



NO.115

Tone's Product of the Year-OVERALL:

The Luxman 507Z Integrated Amplifier

More Awards:
Exceptional Value
Products of the Year

Publisher's Choice
The Heritage Awards:
dCS Vivaldi ONE/Apex
REL No.31
Linn LP-12 Magik



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-Hi-Fi News (EISA Member)





What's not to like about Mahler conducted by Leonard Bernstein? On vinyl?

Till the postbot gets here, we're digging this on Qobuz in 24/96. Maybe by end of issue, there will be treasure on the doorstep.

TONE.115.003

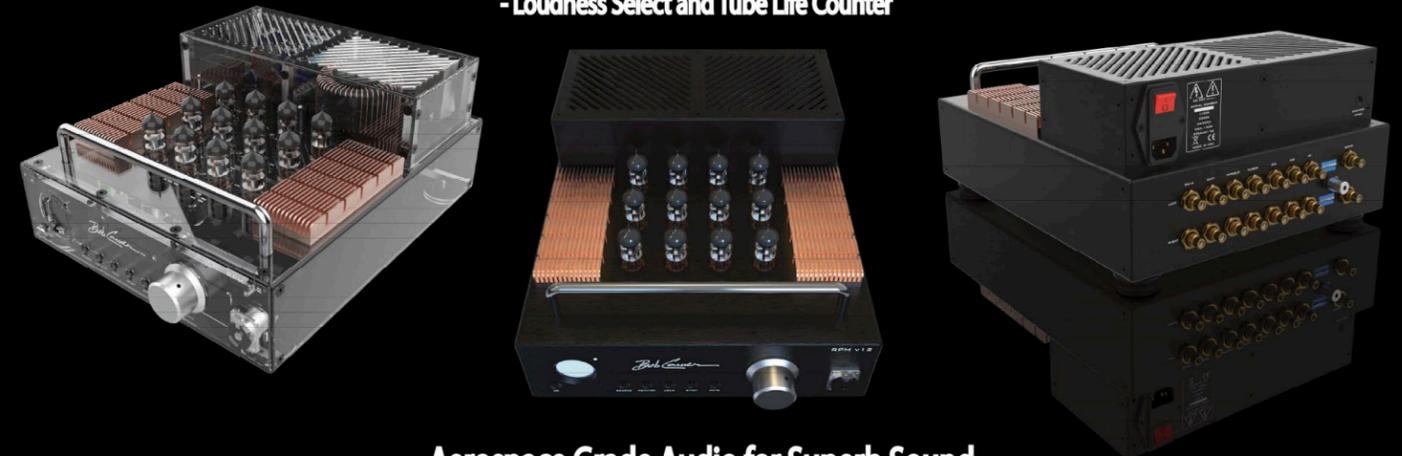
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When John Atkinson came to measure, I insisted he listen...
He let out an involuntary "Wow!" The presence of the images
and the absence of reproductive artifacts were remarkable.
It's what this hobby/pursuit is all about.

Michael Fremer, Stereophile, May 2020



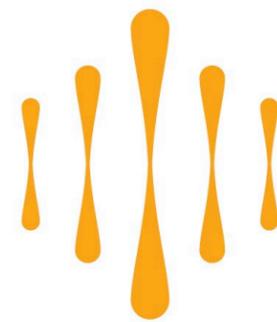
When Music Matters



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T O N E

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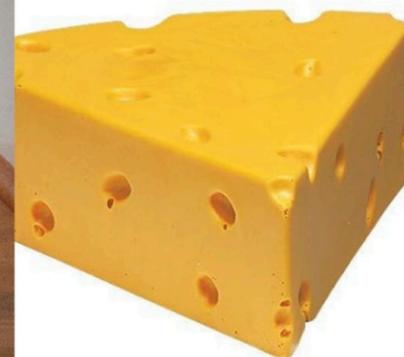
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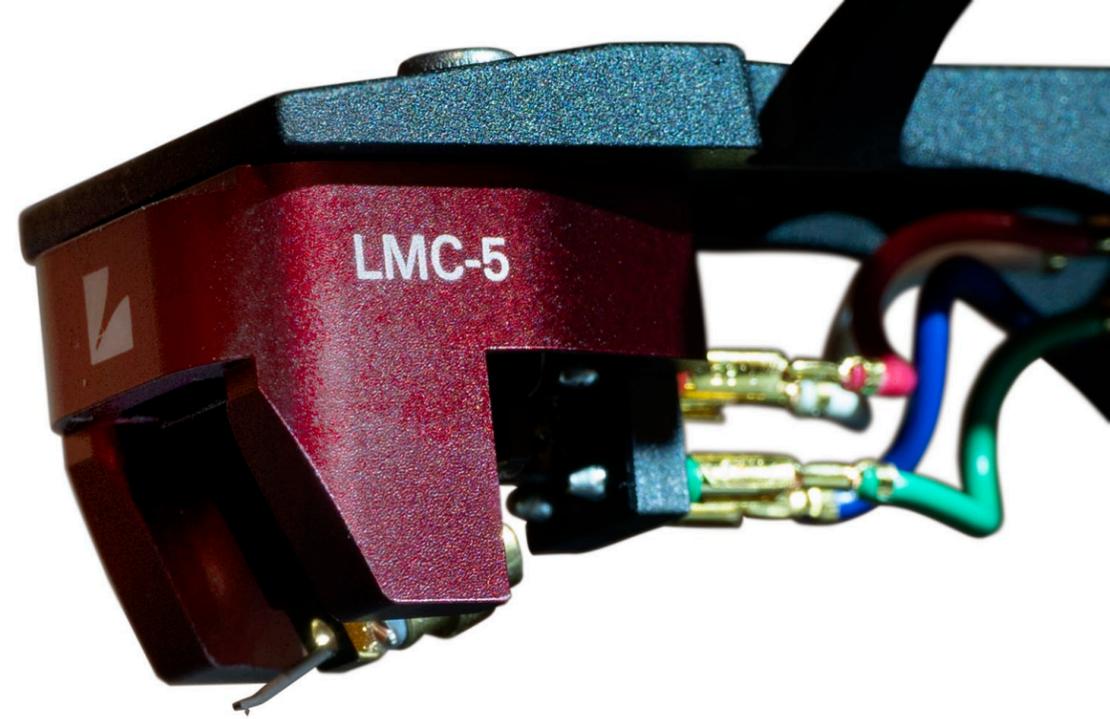
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Livin large with Luxman



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

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We're still deciding on a whisky choice. See you Feb. 1 (and probably with a hangover.)

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

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The Meany is gonna get you....



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#TONEAudio Approved

Adjectives are cheap. Here's the stuff we all wrote checks for.



65

Future Tense

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



TONE/TOC

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Headphone Arts

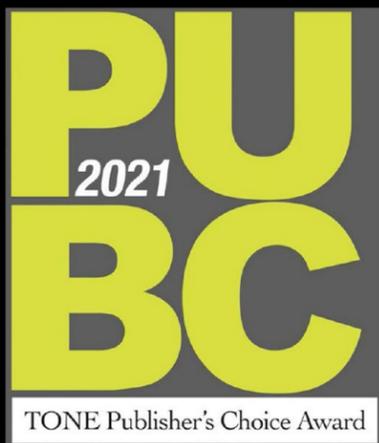
We've been so busy working on awards, that we've only had time to get the latest phones from Audeze out of the box! But they are very exciting. Watch your email box for mid Feb, when HA! gets it's own seperate magazine, and will be very mobile friendly!

visit our website: tonepublications.com cartridgedude.com helletoemag.com

Harbeth XD

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

Jeff Dorgay *Tone Audio* on the C7 XD



"...Alan Shaw's Masterpiece"

Tone Audio
on the 40.3 XD



Audiophilia
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

WINNER | 2021
Harbeth M30.2 XD



C7ES-3 XD



fidelisdistribution.com



what's inside:



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22

The year's best box sets

Contributor Bob Gendron has been working on this one all year, and his picks are solid.

Read his take on what's what.

TELL YOUR SACDS: THE WAIT IS OVER

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15

Old School...

Our publisher finds another great blast from his and occasional contributor Todd Sagester's past, with this mint Levinson pre.

And a big round of applause from our pal Kurt Doslu at Echo Audio for finding this one!



TONE115.009

TOTEM 
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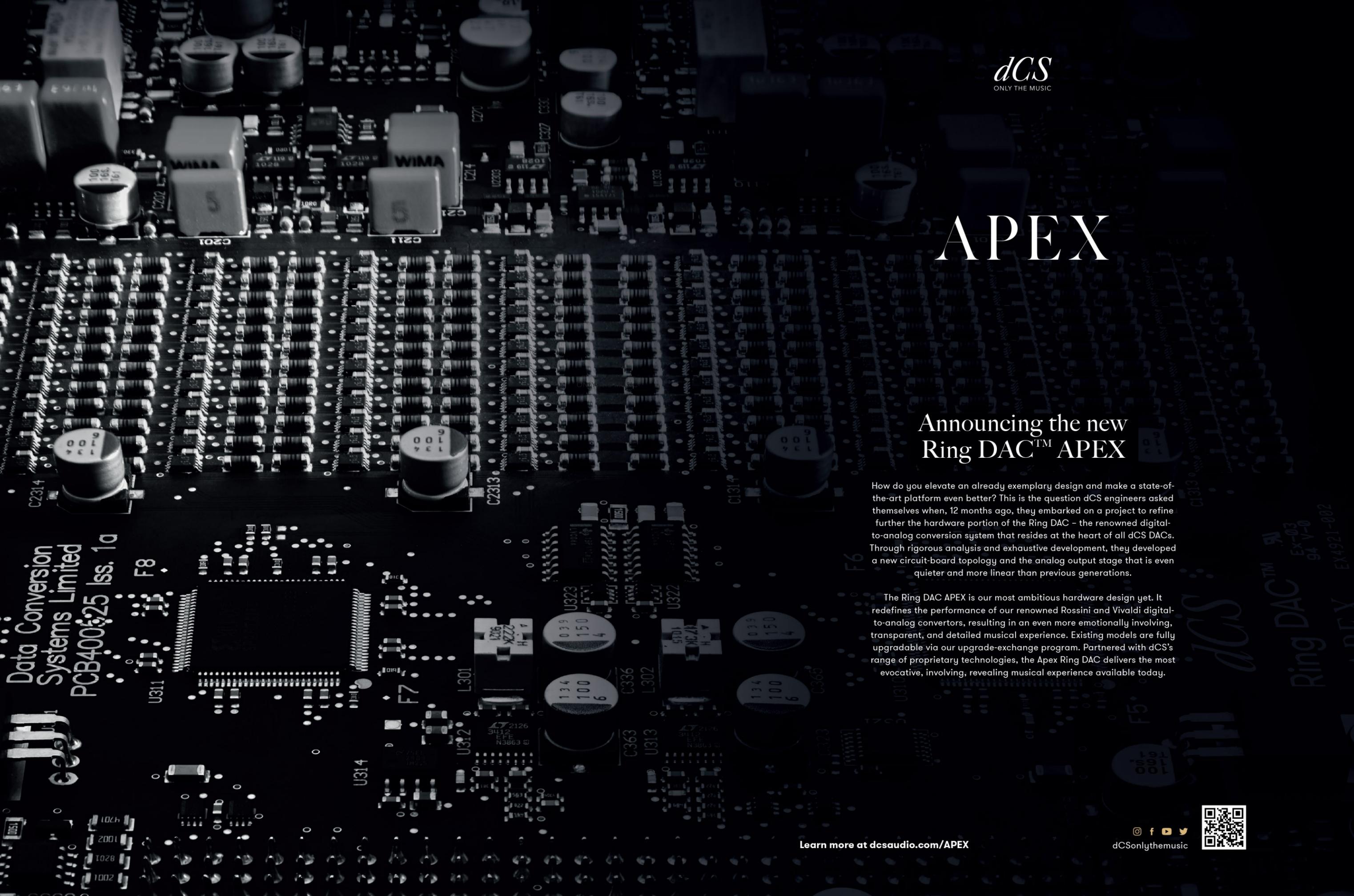
The Ring DAC APEX is our most ambitious hardware design yet. It redefines the performance of our renowned Rossini and Vivaldi digital-to-analog converters, resulting in an even more emotionally involving, transparent, and detailed musical experience. Existing models are fully upgradable via our upgrade-exchange program. Partnered with dCS's range of proprietary technologies, the Apex Ring DAC delivers the most evocative, involving, revealing musical experience available today.

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Crazy as the world is right now, Moscow has still found a way to putting
their hifi show on. I think if we can still get together and listen to some
music, there's still hope.

Good friend Misha Kucherenko, headphone builder at Stereo Pravda, audio
enthusiast and cigar aficionado was there, participating. He was kind enough
to take the time to give us a bit of a show report and supply a few pictures.

I look forward to seeing him again, sooner than later.





Cover Shot:

Something about that shallow depth of field.

Image captured with Sony CX600, and 7 Artisans 50mm f.095 lens @f2.8 ISO 3200.



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no.115

Publisher's Letter

H

ere we are with awards again. Where did 2022 go?

I don't know about you, but this year has been a fairly dense dustball of activity all year long. Those of you that are F1 fans, it's been a lot like Bottas' stop in the 2021 Monaco GP where the wheel nut just wouldn't come off. Yikes. However, many of us have been up against the same logistical bottlenecks, so we're all at a little slower pace.

But we're all still in the race, and that's good. This issue is mostly about our awards with a little bit of show coverage, a fantastic article from Bob Gendron about his favorite box sets this year, and an article from our friend Karl Ueberacker, talking you through the Discogs process. All of our regular scheduled programming will continue in January with issue 116.

Of course it's been holiday season all around the world, and regardless of where you live and what holidays you celebrate, I hope you made it through with a minimal amount of drama. Well intentioned as it all starts, somehow this time of year seems to bring stress to a heavy boil.

We've got a number of new things on the horizon for 2023, but we'll discuss them as they are implemented, rather than us missing the mark and giving everyone that socks instead of toys on Christmas Day feeling. I hate that, and I'm even somewhat of a Grinch.

As always, we know the award thing is tenuous and everyone would always pick different things, but I have to say we had an incredibly great crop of gear in for review this year. A big thank you to everyone that sent their products our way.

We'll see you soon in 2023. Take good care, and thank you all for reading.



Being that Cardas Audio's Josh Meredith and I share a similar love for VanHalen, I asked him to open the issue with his 12 fave VH tracks... "In no particular order"



- Eruption
- Ice Cream Man
- Beautiful Girls
- Everybody Wants Some
- Unchained
- The Full Bug
- Panama
- Hot For Teacher
- Summer Nights
- Best of Both Worlds
- 5150
- 316

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Mark Levinson No. 26

An early object of desire.

\$1,500 - \$4,000 (depending on version)

Just as my system started to get pretty good, my bud Todd raised the bar and got one of these. Oh man. Back in the late 70s and early 80s, before Lexus wasn't even on the drawing boards, and Kim Catrall was my age, Mark Levinson was the shit.

This was the kind of stuff that the big stereo mags went crazy over and was considered major high end.





Enjoy the Experience



Mark Levinson gear was the stuff dreams were made of. So, to one up my audiophile buddies, I took all my student loan money for the year and bought a pair of ML-2, class A monoblocks. I'm past the statute of limitations, and I did pay every penny of my student loans back. But I didn't have enough extra dough to get a No. 26.

By the time Todd sold his, I had moved on to tubes. I was a snotty audiophile now. Electrostatic speakers and vacuum tubes bubba. But tubes were cheap then. You could call conrad-johnson and get a replacement set of tubes for your power amp for about \$70. And we walked forever in the snow. But seriously. The No. 26 was as good as solid-state preamplifiers got, until of course, they came out with the No. 26S.

PASS

Pass Laboratories
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(530) 878-5350 - www.passlabs.com

The No.26S had some circuit updates, but featured a Teflon circuit board, which ML claimed was a game changer. Of course most of the mags insisted that the original was no longer up to snuff. Those with boots on the ground shook their heads.

The real key was to setting the internal DIP switches for the "right" amount of gain, so that in your system the volume control was always in the sweet spot.

No other than the late Dave Wilson of Wilson Audio spread the gospel for this. And it worked. Out of its optimal range the No.26 either sounded flat and lifeless, or somewhat compressed. But when you had things adjusted just right... The heavens did part.

As you can see from the rear panel there are some variations on the theme. While your standard No. 26 did not have a phono board, this was a modest update to order. If you had your own phono preamplifier, you could have that bonus input configured for balanced XLR connectors, however, another board was required.

The one you see here has neither. The jacks are installed but no balanced input. Should you be purchasing one of these, be sure to get the one you want - spares are impossible to find. Also notice that the No. 26 uses proprietary Camac jacks, so you will need adapters or your cables re-terminated.



TONE115.017

Overall, this top line preamp from the past still stands up today. Very neutral in overall presentation, the No.26 (and this is not an S...) this preamplifier has a lot of LF drive, a smooth upper register, and it constructs a huge sound-field in all three dimensions.

Considering that you can find one of these in decent shape for about \$2,000 (more for S, more for all original box and packaging) there's nothing on today's shelves that comes near the performance the No. 26 achieves.

We've been listening to this one a lot and it's a keeper.

And we're still on the lookout for that phono board. If memory serves me correctly, it was very good.

The Mark Levinson No. 26 is a great example of reality being as good as, or better than the memory.



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Luxman LMC-5 MC Cartridge

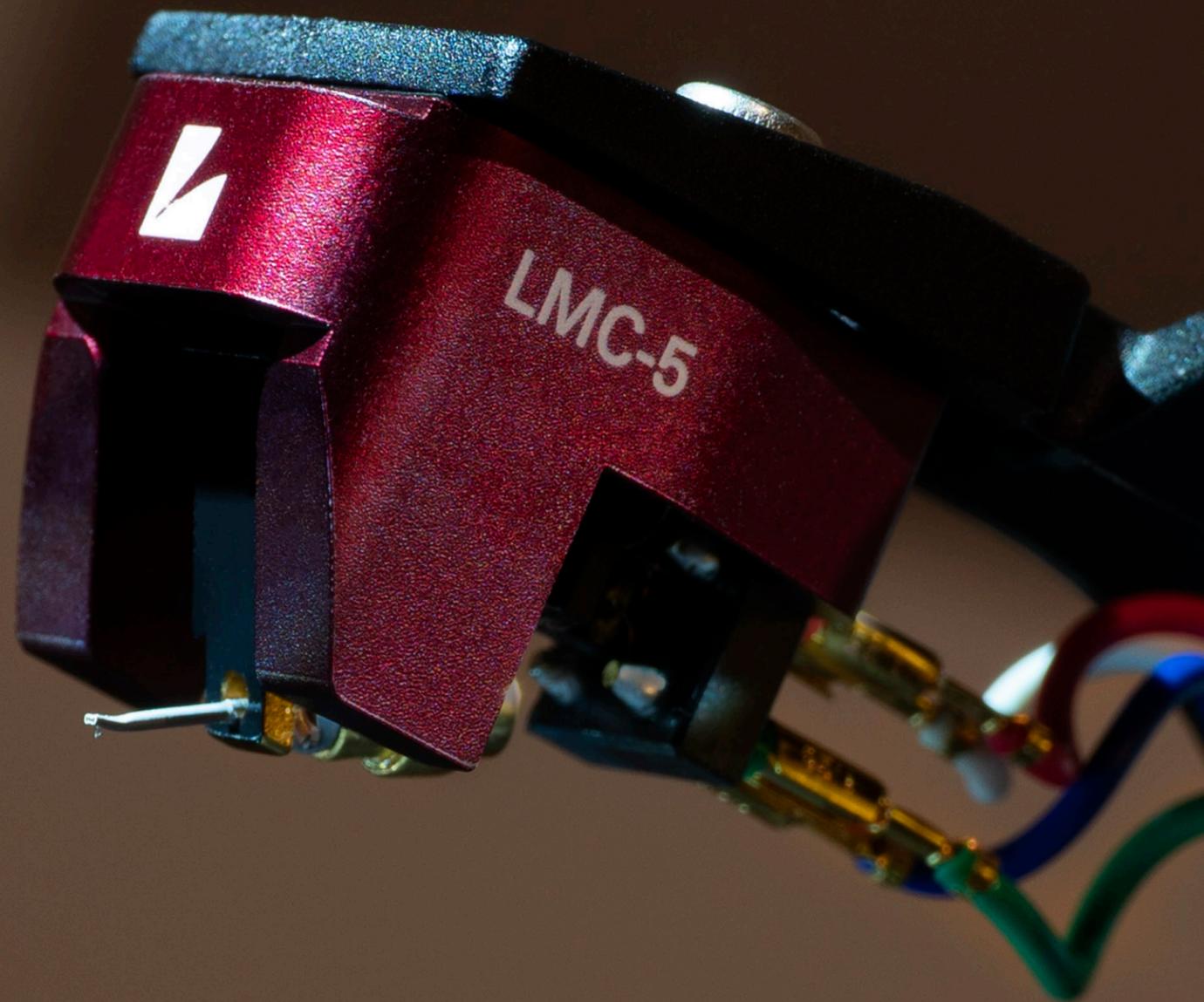
They shouldn't have waited so long!

\$2,695
luxmanamerica.com

Luxman's LMC-5 cartridge is their first MC cartridge in 40 years, according to their website. If you know Luxman, you know this prestigious Japanese company leaves nothing to chance. Like their amplifiers and source components we are very fond of, the LMC-5 is perfectly executed, offering top of class performance. Even as the fine-tuning process began, putting the Shibata stylus down onto CCRs Bayou Country is a fantastic experience. This record is pure analog, and full of space and reverb. The LMC-5 renders this pressing in a big, bold, immersive way. The stereo image is wide and deep, with lead singer John Fogerty planted firmly in the stereo image, yet solidly in front of the rest of the band. The sense of musical pace draws you further and further in.

There was a time that nearly three thousand dollars was crazy money for a phono cartridge, but as 2022 comes to a close, spending five-figures on said transducer no longer even gets a raised eyebrow out of seasoned (and well-funded) analog cognoscenti. Your favorite \$15k cartridge will probably resolve a bit more fine detail than the \$2,695 Luxman, but you better have the system and the record collection to allow it to shine.

Having spent more than my fair share of time with the top Koetsus, the Atlas, and the Goldfinger, I love the cohesive presentation that the Luxman delivers. Pressing after pressing, the LMC-5s rendition of every kind of music shows an overall balance of parameters that very few cartridges, at any price, deliver. If you've listened to a wide range of cartridges, you know some excel at detail retrieval, others deliver an enormous stereo image, and still others tend to favor a certain part of the musical spectrum.



The LMC-5 does it all

This cartridge handles every task with ease, and all parameters are served up in equally high measure – nothing is sacrificed for anything else. Again, this is all very Luxman – never shouting attention to itself. That said, this cartridge is not polite and forgiving, nor does it feel dynamically slow or clouded. However, it does deliver a bit mellower tonal fingerprint with vacuum tubes than solid-state (this is a small diff) but plan your setup accordingly.

Tracking through difficult passages from a few fairly compressed Todd Rundgren albums is a breeze, as is the last track on the first side of Joni Mitchell's *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. "Jericho" is always problematic. I'm sure you have your favorite tracking torture tests. Don't be afraid to go there with the LMC-5.



Setup, fine tuning, and tech

The LMC-5 is not a finicky cartridge to set up. Thanks to its semi open body, you'll have no trouble accurately setting overhang and the rest of the cartridge parameters. Listening began with the Technics SL-1200G turntable, so initial setup with the supplied plastic alignment gauge proved acceptable. Better results were delivered with about 30 minutes' worth of fine-tuning with the Analog Majik software suite and the Acoustical Systems Smart Tractor, to their UNI-DEN alignment spec. Of course, your favorite HiFi guru might tell you that another alignment is the truth, but we prefer UNI-DEN here. Regardless of what you choose, this is a cartridge that will benefit from careful setup, but won't torture you on your way to alignment perfection.

Luxman claims a 2.1 to 2.3 gram VTF, and the tiniest bit of pressure over 2.2 grams makes for the best overall balance. You might think that a tenth of a gram is nothing, but considering the tiny profile of the stylus tip – in this case a stylus tip bonded to an aluminum cantilever, even a tenth of a gram can make a huge difference. Luxman states the stylus profile to be 7 x 40 microns with a 46.7 square micron contact area. That's only about .00028 inches wide. By comparison a human hair is about 70 microns wide.

The tiny coils are symmetrically wound from 4 Nines copper with a Samarium-Cobalt magnet structure. Luxman claims the small field area of their magnetic structure reduces noise. While we don't measure cartridges, other than to set up, the LMC-5 is extremely quiet. When using the Pass XP-27 solid state phono stage, background noise is non-existent, even on records with solitary acoustic instruments, where our tube phono stages revealed a tiny bit of their own noise. This is one of the parameters that you usually have to spend five figures to achieve.



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Tracking at just over two grams probably makes the pressure per inch on the stylus walls somewhere between 300 and 400 psi. Crazy. Not to mention a perfectly set up cartridge means less record wear!

The .4mV output makes the LMC-5 an easy match for nearly any phono stage with an MC input. The cartridge has an internal impedance of 4.7 ohms, and Luxman recommends loading at 40 ohms or more. Considering every Luxman integrated amplifier we've tested has fixed MC loading at 100 ohms, this seemed the perfect place to start with our reference Backert Labs Rhumba Phono. It turned out to be a home run here, as with the Nagra Classic Phono and the VAC Renaissance Phono too.

A long audition

Somehow, the summer and fall months got away from me in the midst of this review. After using the LMC-5 with five different turntable/toner combinations, and an equal number of great phono stages, the urge to stay up to listen to more records has never gone away.

The more records played, the more respect I have for Mr. Nagatsuma's creation. In the press info from Luxman, it mentions that one of the design goals was to reproduce the scale, dynamics, and harmonic overtones of a grand piano. Tracking through a fair amount of classical music, and some Keith Jarrett favorites confirms they have achieved these goals and more.

There's a Nakatsuka's "just right" aspect of sound reproduction that few components manage to master. Some sound too "HiFi," with an un-natural amount of resolution that grates on you after a short time. Others sacrifice resolution, with a soft, rolled off sound, that while friendly, does not allow full engagement either. Both extremes have you unconsciously looking at your phone sooner rather than later.

Great as the LMC-5's midrange is, the way this cartridge handles the top and bottom end of the musical spectrum is beyond reproach. The top end is highly refined, with a smooth yet extended feel, and this cartridge's ability to generate serious low-end energy is fantastic. Whether listening to acoustic bass, electric bass, or synthesizers, the attack is fast without being overdamped and full of texture as well. The low-end power and resolution make this a great cartridge for electronic music too.

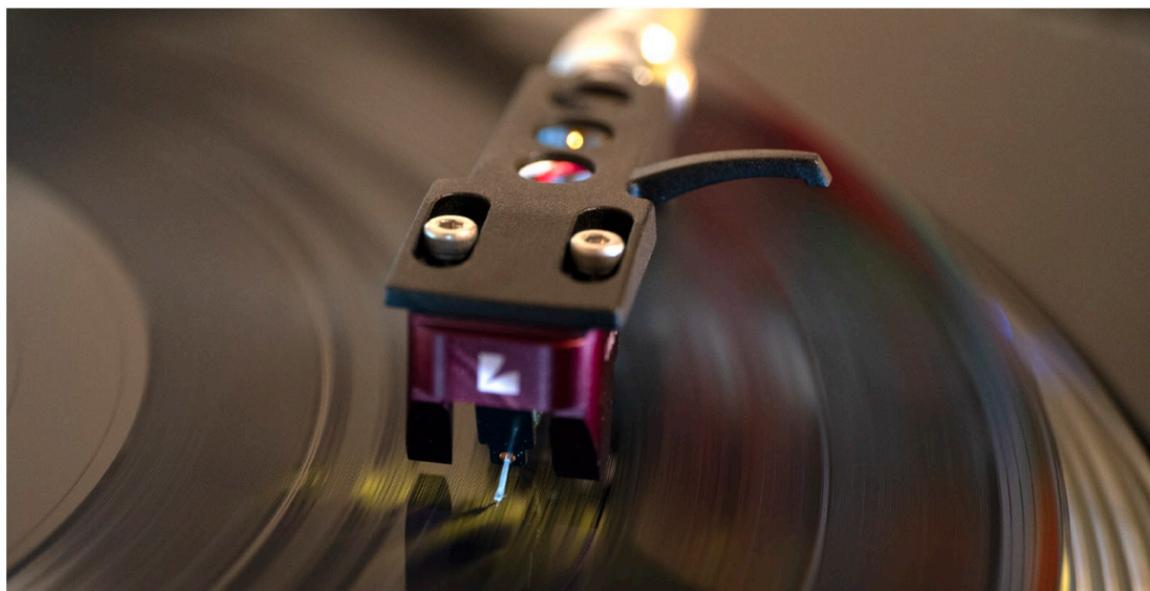
The dynamic ability of the LMC-5 allows you to enjoy your favorite rock records, yet the fine tonal shadings the LMC-5 can resolve, does vocal and acoustic music equal justice. While no one has come up with a measurement for tonality, this cartridge is always exceptional. An additional part of the LMC-5's "just rightness" includes keeps the feeling of the music played the correct size. Nothing feels overblown. I always fall back to the original Crosby, Stills, and Nash record, as well as some early Joni Mitchell, and even Neil Young. But again, you have your favorites, and when you mount an LMC-5 to your table, these will most likely be some early go to tracks. Notice the interplay of harmonies, and how your favorite vocalist sounds with minimal accompaniment. This is analog magic, to be sure.

Rather than go on about the minutiae of this track and that track, subtlety and nuance is what separates the top performing products from the rest of the herd. Fortunately, with the Luxman LMC-5, you don't have to spend ten or twenty thousand dollars to get it. Cartridges are one of the toughest things to suggest because they are so much like speakers. In a sense they all have their own voice, their own personality, and unlike speakers, you usually can't take one home to demo. So, I hope I've done a good enough job describing this one.

Seriously, the biggest problem I had with the LMC-5 was which award to give it. It ends up being the #TONEAudio Approved award, which means I bought it. I think this is the highest compliment I can give Mr. Nagatsuma and his team for their excellent work.

Peripherals

- Preamplifier** Pass XS Pre
- Phono Stage** Pass XP-27, VAC Renaissance, Nagra Classic, Manley Chinook SEII
- Turntables** Technics SL-1200G, Rega P10, AVID Volvere SP w/SME 309
- Power Amplifiers** Pass XA200.8 monoblocks, PrimaLuna EVO400 Monoblocks
- Speakers** Sonus Faber Stradiveris w/six Pack of REL No. 25 subwoofers
- Cable** Cardas Clear



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Make Room on Your Shelf:

2022's BEST Rock Box Sets.

Nothing makes a statement like a box set. Almost four decades after Bob Dylan's *Biograph* and Bruce Springsteen's *Live 1975-1985* helped make them a staple – and about two decades removed from an era in which labels flooded shelves with subpar sets that showed little concern for overall integrity – they remain the ultimate testament to an artist, movement, and/or album's ongoing significance.

Notably, the nosedive of CDs and resurgence of vinyl forced the industry to pay more attention to quality. Listeners who can otherwise hear the content on streaming services or who already own previously released material demand more. As well they should. Archival packages that now regularly retail for upwards of \$150 should be definitive in multiple senses.

Though uninspired offerings still proliferate, the best box sets of 2022 function as bellwethers of curation, context, storytelling, and insight. Doing right by the artist and consumer, they demand close attention; invite repeat listening sessions; trigger curiosity; overflow with revelatory content; and provide the scope afforded by a journal article or concise, well-researched book. These six sets (plus five honorable mentions) are not only worth your money; they are worth your time.

Here's why.



The Beatles. *Revolver: Special Edition*.
Capitol.

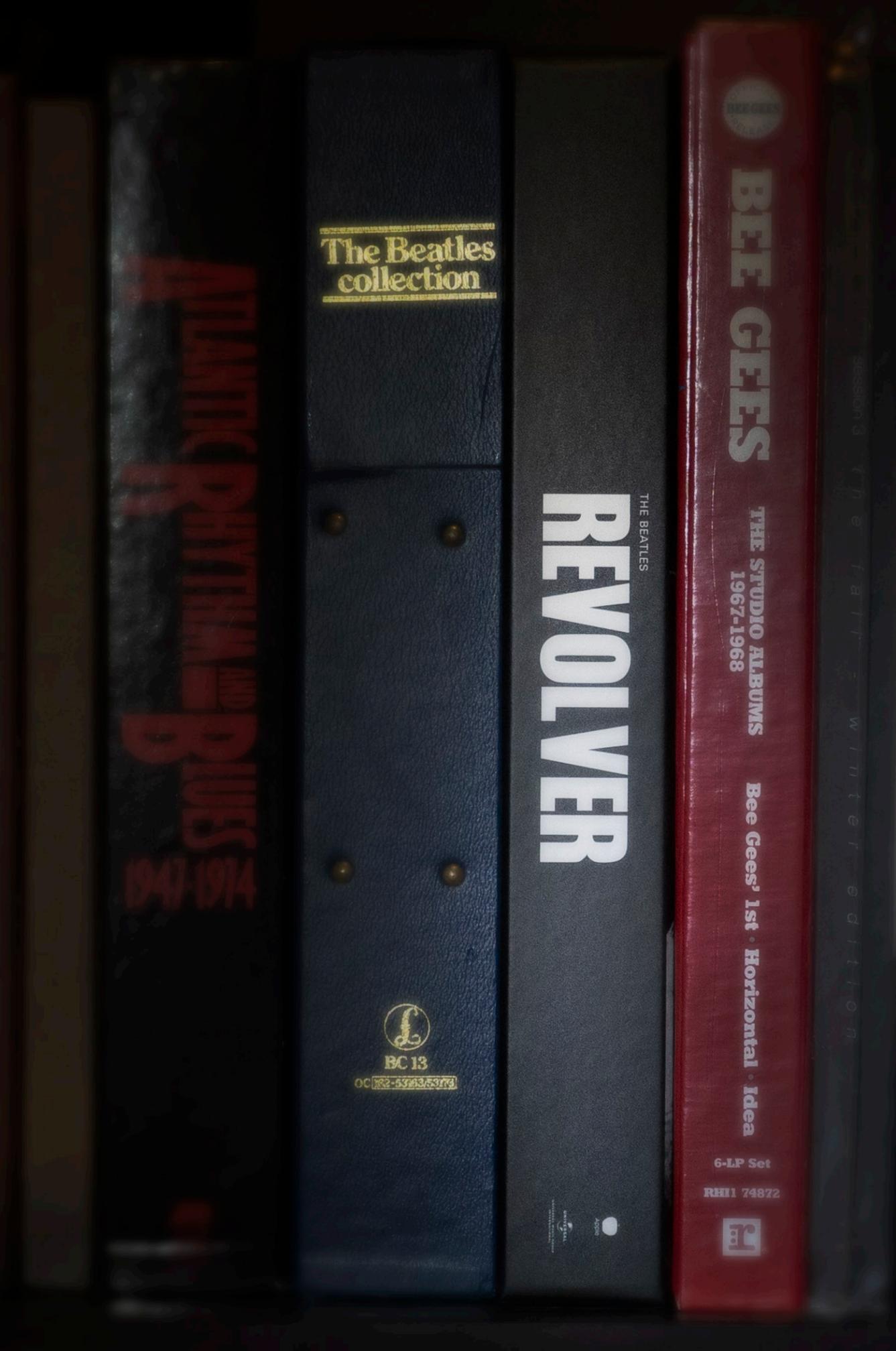
180g 4LP + 7" box set. (Also available as a 5CD box set.)

The fourth in a series of reissues that dive deep into Beatles studio albums surpasses even the fantastic treatments afforded *Abbey Road* and *The Beatles*. Not only does this illuminating exploration help make the case for why *Revolver* runs circles around the overpraised *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, it shows and tells in clear, exacting detail why the 1966 record forever changed studio recording – and what would be possible with pop and rock music going forward. Wisely, the set includes the mono and stereo versions of the album as well as the single, “Paperback Writer”/“Rain,” encouraging listeners to hear the differences between the mixes and debate to their hearts’ content.

Some fanatics will also doubtlessly analyze passages and compare notes as they contrast Giles Martin and Sam Okell’s new mixes to the originals. But one of the charms of this box is that such detective work has already been done by the experts. In addition to the spree of black-and-white photographs and handwritten lyrics, a 100-page hardbound book contains a section devoted to exhaustive track-by-track notes and information. The words act as an experienced tour guide to the album and the 31 previously unreleased session takes and home demos, signposts to the routes the Beatles and George Martin would eventually follow.

Hardcore Beatlemaniacs may clamor for additional rarities but more would be overkill. The cherry-picked selections here serve end-game purposes without taxing anyone’s patience or becoming repetitive. They also affirm the admirable level of curation invested in this package.

That thoughtfulness extends to the essays on *Revolver*, not the least of which is an appreciation penned by Questlove. The Roots drummer admits he initially steered clear of the band due to the presence on LPs of what he perceived as a dated Capitol Records logo. He eventually came around to the Beatles by way of other artists’ samples and covers of Fab Four songs. Though that reasoning might seem like heresy to devotees, his perspectives and reasoning prove invaluable in an age in which the Beatles have now been inactive for more than 50 years – and off the stage for nearly 60. Questlove’s path is likely similar to how many will discover *Revolver* in the years ahead and, like him, become hooked on every element on a record that still sounds like a distant future. Crowned with superb sonics that underscore the arrangement-shaping presence of Paul McCartney’s bass and Ringo Starr’s drumming, this reissue makes that prospect all the more exciting.



Blondie. *Against the Odds: 1974-1982: Super Deluxe Edition.*
 Capitol/Numero Group.
 10LP + 10" +7" box set.

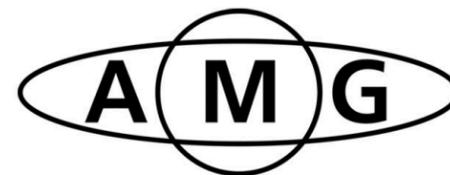
As attention-getting statements go, *Against the Odds: 1974-1982: Super Deluxe Edition* is the equivalent of a shaky hand that reaches down for the tonearm while an LP is still spinning, drags it across the record's grooves, and creates a halting sound that prompts everyone to look up and stop what they're doing. Though Rock & Roll Hall of Fame artists that sold millions of records (and which emerged after the 1950s) are seldom undervalued, this footlocker of a box set forces the reevaluation of a band that – despite the accolades and hits – never received the respect it deserves, at least in the 21st century.

That *Against the Odds: 1974-1982* weighs a core-engaging 17 pounds reinforces the obsessive work and research of producer Ken Shipley. After uncovering the group's archives underneath a dust- and poop-covered blanket in an upstate New York barn, he spent six years overseeing everything worth including in a blowout package that goes far beyond presenting the first six Blondie albums remastered by Michael Graves from the original analog tapes and cut at Abbey Road Studios. Enhanced by dozens of alternate versions, outtakes, and demos that collectively form a panoramic shot of the original lineup's studio sessions, this anthology magnifies the scope of Blondie's artful dance with disco and pop, garage rock and punk, commercialism and independence.

Given the magnitude of ideas Blondie developed and executed in the span of approximately seven years, it's no wonder the group's energy and inspiration dimmed in the early '80s – and no, not even this foil-wrapped trunk rescues *The Hunter* from cut-out status. Nor does it try. True to its title, *Against the Odds: 1974-1982* (also available as more streamlined 4LP, 8CD, and 3CD versions) tells the story straight, and with authority. And what a tale: Fronted by a former Playboy Bunny and her romantic partner/guitarist, Blondie ascends from New York's underground and climbs to the top of the charts time and again without ever really retracing the same steps.



Two hefty books crammed with essays, track commentaries, an illustrated discography, and hundreds of photos elevates *Against the Odds: 1974-1982* to an academic level – and invites you to keep attending class.



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Bound for Hell: On the Sunset Strip Numero Group.

2LP box set. (Also available as a 2 CD box set)

The narrative concerning Los Angeles' Sunset Strip in the 1980s now seems as familiar as the layer of grease that pools on pizza from national chains: It was Ground Zero for musically challenged bands that adhered to a style now commonly called "hair metal"; prioritized style over substance; imitated instead of innovated; and reveled in debauchery with the expectation of being signed to a major label and feted by MTV. When applied to the stretch beginning in late 1987, when Penelope Spheeris began filming her *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years* documentary, and running through the early '90s, that shoe fits – almost without exception.

Still, like most histories, that of the famed California boulevard and its clubs isn't so simple. Before pretenders from around the country descended on venues like Gazzarri's in hopes of becoming the next Warrant clone, the Sunset Strip hosted formative versions of Motley Crue, Ratt, Van Halen, W.A.S.P., and others that – at least in their early incarnations – harbored as much grit as glam. *Bound for Hell: On the Sunset Strip* revisits this period (specifically, 1979-85) and zeroes in on one song each by 21 bands whose fortunes never landed them on the cover of *Hit Parader* or headline status at the L.A. Forum.

A majority of the tracks stem from singles or one-and-done, long-out-of-print LPs. Some artist names might be familiar: Armored Saint, Black 'N Blue (featuring current Kiss guitarist Tommy Thayer), Lizzy Borden, Steeler (led by future Keel singer Ron Keel). Most of the groups, however, will be unknown to all but the most ardent hard-rock enthusiasts. Bands like Nightmare II, Witch, and Odin – collectives that sound as tough, raw, and desperate as their leather-laden ensembles look – belie the blanket "hair metal" stamp that came later. Seemingly recorded in a fidelity ideal for car cassette decks, the unpolished music teems with energy, attitude, and desperation. Like all Numero Group sets, *Bound for Hell: On the Sunset Strip* delivers glorious context. A glossy, photo-jammed 144-page hardbound book spotlights every band with extended bios that often contain input from a former member. Katherine Turman, co-author of *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, writes with a colorful albeit uneven style that befits the subjects.



Enjoy the Experience

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(530) 878-5350 - www.paslabs.com

Guns N' Roses *Use Your Illusion I & II: Super Deluxe Edition*.
Geffen/Universal.
180g 12LP + Blu-ray box set. (Also available as a 7CD + Blu-ray box set.)

In May 1991, Guns N' Roses violated protocol and did the unthinkable. Rather than delay the onset of its tour in order to finish its highly anticipated new albums, the band launched a 27-month-long jaunt by performing feverish shows that featured more than an hour of brand-new, still-unreleased material. The group played without a net: no setlist, no predictability, no filter, no worry about bootlegs undercutting future record sales, no concern about drawing blank stares from audiences due to their unfamiliarity with perilous fare such as "Dust N' Bones" and "Pretty Tied Up." Months later, those records — *Use Your Illusion I and II* — hit shelves, practically led to the concept of midnight sales, shattered records, and established Guns N' Roses as an artist whose bold musical and songwriting breadth eclipsed easy categorization.

Mastered from the original analog tapes for the first time in this set, each volume sparks with passionate emotions and extreme contrasts — bombast and bluntness, rebelliousness and sensitivity, grandiosity and rawness, beauty and ugliness, empathy and vengefulness, sophistication and crudeness, vulnerability and vitriol — across the spectrum. Though the albums still call for the wide-angle lens perspective and scholarship only an in-depth essay can provide, this immersive Super Deluxe Edition supplies valuable context in the form of the debut release of two complete concerts from the corresponding tour: a May '91 warm-up club gig and a January '92 arena date, both mastered from multi-track recordings and both riveting in unique ways. The former event is also gorgeously documented on video originally shot on 35mm film; the ferocious energy, explosive range, high-wire dynamics, and savage hunger alone will make you wonder how the band held together for as long as it did. To wit: Rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin signed off in fall '91; his replacement, Gilby Clarke, plays on the '92 show.

Both instrumentalists are represented in a spectacular 100-page hardbound book loaded with vibrant live photos, press releases, memorabilia, and more. The caliber of the paper stock, finish, and design — which extends to the four gatefold LP jackets, 10 lithographs, a replica fan-club folder — is superb and surpasses the quality seen in most box sets. The front face of the box itself depicts an anamorphic illusion made by viewing it at different angles. Four replica newsletters underscore the limitations of the era's communication methods; one broadsheet introduces Clarke and misspells his name. Such extras amplify the main draw: Seven and a half hours of music presented in stout fidelity, delivered with a thrilling combination of daring, intensity, accessibility, candor, craft, obsessiveness, tension, and ambition. Even during occasions in the studio when aspirations go off the rails — the first *Use Your Illusion* volume could be pared to a dozen watertight tracks with the four leftovers held in reserve as strong B-sides — the results get by on courage, reaffirming the fact the mainstream has never seen or heard anything of the like since.



Where Have all the Good Stereos Gone?



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

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

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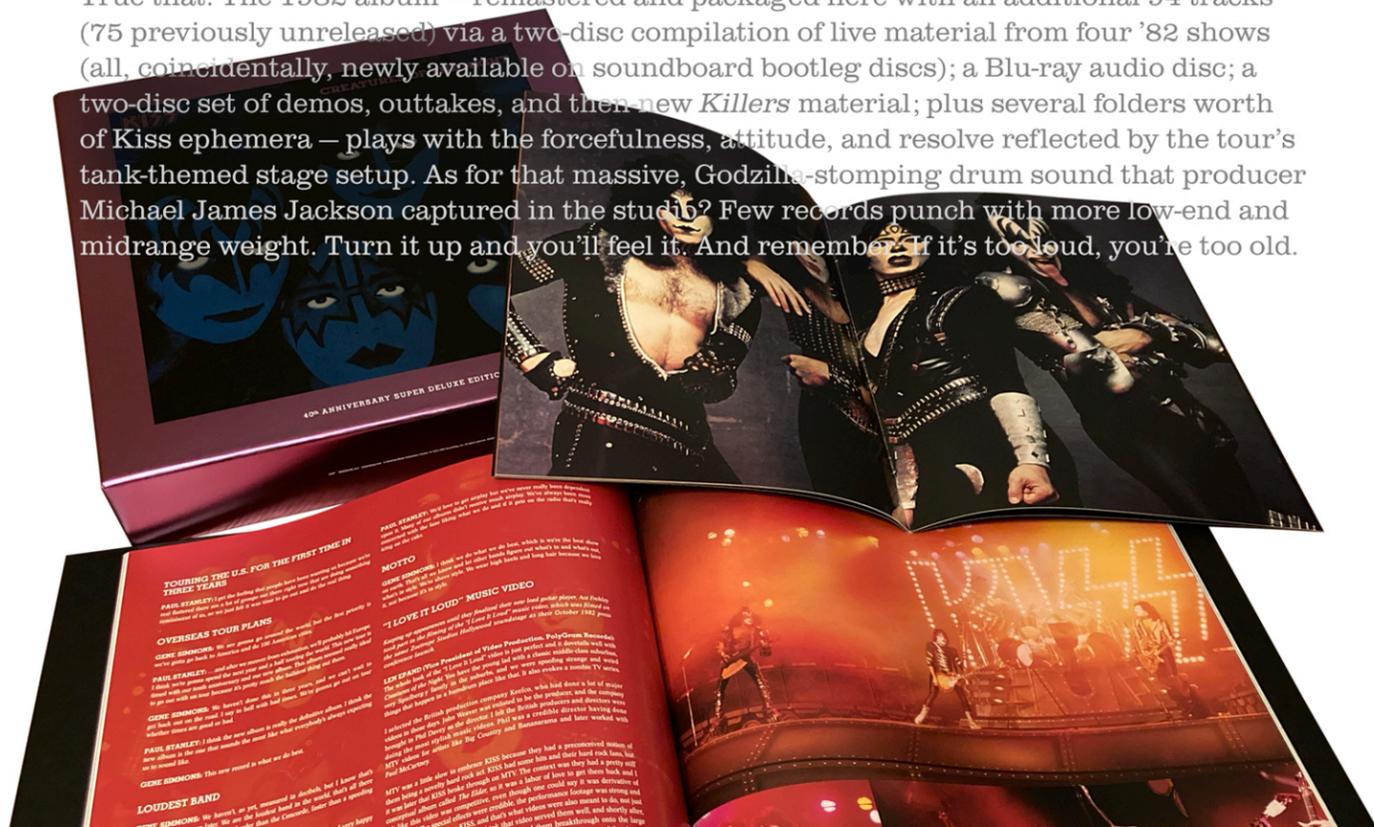
www.echohifi.com 888.248.echo

Kiss: *Creatures of the Night: 40th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition*.
Geffen/Universal.
5CD + Blu-ray box set.

To put it mildly, the circumstances surrounding the making and release of *Creatures of the Night* were unfavorable. Kiss had recently lost its original drummer, Peter Criss, and replaced the beloved cat with an unknown fox, Eric Carr. The band was also dealing with the fallout of two stinkers, *Unmasked* (1980) and *Music from "The Elder"* (1981), that contributed to a dramatic downslide in popularity. Ditto a visual makeover that saw the members trim their hair and dress like they were leading jazzercise workouts. In addition, a crop of New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) bands had captured public interest and made Kiss seem passé. Amidst these challenges, and cash-flow problems stemming from the commercial failures, Kiss sought to keep the lid on a secret known only to several insiders: Lead guitarist Ace Frehley was departing the quartet. In another bizarre twist, Frehley is seen and credited on *Killers* — a 1981 European compilation with four new songs recorded in an effort to right the group's creative direction — and *Creatures of the Night* but doesn't play a note on either LP.

Though it doesn't reveal the names of all the guitarists who perform on the records, Ken Sharp's captivating essay — interspersed with new interview fodder from Kiss leaders Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons as well as Frehley, the producers, and others in the sphere — in this set's vivid 80-page hardbound book addresses nearly every angle of the situation surrounding *Creatures of the Night*. The circumstances would've crushed most bands. The most underrated and heaviest album in the quartet's discography, *Creatures of the Night* saved Kiss but fell short of commercial expectations. Simmons and company even cut a planned 100-date tour short due to dismal attendance in many markets. As the bassist says of the record's timing in the book: "Sometimes it isn't until much later, where people go 'Hey, wait a minute. We missed that one. That's a good one.'"

True that. The 1982 album — remastered and packaged here with an additional 94 tracks (75 previously unreleased) via a two-disc compilation of live material from four '82 shows (all, coincidentally, newly available on soundboard bootleg discs); a Blu-ray audio disc; a two-disc set of demos, outtakes, and then-new *Killers* material; plus several folders worth of Kiss ephemera — plays with the forcefulness, attitude, and resolve reflected by the tour's tank-themed stage setup. As for that massive, Godzilla-stomping drum sound that producer Michael James Jackson captured in the studio? Few records punch with more low-end and midrange weight. Turn it up and you'll feel it. And remember: If it's too loud, you're too old.



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Statement e IC Cryo
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Wilco: *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot 20th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition*.
Nonesuch.

8CD + Box set, also available as a 180g, 11LP + CD Box set.

The Grammy Awards don't get much right these days. However, no matter who or what wins the gilded trophy at the next ceremony, the organization deserves credit for nominating one of the finest examples of music journalism in 2022: the essay penned by Bob Mehr for the 20th anniversary reissues of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. (The release is also up for Best Historical Album.) Mehr, who netted a Grammy for his prose in the Replacements' *Dead Man's Pop* box set, gained access to Wilco members Jeff Tweedy, John Stirratt, and Glenn Koche. Through his efforts, the incredible story of an era-defining album that's already been chronicled in a book and a documentary film is now richer, deeper, more human. So is the music.

Featuring the original record remastered by Bob Ludwig; a complete 2002 concert; a disc of drafts, demos and instrumentals; three discs of outtakes and alternative versions; and a radio performance and interview, this expansive reissue offers a sweeping look into the starts and stops, changes and deletions, and evolution and organization of a textured work that took nearly three years to complete. Distinct from other sets that focus on a single album and include take after take of the same song to the point of redundancy, this package contains an abundance of surprises that reward repeat listening.

Final versions of fare such as "I Am Trying to Break Your Heart" and "War on War" diverge from earlier iterations. Ditto various renditions of B-sides "A Magazine Called Sunset" and "Cars Can't Escape" — songs good enough for any Wilco record. A preliminary sketch of what became "Hummingbird," isolated parts of certain tracks, and a flawed albeit wild mash-up of Wilco and Stravinsky ("Ashes of American Flags (Stravinsky Mix)") further indicate why Tweedy suffered from migraines and how the band's then-primary creative forces (Tweedy and Jay Bennett) reached a point of no return: The scale of ideas, tones, themes, mysteries, and melodies on display is enough to drive anyone mad. That Tweedy, with a big assist from producer Jim O'Rourke, assembled it into a coherent, catchy, spiritually penetrating whole that says more today than in 2002 borders on miraculous. No document concerning *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* portrays its imaginative genius with as much clarity, intrigue, expertise, care, or comprehensiveness.



Honorable Mentions

PJ Harvey. *B-Sides, Demos & Rarities*.
Island Records. 180g 6LP box set.

The unearthing of nearly five dozen rarities recorded over the course of three decades by one of the most fearless artists of the past half century is cause for celebration; most of the material here has been inaccessible for years. Alas, the set calls out for notes that shed light into PJ Harvey's recording process and decision-making.



Motorhead. *Iron Fist: 40th Anniversary Edition*.
Sanctuary Records. 3LP box set.

The final album recorded by the classic Motorhead MKII lineup with Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor and "Fast" Eddie Clarke — the same responsible for the band's first four officially sanctioned studio LPs — remastered from the original tapes and augmented by a 24-page booklet, demos, and an '82 show. An end of an era, justly celebrated as such.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. *Live at the Fillmore 1997*.
Warner Bros. 6LP box set. (Also available as a 4CD box set.)

The archival follow-up to *Wildflowers* and *All the Rest* traces a similar period — early 1997, when Tom Petty sought inspiration and found it via a 20-night stand at the Fillmore — and shares DNA with *The Live Anthology*. This 72-track covers-rich anthology comes with collectible trinkets, a newsletter reprint, and 24-page booklet, though more text would be welcome.



Prince and the New Power Generation. *Live*.
Legacy. 3LP box set.

Live presents Prince and company's 1985 date from Syracuse, N.Y. — originally broadcast over satellite — on a set remixed from the original two-inch multitrack masters and remastered by Bernie Grundman. The extroverted performance and tour's significance are naturals for an extensive essay. It's missing but the music exceeds expectations.

Sleep. *Dopesmoker*.
Third Man Records. 4LP + 7" box set

Fire up the tube amps. Sourced from the original master tapes for the first time, the stoner rockers' magnum opus lands on green vinyl blended to represent the finest pot strains. The 63-plus-minute album is accompanied by a newly found song, previously unheard outtakes, a single, and two huge posters.



The MOSCOW HiFi & High End Show-2022: A FEAST DURING THE PLAGUE

The Moscow HiFi & High End Show-2022 took place in The “Borodino” hotel from October the 13th to the 16th.

Originally the show was scheduled to take place in June, but, in March, due the outbreak of Russia’s “The Special Military Operation” in Ukraine it was postponed by the (totally confused by the sudden common uncertainty) organizers till October.

Unfortunately, that uncertainty became even worse, however, Midexpo, the show organizers, decided to go ahead with the event (as most of the rooms were already fully prepaid by the exhibitors long before the proverbial stuff hit the fan).

This show started in 1996 with eleven demo rooms and a few years later it became one of the biggest ones – if not the biggest one for a while – in Europe. Around the turn of the century, the Russian audio demand became so strong that our local market became top priority to a lot of audio manufacturers, however, since 2014 – the year of the first wave of international sanctions against Russia over its involvement in the crisis in the Ukraine – the local economy started to deteriorate and that (exacerbated by the general crisis in the High End Audio) lead to the overall decline of the customer support for the industry here.

Nevertheless, the cheerful vibe of this show projected a completely different picture –despite the fact that most of the exhibitors barely scrapped their living, a few thousands of show visitors, mostly unaware of all the undercurrents behind the scene, have had a festive “business as usual” impression from what they saw.



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This year – despite all the gloominess hanging in the air – it was not different from all the years before, except, this time, there were three (usually separate) shows – The HiFi & High End Show, ProIntegration Tech and HIGH-TECH Building – that were running simultaneously under one roof.

Out of seventy-seven exhibitors at the dedicated audio show, impressively spread over nine floors of the (average size) hotel, ten were occupied by Russian equipment manufacturers. A few years ago, there were none. However good the sign that is, the problem with the most of their breed is a lack of any particular – let's put it this way – school. Some of them – like, Alexei's Syomin's SALabs – do have some outstanding technical expertise and even fully appropriate manufacturing capabilities, which allow them to efficiently reach stable operation phase of their equipment's development, however, properly voicing it is a completely different story. In Western audiophile terms, they complete the development of their gear at the point where the real work should just begin. In the latter sense, even the best examples of the local sonic excellence – e.g., the whole Audio Stand Art system by distinguished Russian engineer Anton Ostroucshenko (“Sharp Ear” in the Russian lingo – as the ship you will name so it and will float...) – still sounded raw, as the all 95 kilos worth of Dmitry Ershov's X-Factor DAC hooked to PBN/Montana/CHPrecision still sounded anemic and confused, and as Anton Julin's Reezoldini loudspeakers powered by SALabs amplifiers still obviously were in demand of further voicing efforts.

The same lack of “school” goes for the editors of the Russian audio press – although, their role in the publications is more akin to the publisher's role in Western terms. For my YouTube channel I interviewed a couple of them, and as also I interviewed J. Gordon Holt, John Atkinson and Harry Pearson for my book (“StereoPravda – Politically Incorrect View On High End Audio”), then, discussing audio matters with them vs doing the same with their Russian counterparts was like talking to a Nobel prize winner in economy vs talking to a bookkeeper from a local McDonald's.

That lack of deeply absorbed audiophile values – and the role of the specialized local media in spreading them can not be overestimated – is reflected in the development stage of all the current crop of the Russian-made audio equipment demonstrated at the show.

Personally, the only Russian-made products I feel the presence of outside Russia is Kennerton headphones which were also exhibited at the show.



Contrary to home audio, Kennerton fits much better in overall world standards of what portable audio is capable of sonically at the moment. But, again, this exception just proves the rule – as the sonic contexts of portable audio – let alone various manufacturing requirements – are quite different from the home audio ones.

I deliberately dwelled in my show report on the local manufactures which exhibited there as the rest of the demos were not really different from what you would experience at any other show outside Russia.

Some of them were quite impressive – for instance, Legacy/Bergmann/Electrocompaniet/Esprit system demoed by their Russian distributor Alcomm, or, Unison Research/Aqua/Torus/Kubala-Sosna system demoed by En-Trade, or, Montana/MSB/dartZeel system demoed by Gong-AV, or, without fake modesty, our own demo system set up in our ‘StereoPravda’ YouTube channel's room with venerable Alon/Magnepan speakers powered by D'Agostino/Jadis amplifiers (via Kubala-Sosna cables and a Torus power filter) and sourced from MSB/Matrix DACs.

All in all, life goes on – and even in the worst of times, we all still need an outlet for the best in us, for “our soul's noble bursts”, as we would say locally, and any hi-fi shows – wherever they are taking place, and whatever the moment is – definitely provides one.

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 achievement.

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

Much as we hate to use the B-word the selections that follow represent the “best of the best” of what’s come through the door this year.

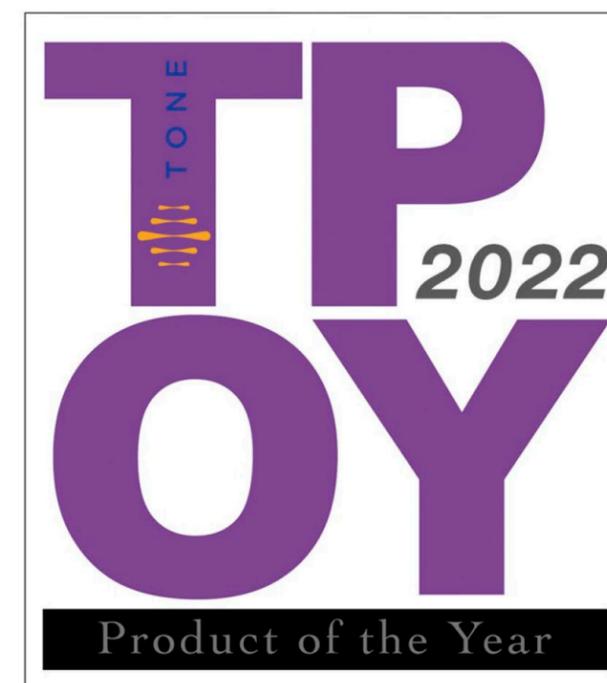
We’ve completed full reviews on nearly all of these, but a couple are still in process, with final copy to follow in early 2023.

We do not expect you to spend your hard earned income on anything, simply because we think it’s fantastic, but is our hope that should you be looking for something in one of these categories, you would at least give our choices a listen.

Our hope is always that if any of these products warrant your investigation, you would enjoy them as much as we have.

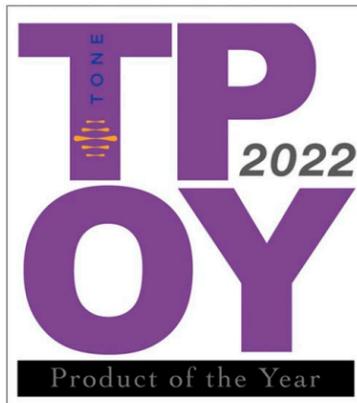
It’s all about finding that special piece of gear that will take you somewhere you’ve never been.

All of these items pass that test.



Overall: Luxman L-507Z

\$8,995
luxmanamerica.com



Luxman makes incredible integrated amplifiers that manage to incorporate nearly all of the performance of their separate components on one chassis.

While they have discontinued their 30 Watt-per-channel L-590 pure Class-A amplifier, the new L-507Z delivers so much of the 590s sonic delicacy, the only thing you might miss is the higher electric bill.

As always, the latest tech from Luxman's top components is all under the hood of the L-507Z.

Don't let the visual similarity fool you. Every aspect of the new L-507Z has been upgraded, and in particular the already excellent phono stage is even better. And, there are two headphone jacks on the front panel now.

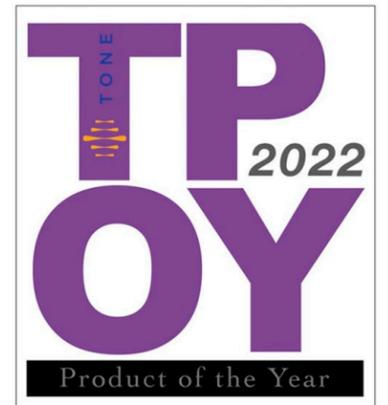
It all adds up to a level of performance and execution that is rarely seen. Which is why Luxman's integrated amplifiers are rarely for sale on the secondary market.





Speakers: Acora Acoustics SRC-1

\$28,000/pair
acoraacoustics.com



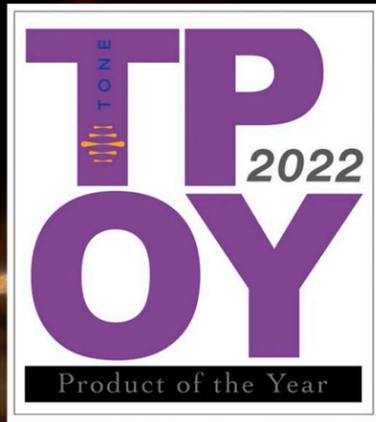
Resonance is something that plagues nearly all loudspeakers, resulting in a sonic signature that is part drivers, part crossover network and part cabinet. Acora Acoustics uses granite for their enclosures, taking that part out of the equation.

The result is a unique speaker that sounds stunning. Once you experience an Acora speaker and go back to your favorite “wooden box” speaker, you’ll be surprised at what you don’t hear with the SRC-1s.

Fairly massive at almost 250 pounds each, the SRC-1s are not overbearing, and look absolutely stunning in any room.

This is a speaker we’ve enjoyed tremendously and continue to use as the first step in our product evaluations, to get an initial read on how other things sound.

Highly recommended.



Amplifier:

PS Audio BHK 600 Mono

\$32,498/pair
psaudio.com

PS audio has always been a champion of performance and value. Even back when their 200CX power amplifier was on the street, it delivered sonics that rivaled amplifiers costing considerably more.

While 33 thousand dollars isn't exactly pocket money, the BHK 600 monos have a level of refinement, control, and tonality rivaling anything you're likely to hear.

Our full review is still in progress, but even after a few hours, it was obvious that there was magic in the air with these amps.



Analog(phono pre): Backert Labs

Rhumba XPhono 1.1

\$7,500
backertlabs.com

Backert Labs Rhumba line stage was a home run here last year, and their phono stage equally awesome.

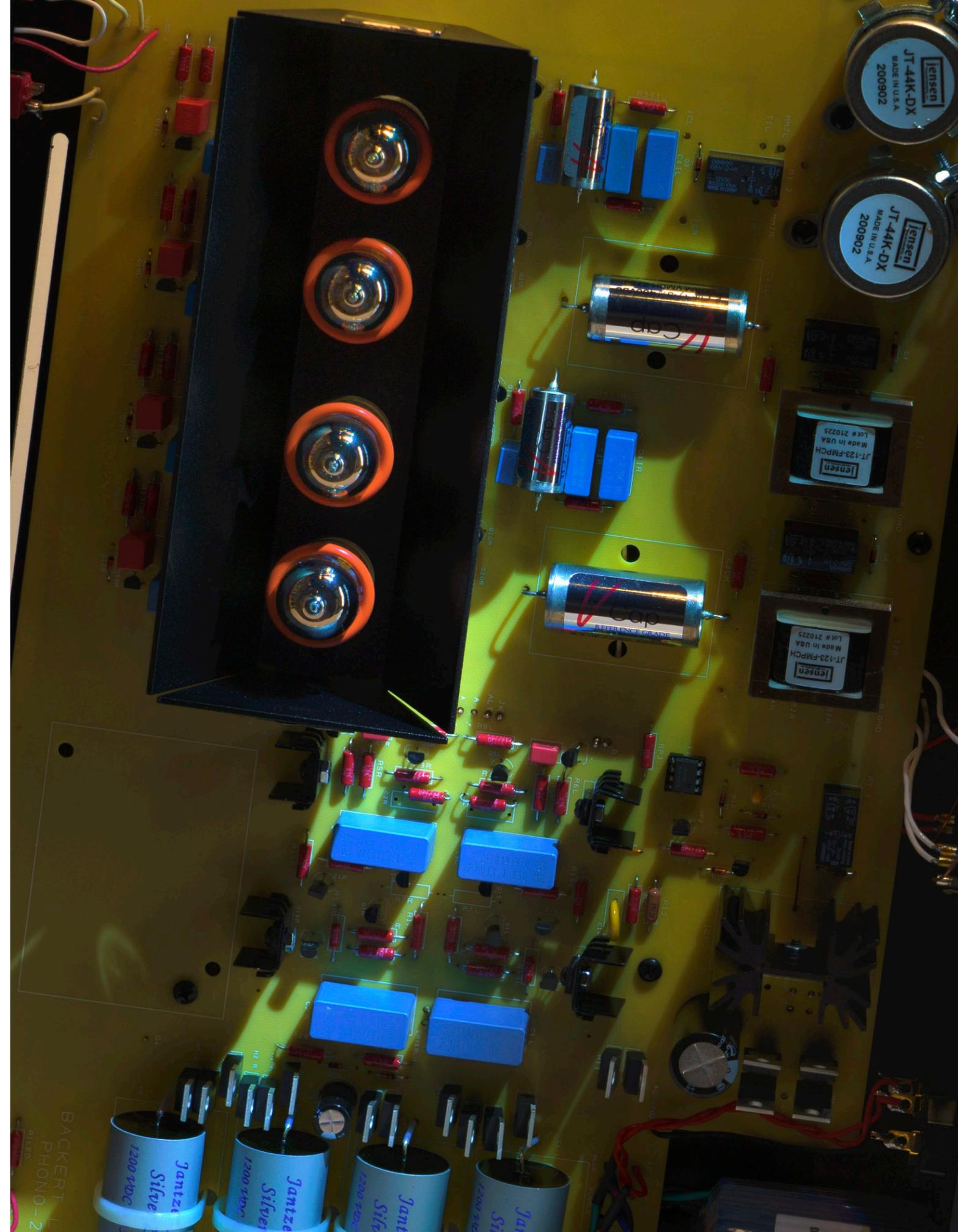
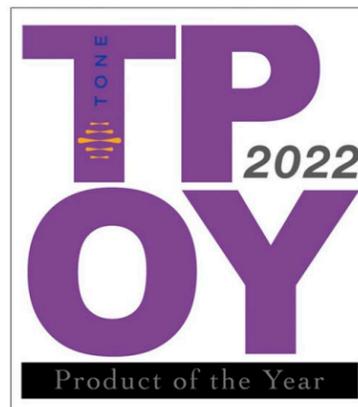
Though a relatively small company, Backert has taken the high road, concentrating on excelling at one thing - preamps. The attention to detail and implementation is obvious, the minute you turn it on.

There's a level of musicality way beyond the price point.

Also included is a number of nice touches that make the XPhono 1.1 a top dog for the true analog enthusiast. The clear cover on the top face makes it a snap to change (or roll) tubes without taking the case apart.

Loading for the MC phono section is easily done by swapping the position of loading plugs on the rear panel. No DIP switches that require having fingers the size of a 3-year old to get to.

And, two inputs. All great stuff.

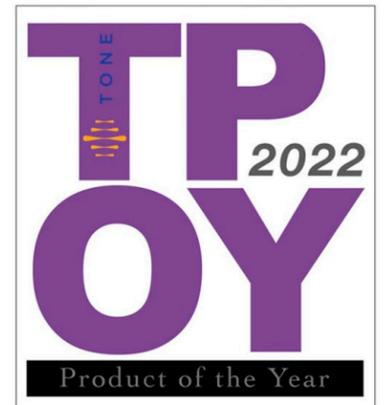




Analog(Tonearm): Viv Labs

Rigid Float HA-9

\$4,000
sierrasound.com



Adding a second (or even third) tonearm is always analog coolness.

But when the add-on arm is usually better than the main arm, that's even better. The Viv Labs arms are made to be used as a standalone pod with your turntable, not screwed down to the plinth.

Granted, once set up, you're going to have to keep other beings away from your deck, but you don't want anyone else near your turntable anyway, right? (I sure don't)

Available in multiple sizes, the Viv Labs arm solves a number of common analog problems and delivers fantastic sound.

Considering how much we love the base HA-9 (it also recieved the #toneaudioapproved award on P.63) we look forward to another one of these in 2023.



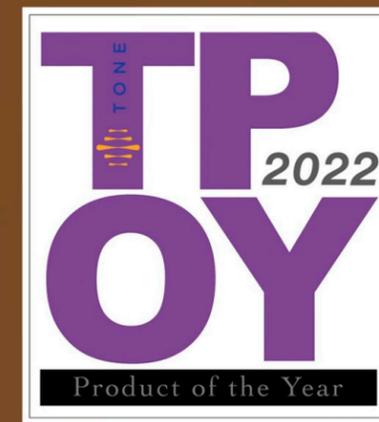
Digital: Aqua LaDiva Transport Formula xHD DAC

\$9,600 (transport) \$17,500 (DAC)
aquahifi.com

If you love digital playback, Aqua makes three fantastic DACs, ending with their top Formula xHD shown here. Taking a no-filter, no upsampling approach, the result is a DAC that sounds incredibly “Un-Digital.”

Should you be committed to physical media and CDs in particular (the LaDiva does not play SACD) their LaDiva transport is robustly built, and a sonic match for any DAC you might choose to use it with.

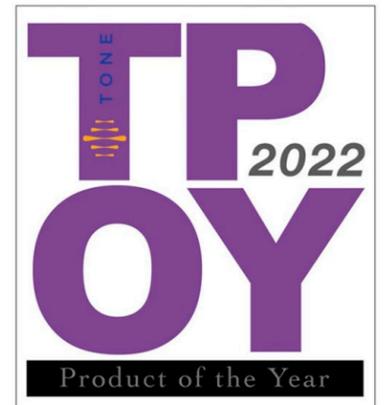
The combination however, is formidable, regardless of budget. This is one of the world’s most engaging digital players.



LINA

Personal Listening: dCS Lina

\$29,150 (full stack)
dcsaudio.com



These days, there are headphone amp/DAC combinations that cost far more than the LINA. And, there are headphone amps alone that also cost way more than the LINA.

None of them sound as good, are nearly as functional, or are as well executed as the dCS stack you see here.

This is the best way to enjoy headphones made. Period. End of story.

We don't use that word lightly here at TONE.

If you had \$100 bucks for everytime we've said this was the best, or that was the best, you'd have a couple hundred dollars.

Considering our publisher owns the \$95k Vivaldi ONE/APEX as his reference digital source, that's not a remark made lightly.

There's nothing like the LINA.

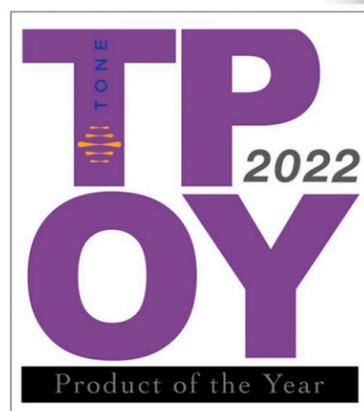
If you're the obsessed headphone listener with a pile of premium phones, drive your collection with this.

You won't be sorry and you won't get tired of it.



Accessory: Cardas Nautilus Power Strip

\$2,000
cardas.com



Much like a non-oversampling DAC, sometimes you just want signal purity, that is untouched.

In a sea of power strip shaped power conditioners, the Cardas Nautilus is just a mega high-quality power strip using all the best ingredients.

The end result is more outlets, pure and simple. No fairy dust inside, just the job done right. When you need more outlets, regardless of current delivery, this is the one that accomplishes the task and does no harm.

It's the one we use too.

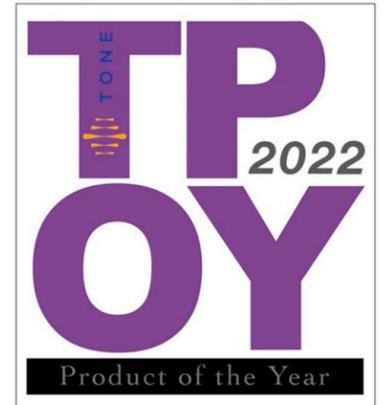




Recording: Al DiMeola/ Saturday Night In San Francisco

\$40 vinyl, \$30 SACD

elusivedisc.com



For everyone that has enjoyed Friday Night In San Francisco for decades, it was a major treat when Al DiMeola was finally able to make the planets aligned to get the second night of that famous show committed to vinyl (and digital disc).

The recording quality itself is above average, but the care taken by the Impex crew in mastering the music as well as the jacket, compliments the labor of true love that went into the music.

When we spoke to DiMeola earlier in 2022 (full interview in issue 112) he was super excited about the whole thing and very pleased with the outcome.

Now, with both records available, you can hear so much more of this amazing performance with three of the world's greatest guitarists at the peak of their abilities.



We 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.

Continuing last year's trend, we had a few more than our usual ten EV awards. We really got a lot of high-value stuff to evaluate this year! This is a trend that we really hope continues, it's the only way to get new people to join our journey

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 2023!



**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

Fyne 500SP

\$2,195/pr.

soundorg.com

The 500 SPs have gone up a bit in price since we reviewed them at the beginning of the year, but even with a \$200 price increase, they are still an incredible value.

Combining luxurious build quality, and a level of sonic excellence, you'd expect to pay a lot more for, the 500SPs are a great building block for a modestly priced, yet high-performance system.



Benz LP-S

\$5,000

sierrasound.com

This one is tough to beat at any price.
Still one of the world's finest.

**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

**LSA
Signature 50**

\$599/pr.

underwoodhifi.com

Between the real leather front baffle, and the high quality cabinets, you wonder how LSA can build a speaker this gorgeous for \$599 a pair.

And then you play some music.

It's hard not to tilt your head like a dog.

These are great little speakers.

**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

**Music
Hall
A-3**

\$1,195

musichallaudio.com

Roy Hall does it again,
delivering maximum
value and a heavy dose
of coolness.



**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

**Focal
Aria
K2 936**

\$5,998/pr.

focal.com

FOCAL - Made in France

Because Focal is a manufacturer that does everything in house, they have a tremendous advantage when it comes to producing speakers of incredible value at every price point.

The same people that design and build the \$225,000/pair Grande Utopia EM every day, put the same amount of love into a pair of Aria K2 936s.

It makes a difference.

**EX
VAL** 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

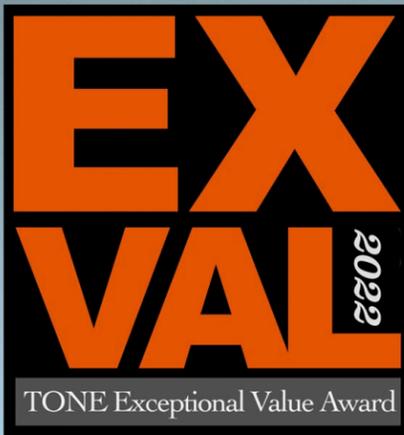
**PrimaLuna
EVO 300 Hybrid**

\$7,295

primaluna-usa.com

We love tubes, but now and then you just need more current drive for a demanding pair of speakers, or perhaps you just like the sound of a tube pre and a solid-state power amplifier. Bam.

The EVO 300 Hybrid is the way to roll.



Skyanalog G2

\$1,995

gramophone.ca

This MC newcomer from China offers a tastefully smooth voice, high trackability, and an awful lot of detail retrieval for its \$2k price tag.



EX VAL 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

LSA .5 Phono

\$249

underwoodhifi.com



We're showing you the inside view just to prove there's a real circuit going on here for \$249. Some mfrs. spend more than that on the packaging?

If you want to get in the analog game on a ramen noodle budget, this is the go to.

Even at \$700, this would be a serious contender.



Focal ClearMg

\$1,495

focal.com

EX VAL 2022

TONE Exceptional Value Award

Much like Focal's Aria speakers, also on these pages - the ClearMg phones also take such great advantage of what goes into manufacturing the Utopia phones, and delivering a tremendous helping of that performance at this price.



Manley Chinook SE Mk.II

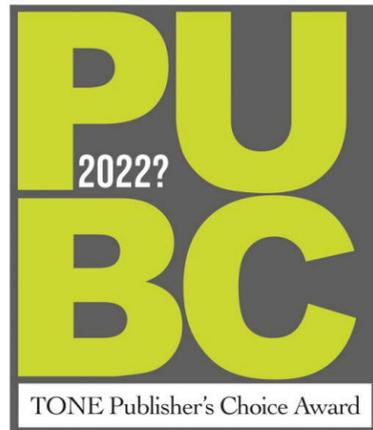
\$3,295
upscaleaudio.com

Manley Labs has always had a ton of great press for their top of the line Steelhead phonostage. It's always been one of the best of the best.

What makes the Chinook so exciting, is how much of that nearly \$10k box's performance has trickled down into the just over \$3k, single input, Chinook.

Tubes definitely rule.





Because collectively, we bought so much new gear this year, and the Publisher's Choice award is typically more of a teachers pet type of award to begin with, it seemed redundant to hand out more trophies just for trophies sake.

So next year, the Publisher's Choice award should return. Unless we all get wacky with our credit cards again.

Behold *The New* D-10X

Accuracy, Sensitivity, Musicality



LUXMAN

luxmanamerica.com

Revisiting an old friend.

It's always so much fun to find a disc that you kind of forgot about. Great memories, this one!



Authentic sound, naturally

Mu-so Wood Edition Light Oak



Enjoy a better-class experience of the music, radio, podcasts and TV you love. The premium Mu-so Wood Edition wireless speaker system combines almost 50 years of authentic audio expertise with the latest music-streaming technology and easy playback from all your devices. Crafted from expertly lacquered, sustainable hardwood, with a unique woven speaker grille, it's the natural choice for exceptional sound and styling in your home.

Mu-so Wood Edition | \$1,799



Mu-so Qb 2nd Generation
\$1,199



Mu-so 2nd Generation
\$1,799



Mu-so for Bentley
Special Edition
\$2,299



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

Yet, when the initial buzz wears off, the ultimate question is would you pay the money and live with the component you just finished gushing over? Talk is cheap.

Some complain that audio reviewers are granted an industry discount, which usually amounts to dealer cost. However, the physical act of writing a check is more often than not the great equalizer. Rarely does the discount act as a way to *save money*. Access to a better price usually means buying the next model up.

If you you walked into a record store and were informed that everything was on sale, 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 cards 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. These are the ones we bought this year.

PS: The additional benefit of purchasing a component means we can keep it longer than the usual review cycle and produce a long-term follow up in a year or two, providing additional insight.



MOFI ONE-STEP

\$100 - \$125
MOFI.COM

Despite the controversy this year, Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs has continued to produce high quality recordings, for over 40 years now. As a matter of fact, I've been buying them for just over 40 years.

I love vinyl, but I'm not a purist. I don't have a vast collection of first stamper this and that - I'm not that guy.

If you make a good record, I'll buy it. I don't care what the process is. MoFi has not only created a tremendous body of work, they've had the courage to press things that at times, are WAY out of the box, and for that alone, I salute them.

So, for those that are still crabby pants about their one-step records, I refuse to buy into that. People are running for their lives all over the world, and we're going to get shitty about the source for *Van Halen II*? Not on my ship.

Not only do I give the MoFi One-Step records the #TONEAudio Approved award, I give them my personal endorsement.

-Jeff Dorgay, Publisher

#TONE
Audio
Approved

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





LAB 12 MIGHTY

\$2,290
FIDELISDISTRIBUTION.COM

TONE
Audio
Approved

Even with the slight price increase to \$2,490, this 10wpc SET amplifier is a mighty value.

While 300B tubes are the usual choice for low powered, tube SET amps, LAB12 uses a more common EL34 tube in SET mode.

The results are fantastic. If you have a speaker that can work with 10wpc, this is one of the most enjoyable music experiences going.

Please click here to read our full review.

European Superstars

turning heads, delighting hearts, igniting passion

Distributor in North America:
matterhornaudio.com
+1 617-494-1400
info@matterhornaudio.com



FOCAL CLEAR MG

\$1,495
FOCAL.COM



#TONE
Audio
Approved

We've really become Focal headphone fans over the last few years. Our congenial Canadian correspondent, Shanon McKellar sports a pair of Focal Utopias, and I've got the Clear Mg's along with their new pair of Bathy wireless phones.

And for good reason - they are easy to drive, play well with a plethora of amps, and they sound great.



The
sound
Organisation

MAKE
BRILLIANT
MUSIC

Degritter

Take time
to experience



BACKERT LABS RHUMBA XPHONO 1.1

\$7,500
BACKERTLABS.COM

This two-input phonostage surprised everyone with a level of refinement that usually costs a lot more money.

Backert Labs is a small company that only makes preamplifiers, so the Rhumba XPhono 1.1 may have a little less bling, as a result, but we'll take the performance any day.

If you're a major vinyl enthusiast that wants killer sound, needs two inputs, and wants to keep the cost under five-figures, this is as good as it gets.

TONE
Audio
Approved



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

FIND YOUR NEAREST DEALER:
degritter.com

HERETIC AD-612

\$9,290/PAIR
FIDELISAV.COM

TONE
Audio
Approved

Earlier this year, our publisher said the slightly smaller Heretic 614s (yes, it's a little counterintuitive to have the bigger number on the smaller speaker, but...) "were one of the most fun speakers he'd heard in a long time."

Interestingly enough, other prominent reviewers that have caught up with us are saying the same thing. FUN is the big word being used.

And that's a great thing. We're flattered.

Both speakers use the same incredible 12-inch coaxial driver, yielding 97dB/1-Watt sensitivity, but the larger AD-612 goes a little deeper in the bass department, thanks to increased cabinet volume.

Also, both are voiced to be close to the wall, so which one should you buy? Consider your budget and room size. Those will smaller rooms will be just fine with the smaller AD-614.

Either way, the new Heretic speakers are the perfect blend of old and new style.



ACCURACY IS
ESSENTIAL TO BEAUTY

– Ralph Waldo Emerson



Verismo

Diamond Cantilever

Multi-Wall Carbon Nanotube Suspension

Titanium SLM Housing

ortofon
accuracy in sound



"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

telluriumq.com +44 (0) 1458 251 997

XSA LABS VANGUARD

\$799/PAIR
XSA-LABS.COM

Now that we live in a world of 750-thousand dollar speakers, it's nice to see someone designing great speakers that real people can afford.

While xsa-labs pays homage to some famous Brit monitors you probably know and love, the Vanguards are deservedly their own speaker. These will now be our budget speaker reference.





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. Authorized JL Audio Dealers do not sell via the Internet. Subwoofers pictured with grilles removed.

HARBETH 40.3 XD

\$22,500-\$24,500/PAIR
FIDELISAV.COM



TONE
Audio
Approved

Contributor Tom Caselli snagged the 40.3s before we sent them back to Harbeth, and he’s been spinning a lot of classic rock through these legendary monitors.

Think of these as the BBC monitor sound realized in a super size format.

Please click [HERE](#) to read the original review.

Brilliant.



Late Night Garage Playlist
-Jeff Dorgay

With all of Bob Gendron's talk about the GNR box set, excitement was building waiting for my copy to arrive. And, while their entire catalog is there to stream, now that I have a cassette deck in the garage system, why not start here?



- The Spaghetti Incident - I Don't Care About You
- Appetite for Destruction - Sweet Child O'Mine, Paradise City, Welcome to the Jungle
- Use Your Illusion 1 - Back off Bitch, Live and Let Die, Right Next Door to Hell, November Rain
- Use Your Illusion 2 - Locomotive (Complicity), You Could Be Mine
- GN'R Lies - Used to Love Her, Patience
- Live at the Ritz, NY Feb 2, 1988 - Rocket Queen

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



TECHNICS SL-1210GR

\$1,695
TECHNICS.COM



TONE
Audio
Approved

I've been using a 1200 since I was 14 years old collecting paper route money.

While the 1200 has come back into fashion, this direct drive deck has never lost its lustre. With build quality that eclipses all of its similarly priced competitors, the 1200 has stood the test of time.

I like the current GR so much, I bought two, one in black and one in silver.



Everyone is an Audiophile



audio research
MINNEAPOLIS MINNESOTA
1/50
integrated

www.audioresearch.com

QUTEST SYSTEM



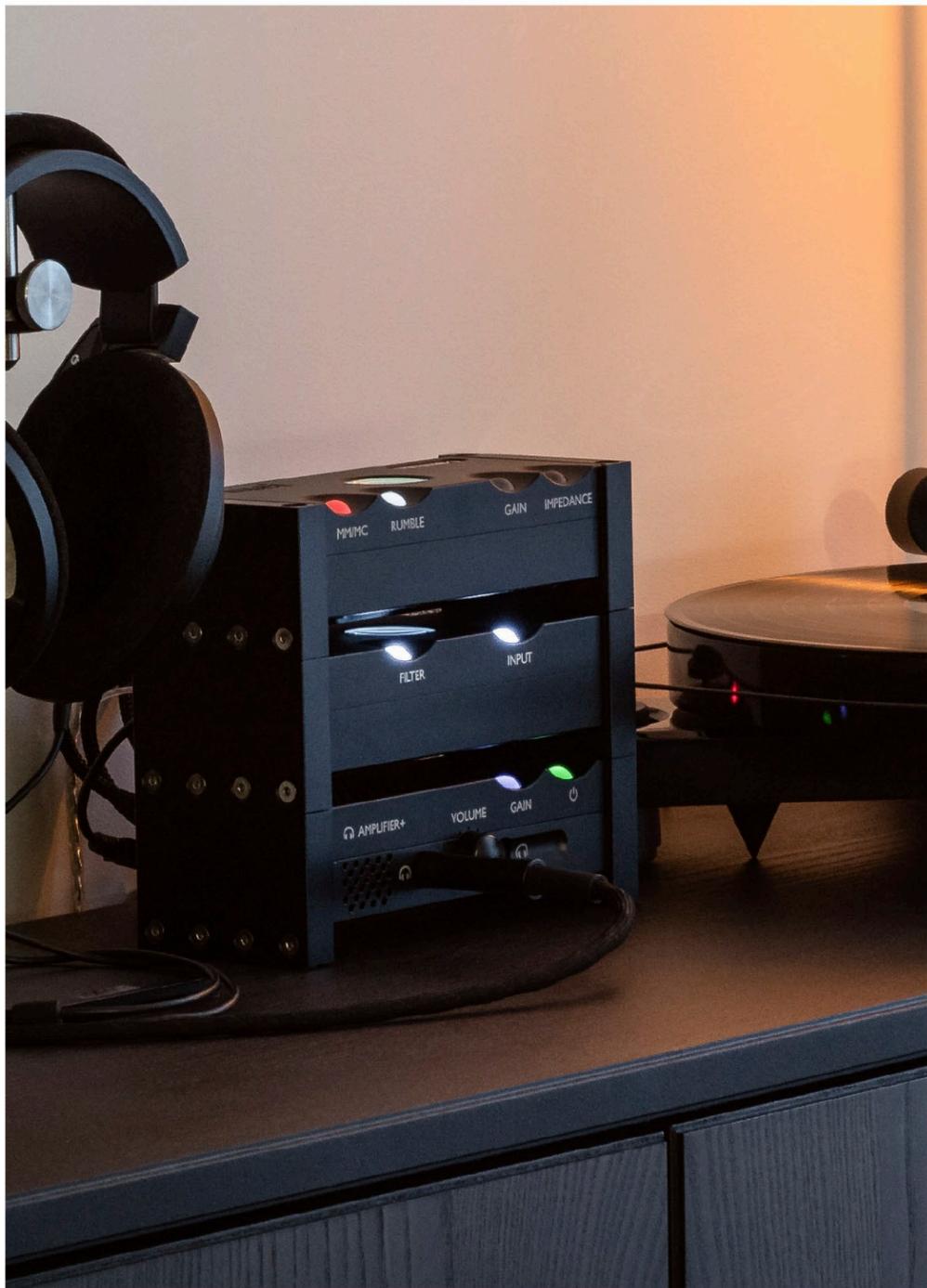
DESKTOP AUDIO
REDEFINED



Chord Electronics Ltd.



Organisation



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

HANA UMAMI RED

\$3,950
ELUSIVEDISC.COM

TONE
Audio
Approved



We've added to the cartridge fleet this year, and Hana has done such a great job with their modestly priced carts, we were more than curious to hear what they could produce at a higher price point.

Just like the rest of the lineup, the Umami Red is a class leader.

PASS LABS XP-27

\$11,500
PASSLABS.COM

PASS

XP-27

Phono Preamp

#TONE
Audio
Approved

The XP-27 is quiet, quiet, quiet.

And, it offers a lot of the engineering excellence that is under the hood of Pass' flagship XS Phono at a more approachable price.

This one gets a lot of use every single day.

PASS

XP

Power Supply

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



#musicreengineered
T+A Caruso



T+A
Engineering Emotion

TONE
Audio
Approved

LUXMAN LMC-5

\$2,695
LUXMANAMERICA.COM

We've added a few phono cartridges to the reference stable this year, in the hope of discovering more world-class cartridges at the \$2k-\$4k range. (kinda what premium cartridges *used* to cost...)

The LMC-5 definitely fits the brief.



AUDIO RESEARCH LS-28SE

\$10,000
AUDIORESEARCH.COM

TONE
Audio
Approved

Chris was all ready to update his linestage to a clean pre-owned ARC REF 5 when he joined the ship here. The LS-28SE was in the middle of the review analysis, but after a weekend with the LS-28, Chris was convinced that the newest model from ARC was the way to roll.



CARDAS CLEAR REFLECTION

PRICE VARIES WITH LENGTH
(1M XLR PAIR, \$1,250)
CARDAS.COM



In our never ending quest to discover high value/high performance products, we always seem to come back to Cardas.

The Clear Reflection cables always reveal a lot of music with zero harshness or grain.

And, their floppy nature makes them incredibly easy to use in a rack full of gear.

#TONE
Audio
Approved

LAB 12

Now available in the USA!

Fidelis
distribution, llc

fidelisdistribution.com



PU 2021 BC

TONE Publisher's Choice Award

melto2 Remote Controlled
Tube Phono Preamp

The country that brought us Democracy and The Olympics now brings us award-winning electronics from Lab12.

The experts agree.



EVERY COMPONENT OF THIS
 AUDIOPHILE-WORTHY HIGH-FIDELITY
 STEREO SOUND SYSTEM
 IS ON DISPLAY IN THIS PHOTO



THE PEARL
 \$3499 EACH



THE PEARL AKOYA
 (PICTURED) \$1899 EACH

MAXIMUM SOUND LEVEL
 118 DB MONO, 124 DB STEREO

BANDWIDTH
 14 – 27,000 HZ

DESIGN
 3 DRIVERS, 3 AMPS

POWER
 1600 W RMS / 3200 W PEAK

DIMENSIONS / WEIGHT
 12.6" DIAMETER / 40 LBS EACH



MAXIMUM SOUND LEVEL
 115 DB MONO, 121 DB STEREO

BANDWIDTH
 30 – 27,000 HZ

DESIGN
 3 DRIVERS, 3 AMPS

POWER
 1050 W RMS / 2100 W PEAK

DIMENSIONS / WEIGHT
 8.7" DIAMETER / 18 LBS EACH

AUTOMATIC ROOM CORRECTION. ETHERNET/WIFI – BLUETOOTH – SPDIF – OPTICAL – RCA ANALOG – USB FOR MUSIC ON EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES
 CONNECT YOUR FAVORITE STREAMING SERVICE VIA THE CABASSE STREAMCONTROL APP

PROUDLY ENGINEERED IN FRANCE | CABASSE.COM

EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION IN NORTH AMERICA BY UPSCALE DISTRIBUTION. DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOME. UPSCALEDISTRIBUTION.COM

AQUA AUDIO LA SCALA DAC

\$8,950
 AQUAHIFI.COM

#TONE
 Audio
 Approved



Despite Aqua's flagship DAC and Transport being our Digital Product of the Year, we purchased the LaScala earlier this year to use as an additional reference.

In a world full of DAC's around the \$10k mark, the LaScala really stands above so many others we've heard, because it is so analog-like in its delivery.

VIV LABS RIGID FLOAT HA-9

\$4,000
SIERRASOUND.COM

We have always been fans of multiple tonearm setups, as they keep the sonic signature of the turntable you love, and save space.

Unfortunately, most tables don't offer this functionality, and a few of the ones that do end up looking pretty crazy.

ViVLabs offers the best solution we've ever seen with their Rigid Float designs (in 7, 9 and 13-inch versions).

There's no plinth drilling required and the arm cozys up to your existing table.

There's so much that is unique about the RF arm, that we still aren't done with the review, but suffice to say this is the most intriguing arm we've ever used!

And, there may be a 2nd one in our future.



W H A R F E D A L E

The reviews are in.



EV04



ELYSIAN



HERITAGE



WharfedaleUSA.com

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info@mofi.com

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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.



CLARUS DUET

Designed for Monobloc amplifiers and subwoofers



www.claruscable.com - info@claruscable.com

TOTEM TRIBE ARCHITECTURAL IN-WALL

\$2,000 EA
TOTEMACOUSTIC.COM

#TONE
Audio
Approved



We've given The Audiophile Garage a major update this year, but the Tribe In-Wall speakers are a great fit anywhere in your home or office that requires great sound but doesn't have the room for a pair of speakers.

(hint, hint, Totem makes in-wall subs too...)

T+A CARUSO R

\$4,450
T_AHIFI.DE

The biggest problem we have with the T+A Caruso R is where to put it. With so much capability in such a small package, it's a great system anchor anywhere.

Though it is a great streamer, we love that the Caruso R still plays CDs, and has a built in FM tuner.

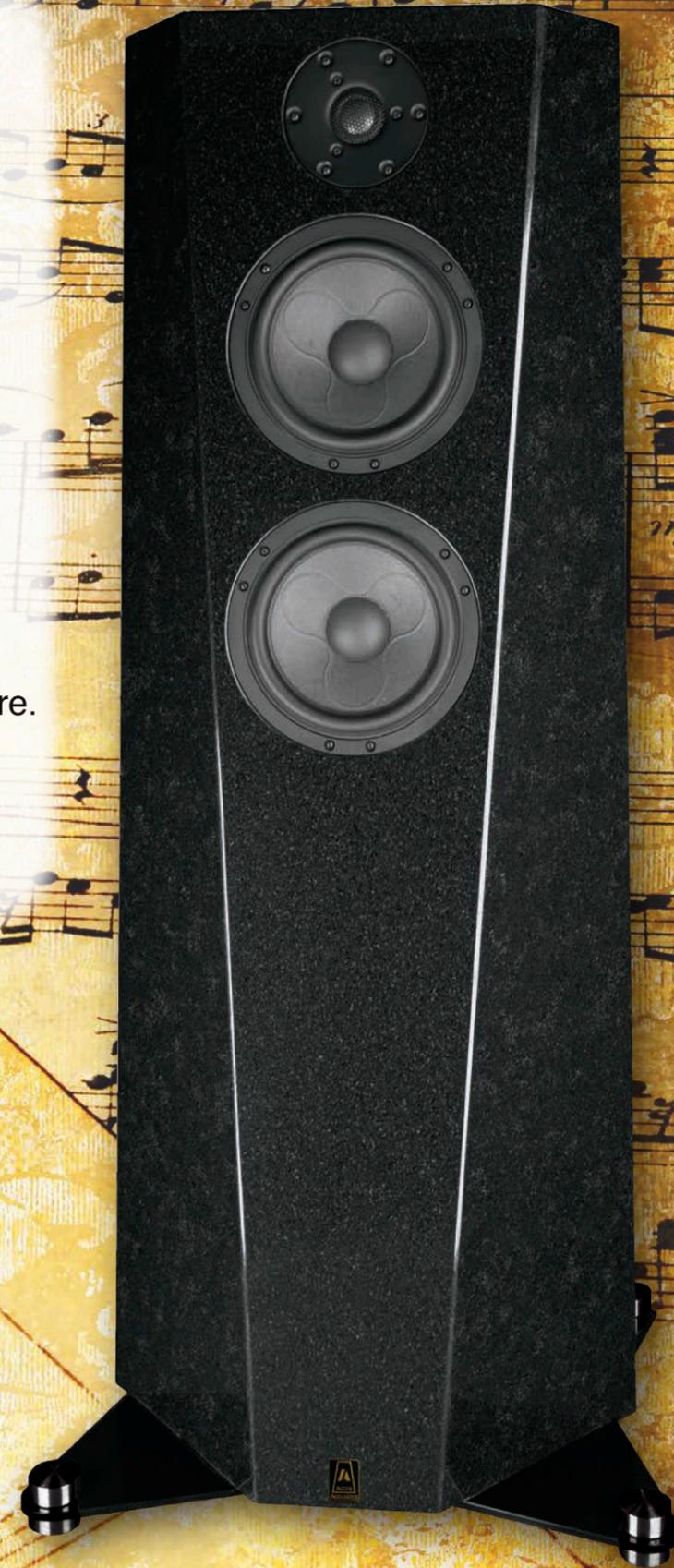
A real favorite. We may need another!



-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>

SCULPTURE A



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.

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



LSA VT-150 & VT-70

\$1,299 AND \$2,499
UNDERWOODHIFI.COM

#TONE
Audio
Approved



Instead of always wrestling Jerold O'Brien for the VT-70, our publisher bought the VT-150 as well.



TOTEM KIN PLAY TOWER

\$2,250/PAIR
TOTEMACOUSTIC.COM

Last year, the bookshelf-sized Kin Play speakers were an award winner and the anchor of our publisher's bedroom system.

The additional ability that the KinPlay Tower delivers demanded an upgrade.

These are more than just powered speakers - with a great MM phono stage built in, and a DAC, (also Bluetooth capable!)

These can be a perfect way to build a high-performance, minimal footprint system.

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AUDIA
FLIGHT

For more information,
please contact:

www.gramophone.ca

800.231.7594



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.



ORTOFON CADENZA BRONZE

\$2,399
ORTOFON.COM

TONE
Audio
Approved

It's one thing when you come back for seconds. But between all of us at TONE, we own five Cadenza Bronze carts. That's a lot of love.





Masterpiece Award - 2022

So another year has passed by. And for us, rather quickly.

While this year has brought a fantastic group of things to review, again, three things stood out from the pack, and of course, all from manufacturers that have been dedicated to excellence for decades:

dCS, REL and Linn.

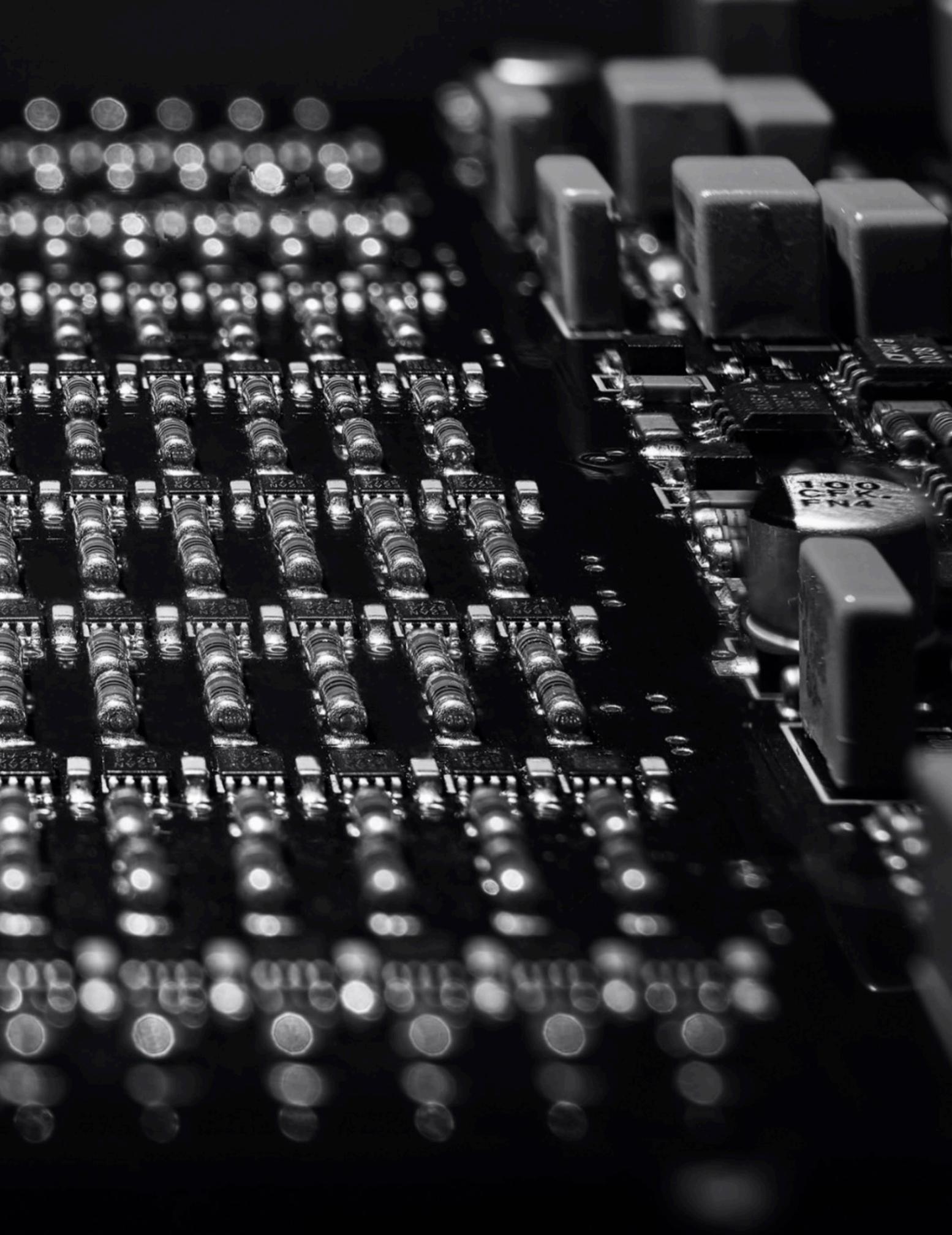
This is our second year of the Heritage award, and it's proven to be successful. Rather than waste your time calling something out as "the best," and then somehow finding a new best before you even get the credit card bill, we feel these products will stand the test of time, and no matter what is introduced after them, you will still be proud to own them.

To us, that is the real benefit. And besides, we think you're way too smart to keep falling for this nonstop barrage of superlatives.

Here are the three that I put my personal stamp of approval on.

Let me know what you think.

-Jeff Dorgay, ***publisher***
jeff@tonepublications.com



Deep in the heart of the dCS Vivaldi, Vivaldi ONE, and Rossini DACs is a precision resistor array at the heart of their patented RingDAC.

But you already know about this.

Taking things to a completely new level, their recent APEX update not only offers significant improvements to the digital side of things but the analog stage as well.

The delta between Non-APEX and new APEX machines is enormous. And true to dCS tradition, current customers can upgrade their dCS players to stay current.

Innovation, quality and common sense is what sets dCS apart from the others.

dcsaudio.com





REL never brings new products to market unless they've figured out a considerably better way to apply what is discovered in the lab to the final product in the listening room.

After living with a six-pack of their flagship no.25 subs for the better part of three years, the new no.31 and 32 come along and make everything we thought we knew obsolete.

The pair of no.31s here now will be updated to a six-pack array this spring when our main room will be enlarged.

We'll have a full review of the pair of no.31s currently here mid-January of 2023.

www.rel.net





Masterpiece Award - 2022

The Linn LP-12 has been a staple of analog reality for decades now. Working past the usual arguments, this table, even in the Majik form you see here, does an amazing job at getting to the heart of the music.

Whether you choose a current or vintage LP-12, this is an incredibly satisfying turntable.

Which, by the way you can tweek, customize and upgrade to your heart's content.

linn.co.uk



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

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FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



Peak Consult Sinfonia

\$60,000/pair (approx.)

<https://peak-consult.dk/sinfonia/>

We are thrilled to have these on the way to our main listening room.

Peak Consult has always made some of the world's finest and most natural sounding speakers.

New CEO Wilfried Ehrenholz promises that the new models are "better than ever." Considering he's the former head guy at Dynaudio, these words carry a lot of weight.



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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 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
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- Optional wireless system



FUTURE

TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



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We've always had outstanding results with IsoTek power products.

The V5 Corvus is perfect for smaller systems and amplifiers with lower current draw. Hint: It's awesome with SET tube amps.

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

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News

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

Dave Hanson,
EnjoyTheMusic.com



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

Grover Neville, InnerFidelity

"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+

"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

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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



FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

Bits from the far North...

\$13,400
mola-mola.nl



New staffer Chris Harr loves his Mola Mola, so we're going to get it in for evaluation and see (listen actually) how it sounds compared to our references from T+A, dCS, and Aqua.

Should be fun!



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

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Bathys**

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The Bathys bridge the gap
when you can't be tied to a
cord, but want premium
sound.

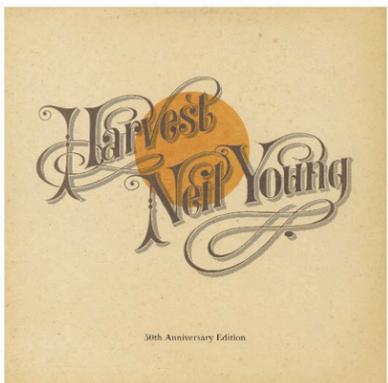
What better way to wind up the year than a musical exploration, that includes some old friends?

Here are some selections from the Qobuz "Grand Selection." What do you think?

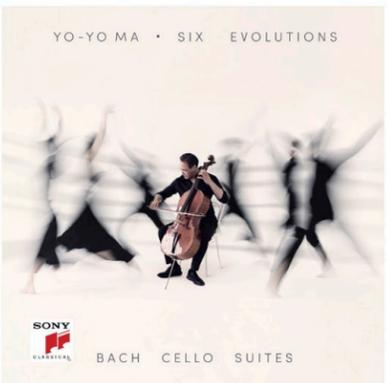
Happy new year!



Glad they're back



Now he is an old man



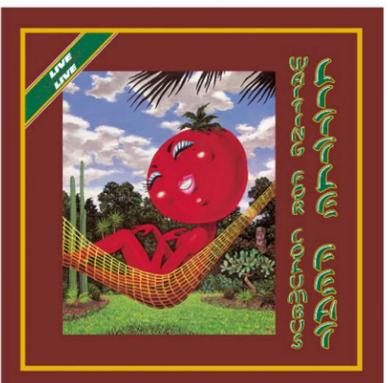
Music for salads



Very diluted



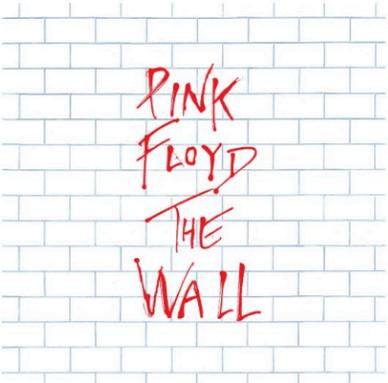
151 Proof



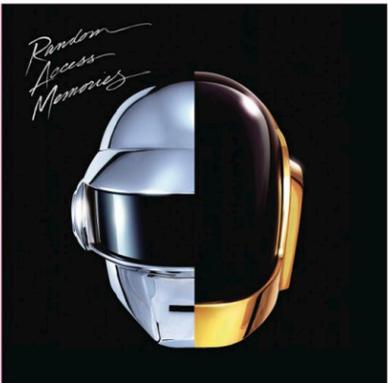
Just right



You know you want it

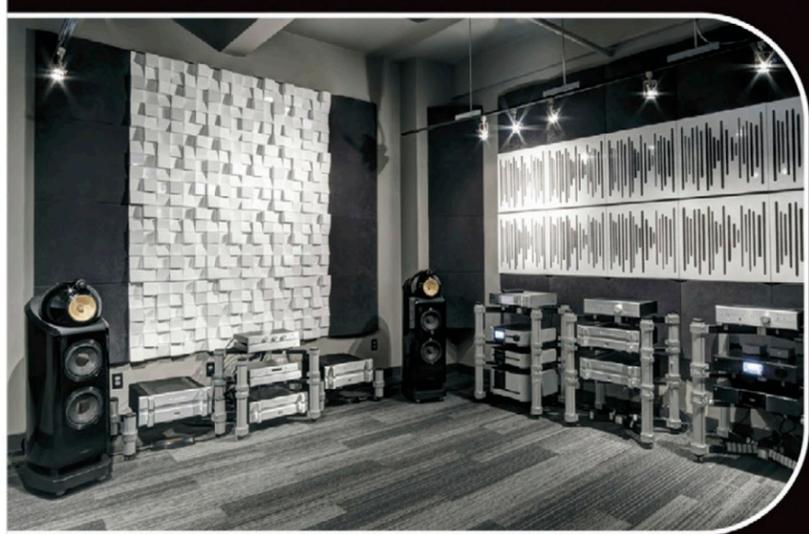


Still can't listen to all 4 sides



Happy, happy, joy, joy

50 BRANDS
8 DEMO ROOMS
1 LOCATION



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.

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TONE115.073

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

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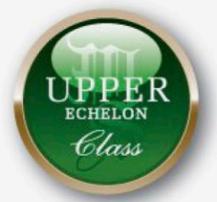
Eliminating Vibration

\$229
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If you have a turntable that lacks suspension, and you're having acoustic feedback issues, the ZaZen II is very effective and very affordable. They are great for your tube preamps too!



— Formula xHD rev. 2 —



“MAGICAL EXPERIENCE”

“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

aquahifi.com

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Featuring that inviting sound that Cardas is famous for, in a world of mega-pricey IEMs, these are our publisher's favorite to to, must pack.

TONE115.082



"The new statement wire from Audience proved worthy of its name. Led by a full-throated midrange, highly focused imaging, and a 'you are there' transparency, frontRow summoned up the electric excitement of the live concert experience like few cables Neil Gader has experienced. Dimensionality, always a strength with Audience cabling, was even more well defined. Audience's top-notch wire, although not inexpensive, seemed boundless in its responsiveness, speed, and musicality. Highly recommended for systems of superior resolution."

Neil Gader
The Absolute Sound Magazine, Issue 325
reviewing the **Audience frontRow cables**.



audience

audience-av.com

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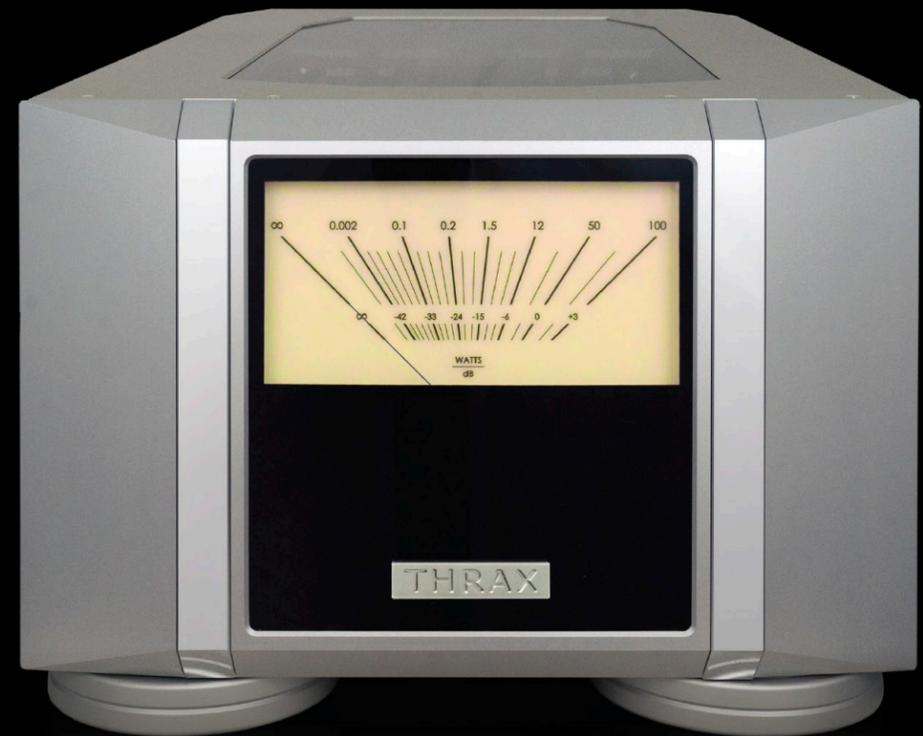
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But you can't have it...



Nordost's ODIN Gold speaker cable *starts* at \$55,000 for a 1.5 meter pair. But who has speaker cables that short? No bother, \$8,000 per per additional *half* meter.

So it's not like you can't have it, but precious few of us can have it.

Hmmmm.

That being said, Nordost makes fantastic cables that are in the reach of mere mortals.

nordost.com

aqua
acoustic quality



Dominio Digitale

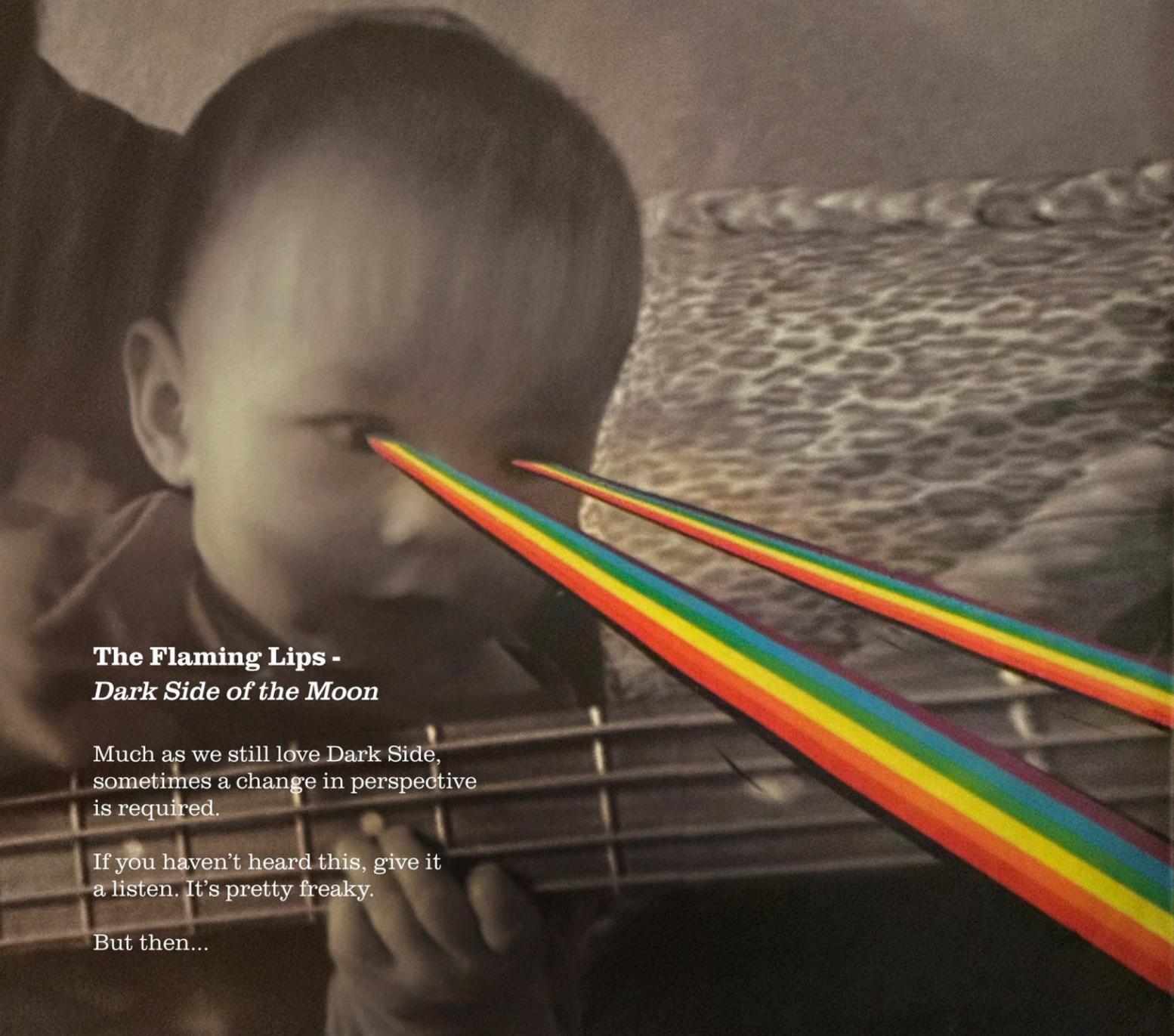
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INHOUSE

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Much as we still love Dark Side, sometimes a change in perspective is required.

If you haven't heard this, give it a listen. It's pretty freaky.

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"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



x

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DTMB

Dealers That Mean Business

We'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 an appointments only model, 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 retail 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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Vestal, New York - Audio Classics

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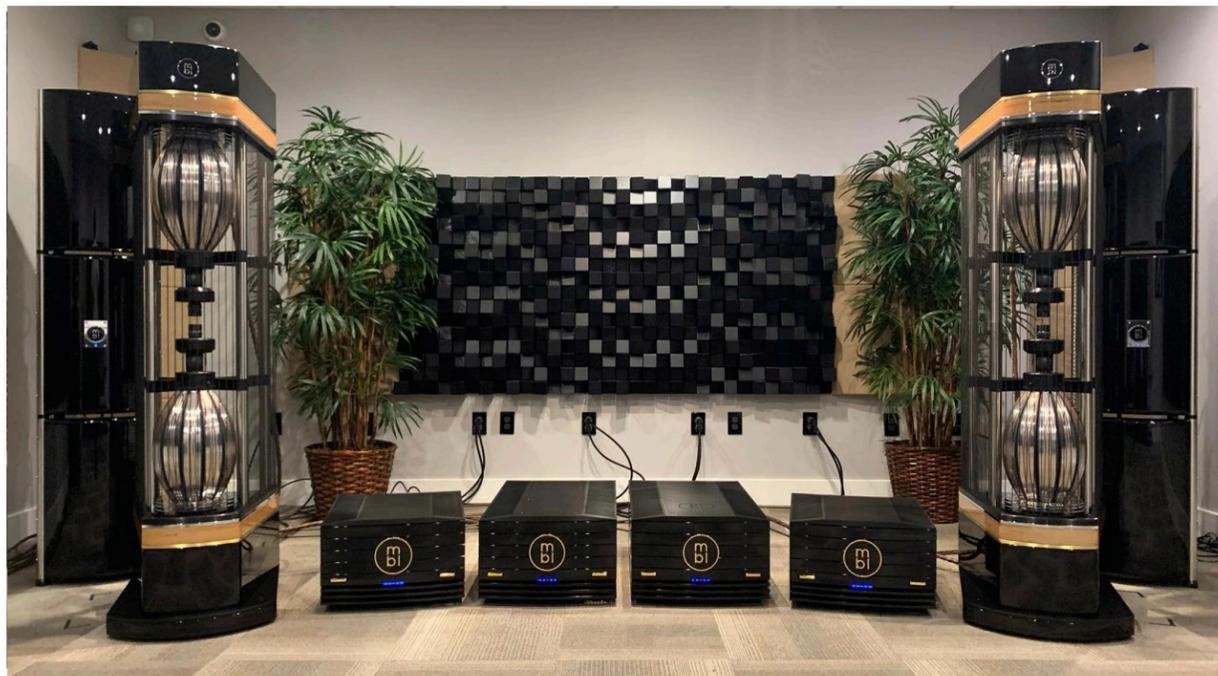
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Club Mix compilation expert, Scott Tetzlaff's theme for this playlist is "a quick tour of the Middle East and North Africa via flying carpet."

Bust out the hookah and fluff the cushions...



ASADI - Caspian

Beats Antique, The Spy From Cairo - Desert Dream (remix)

The Spy From Cairo - Nafas

Balkan Beat Box, Nickodemus - Adir Adirim (Nickodemus Remix)

Beats Antique - Beauty Beats

Zeb - Balkany & Flowers

Volkan Uca, Merih Gurluk - Istanbul (Radio Mix)

Dreamers Inc., Billy Esteban - Alladin's Wish

Tebra - Suton

Tebra - Istok

New Sound Experience - Ship of the Desert

Nickodemus - Cleopatra in New York

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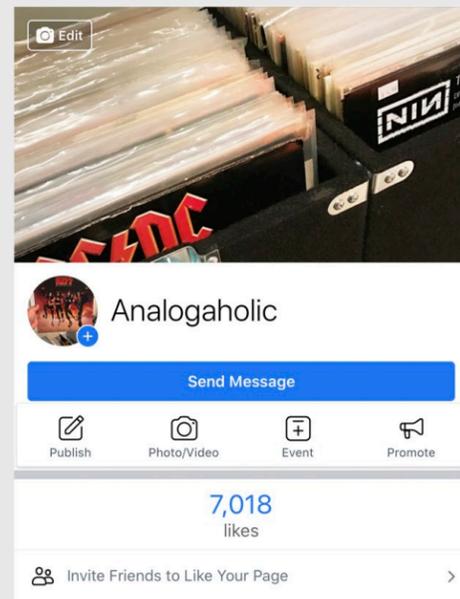
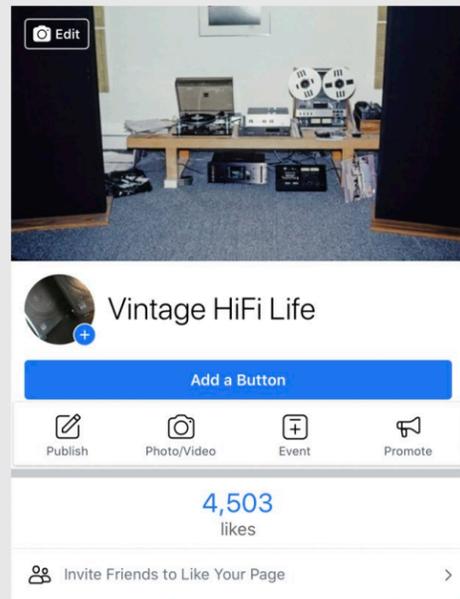
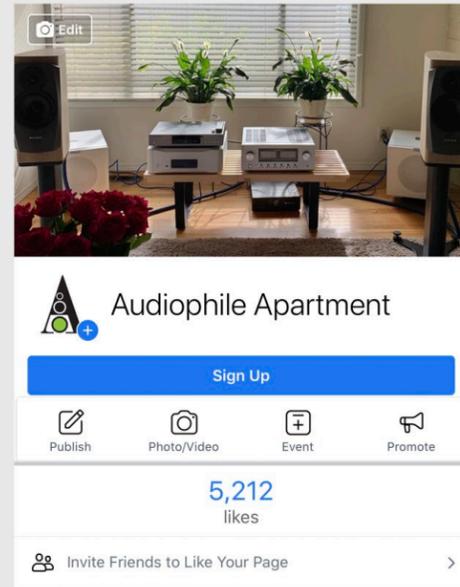
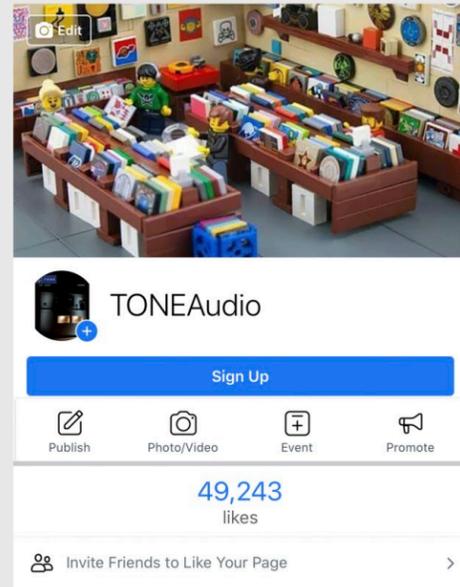
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Here they are with links. Just click on the page that interests you most. We look forward to hearing from you when you have a spare moment.



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Next issue, **116:**

Next issue...it's 2023!

This has been a pretty crazy year, but thanks for spending time with us in 2022.
More to come next year.

As always, drop on by our Facebook and Instagram
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T O N E