, but I selfishly submit that this is Ortofon's finest MM. However, not everyone has a Technics, SME, or Ortofon arm with that connection. But if you do, this one is a treat.

With four variations on the SL-1200 theme at our disposal, initial listening begins with our latest, the SL-1500C, featuring auto lift and priced at \$1,200. Fine-tuning VTA with the Analog Magik software optimizes the Century to perfection, and tracking force is double-checked with our Ortofon digital stylus force gauge. The 1.8 gram suggested tracking force is perfection. Moving through the ranks up to the top range SL-1200G and replacing the stock tonearm cable with the Blue Heaven from Nordost, the Century really shines.

If you do not have access to any high-tech tools, you can get the Century very close to optimum VTA eyeballing it. Careful, minute adjustments with multiple listening sessions will get you the rest of the way. This is the easiest thing to set up beyond a Rega cartridge on a Rega arm with their three screws. That's a good thing because it's so easy to screw up cartridge alignment, with the analog feel going down the drain in the process.

As MM cartridge performance continues to improve, it begins to overlap into MC territory. Like several other manufacturers, Ortofon makes excellent MC cartridges for less than the Century's price – but you will need a step-up device of some kind. What really makes the Concorde Century so superb is its tracking ability, dynamic range, and incredibly neutral/natural overall tonal balance. Others have said the Century has a "lively presentation," and I agree.

Listening to musical selections featuring acoustic instruments is fabulous. The Century does a fantastic job getting tone and timbre right. Acoustic guitars sound as they should, and it's easy to hear the differences between different guitars and strings when played. The attack of piano and violin are equally stunning. When mounted to the \$4,000 Technics SL1200G, this combination sounds way more formidable than the price tag suggests. Much as I enjoy analog, I could live happily ever after with an SL-1210 (about \$1,600 when they become available again), a Concorde Century, and that Nordost tonearm cable.



# PARASOUND

## JC 1+ Mono Power Amplifier

Five years in development, the new JC 1+ monoblock amplifier is the ultimate achievement of Parasound and legendary designer John Curl.



"...If someone whispered in my ear and said, 'you're listening to a six-figure pair of amplifiers,' I would believe them. The JC 1+ monos are that good, that refined, that musical."

*Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio*

"This is a superb-sounding amplifier that will get the best from every loudspeaker with which it is partnered. Well done, Mr. Curl."

*John Atkinson, Stereophile*

When stepping up to the Nagra Classic Phono and power supply we have in for review, the capabilities of the Concorde Century become even clearer, revealing the level of texture and detail this cartridge delivers. I highly suggest anyone running a Technics as their second or third table in a cost no object system should consider this cartridge as their daily driver. You will not be disappointed.

One last word on trackability and the DJ heritage of the Concorde. Going through our crates of 45r.p.m. maxi-singles, known for their dynamics, portrays this cartridge in a rocking perspective. These records usually have more dynamics than their LP counterparts because most of the time, they've spread out the track on an entire record side and cut hot. Spinning Thomas Dolby's "May the Cube Be With You" had my six REL subwoofers pumping. However, don't forget this cartridge uses a standard 20-degree tracking angle, so don't get over-enthusiastic and start scratching!

There you have it. Few things are better in the world of audio than discovering reasonably priced sonic solutions. The Ortofon Concorde Century is a top choice for any turntable enthusiast that can use this type of cartridge mounting system or those wanting great sound that are set up adverse.

Because this one is staying, consider the Ortofon Concorde Classic #toneaudioapproved.

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



Better in every way!



"If hi-fi should be about music rather than the system delivering it then these Gershmans are a great place to start..."

... natural warmth, musical presence and easy, unforced dynamics ...

... the bass being deep enough and clean enough to let you clearly hear the impact of any positional shifts....

... "the sound blossoms, growing away from the speakers to spread beyond them and fill the end of the room and pushing out the back wall.

Voices breathe, instruments fall into place and the sense of the song and the sense of performance lock in. ...

..these Gershmans bring living, breathing performers to your room, with body, presence and a natural ability to engage and entertain" ...

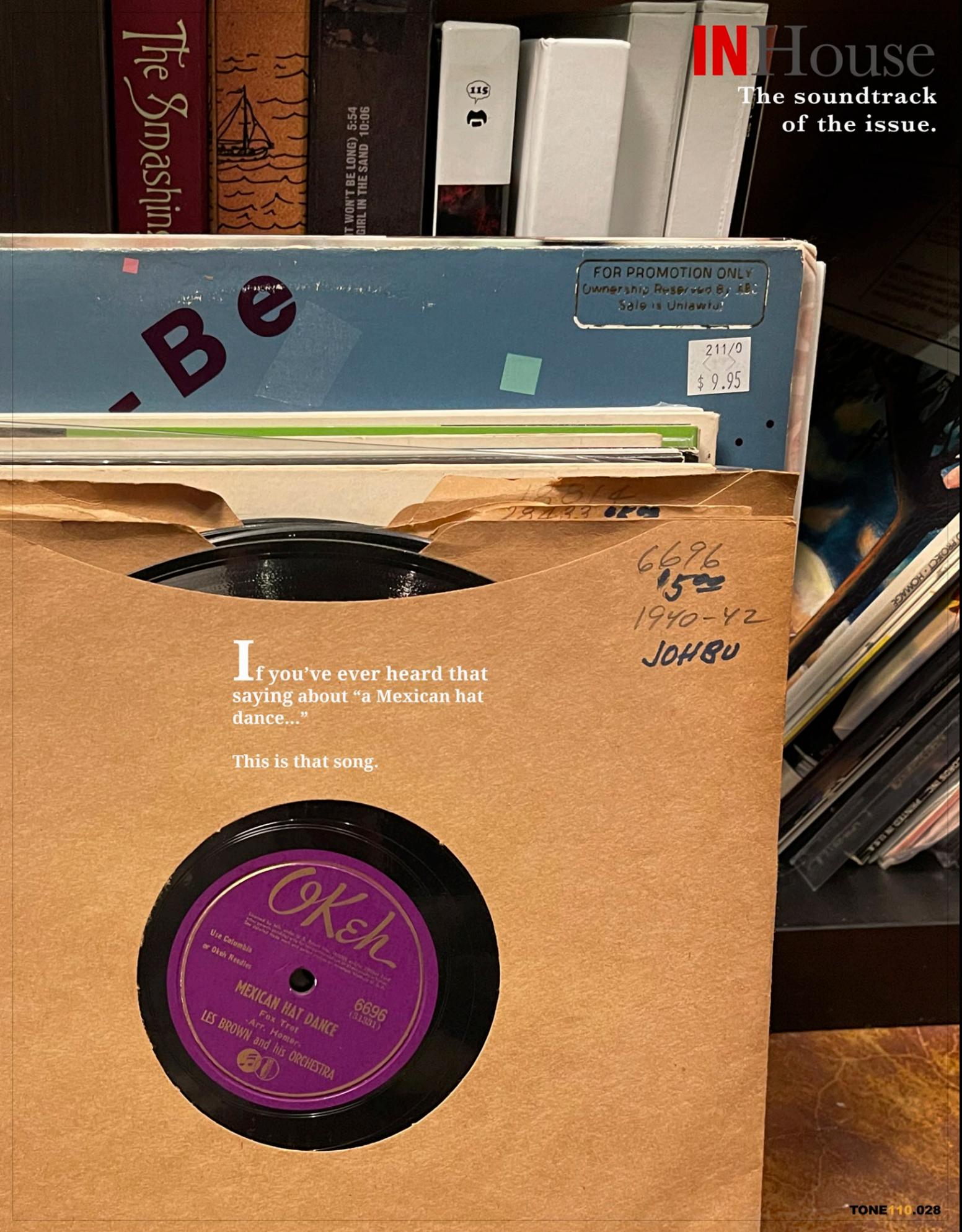
Roy Gregory Hi Fi + Issue 186

**Handcrafted in Canada**

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

Dealer inquiries are welcomed  
[gershmanacoustics@yahoo.com](mailto:gershmanacoustics@yahoo.com)

**IN**House  
The soundtrack  
of the issue.



If you've ever heard that saying about "a Mexican hat dance..."

This is that song.



## BACKERT LABS

Preamp specialists.

We build each Backert Labs preamp by hand in Pennsylvania. Our goal: musical performances in your listening room that feel like they are happening right now.

We include luxuries such as the Elma switch from Switzerland. Fully balanced input and output via Neutrik XLR connectors. Furutech power cable inputs. All employed in highly innovative circuits. For example, most manufacturers' power supplies include significant capacitance. Our patented power supply uses almost none. Capacitors have a sound to them, which we seek to minimize.

The results: natural tone. Accurate dynamics. Correct timing. Music that is more lively, and more intimate.

Hear what they heard, when they recorded it. Feel what they felt. Like it's happening right now.



# Setlist

Clowes Memorial Hall - Indianapolis, IN

Sept. 11, 2010

Photo by Jeff Dorgay



**I**t was a weird way to spend the anniversary of 9/11, but nothing like a great concert to brighten your spirits. And TR was in perfect form, this evening when he performed Todd and Healing back to back for the first time in maybe forever.

With his current band in place, the peeled through a lot of tunes that loyal Todd fans had never heard live. The combination of a great performance, great acoustics, and with Rundgren - always a solid helping of theatrics (and costume changes) made for a memorable evening.

TONE110.029

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team

KROMA  
AUDIO®



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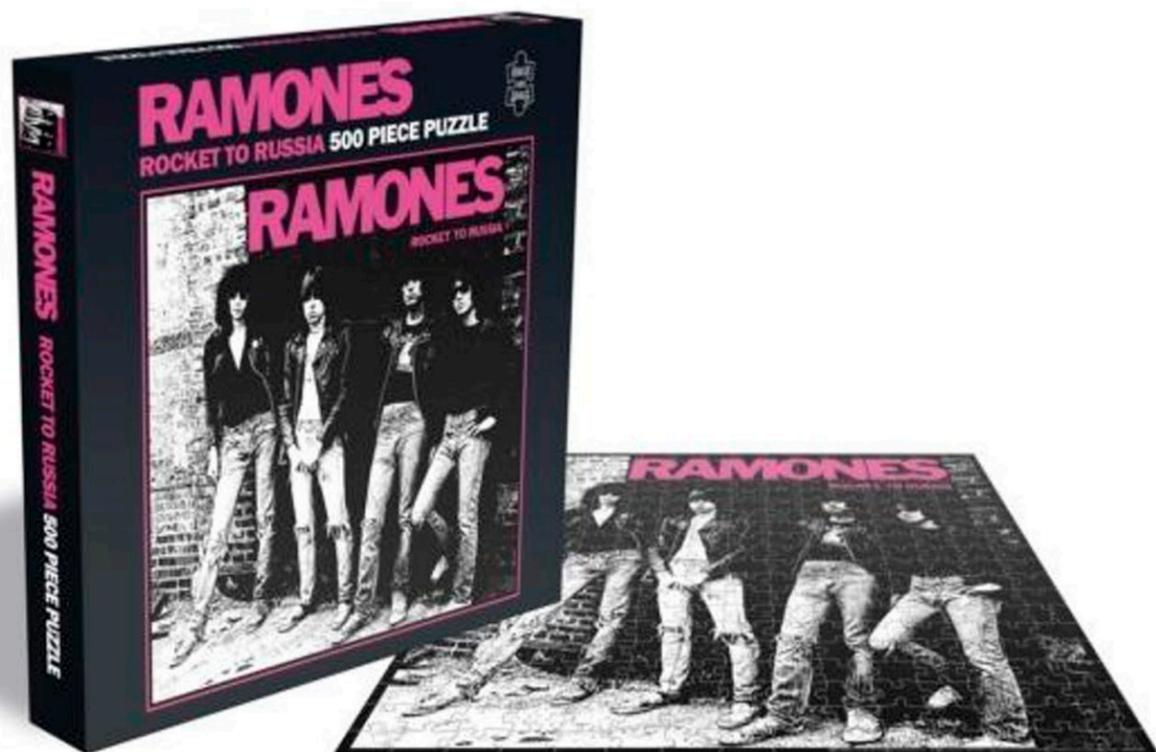
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MATTERHORN  
Audio Group

**MERCHTable**  
Where the goodies are



The Ramones may be long gone from the touring stage, but their merch lives on.

At the merchbar.com, of course.

\$42.95 will get you your own 500-piece puzzle of the Rocket to Russia album cover. Hmm. this one might look better unassembled, in the record rack with all your Ramones albums.

Either way a conversation starter.

# T H E F I N E A R T S

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



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

Shanon McKellar was given the task of sharing some tunes that are “from Canadian bands, but somewhat off the beaten path.”

We think she’s succeeded brilliantly.



Moxy Fruvous - King of Spain

Goddo - Tough Times

The Gandharvas - First Day of Spring

The Grapes of Wrath - All The Things I Wasn't

Hollerado - Juliette

Rheostatics - Here Comes the Wolves

Down With Webster - Whoa is Me

McKenna Mendelssohn Mainline - She's Alright

The Strumbellas - Salvation

The Glorious Sons - Heavy

Sloan - Snowsuit Sound

Default - Wasting My Time

## LIKE A BESPOKE SUIT,

Rega's audio equipment is handmade and built entirely in England by skilled craftsmen and takes time. Supply shortages are causing delays, but the sound is worthy of the wait. Your ears will thank you.

**rega**

The **sund**  
Organisation

Canada and US Distribution for Rega  
(972) 234-0182 | 1009 Oakmead Dr, Arlington TX 76011  
soundorg.com | soundorg.ca



**T**his has been an interesting world to say the least.

Fortunately, what we do makes it easy to follow Angela Cardas' advice of "just stay home and listen to music."

Now that TONE enters its 17th year, a lot of great gear has passed through these doors. In case you don't know, I take about 99% of the photos in the magazine, so I have the unique opportunity to listen to every single thing before it heads to one of our other writers.

It's given me a perspective most reviewers don't have.

This is a very enjoyable process, requiring an open mind at all times. We hand out fewer awards than any other publication for good reason; everything we review is worth your hard earned money. If it's not great, it doesn't even make it in the door.

I'm guessing you're way too busy to waste your time on mediocrity. I know I am.

This year, we had three pieces that felt a step beyond the honor of a "Product of The Year" award, and it's a long time till 2029.

So, we go forward with the Masterpiece Award. There will only be a couple every year. This year we have four things that are beyond class defining for you.

-Jeff Dorgay, ***publisher***



**F**or many cost no object audiophiles, Boulder is the pinnacle that many strive to reach. Our publisher still swears the reference system at Boulder HQ remains the most lifelike system he's ever experienced.

Everyone that has had the experience agrees. Yet for those on a quest to capture as much of this experience at an approachable price, Boulder has built something truly amazing with the 866. For just under \$15k with a built-in DAC, this 200 Watt per channel amplifier will drive anything. Thanks to its high quality touch screen and ROON endpoint capabilities, you can assemble a destination system for incredibly reasonable money. Take it a step further with the equally impressive 509 phono stage and add analog to the mix.

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



Masterpiece Award - 2021



**T**he Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin has been on the scene for 14 years now. There are many imitators, but nothing possesses the combination of sound, style, and functionality of the Zeppelin.

We still have the first and third generation Zeppelins here, and have given a few as gifts over the years.

This unique product is a fantastic addition to any household.

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





**B**alanced Audio Technology has always produced world - class vacuum tube components, but the REX 3 preamp not only eclipses everything they've done in the past, it eclipses most other preamplifiers on the market at any price.

Unlike some linestages that rely on transformers to provide balanced inputs or outputs, the REX 3 is a fully balanced design from input to output.

The only drawback to all this tubey awesomeness?

A lot of tubes to replace when the big day comes. 18 in all. Start saving the day you unbox it, but once said tubes warm up, you'll be a slave to it's power, and will gladly feed it all the tubes it wants.

Don't say we didn't warn you. Prepare to have your perceptions altered in an incredibly good way.



Our Product of the Year Awards celebrate what we feel is the ultimate expression of a particular component, whether it be at a specific price point, or technological prowess.

While we have tried very hard to take more of a “concierge” approach here at TONE, trying to find what we feel are the most exciting to put on your short list, the TPOY products deliver even more.

Much as we hate to use the B-word, the gear to follow certainly represents the “best of the best” of what we’ve had the privilege to listen to this year.

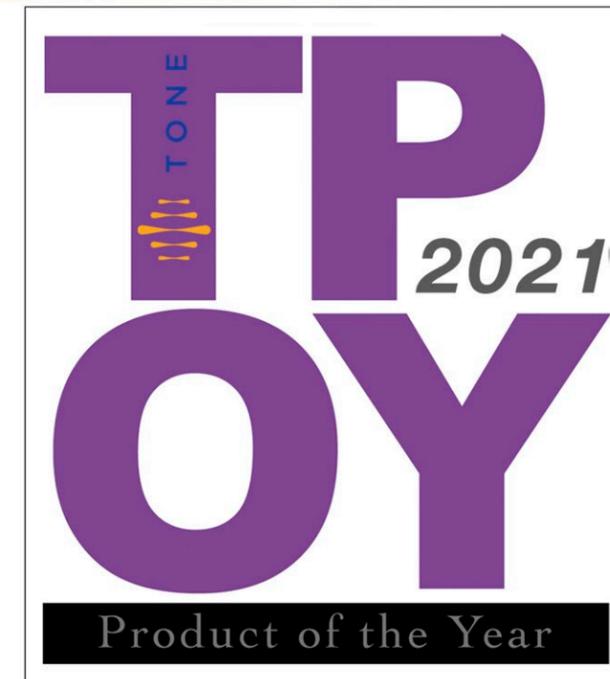
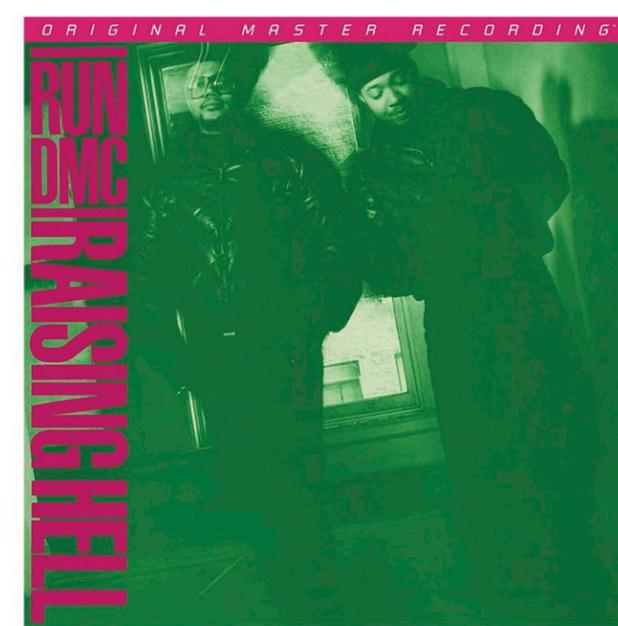
We’ve completed full reviews on most of these, but a couple are still in process, with reviews to follow early in 2021.

Again, we would never expect you to spend your hard earned income on something, simply because we think it’s outstanding, but it is our hope that should you be looking for something in one of these categories, that you’d take the time to investigate, audition, and compare these to what you were thinking of.

Our hope is that should any of the products on the following pages fit your criteria, that upon thorough investigation, you would enjoy them as much as we have.

It’s all about finding that special piece of gear that will take you somewhere you’ve never been.

All of these components pass that test.

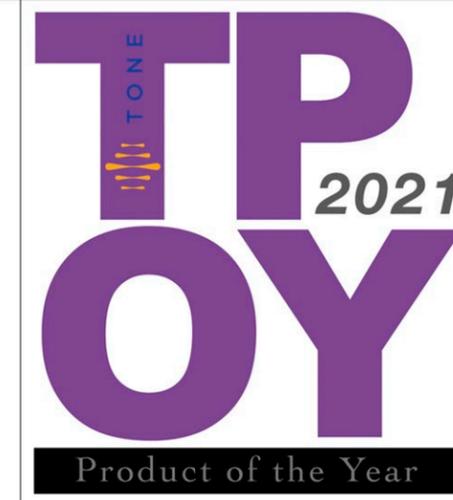




# OVERALL: HiFi Rose RS150B

\$4,995

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



We rarely make broad, bold statements, but when we do, we mean it. There's no better anchor to build a music system HiFi Rose RS150B.

If you're assembling a cost no object system, it's the perfect streamer. Should you be looking for a high-performance, minimal box content system, the RS150B features RCA and balanced XLR outputs, with every digital input you can imagine on the back panel. And... it offers a single analog input so you can add a turntable, should the analog mood strike.

DAC and line-level preamp sections are at the top of their class as well.

Best of all, the user interface is the most intuitive we've yet used, and we've been around since Sooloos 1.0 days. The RS150B is equally ground-breaking because the implementation is sheer perfection.

There is no faster way to audio excellence.





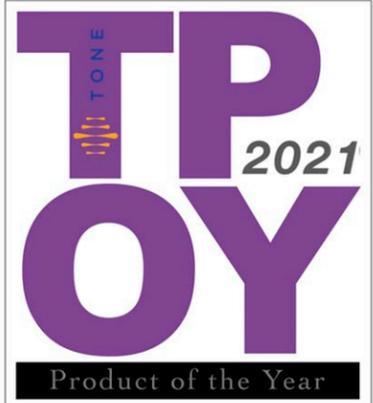
# Speaker: Fink Team Kim

\$12,800/pair  
[matterhornaudio.com](http://matterhornaudio.com)

**T**hese compact but powerful two-ways blend a bespoke AMT tweeter and 8-inch woofer to perfection.

With adjustments for damping and high frequencies, they can work well with nearly any amp.

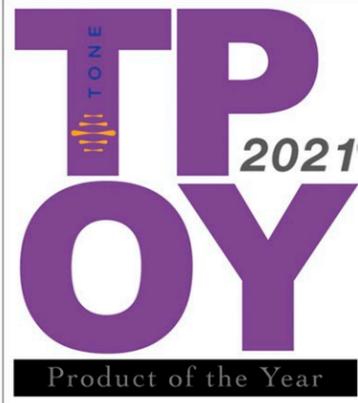
Thinking of the Kims in terms of a compact, yet high performance speaker, they are tough to beat.





# Digital: Naim Uniti Atom Headphone Edition

\$3,290  
naimaudio.com



This has been the toughest award we've ever given, because the Naim Uniti Atom Headphone Edition excels at every function it offers. It is a superb headphone amplifier, to be sure, but because the power amplifier section from the standard Uniti Atom no longer makes demands on the power supply, its performance as a linestage preamplifier, and digital hub needs to be heard to be believed.

With multiple digital inputs, and ROON endpoint functionality, this has to be the best compact yet high performance digital hub going.

Icing on the cake is the single analog input, so you can add a turntable to the mix. Brilliant.



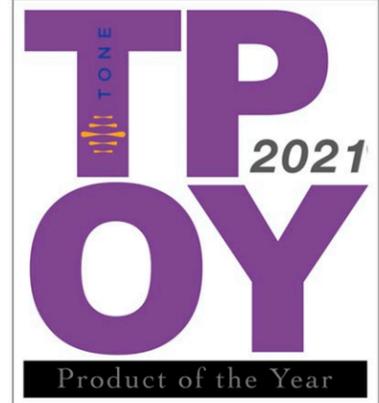


# Analog: Thrax Yatrus

\$15,500 (without arm)

\$21,000 (with Schroeder arm)

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



There's always been a fairly healthy gap between good, great, and outstanding turntables. Now that we live in a world where six-figure turntables are no longer anomalous, some might ponder what it costs to have state of the art analog payback.

We submit the Thrax Yatrus as a contender for an incredibly short list of tables that get down to business for way less than a house in Scottsdale.

The direct-drive Yatrus has it all, and we respectfully submit that the synergy with the matching Schroeder arm is almost too good to believe for this price.

Beyond this award, this table is now a permanent reference here.

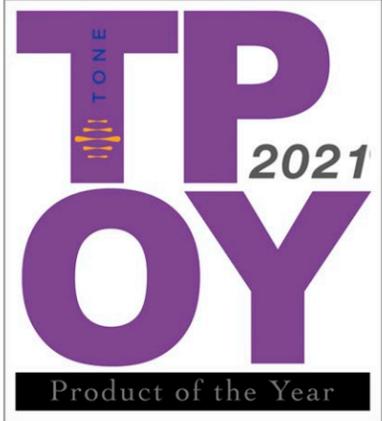




# Preamplifier: Parasound Halo P6

\$1,599

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



We liked Parasound's JC1+ monoblocks so much, we bought the review samples. This one is also staying for a staffer. If there is a better deal going for a line-stage preamplifier, that includes a DAC, MM/MC phono stage, and a headphone amplifier, we aren't aware of it.

The level of performance the Halo P6 delivers would be worth the sticker price if it were just a preamplifier.

Next time you hear the internet pundits complaining, that you have to spend five-figures to get great sound, point them in this direction. It doesn't get any better.

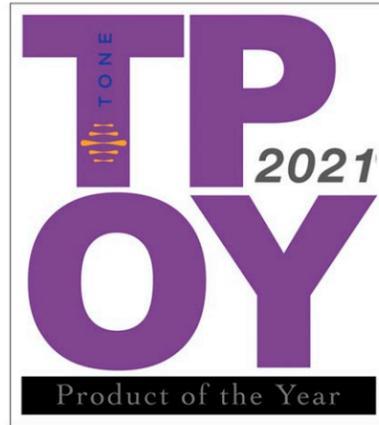
#toneaudioapproved



# Phono Pre: Nagra Classic

\$19,750 (Classic PS \$16,000 addl.)

nagraaudio.com



Nagra craftsmanship is always beautiful to behold, and the sheer efficiency by which their years of making pro gear surfaces in ease of operation and functionality.

The current Classic series builds on the past generation VPS, and the HD series components. The result is incredible.

The ability to configure both inputs as MM or MC, and adapt to mono cartridges as well as the various EQ curves allows the Classic Phono to integrate any cartridge you have in your collection.

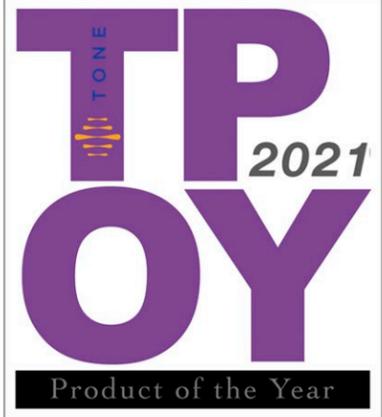
And, the Classic PSU adds even more performance, when you are ready to go further.



# Budget Component: Rega Kyte Speakers

\$795/pair

[soundorg.com](http://soundorg.com)  
[rega.co.uk](http://rega.co.uk)



Many know Rega for their line of turntables, but they have been a full-line manufacturer for decades.

True to the Rega design ethos, their products all are top of their class in performance and value. The new Kyte speakers take advantage of current advances in materials technology, and offer up great sonic performance.

Whether you choose to go all Rega or not, the Kyte speakers are a great match for a compact, high-performance music system.

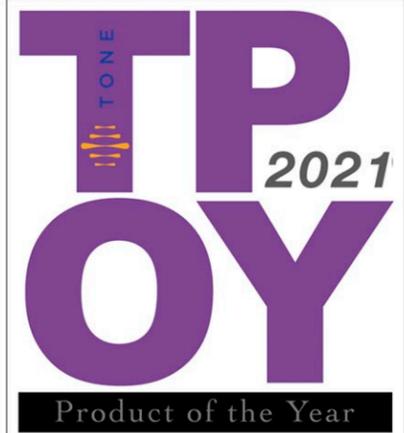




## Power Amp: BAT Rex 3

\$20,000

[balanced.com](http://balanced.com)  
[mofidistribution.com](http://mofidistribution.com)



We've been using various BAT amplifiers, based on the Russian 6C33C triodes for years now, with major enthusiasm. With nearly all other large-scale tube amplifiers based on more traditional EL-34s and the KT88/120/150 power tubes, these amplifiers have always had a unique voice.

The new REX 3 pays visual and sonic homage to BAT designs past, but thanks to improvements and refinements (as well as a major upgrade in casework) makes this one of the world's finest tube amplifiers.

If 80 Watts per channel, is not enough, a mere flick of the switch makes the Rex 3 a 160 Watt, triode monoblock.



# Integrated: Luxman L-590AXII

\$9,495

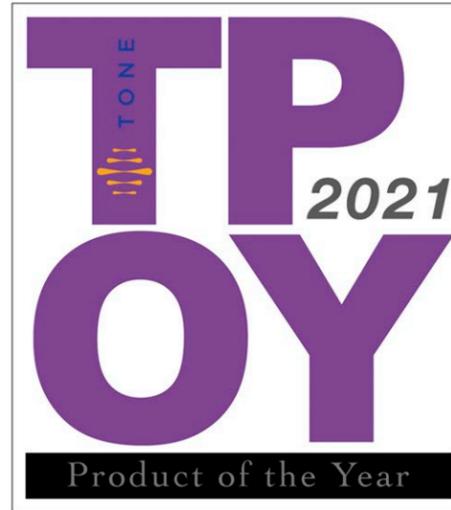
[luxmanamerica.com](http://luxmanamerica.com)

We get a lot of readers asking for a final destination, wanting high performance in a single box. The Luxman 590, and now the current AXII model is almost always the suggestion we present. Five TONE staffers, along with numerous friends and readers have purchased one of these.

It's massive current, 30Wpc class-A power amplifier can drive nearly any speakers, and the built-in MM/MC is top notch.

Add 95 years of manufacturing expertise, to execution and packaging worthy of the finest luxury items, and it adds up to an amplifier you'll probably want to spend the rest of your life with.

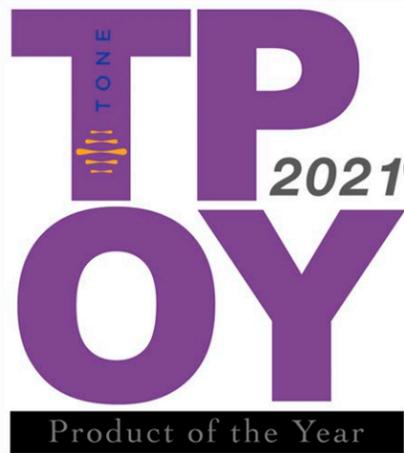
It's that good.





# Personal Audio: ampsandsound Nautilus

\$9,200  
ampsandsound.com



There's no mincing words, this is one of the world's finest headphone amplifiers. Sound is one thing, and that's what we love, but the Nautilus goes way beyond good sound.

The homage paid to hifi's classic past, both in look and feel is unmistakable. It doesn't stop when you remove the bottom cover and look inside. Wanna know why those McIntosh and Marantz amps from the 60s still work today? They were carefully hand wired by people that cared.

Justin Weber produly carries on this tradition, building amplifiers that will probably still be rocking in the next century. It's also an 8Wpc SET amplifier for those of you with efficient speakers.

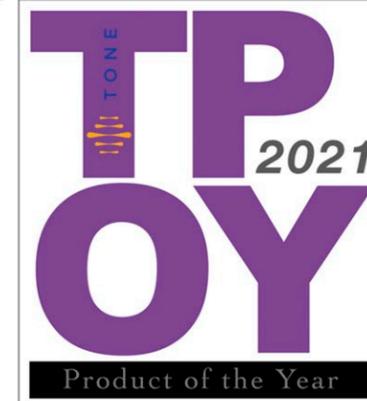
Finally, they are offered in super cool colors. Job done.





# Subwoofer: Totem Tribe-solution

\$2,200  
totemacoustic.com



Totem Acoustics of Canada always excels with speakers offering equal priority to sound and aesthetics.

For someone requiring more low frequency output, but not having the ability to go in-wall, the Tribe “Solution” is appropriately named.

This slim (24 x 13-inch) cabinet is only 4 1/2 inches thick, and can be placed on its rear face, firing upwards, so you can put it anywhere.

If your tribe happens to be slightly more nomadic, this one can go anywhere.

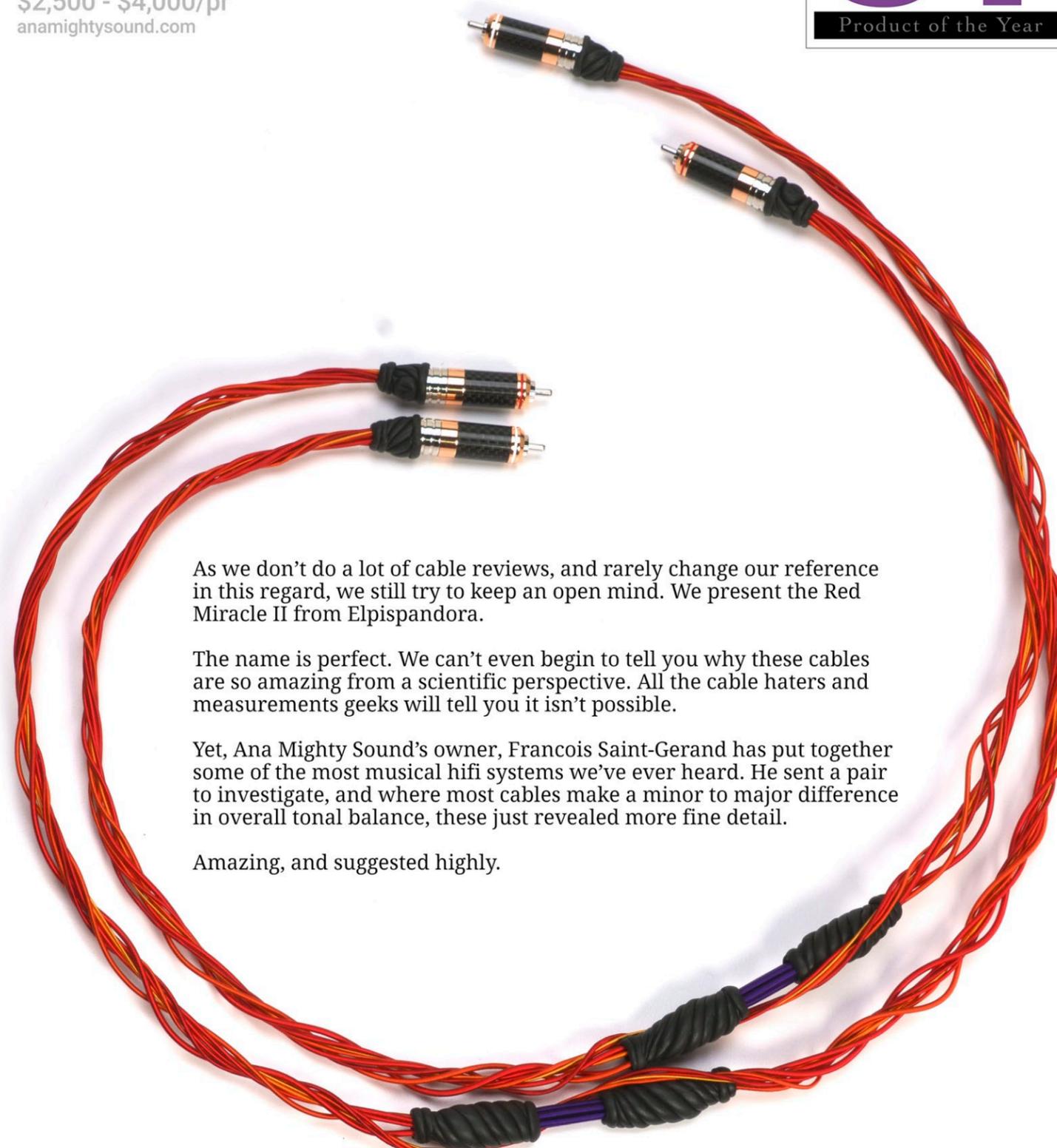
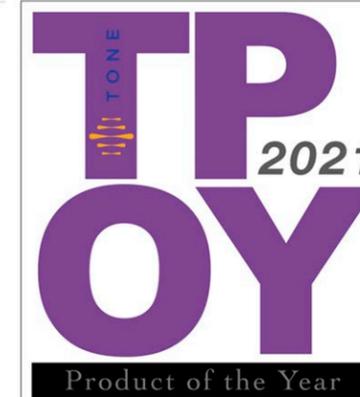
With a pair of 8-inch woofers, and a 500 watt amplifier, (wireless option available) you can count on great bass.





# Cable: Elpis Pandora Red Miracle II

\$2,500 - \$4,000/pr  
anamightysound.com



As we don't do a lot of cable reviews, and rarely change our reference in this regard, we still try to keep an open mind. We present the Red Miracle II from Elpis Pandora.

The name is perfect. We can't even begin to tell you why these cables are so amazing from a scientific perspective. All the cable haters and measurements geeks will tell you it isn't possible.

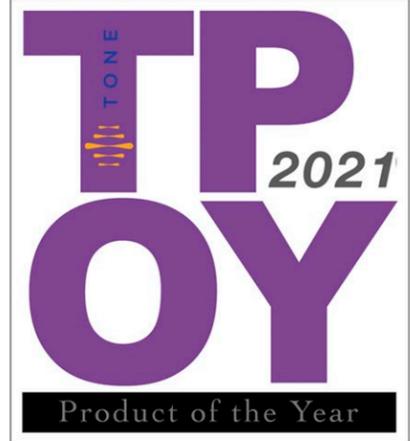
Yet, Ana Mighty Sound's owner, Francois Saint-Gerand has put together some of the most musical hifi systems we've ever heard. He sent a pair to investigate, and where most cables make a minor to major difference in overall tonal balance, these just revealed more fine detail.

Amazing, and suggested highly.

# Accessory: The Degritter

\$3,000

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



We've tried a number of record cleaning machines over the last 30+ years. Some have been considerably less than the Degritter, and others more expensive.

The Degritter has been in use for the better part of this year and ticks all the boxes. It's thorough, easy to use, quiet, and offers multiple cleaning options, from the 4:30 "quick" setting, to the just over 12 minute "heavy" setting.

In addition to doing a fantastic job cleaning records, it is very quiet, efficient, and the easiest one to use.

And we've tried em all.

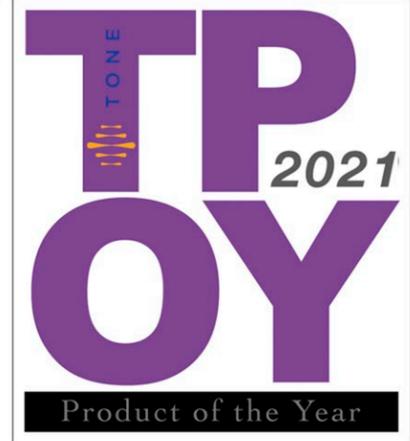
To the left, an LP fresh from being cleaned in the Degritter. Nice.





# Recording: RUN-D.M.C. MoFi

out of print - it's tricky to find one  
[mofi.com](http://mofi.com)



While other imprints were falling all over themselves to re-release tired and often obscure rock and jazz staples, Mobile Fidelity again shows their commitment to music of all kinds, by releasing RUN-D.M.C.'s *Raising Hell* on no less than a two 45-r.p.m. set, as well as an SACD version.

The 5,000 discs pressed, sold out instantly, proving there are a lot of us with great music systems wanting more than standard audiophile faire. Just how much additional information is present on the MoFi grooves, more than validates the effort. Here's to hoping we see more of this in the years to come.

If you missed it, and can't bring yourself to part with 2-5 times the original asking price, the SACD version is very close in sonics, and still in stock at Music Direct.

True believers need this disk. Job well done.



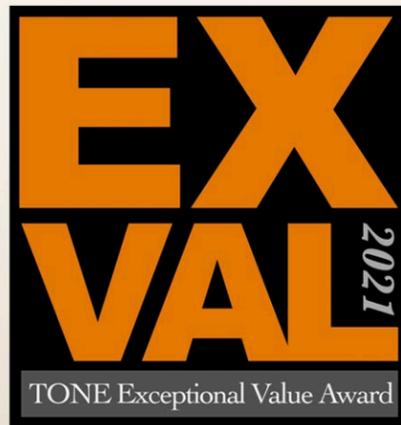
**W**e seek high value in everything we review, yet some things go above and beyond what is expected at any given price. Such is the nature of the Exceptional Value Awards.

The component velocity has picked up this year, despite supply chain issues. As always, there's still no shortage of great values this year.

We hope that at least one or two of these manage to make it on your radar, and we thank all of the manufacturers that have sent things our way for review.

Here's to 2022!





# SVS SB1000 PB1000

\$599 and \$799  
svsound.com

**T**hanks to their big, 12-inch drivers, DSP control and massive power amplifiers, SVS offers the easiest way to big bass going.

# A New Classic.

The new Mini, A612, and A614 speakers from Heretic will take you back to a friendlier day.

Modern re-imagining of a classic design takes these compact monitors to a place that will make you smile.

Read the full story here.

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





# FATHOM® v2

f110v2 IN-ROOM POWERED SUBWOOFER

“Replacing the excellent low end of the (main speakers) with the tautly controlled f110v2 more completely disambiguated the sound of the guitar’s lowest strings from that of the wood, without diminishing the warmth and weight of either.”

- Kal Rubinson, *Stereophile*

“Every Impact was realistic, with a visceral quality that I felt in my chest.”

- David Vaughn, *Sound & Vision*

“The JL f110v2 is a mighty-mite of a sub, conceding little to its larger brothers.”

- Kal Rubinson, *Stereophile*

“But do they ROCK?  
The answer to that question is YES!”

- Jeff Dorgay, *TONEAudio*



JL AUDIO® | How we play.®

© 2020 JL AUDIO, Inc. For more information on our complete line of subwoofers, please visit your local authorized dealer or [www.jlaudio.com](http://www.jlaudio.com). Authorized JL Audio Dealers do not sell via the Internet. Subwoofers pictured with grilles removed.

# EX VAL

2021

TONE Exceptional Value Award

## Pass Labs X150.8

\$6,750

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

Pass Labs “entry” stereo amp from their .8 series is very impressive. First, a single person can lift it!

Yet a quick listen lets you know who designed this one, it’s Pass through and through.

If you don’t need massive power but still want “that sound,” the X150.8 is a killer value.



# Harbeth C7ES-3 XD

\$4,890 - \$5,190 (finish)  
fidelisdistribution.com

**W**e've enjoyed the last two versions of the Compact 7, but the latest brings a lot more to the table.

Easy to setup, drive, and live with, this is one of our favorite all-rounders.



# Boulder

## 866 Integrated



200 Watts Per Channel

Roon Endpoint

3 Analog Inputs

Digital Inputs and Streaming Capabilities

App Control

Designed & Built In U.S.A.

Renowned and Awarded Throughout the World



“This integrated amplifier DAC/streamer is a triumph of audio design and engineering.”  
-Greg Petan  
(Positive Feedback)

“When it comes to sound quality, the main reason we are all into this wonderful hobby, the 866 Integrated is fantastic.”  
-The Computer Audiophile

“This is an amplifier you will keep... and enjoy!... for the rest of your life.”  
-What Hi-Fi

Boulder Amplifiers, Inc S. Taylor Avenue Louisville, CO 80027 (303) 449-8220, x110 www.boulderamp.com

BoulderAmplifiersInc @boulderamplifiers @BoulderAmps



## IT WILL MAKE YOUR STREAMS COME TRUE.

The Ansuz 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 Ansuz 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](http://hificentre.com)



433 Carrall Street | Vancouver | 604 688 5502



## LSA Warp 1

\$1,199 [underwoodhifi.com](http://underwoodhifi.com)

There was a time that Class-D was a dirty word. Not any more.

This is a compact, 150 watt per channel power amplifier that will fit in the smallest of racks.

Incredibly neutral in presentation, and the Warp 1 can even drive a pair of Magnepans with ease.

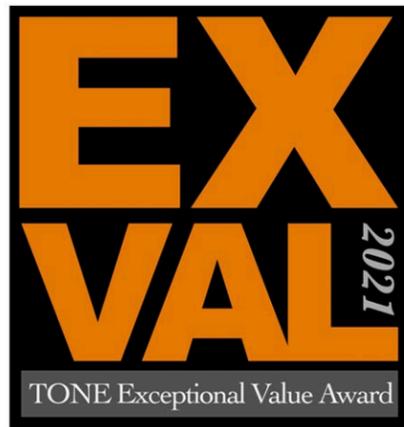
# Naim Mu-so 2

\$1,690 - \$5,190  
naimaudio.com

**N**aim's Mu-so has been killing it since its introduction in Munich years ago.

Performance and functionality are at the top of the class, and the human factor is off the charts.

Turn it on and see!



www.nordost.com



NORDOST

Made in USA



# McIntosh®

LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE®

**FOR EVERY ARGUMENT, THERE'S A SOLUTION.**

The MA352 Integrated Amplifier is a hybrid design that combines the finest of vacuum tube and solid state audio design principles. The result is an eye-catching amplifier that enjoys the best of these two opposing audio philosophies all while reproducing music at the highest quality level.

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

**EX  
VAL** 2021  
TONE Exceptional Value Award



## "The Cap"

\$68 [denonaluminumbody.com](http://denonaluminumbody.com)

Our initial review of the Denon aluminum body cap for the 103 series cartridges decreed this accessory the winner of our JFB (just f\*\*\*ing buy it) award.

If you're using a Denon 103, or considering getting one, there is no better, more cost-effective analog upgrade on Earth. So JFB.

Technics  
Direct

TONE110.057



## Dan Clark AEON 2

\$899.99  
danclarkaudio.com

This is a very exciting set of phones delivering great sound, light weight and a black/carbon fiber aesthetic.

Thanks to new, perforated ear pads, the AEON 2 Noire (shown here) paints a massive sonic picture.

TONE110.058

# SCULPTURE A

## LE PHONO SE

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



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

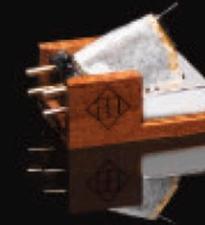
Le Phono SE, a solid-state design without the usual issues of tube electronics.

info@  
anamightysound.com

**Ana**  
MIGHTY SOUND



A.4 Silver



A.3



A.4 Copper



made by Ana Mighty Sound

## A.3 & A.4 SCULPTURE A PHONO CARTRIDGES

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

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



retip

## Our insights on cartridge "repairs"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





**VPI**  
JMW Fatboy  
Tonearm  
Armwand  
\$3,999.99



**Nordost**  
Blue Heaven  
Power Cord  
\$219.99



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



**Clearaudio**  
Concept Active  
Silver Turntable  
Combo  
\$3,199.99



**Hana**  
ML Microline MC  
Cartridge 0.4mV  
\$1,199.99



**AudioQuest**  
Monsoon AC  
Power Cable  
\$449.95



**Quest For Sound**  
Isol-Pad Isolation  
Feet (1 Each)  
\$6.25



**Sieveking Sound**  
Omega Headphone  
Stand  
\$179.99



**AudioQuest**  
DragonFly Cobalt  
USB DAC + Preamp  
+ HP Amp  
\$299.95



**Sumiko**  
Blue Point  
Special EVO III  
MC Cartridge  
\$548.99



**Spin Clean**  
Washer MkII  
Record Cleaner  
\$79.99



**VPI**  
MW-1 Cyclone Super  
Record Cleaner  
\$1,599.99 (Packages  
Available)



**Edifier**  
S2000MKIII Powered  
Bluetooth Speaker  
\$399.99



**Final Audio Design**  
E5000 Earphones  
\$278.99



**Clearaudio**  
Performer V2  
Ebony Wood MM  
Cartridge 3.3mV  
\$278.99

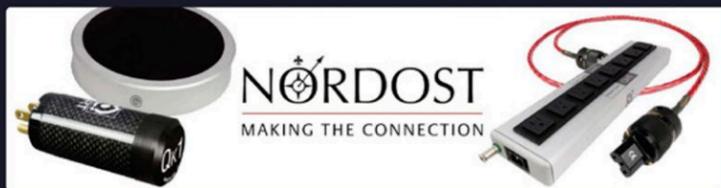


**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US:**

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



**KirmussAudio**  
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic  
Restoration System  
\$899.00



**Audio GE  
Teddy**

\$1,999 pr. [underwoodhifi.com](http://underwoodhifi.com)

These are a fantastic pair of floorstanders, with an entry-level price but sonics that you might expect from a much more expensive pair of speakers.

Incredibly easy to drive, and equally easy to set up, the Teddy's play well with anything.

The perfect anchor to a system you can upgrade for a long time before you feel like upgrading speakers.

And, they are #toneaudioapproved.

# PrimaLuna EVO100 DAC

\$3,395  
primaluna-usa.com  
primaluna.nl

**T**his single-purpose DAC offers a level of musicality that will pull you in right now.

If you're a vinylista that turns your back on digital, or just thinking about an upgrade, this one is at the top of our list.

And, it's #toneaudioapproved too!



## INTRODUCING 212/SX

Upgraded alloy drivers, a new passive radiator and our PerfectFilter™ delivers crushing low bass with greater speed & air, taking 212/SX well beyond illustrious predecessor

1000 WATT NEXTGEN5  
CLASS D AMPLIFIER

DUAL ACTIVE 12" DRIVERS

1 DOWN FIRING & 1 REAR  
FIRING PASSIVE RADIATOR



**REL**  
ACOUSTICS LTD

Start your journey by scanning the QR code or contact your T+A concierge at:  
concierge@ta-hifi.com



#music reengineered  
T+A Caruso



**T+A**  
Engineering Emotion

## Gershman Acoustics Studio Two

\$3,995 pr. [gershmanacoustics.com](http://gershmanacoustics.com)

We've always had a major fondness for the natural, lifelike sound of Gershman speakers.

This compact, two-way stand mounted monitor features a soft dome tweeter and 8-inch woofer. The blend between the two is fantastic, allowing these modest sized speakers to deliver a lot more drive than their size suggests.

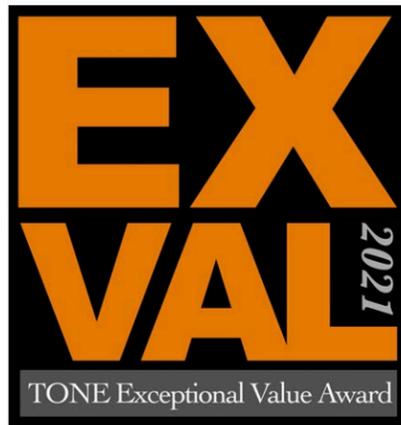
Very highly suggested.

**EX  
VAL** 2021

TONE Exceptional Value Award

Hand crafted in





## AudiaFlight FL Three S FLS 9 FLS 10

\$3,800, \$6,500, & \$10,500

[audiaflight.it](http://audiaflight.it)

**T**his is the first time we've ever given this award to three components, but each one of these Audia Flight amps have such an incredible level of finish, performance and functionality, we can't ignore them as a group.

To that end, each amplifier presents an equal increase in performance, so there is no "diminishing returns." All will make fantastic system anchors in systems of increasingly higher quality.

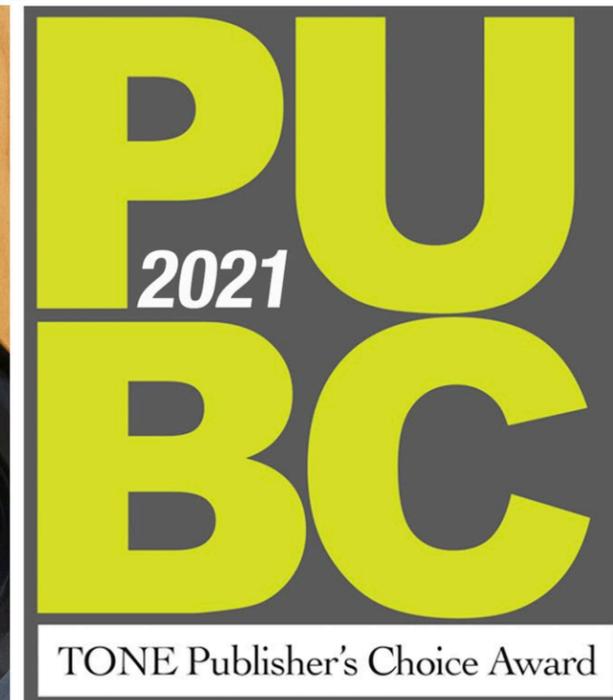


**T**he Publisher's Choice Awards are few, and self-indulgent on my part.

Product of the Year, and Exceptional Value awards, I hope are fairly self-explanatory, but the handful of products presented on the next few pages are special, in a way that I feel doesn't need to conform to a specific price or performance target.

This issue, we had a few more main awards, yet still a few "teacher's pets" here.

Enjoy.



**PU**  
2021  
**BC**

TONE Publisher's Choice Award



## Lab 12 melto2 Phono

\$4,490  
fidelisdistribution.com

The Lab 12 melto2 phono is the perfect solution for the analog lover with multiple turntables and/or tonearms.

Three inputs makes it a breeze to have a different setup at your disposal. Perhaps one table for mono, one for 78s and an all-rounder.

Best of all, you can optimize the settings from your listening chair with the supplied remote.

We know of a number of big-bucks phono preamplifiers that don't do this. Bonus!

We Are  
**Young.**

We Are  
**Fun.**

We Are  
**KINPlay**



**TOTEM**

Discover yours

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

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

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



## Elegant. With a side of Muscle.

MartinLogan's latest generation of Dynamo™ subwoofers. Five models engineered to deliver an intensely tactile bass experience. They feature new technology, bold construction, and the power to reveal the *Truth in Sound*: fast response, accurate detail and realistic impact. New smartphone App control, and ARC Room Correction, give you the ultimate control, and optimal bass in any listening space. For music or cinema, Dynamo brings the performance home. Visit [martinlogan.com](http://martinlogan.com) for more information, and to find an authorized dealer near you.

- Five sizes
- NEW! App control via smartphone
- Anthem Room Correction (ARC®) for PC, iOS and Android
- Flexible front-firing or down-firing design
- Optional wireless system



## Chord Huei Phono Pre

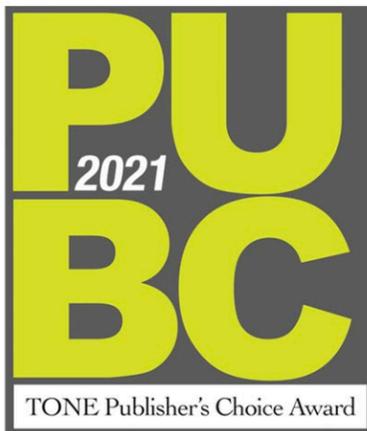
\$1,595

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

The Chord Huei is nothing short of a compact miracle.

MM and MC performance are equally stunning. The Huei is dynamic, open, and super quiet.

With RCA and balanced outputs, Huei easily integrates into any system.



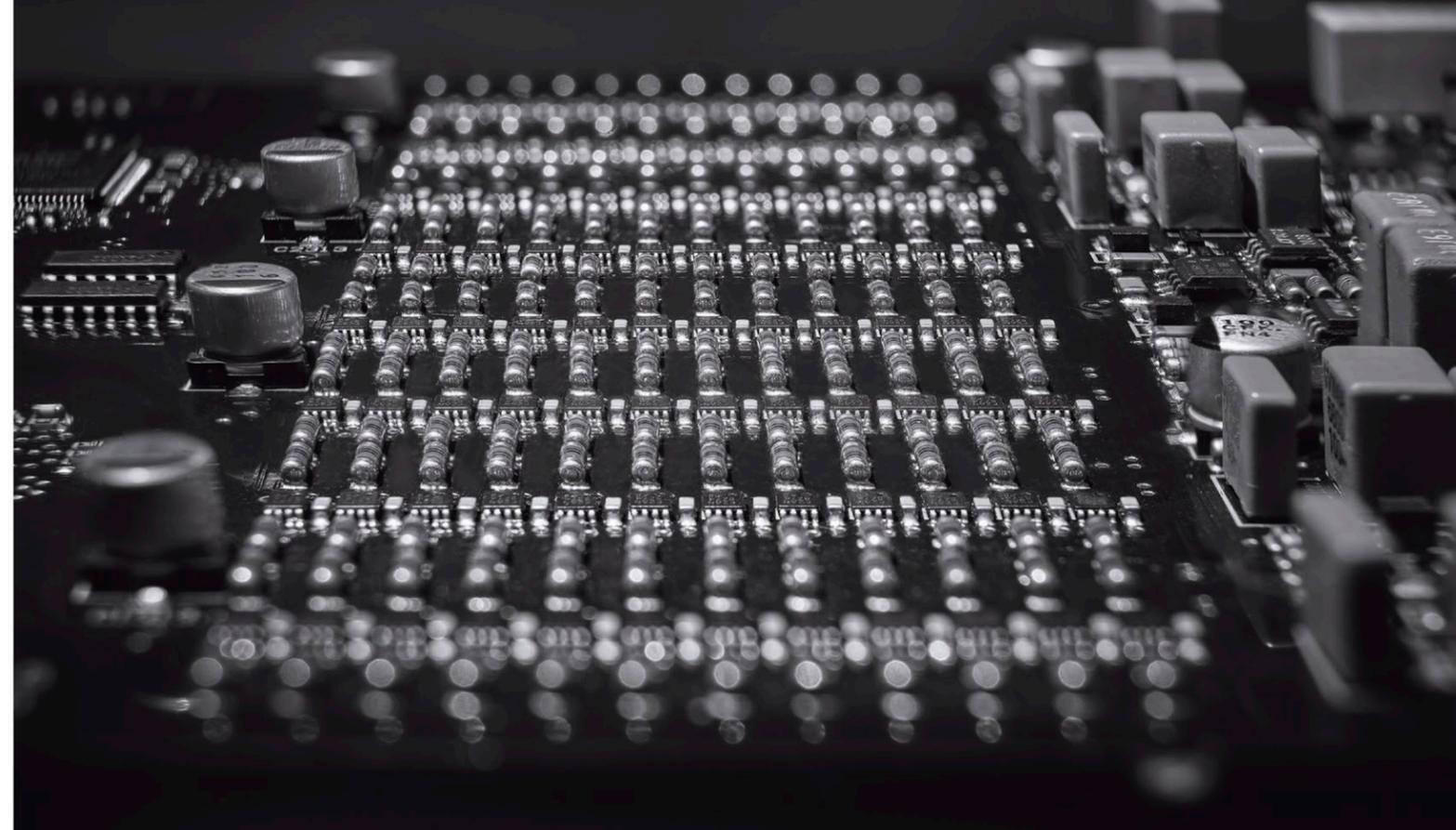
# T+A Caruso R

\$3,490    ta-hifi.de

You may not know it, but the T+A Caruso has been around since about 2008, quietly starting its own revolution.

We love the current Caruso R version so much because it offers a CD player and FM/DAB tuner in addition to its streaming capabilities.

Add a 50-watt power amp all on one chassis and this is a big winner. T+A makes a pair of companion speakers that are fab too.



## Musicality, Engineered

The *dCS* RingDAC™

From the beginning, *dCS* traveled a fundamentally different path. With the introduction of the 900 analog-to-digital converter in 1989, our engineers pioneered the world's first 24-bit audio processor. The new design embodied two years of intense research into an all-new approach to digital signal conversion. Critical to that design was a discrete circuit the young company called the RingDAC™.

The RingDAC™ design began with an acknowledgment that all-digital audio hardware fell short of conveying the emotional essence of music. While identifying the deficiencies of the established standards, it became obvious the solution required a design that disassociated the noise and distortion all hardware inevitably overlays on the music signal. The RingDAC is central to our never-ending quest to unlock the limitless potential of recorded music, free from the constraints of physical hardware's finite accuracy and longevity.

For the past 30 years, *dCS* engineers have continued to find fresh and unique approaches to set and redefine industry standards. Still, with every advancement, the process remains the same: an agnostic inquiry into the technologies that yield quantifiable and observable results, all in the service of the music you love.

[www.dcsaudio.com](http://www.dcsaudio.com) | [info@dcsLtd.co.uk](mailto:info@dcsLtd.co.uk) | @dCSonlythemusic

Manufactured in the UK by Data Conversion Systems Ltd

Unit 1, Buckingham Business Park, Anderson Road, Swavesey, Cambridge, CB24 4AE

Imported by Data Conversion Systems Americas Inc. T (617) 314 9296

*dCS*  
ONLY THE MUSIC



# Luxman L-595a

\$11,595

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

If you are a fan of Luxman's solid-state, class-A integrated amplifiers, the limited edition (200 units total) is the ultimate realization of this platform.

Gone are the meters you're used to. The 595 pays homage to Luxman class-A amps past, with individual buttons for all functions.

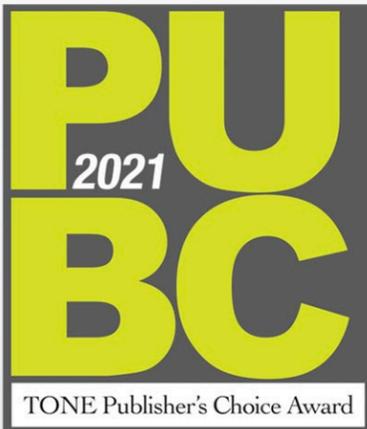
When the 595s are gone, you'll be paying the scalpers. So get one while they last.



<sup>®</sup>  
**PENAUDIO**  
auditional wellbeing™

[www.penaudio.fi](http://www.penaudio.fi) & [www.audiomania.fi](http://www.audiomania.fi)





# Harbeth Monitor 40.3XD

\$22,500 - \$24,500  
(finish dependant)

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

These snuck in at the very end of the year...

Though it was no one's fault with supply issues being what they've been. Fortunately, We used the earlier 40.1s as reference speakers for a few years, and we are huge fans of the Harbeth brand.

Good as all the small Harbeths are, the Monitor 40.3XD is Alan Shaw's masterpiece.

Just think of your favorite Harbeth monitor with another octave of bass extension, and massive dynamic drive.

You're getting close, but you need to hear them to get it.



# \$9k for a 15lb preamp?!

If you want to pay \$9,000 for a 15 lb preamp with mediocre parts, *that's your business.*

If you want to pay \$4,699 for a 53 lb preamp crafted with the finest exotic parts, *that's our business.*

Learn the truth on the PrimaLuna YouTube channel.

## PrimaLuna EVO 400 Preamplifier

Dual-mono design utilizing two toroidal transformers and two 5AR4 rectifier tubes to drop noise and maximize imaging and texture

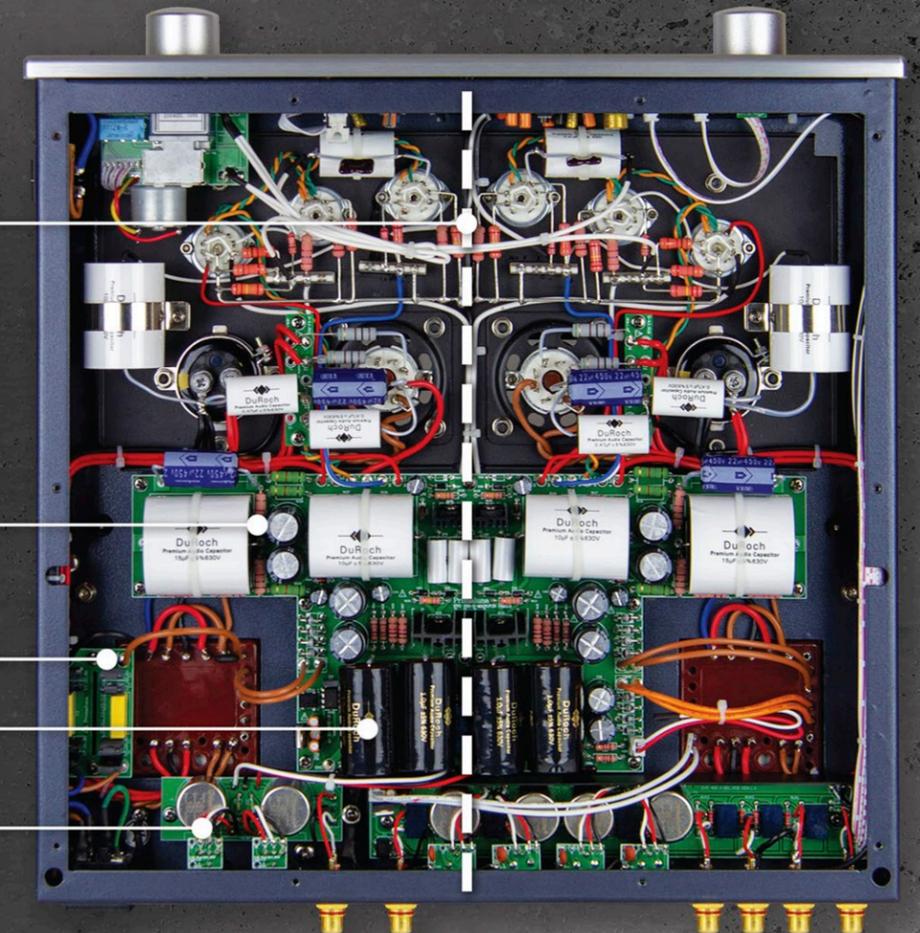
Point-to-point wiring with Swiss-made silver-plated OFC wire improves sound beyond what's possible with PCBs

Takman resistors from Japan renowned for their low noise, linearity, and musicality

AC Offset Killer lowers transformer noise to create a sense of space and air

Exotic Swiss-made tin-foil capacitors for the best sound without regard to cost

Transformer-coupled XLR plus RCA connections for ultimate flexibility



"...an insane audio bargain that delivers pure tube magic." DICK OLSHER, THE ABSOLUTE SOUND

The Absolute Sound  
Product of the  
Year 2020



TONE Audio  
Product of the  
Year 2019



[primaluna-usa.com](http://primaluna-usa.com)

909.310.8540

**PrimaLuna**<sup>®</sup>  
Music Illuminated<sup>™</sup>



**PU  
2021  
BC**

TONE Publisher's Choice Award

## Acora Acoustics SRB

\$15,000/pr  
(all granite stands \$5,000 addl.) [acoraacoustics.com](http://acoraacoustics.com)

If you subscribe to the school of thought that speaker enclosures must be completely inert, so every last bit of sound from the drivers is not clouded in any way from cabinet resonance, there's nothing more inert than granite.

Acora's visual and audible execution succeeds perfectly. The SRBs are fast, open and paint an enormous sonic landscape in front of you.

Need more bass? There are two bigger models.

However in a small-ish room, these are incredible.

*Degritter*

Take time  
to experience



Keep your sound pristine with the Degritter ultrasonic record cleaning machine. Fully automatic for a convenient washing experience.

FIND YOUR NEAREST DEALER:  
[degritter.com](http://degritter.com)

**I**t's easy to get excited about new gear. A lack of enthusiasm would be scary, don't you think?

Yet, when the initial pixie dust dims, the ultimate question is would you live with the component that you just finished waxing poetic about?

Granted some complain that audio reviewers are often granted the same industry discounts that the other people in the audio world are allowed. However, the physical act of writing the check is more often than not the great equalizer. Rarely does the discount act as a vehicle to *save money*. Access to a better price just means you buy the next model up.

If you walked into a record store and were informed that everything was discounted, would you buy fewer records? I know I wouldn't.

To this end, we've created the #toneaudioapproved award and hashtag out on social media - maybe you've seen it.

That means we've put our credit card on the table. It's one thing to exhaust your adjective gland in the hope of being quoted somewhere.

It's quite another to have some skin in the game. Here's the ones we bought this year.

PS: The additional benefit of actually purchasing a component, gives us the opportunity to write a follow up review in a year or so - adding additional insight.



# TONE  
Audio  
Approved

## Rega Planar 10

\$5,699  
rega.co.uk

Rega's top (well, 2nd from top if you count their limited edition Naiad) table smokes a lot of much more expensive tables from others.

And it's incredibly easy to set up.

That's why we wrote the check.

# CLEAN POWER. REDEFINED.



## CLARUS CONCERTO

A radical new application specific filtered AC energy delivery system incorporates three separate and unique AC filter designs for Analog components, Digital components and High Current Amplifiers. Introducing Propriety C-Core Technology - No other core performs as well to keep your AC signal silent and clean.



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CRYSTAL CLEAR SOUND

  
positive-feedback



[www.claruscable.com](http://www.claruscable.com) - [info@claruscable.com](mailto:info@claruscable.com)

# WHARFEDALE

The reviews are in.



EV04



ELYSIAN



HERITAGE

#TONE  
Audio  
Approved

## Penaudio Lumi

\$2,995/pr.

[penaudio.fi](http://penaudio.fi)

In Finnish, Lumi means “snow.”

These speakers pay homage to Finland’s quiet winter season.

These compact monitors are clear and clean sounding. One of our favorites.



PENAUDIO  
auditional wellbeing™



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

Find a local store. Free Shipping.

Mofi Distribution  
North American Distributor  
[info@mofi.com](mailto:info@mofi.com)

# SVS 3000 Micro

\$899.99  
svsound.com

Cool as big subwoofers are, this compact cube from SVS packs a lot of horsepower.

Dual, opposing 8-inch drivers, coupled to an 800-Watt amplifier (with DSP control) is the perfect solution when you need big bass, but lack the space. This one is a major fave.



"Tellurium Q's Ultra Black II's can be seen as one of the best loudspeaker cables on the market at their price"

- 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

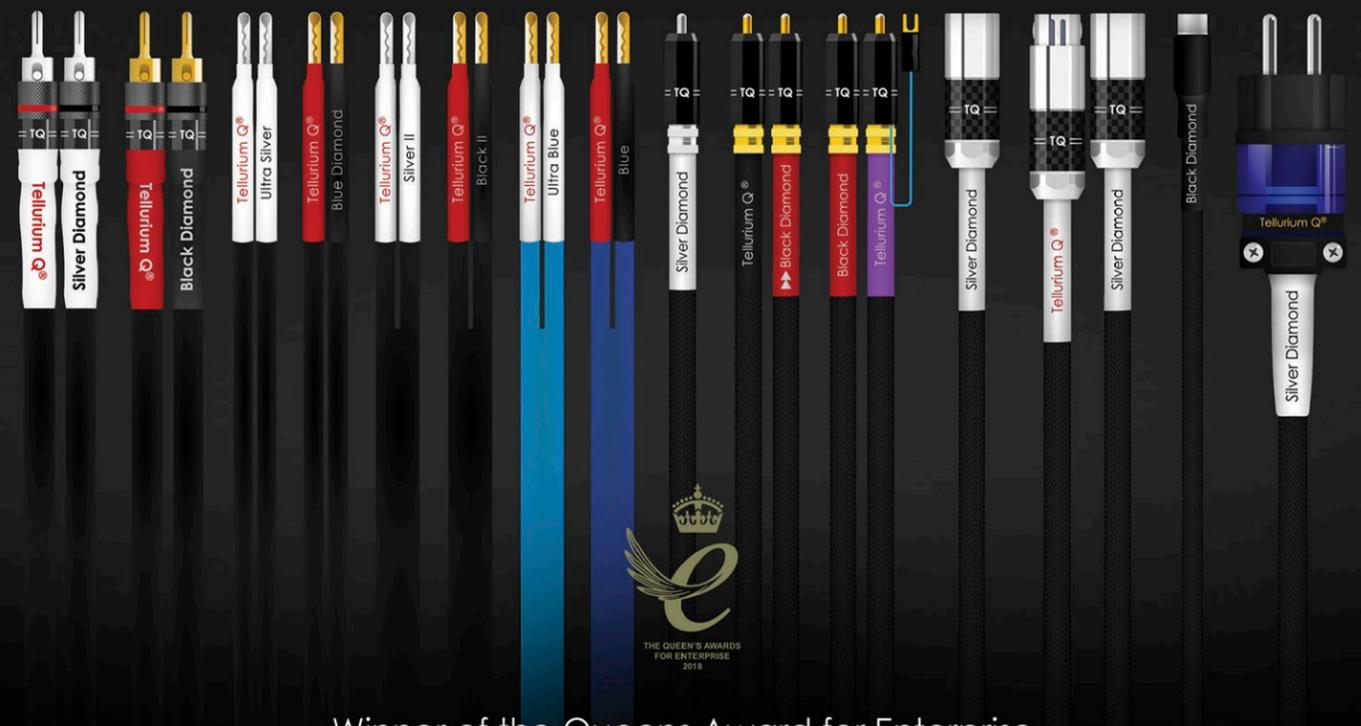
"Tellurium Q Ultra Black II is a remarkably coherent and "well-timed" cable"

- Jason Kennedy, HiFi +

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

- Chris Kelly, The Ear

## Tellurium Q®



Winner of the Queens Award for Enterprise

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**HIGH END BY OZ**  
THE WIZARD OF SOUND

“I have purchased the review sample to be one of our reference components, it's that good!”  
Jeff Dorgay, ToneAudio



 **Thrax Enyo**



North American Importer & Distributor

www.highendbyoz.com “The Wizard Of Sound”  
Greenmount Drive, Woodbridge VA 22193 USA, (424) 344-0011

North American Dealers

<b>Audio Limits</b> 3132 Acacia Ct, Laughlin, NV 89029 USA, (702) 299-0567 www.audiolimits.com	<b>Stellar Home Audio</b> 1 Nicolette Ct, Commack NY 11725 USA, (631) 542-2728 www.stellarhomeaudio.com	<b>Audio Den</b> 105 Desperado Rd, Bailey, Co. USA (303) 478-8221 www.audioden.net	<b>United Home Audio</b> Stafford, VA USA, (540) 295-8313 www.unitedhomeproducts.com
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## Focal Stellia

\$2,999

focal.com

As we are trying to include an increasing number of personal audio reviews in our pages, our personal collection of phones is also increasing.

Built to the same high level of quality that the 6-figure Grande Utopia EM enjoys, the Stellia phones are our publishers go-to reference.



# Dynaudio Confidence 20

# TONE  
Audio  
Approved

\$11,999  
dynaudio.com

Last year they were our product of the year. The review samples have been serving us well in system three with a six pack of REL S/510s

DYNAUDIO

## Some of us never quit....

Now available on 7 and 10-inch reels!

Reel to reel isn't the only revolution.

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

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

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

Hence the name.

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



Perfectly Balanced.



### Announcing The New VK80i Integrated.

The warm glow of the quartet of 6C33 tubes distinguishes the VK80i as a pure Balanced Audio Technology design. Inside the stunning all-aluminum chassis is innovative technology and uncompromising audio quality. It's perfectly balanced for the discerning music lover.

BAT's proprietary *intelligent auto-bias and fuseless protection circuits* make this a tube amp that is easy to own and operate. You will always have optimal sound and total peace of mind. The balanced amplifier generates 55 watts-per-channel of *high current triode* power. This amplifier drives speakers with vigor due to the exceptional wide-bandwidth output transformers. With the VK80i, all you need to do is listen.

Contact your nearest BAT specialty retailer to audition this American-made powerhouse.

### A Truly Balanced Approach.

For over 25 years, Victor Khomenko and the BAT team have been on a mission to build components that recreate music's natural beauty. When we started the company, we found that many products use complex designs to achieve unnatural perfection. There had to be a better balance.

BAT believes in the benefits of fully-balanced circuits to maintain the purity of the original signal. We use the fewest number of gain stages possible for the shortest signal path, and we go to great lengths to custom manufacture high-quality parts that meet our sound quality and reliability standards. Whether you choose one of our solid-state or tube designs, BAT components will give your system a "breath of life" that you've never heard before!

# BAT

For more info visit [Balanced.com](http://Balanced.com)  
[sales@balanced.com](mailto:sales@balanced.com) | 302-999-8855

# TONE  
Audio  
Approved

## Technics SL-1500C

\$1,199

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

The built-in phono pre and 2M Red cartridge will start you on your analog journey.

Decades of turntable expertise from Technics delivers the goods when you want to travel further.

Add an external phono stage, a better cart, and you're rocking.

And...the arm lifts at the end!



Paradigm  
*Founder*  
 SERIES

When Art Embraces Science,  
 Anything is Possible

**Founder is no ordinary loudspeaker.** We've treated every part, large and small, as if it were the most crucial piece of the whole. Every component has been thoroughly researched, designed, engineered, and tested. Not only are the drivers completely new, so is their mounting hardware, the cabinet's internal structure and shape, and even the feet. By leaving no element unaddressed, we've created something that is much greater than the sum of its parts.



Shown: Founder 120H



Shown in Paradigm's exclusive **Midnight Cherry Finish**.



**Designed, engineered, and fully Crafted in Canada**, by people who love great audio (*just like you*).

[paradigm.com/findmydealer](http://paradigm.com/findmydealer)

# TONE  
 Audio  
 Approved

**LSA  
 VT-70**

\$1,199

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

Entrance has produced a small miracle in personal listening for just under 200 bucks.

Don't let the basic casework fool you. There are a lot of \$600-\$1,000 phones that don't come close to this level of neutrality.

This is our go to affordable headphone.



When assembling systems of like value, it's important to have some basic building blocks to build what we feel are "real world" systems.

Plugging \$1,500/pair speakers into \$100k amp/pre combos doesn't help you make a purchase decision.

We've happily added this one to our arsenal of tools.

TONE110.077

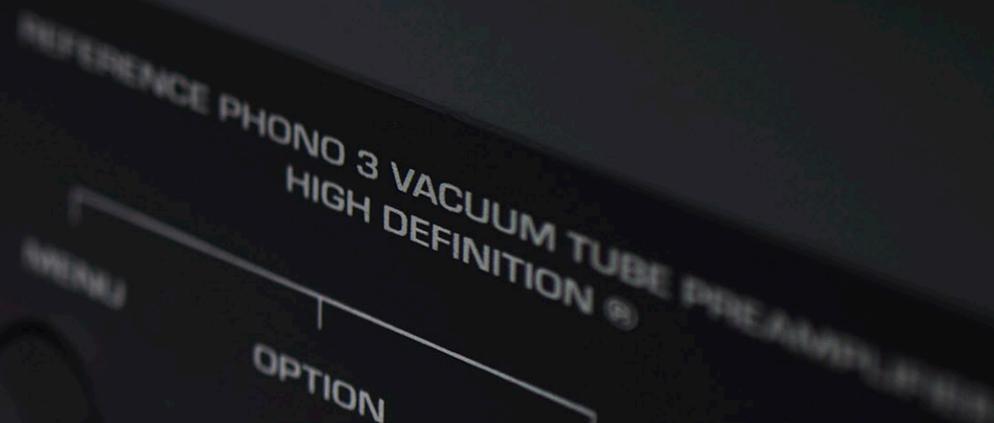
# Audio Research REF Phono 3SE

\$18,000  
audioresearch.com

Staffer Kevin Wolff has used a number of ARC phono and linestage preamplifiers over the years, so the latest SE version was a logical update.

The REF Phono3SE remains one of the best values in top of the mountain phono stages going.

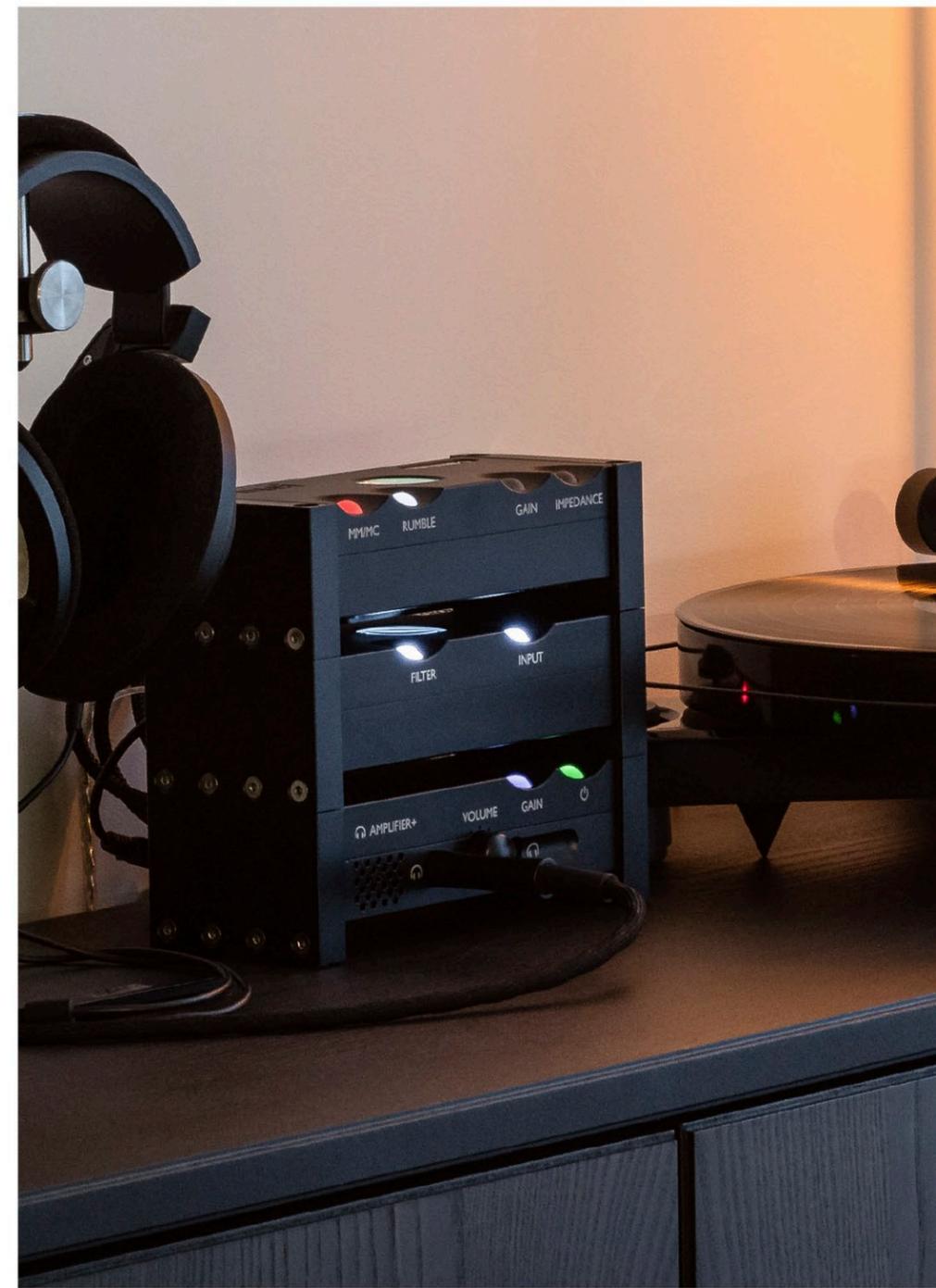
# TONE  
Audio  
Approved



## QUTEST SYSTEM



DESKTOP AUDIO  
REDEFINED



The Qutest range distils more than 30 years of award-winning British design, engineering and craftsmanship into a compact home audio system for the modern age.



# LAB 12

www.lab12.gr

Fidelis  
distribution, llc

## Now available in the USA!

HiGain ST

Navigation

Audiophile Adjustable Tuning

LAB 12

# TONE  
Audio  
Approved

### REL S/510

\$2,749 rel.net

What do you do when you have a six pack of REL no.25s in the main room? Get a six pack of S/510s for the living room.

Why would we not?

The country that brought us Democracy, The Olympics, and Ouzo, brings us award-winning electronics from Lab 12.

The experts agree.

Contact Fidelis Distribution for review and dealer inquiries.

603-880-4434



TONE110.079

# Thrax Yatrus

\$15,500 (sans arm)

\$21,000 (w/Schroeder arm)

highendbyoz.com

**W**ant six-figure turntable performance for just over \$20k?

Buy the Thrax/Schroeder combo you see here. Enough said.

# TONE  
Audio  
Approved



# SUNCOAST *Audio*

## WHERE HIGH END AND LUXURY MEET

[WWW.SUNCOASTAUDIO.COM](http://WWW.SUNCOASTAUDIO.COM)



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AQUA HIFI-ANALYSIS PLUS-ARTESANIA AUDIO-AUDIOQUEST-AURENDER-AVANTGARDE ACOUSTICS-AVID HIFI-BAK00N-BERKELEY AUDIO DESIGN - BOULDER- BOWERS & WILKINS-BRYSTON  
CHORD ELECTRONICS-CLASSÉ AUDIO-CRITICAL MASS SYSTEMS-DEGRITTER-ENGLISH ELECTRIC-ESOTERIC-FOCAL-FRANCO SERBLIN-FURUTECH-FYNE AUDIO-HARBETH SPEAKERS-HEGEL  
HIFIMAN-IFI-INTEGRITYHIFI-ISOACOUSTICS-JVC-KRONOS AUDIO KUZMA-KHARMA-KOETSU-LUMIN-LUXMAN-MAGICO LOUDSPEAKERS-MOON BY SIMAUDIO-MSB TECHNOLOGY-MBL AUDIO  
MY SONIC LAB-NAIM-NORDOST-ORTOFON-PASS LABS-QUADRASPIRE-REGA-SHUNYATA RESEARCH-SOUND ANCHORS-STEIN MUSIC-STILLPOINTS-TAIKO AUDIO-TONTRAGER-TRINNOV  
VAC AUDIO-VAN DEN HUL-VICOUSTIC-VIVA-VIVID AUDIO-VPI INDUSTRIES-WIREWORLD

PREMIERE FLORIDA DEALER

# Where Have all the Good Stereos Gone?



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

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

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

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

echo)))  
audio

www.echohifi.com 888.248.echo

**FUTURE** TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



## Focal Clear Headphones

\$1,490  
focal.com

Having had a lot of seat time with Focal's Utopia and Stella headphones, we're very anxious to see what they've come up with at this level.

First look and listen reveals much of the tech from the top has indeed trickled down to a more approachable model.

As usual, the sound of the Clear's is matched by flawless execution.

*Enjoy the Experience*



**PASS**

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

**FUTURE** TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



**Tellurium Q  
Black II Power Cord**

\$975/1.5m cord  
[telluriumq.com](http://telluriumq.com)

Cable meister Geoff Merrigan has just produced an update to Tellurium Qs wildly successful Black power cord, with the new II series.

The original Black was a fantastic performer, so we'll be listening closely to the details.

Full review shortly.

audio  
**Art**cable

**AudioArtCable.com**

CUTTING EDGE

# Premium Cables



**Statement e IC Cryo**  
Interconnect Cable

**Power1 e Cryo**  
AC Cable



CONNECTING *YOU*  
**With the Music**

**Factory Direct Prices &  
Custom Orders**

**TONE**Audio



**FUTURE** TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

## HiFi Rose RS250 Streamer

\$2,495

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

As the RS150 snagged this year's Product of the Year Overall award, (and it's staying) next on the list is to investigate how much of that performance is available at half the price.



# Tone Imports

ACOUSTICPLAN

AUDITORIUM 23

EMT

J.C. VERDIER

LEBEN HI-FI

LINE MAGNETIC

MURASAKINO

RIVIERA LABS

SENTEC

SHINDO LABORATORY

SPEC CORPORATION

SUGDEN AUDIO

TELLURIUM Q

TONAPPARATE

toneimports.com



FUTURE

TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

## ESS Amt Limited

\$4,499/pair  
essspeakers.store

Nearly 50 years later, ESS is still in business. Now that we own a pair of clean originals, you know we have to get a pair of new ones in the house.

And after pestering ESS for over a decade, they are going to send some.

Anxious for this comparison.



**MINE**  
it should be **YOURS**

## Welcome to MINE:

We're not just crazy about music and hi-fi here at TONE. While we can put many labels on our ethos, claiming to be music lovers, audiophiles, or perhaps even qualityphiles, that doesn't even cover it. Having met so many of our readers from all over the globe, 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.

This issue's MINE section is a bit short because of the holiday season. We put together a list of fun gift ideas along with the folks at Mofi Distribution, that are still solid must-haves, no matter what time of year.

Please click here to view on the TONE site.

Thank you all again for reading and we hope you've been having a great holiday season.



TONE110.085

## THE COMPONENTS OF EXCELLENCE: LASTING VALUE

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



Made in the USA

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

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

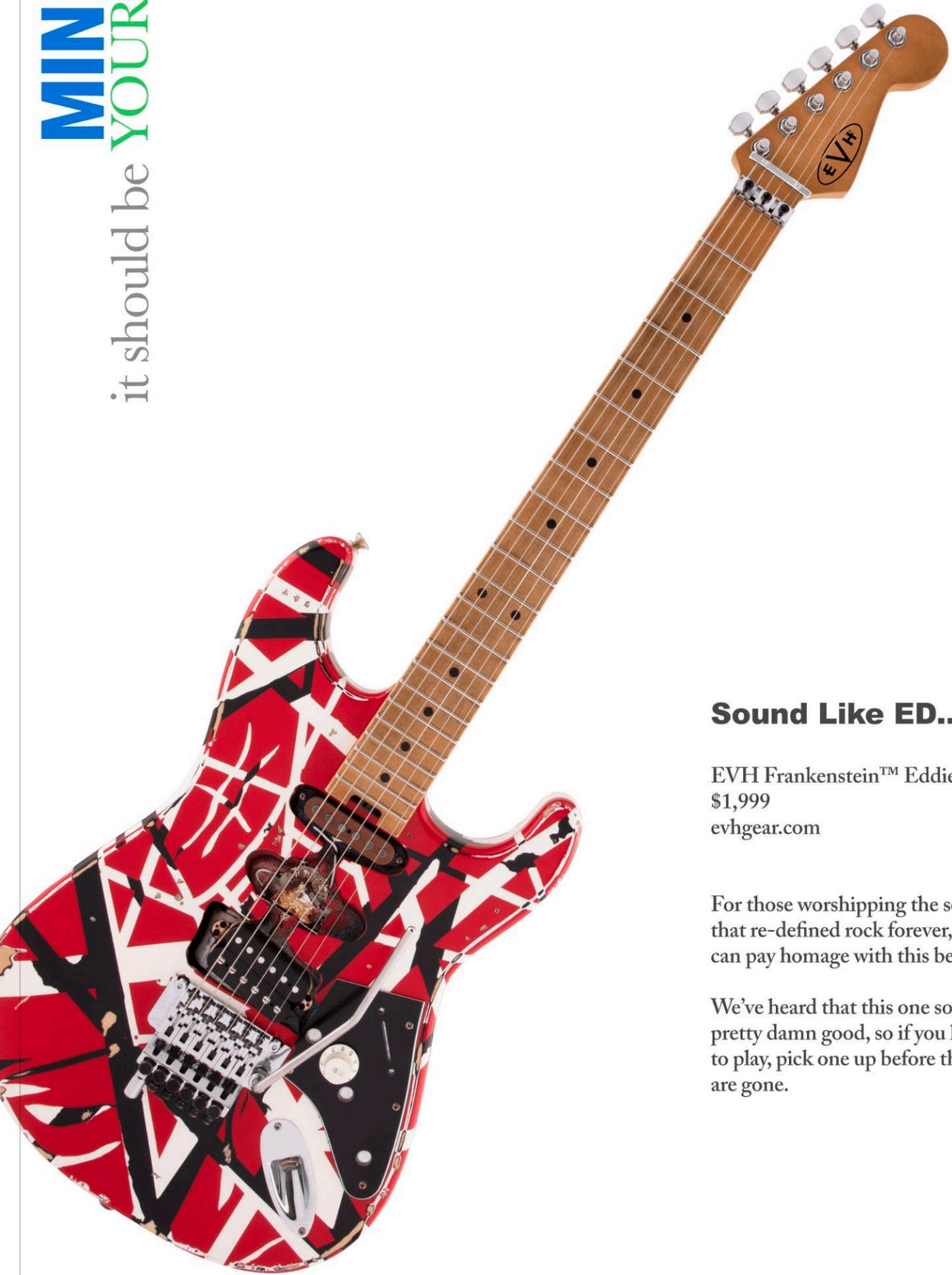
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[www.AUDIOCLASSICS.com](http://www.AUDIOCLASSICS.com)

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

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it should be **YOURS**



### Sound Like ED...

EVH Frankenstein™ Eddie  
\$1,999  
evhgear.com

For those worshipping the sound that re-defined rock forever, you can pay homage with this beauty.

We've heard that this one sounds pretty damn good, so if you love to play, pick one up before they are gone.

TONE110.086

Learn some cool sh\*t on our YouTube channel!



PRIMALUNA  
**NEW! EVO 400 Tube Preamp**  
RCA & Balanced In/Out  
\$4,499

53lbs of badass, dual-mono, tube-rectified bliss! Plus, transformer-coupled XLR. Look inside on our YouTube channel.



MUSICAL FIDELITY  
**MX-VYNL Our Favorite \$1000**  
Phonostage Is On Sale  
\$749 (regularly \$999)

The MX-VYNL is fully-balanced, adjustable on-the-fly, and sounds fantastic. Pair w/ Sbooster for reference-level performance!



VPI  
**Super Prime Scout w/ 10.5" JMW Arm & VTA On The Fly**  
\$2,899 (was \$58,997.32!)

Watch our video! Upscale Audio Exclusive with upgraded tonearm and base! Cartridge bundles. #1 VPI dealer worldwide!



PATHOS ACOUSTICS  
**Aurium Hybrid Headphone Amp**  
\$1,295

Class-A, zero feedback hybrid design using two 6922 on the front end. Hot-rod it with a Sbooster Power Supply!



NAIM  
**NAC 152 XS + NAP 155 XS Pre/Power Bundle**  
\$2,249 (was \$5990!)

62% off! We made your dream of owning Naim come true! Take a peek inside on our YouTube channel.



LUMIN  
**LUMIN Network Music Players aka Streaming DACs**  
\$2,300-\$13,990

Lumin's secret sauce yields incredible musicality from digital files, Tidal, Qobuz, and more. Call us and do digital right.



SBOOSTER  
**BOTW Power & Precision MKII Audiophile Power Supply**  
\$359-\$399

Vastly improve the sonic performance of any compatible device in your system. DAC, streamer, router, turntable, etc.



FELIKS AUDIO  
**Euforia Tube Headphone Amp**  
\$2,599

Learn why Focal uses Feliks headphone amps to demo Utopia at our YouTube channel. Amps starting at just \$679.

### KIRMUSS ULTRASONIC RECORD CLEANER

Restores THREE LPs  
and ONE 45  
Simultaneously



### Upscale Audio Edition

VINYL RESTORATION TAKES TIME

The Upscale Audio Edition processes 50% more LPs per session than the standard Kirmuss Record Cleaner.

Just \$1,335

LIMITED TIME OFFER

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**MINE**  
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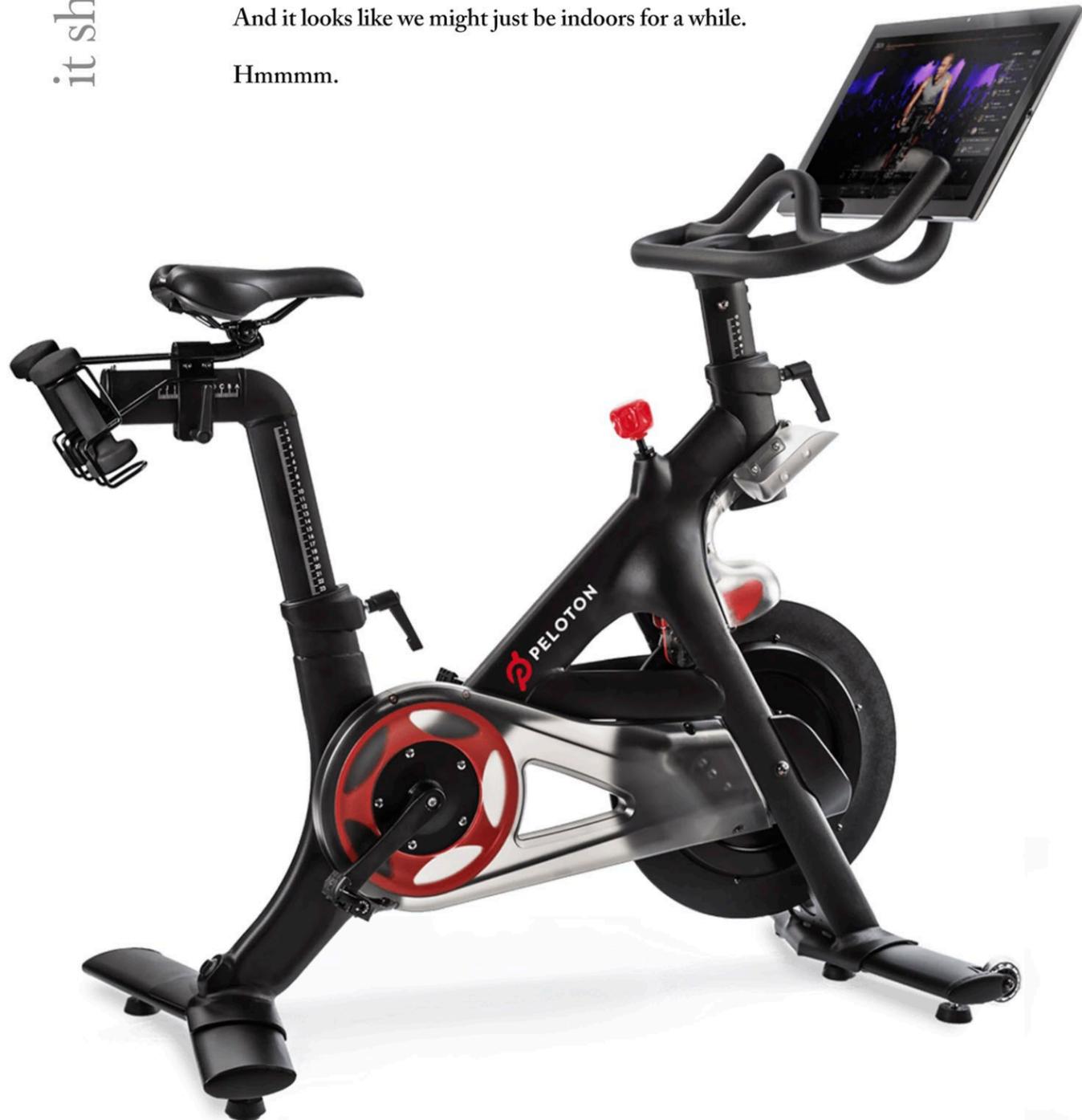
## Shape up for Audio Show Season...

\$1,499  
peloton.com

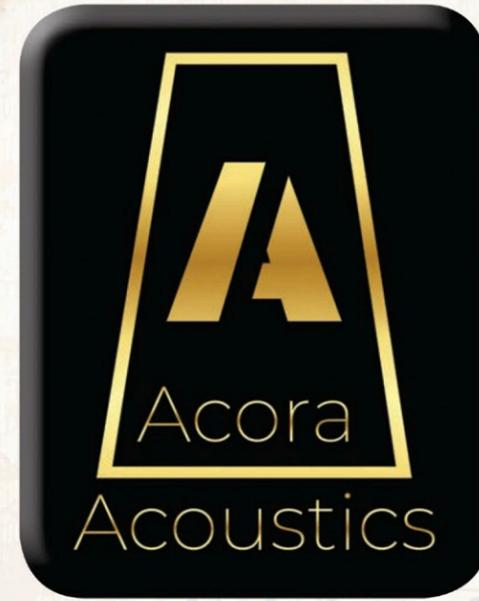
Now that the Peloton has been around for a while, if you can do without a few bells and whistles, the original bike is available at a pretty reasonable price.

And it looks like we might just be indoors for a while.

Hmmm.



TONE110.087



**-HEAR THE TRUTH-**

The speakers with the all granite enclosure.  
Visit an Acora Acoustics dealer soon  
to audition any of the Acora Acoustics  
loudspeakers and....

**-HEAR THE TRUTH-**



 Like us on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/acoraacoustics>

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

**MINE**  
**YOURS**

it should be

### Got Harbeths? Get These.

\$1550-\$1,850/pair  
fidelisdistribution.com

The TonTrager Reference stands are custom made for every Harbeth model to ensure the proper tweeter height. Their extended "TonBeds" provide maximum coupling with minimum surface area. Fantastic.

TONE 110.088

# TELL YOUR SACDs: THE WAIT IS OVER

The GeerFab Audio D.BOB unleashes DSD64 from SACDs and 24/192 PCM from Blu-ray Audio discs and outputs to an external DAC. Legally. For the first time ever.

Unlock the potential of your SACDs and let them shine with staggering clarity, dynamics and presence.



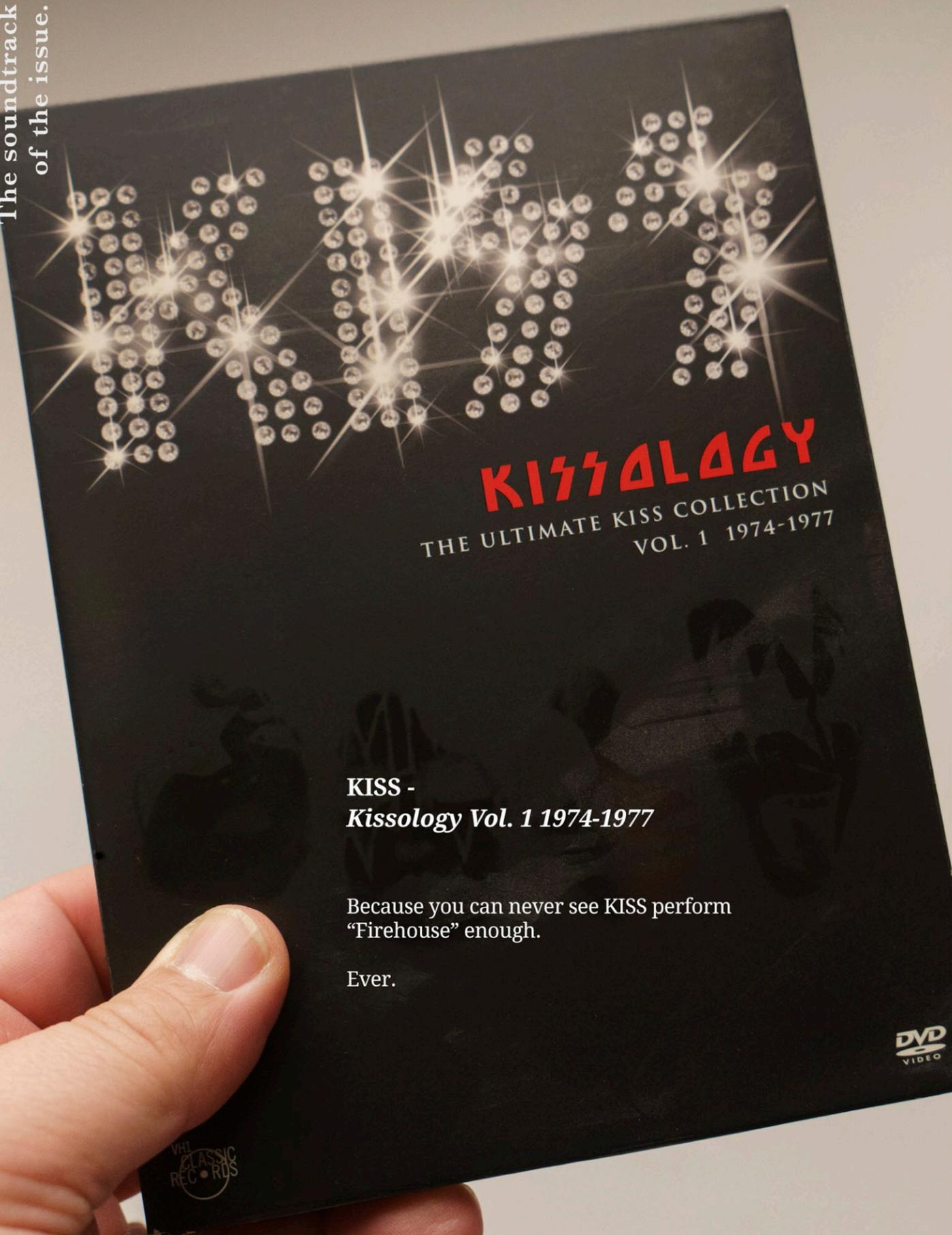
## D.BOB

DIGITAL BREAKOUT BOX



geerfabaudio.com

**INHouse**  
The soundtrack  
of the issue.



**KISS -**  
*Kissology Vol. 1 1974-1977*

Because you can never see KISS perform  
"Firehouse" enough.  
Ever.



**Underwood HiFi**  
VALUE INNOVATION IN HIGH END AUDIO



**NOW SHIPPING FROM STOCK**

**WARP 1 - 150 watts per channel @ 8 ohms - NextGen Class D**  
Custom Designed and Developed for LSA  
Class-Leading - TI Pure-Path(tm) Ultra-HD Amp Core  
Breathtaking Performance at a Real World Price

**Sale Price \$1199**

We will let others do the talking for us  
Class D like you've never heard before -  
Unparalleled Sound - Incredible Price



"Consider my attitude changed. The LSA Warp One is a great amp, period. Class D has matured, and very well I might add. For \$1,195, we're definitely awarding this baby an Exceptional Value Award. Job well done".

Jerold O'Brien - TONEAudio September 2021

"The Warp One is the best amp I've heard under \$2K dollars."

Greg Voth - Stereotimes September 2021



[underwoodhifi.com](http://underwoodhifi.com) | [underwoodwally@aol.com](mailto:underwoodwally@aol.com) | 770.667.5633

**CALL OR EMAIL  
TO ORDER**

# DTMB

## Dealers That Mean Business

**W**e've had this section at the back of TONE for some time now, and actually before we got hit with COVID, and it was easier to just pop in your favorite hifi store for a cursory visit, I was planning on an extended road trip to seek out great audio salons. I'm sorry to say that quest has been on hold for a while.

A few years later, times have changed, the landscape has changed somewhat, but the best dealers have adapted and are still thriving. Innovate or perish, as the saying goes. Most have gone to appointments only, which hasn't been all that much of a stretch, because many hifi shops had adopted this model, or at least a semi-appointment model before the current situation. Of course, stricter anti-cooties protocols have been engaged, and for the most part, customers have stayed in the game.

We've swapped a few people out here, but most of the dealers we were featuring are still doing well – we are truly glad for this. As it becomes easier and easier to travel again, I'll be back on the road seeking out more great dealers and attending events.

In the issues to come, we're also going to be featuring commentary from these dealers, telling their stories on how they've adjusted, and what, if anything they've learned and changed.

As we move into the year 2022 (which still feels weird saying) I still firmly believe the support from a great hifi dealer is essential to help you wade through the ever increasing complexity of audio, whether it be two channel, theater, or something in-between.

To recap what I've said here before: Nearly every audio system that has failed to achieve the greatness expected of it can be traced back to poor component choice and setup. I've heard a lot of systems all over the world, and it always falls back to these two factors.

The top retailers need our support now more than ever.



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www.suncoastaudio.com

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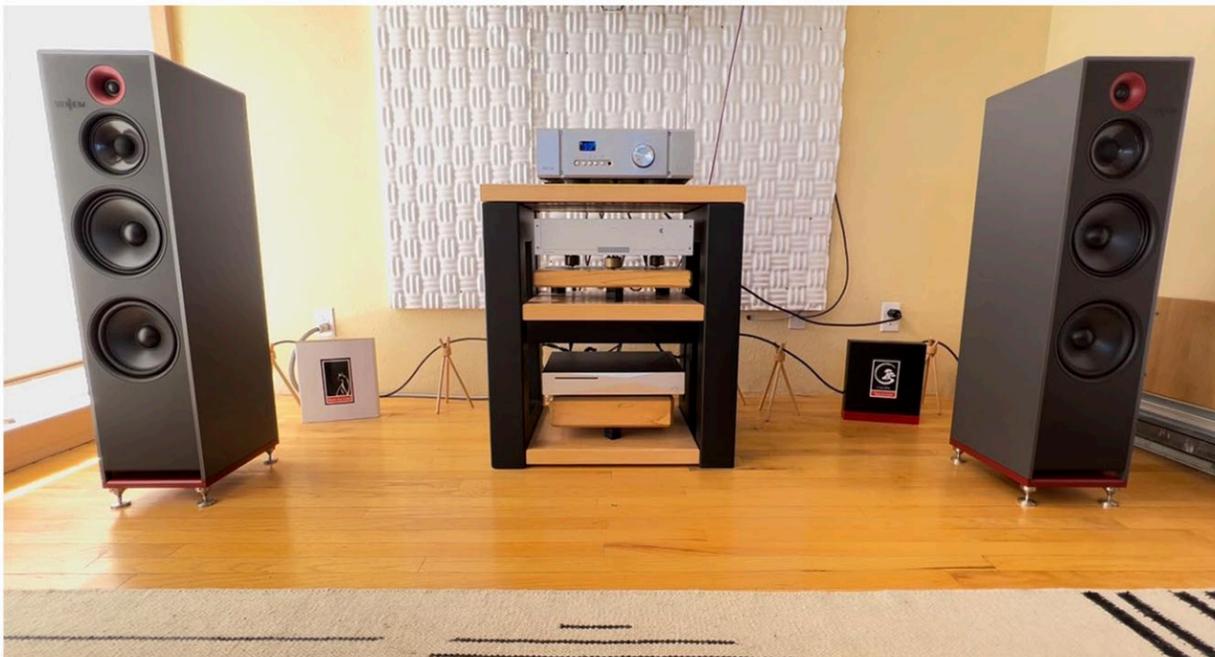


### Santa Fe, New Mexico - Gestalt Audio

www.gestalthifi.com

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San Francisco, California 94109

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### Austin, Texas - Whetstone Audio

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

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

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Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

414.221.0200



### Portland, Oregon - Echo Audio

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

5904 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy

Portland, Oregon 97221

888.248.3246



Club Mix compilation expert, Scott Tetzlaff's theme for this playlist is "Global Radio." Snippets from a lot of places.

This one's true to it's title. Not too much of any one thing, and eclectic without getting too far out there.

Enjoy!



Quantic, El Buho - Cumbia Sobre el Mar

Peter Power - Sun Sun Damba (original mix)

The Dynamics - Move on Up

Alisha Chinai, Vijay Benedict - Zindagi Meri Dance Dance

Nicola Cruz - Cumbia del Olvido

Shintaro Sakamoto - Like an Animal

Munk - Surf Smurf

William Onyeabor, Scientist - Body and Soul (Scientist remix)

Lord Echo, Mara TK - Just You Do

Mulatu Astatke - Tezeta

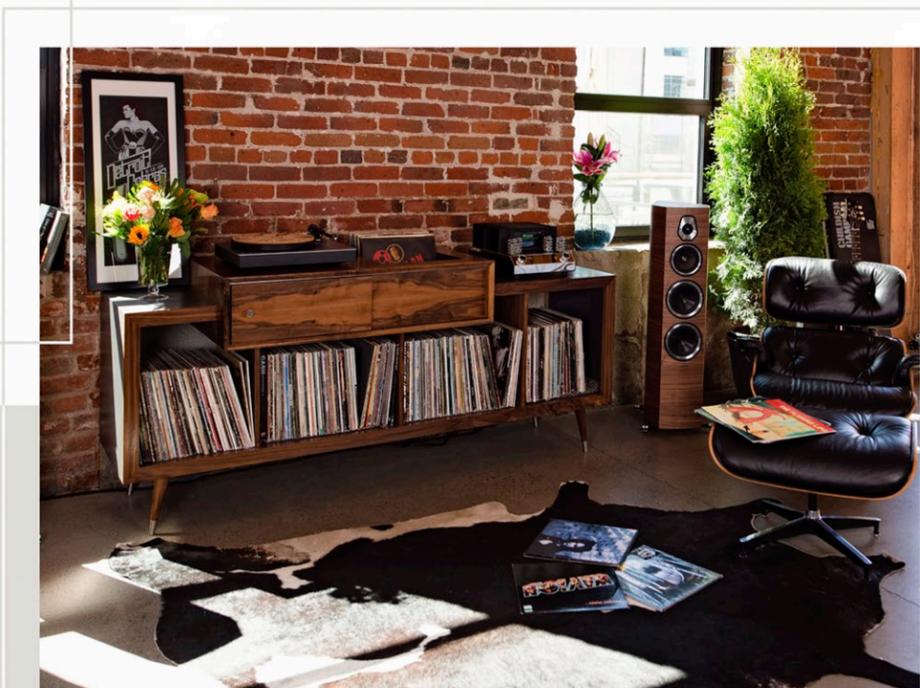
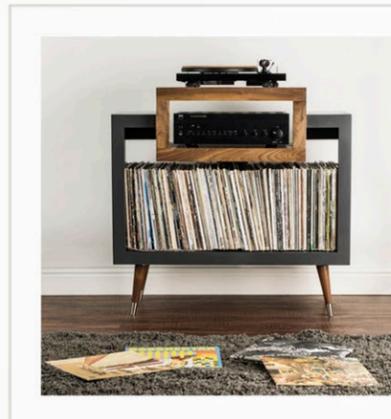
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**LAST**Word  
our parting thought...



**S**taying on the vintage tip, we managed to find a lovely pair of ESS AMT-1b's, from our friends at Fred's in Portland.

This is where my real audio journey began, with occasional contributor, Todd Sageser, who had four AMT-1 Towers in his parents living room. Cool.

It's always fun to revisit your past, and even better when it's a brighter memory when you remember.

What are your favorite audio memories?

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<b>Ana Mighty Sound</b>	<a href="http://anamightysound.com">anamightysound.com</a>	<b>Degritter</b>	<a href="http://degritter.com">degritter.com</a>
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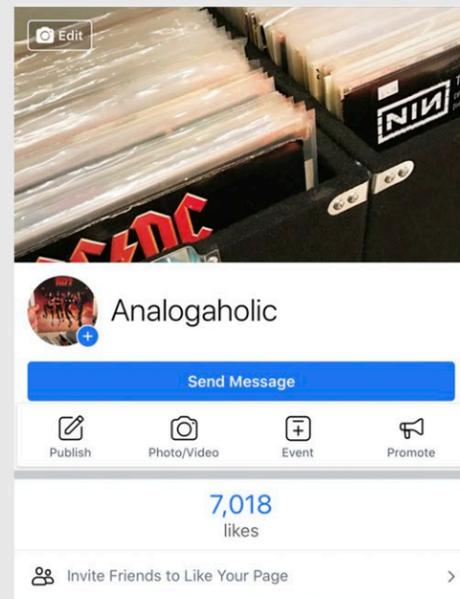
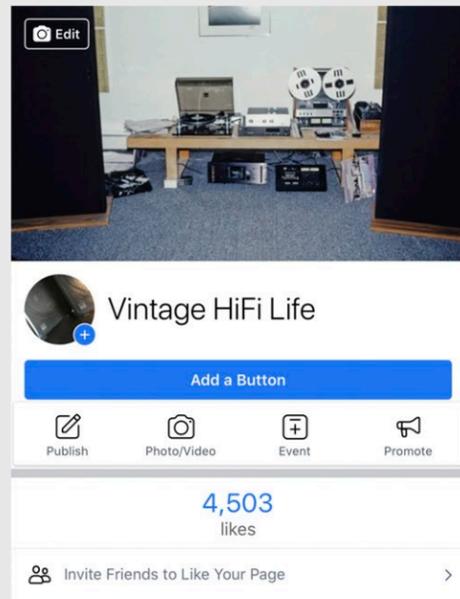
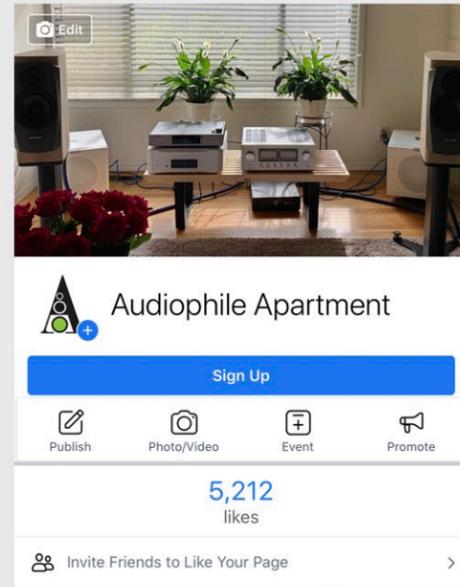
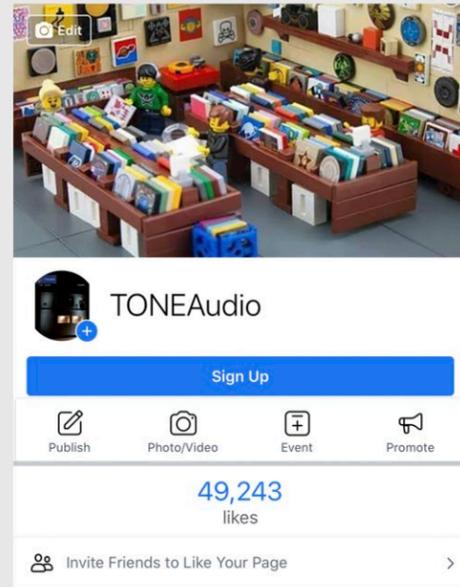
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Here they are with links. Just click on the page that interests you most. We look forward to hearing from you when you have a spare moment.

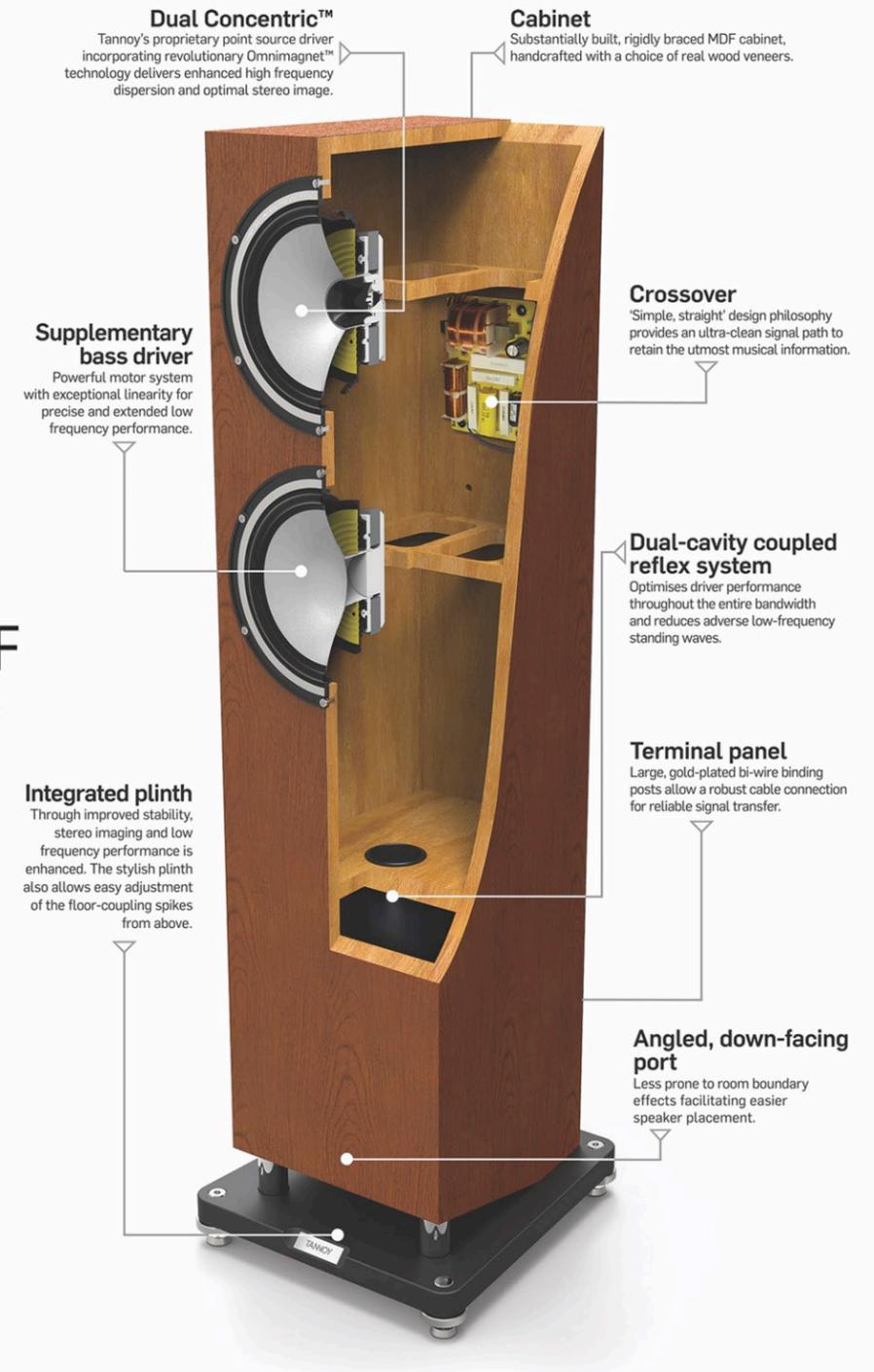


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"The Tannoy Revolution XT 8F was Robert Harley's top discovery at the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show. His first impression was as follows: 'After listening to it and looking at the real wood enclosure, I guessed the price at \$7000 to \$10,000. The 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



**INHOUSE**  
The soundtrack  
of the issue.

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Next issue, **111:**

Starting the new year off right, with some analog.

Mostly phonostages this time, big and small - affordable and expensive, with a few in the middle. An overview of this critical part of the analog chain.

If you're in the market to upgrade, here's a few things to put on your list.

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



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