

Trust Your Ears



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

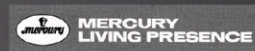
She worked closely with her husband, recording industry pioneer C. Robert (Bob) Fine. He provided his music-driven engineering expertise and offered a constant stream of innovations in equipment and techniques. Together, they set out to tape a series of classical recordings that were as closely faithful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

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

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



Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the first Mercury Living Presence Recording.
Entire Digital Catalog on all major streaming platforms soon.
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SVSound.com

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

There's no question how much of a part Traffic and the legendary members that went on to be a big part of music history, after one of rock's first major "supergroups" disbanded.

So what a better way to start the issue, than to spin some classic Traffic?

BTW, the recent 180g masters are very good, should you care to revisit these records, or perhaps, yours are worn out?

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Michael Fremer, Stereophile, May 2020



When Music Matters



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TONE

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Cover Story

The **Harbeth** C7ES-3 XD Speakers

A long-time favorite returns..



57

Shhh....

We celebrate low level listening with **GE-Audio**, Vintage **Sansui**, and a little help from **Nakamichi**.



23

(and on...)

Playlists

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

Sponsored By Qobuz

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Speakers, speakers and more speakers, great and small.

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The Audiophile Apartment

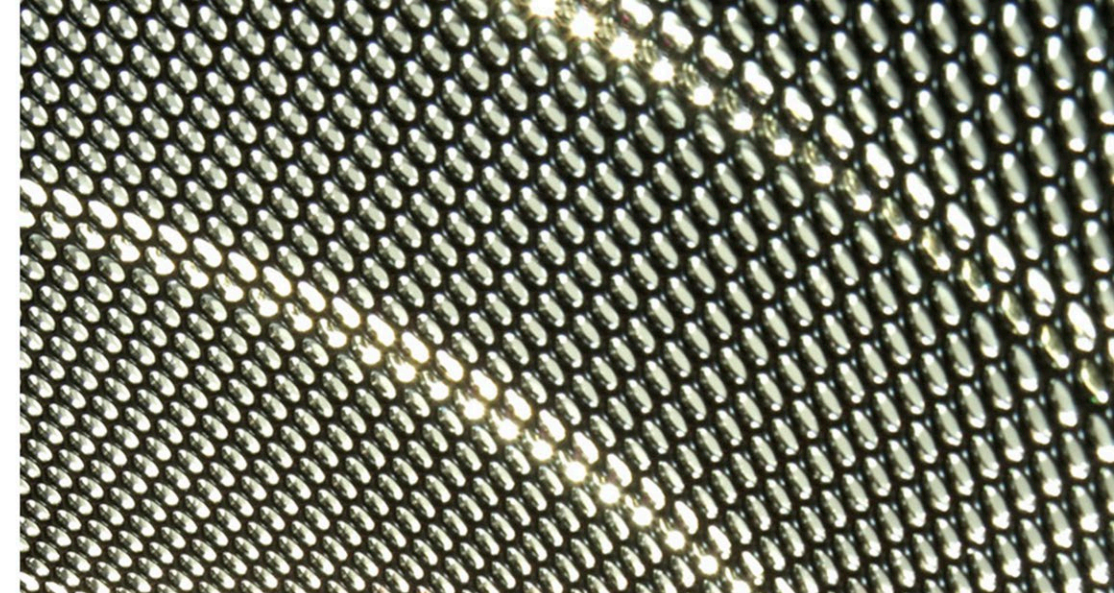
We've been spending a lot of time with the **Focal** Kanta no.1 speakers. And it's been lovely.

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Lawrence Devoe fills us in on his new MartinLogan's

The ESL-13A



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MINE: It Should be Yours

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

101

Swill

Enough hifi, let's have a beer! Comedian Cam VanDerHorst puts a twist on bubblegum. Sponsored by Cardas Audio

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Dealers That Mean Business

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

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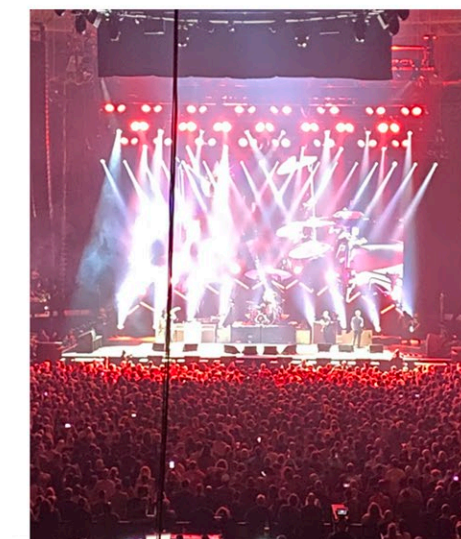
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Links to the gear (and our advertisers) in this issue.

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Last Word

Walk a few hundred miles in my shoes...



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Colleen English goes bi-coastal to catch the Foo Fighters in NYC. Our publisher looks back on his first show and an old friend.

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Can't Get it Out of my Head

Emily Duff is back with some great tunes she can't stop playing. (and singing along with!)



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Future Tense

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



Harbeth XD

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

Jeff Dorgay *Tone Audio* on the C7 XD



603-880-4434



what's inside:



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More Analog...

Kevin Wolff takes the drivers seat at Cartridge Dude this issue, giving us his take on the special, new version of the Dynavector 17DX!

Dynavector

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what's inside:



MERIDIAN Digital Converter 263 $\Delta\Sigma$

Power



EQ



Lock



44kHz



25

Old School...

While we remain on our decluttering crusade, Jerold O'Brien finds an interesting relic in a closet, tucked up on a shelf...

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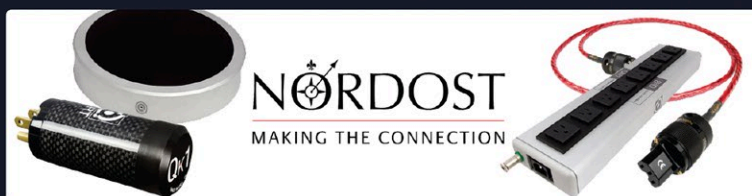
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new arrivals...

Karolyn Faras joins us at the curator of a new page called "Merch Table," sharing her enormous collection of music memorabilia. Having grown up with parents that were great singers, and three older brothers that were all music enthusiasts (and who forced her to listen to "Freebird" daily, how could she not end up a music lover?

Today, Faras has a major music collection, an incredible hifi system, and a great guitar collection of her own. We look forward to sharing some of her treasures with you.





Cover Shot:

The latest version of Harbeth's Compact 7 takes the cover spot this issue.

Captured with the Nikon D800 at ISO 100. 4 seconds/f11 with a vintage Nikkor 35mm f2.0 lens.



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With a sculpted aluminum frame and patented IsoAcoustics integrated isolators, the Aperta Sub introduces a new standard in acoustic isolation for subwoofers. The Aperta Sub decouples the subwoofers from the supporting surface to prevent the physical transfer of energy that excites the supporting surface, causes room rattle and disturbs your neighbors.

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no.107

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

This wasn't exactly the note I had in mind.

I found out the morning of May 25 that my oldest friend had lost his battle with brain cancer. I knew this day was coming, but somehow, as many of you who have lost friends and loved ones know, it never makes it easier. As a public service announcement, I urge all of you to stay on top of cancer screening, no matter your age or gender. My good friend Al did not and paid the ultimate price.

He was one of my oldest friends.

50 years is a long time to know someone. We were lab partners in electronics class for all four grades of high school, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. He helped me build my first amplifier, so our music and audio adventures run deep. He was the dude I went to see the first rock concert with – Deep Purple, at the Milwaukee Auditorium in November of 1974. I learned how to drive in his 55 Chevy, and we used to listen to a lot of Kiss, Springsteen, and Blue Oyster Cult cruising around in that car with its Craig cassette deck and Jensen 6 x 9s pounding.

I can't tell you how many pairs of really heavy speakers, and amplifiers we carried up and down numerous flights of stairs over the years. And I remember the day he bought a massive Pioneer 9500II integrated amplifier, Technics 1200 and a pair of Cerwin-Vega 15" 2-way speakers. This time it was my turn to return the favor, doing some heavy lifting.

Al knew staffer Jerold O'Brien, but more in a peripheral way – rarely were all three of us in the same room at the same time, but we had another good friend, Steve, that tagged along to numerous concerts, record buying excursions and long motorcycle rides. We definitely had our share of Hunter H. Thompson worthy adventures. That's Al, Steve, and I in Cannon Beach, Oregon about 15 years ago. The time truly does fly past.

So, my most humble apologies for this issue being a bit late. If you've been following my personal page on Facebook, you know it's pretty much a few pics of Pam and I, along with some general silliness from time to time. I tend to not share much truly personal stuff, but this has really shaken me to the core.

Give your friends a hug, put on your favorite album, and hold a lighter up to the sky. And please, get your checkups.

Thank you.



There's just something about mid 80s prog always catches our publisher's attention. Mix in some Phil Collins and who can resist?

If you happen to remember Brand X, here's a few tracks...



Unorthodox Behaviour – Unorthodox Behaviour
Euthanasia Waltz

Moroccan Roll – Disco Suicide
Malaga Virgen

Masques – The Poke

Slow Turning – Slow Turning
It Feels Like Rain

Livestock – Nightmare Patrol
Ish

Product – Don't Make Waves
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Do They Hurt? – Noddy Goes to Sweden
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Timeline – Drum Solo



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Digital From the UK: Meridian's 263 $\Delta\Sigma$

Much more than with any other component, digital processors become "vintage" in a hurry.

Yet, there are a few classics still out there, that can be had at a low cost, that challenge today's budget players. While the current crop of entry level DACs can decode high-resolution files, and some can even stream, you'd be surprised at the level of musicality when decoding 16/44.1 files, these older processors bring to the table.

Meridian's 263 is one such unit.

MERIDIAN Digital Converter 263 $\Delta\Sigma$

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EQ

Lock

44kHz



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"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

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One fine pre-Covid day, I strolled in to Echo Audio for a random visit, and there it was. Staring right at me. Back in the early 90s I was still using a PS Audio Digital Link, and Meridian was a big step up, even though digital prices were clearly on the way down. \$895 for the Meridian was not a crazy expenditure by any means. Back then, there were still only a few players with digital outputs, (mostly RCA SPDIF, or Toslink optical) and even fewer dedicated transports. Meridian did make a matching model 200 transport for \$1,495.

TAS's Robert Harley (then at Stereophile) went into great depth about the technical innovation under the hood of this compact processor.

I had to buy it.



Enjoy the Experience



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MERIDIAN Digital Converter 263 $\Delta\Sigma$

Power

EQ

Lock

44kHz

Sometimes the best plans go awry. That small Meridian processor sat on the shelf a lot longer than anticipated. It took a long stint of “spring cleaning” to get it down off the shelf and into a system.

Though a \$900 Pro-Ject DAC will play 24/192 files and work as a Roon endpoint (which is incredibly ironic, considering the Roon guys used to work at Meridian) this DAC does a straight up job with 16/44.1.

Out in our garage system, connected to a Cambridge Audio CD transport, and a freshly re-capped Marantz 2270 receiver, it delivers the goods. It's slightly mellow sonic signature offers an almost analog-like presentation.

You can probably find a clean one for \$250. Not bad at all.

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SU-R1000 Reference Class Digital Integrated Amplifier

ELAC's Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52

Precious Price/Performance.

\$599/pair
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Usually, we save our conclusions about a piece of gear until the end of a review. In this case, at \$599, we'll just spill it: The Elac Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52 offers terrific performance exceeding expectations for its price point substantially. The tiny Elac's handily earn their place among TONEAudio's 2021 Exceptional Value Award winners.

What's inside counts

Lifting each 7.28" x 13.62" x 10.83" speaker from their shipping box – at 18 pounds each – hints at the hardy components and bracing within. Unwrapped, these speakers' matte black finish and a non-descript boxy cabinet won't inspire the speaker's new owner with a dazzling first impression visually. To maintain a lower price point for prospective owners, it's clear that Elac packed in a lot of goodness where it counts most – the sonics.

Despite their small size, the speakers sport a 3-way design. A one-inch soft dome tweeter resides in the middle of a four-inch aluminum cone midrange driver. Below that, a 5.25-inch woofer, also made of aluminum, pumps out the lower frequencies. Elac suggests the speakers can faithfully reproduce from 46Hz to frequencies well above the range of human hearing.





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Great sound around a G...

As monitors, the Uni-Fi 2.0s require owners to elevate them so that tweeters reside at ear level when seated. Since the bass port is on the speaker's front, one can place the speakers on a shelf or cabinet. However, it's essential to give the speakers some room to breathe for the best sonics. Elac says maintaining about two feet of space between the speaker and the rear wall for optimal bass response. During our evaluation, the speakers remained stand-mounted, still offering surprisingly robust bass for such a small monitor, even when moved a few more feet out into the listening room.

ELAC Uni-Fi 2.0

Uni-Fi 2.0 Bookshelf Speaker
Designed by ELAC
Model: UB52-BK

Assembled in China



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In my case, placement involving about eight feet of speaker separation, roughly 15 degrees of toe-in, and ten feet of distance from the listening chair, gave them a great spot from which to sing. However, since everyone's room is unique, what works well acoustically in this listening space may not be ideal for you. Be sure to invest the time to experiment with speaker placement to let the Elacs perform to their full potential.

While the Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52 speakers do quite well as a stereo pair, surround-sound enthusiasts can appreciate them as rear speakers accompanying a matching Elac center channel and larger floor standing Uni-Fi 2.0 speakers up front for deeper bass. A full range of subwoofers is also available.



What's upstream?

Elac suggests pairing the speakers with an amplifier providing 140 watts into 6 ohms. The solid-state Pass Labs X-150.8 amp and tube-based Conrad Johnson ART 150 amp on hand both deliver 150 watts into an 8-ohm load, so we were right in the ballpark.

Having extra power available allows the aluminum drivers to produce well-rendered and punchy sound from low to volume without strain.

While few people would pair \$549 speakers with the level of upstream components used in our test systems, when fed with a high-quality audio signal, the speakers do a rather miraculous job stepping up to the challenge, though.

Should you choose to bring a pair of Elacs home, don't make any judgment about their sound until they've had several days of break-in time. Over time they mellow out to a more neutral-sounding voice.

Further Listening

We put the Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52 through their paces with a breadth of musical genres ranging across jazz, electronic dance music, reggae, acoustic performances, and more. Frankly, they did a great job reproducing all of them. They offer plenty of oomph when music dictates, paired with a beautiful midrange. Those preferring pounding and pronounced bass should not expect a monitor-sized speaker to deliver that. However, the Elacs maintain a tight grip across their useful lower frequency range.

Engineered for Reality

Testing

Wireworld

Cable Technology

was founded with the unique mission of perfecting audio cables through objective listening tests.

Far more revealing than normal cable comparisons, these tests compare cables to virtually perfect direct connections between components. Robert Harley, editor of *The Absolute Sound*, described this "Cable Polygraph" as, "illuminating insight into exactly how each cable affects the sound."

Technology

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

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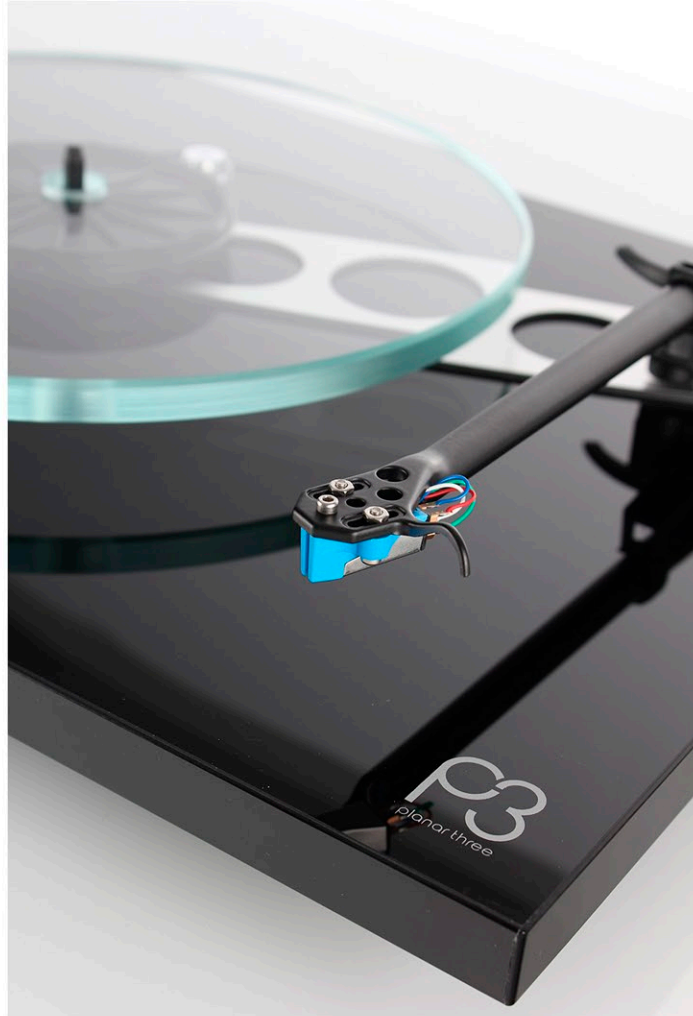
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Great sound around a G...

The UB52's provide a very nicely-rendered music portrayal with considerable detail. That strength becomes a double-edged sword in some instances. During some songs, the Elacs revealed some high-frequency edginess. For example, while saxophones render with a good level of realism, powerful high notes could cross slightly into the realm of stridency. The reference amplifiers on hand to pair with the Elacs offer a sound signature that's a touch toward the warmer side.

Our publisher tested the speakers paired with more analytical amps. Our combined experience shows electronics with a more laid-back voice prove the best match for the UB52s. Of course, different listeners have different sonic preferences, so there's no right or wrong answer here. A nice vintage tube amp is magic with these speakers, where a vintage solid-state receiver will probably not be the answer.

When properly placed, the speakers do a very good job of melting into their soundstage. A solid central image gives life to vocalists and other instruments engineered into the broader soundstage render well, too.

At \$599, the Elac Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52 speakers nail the fundamentals, offering a great voice to build your system around, with plenty of room to expand. The front port makes them extremely versatile in terms of placement too. Whether you need to put them on a bookshelf, or have the luxury to put them out in the listening room on stands, they will fit into your space.

Summing up

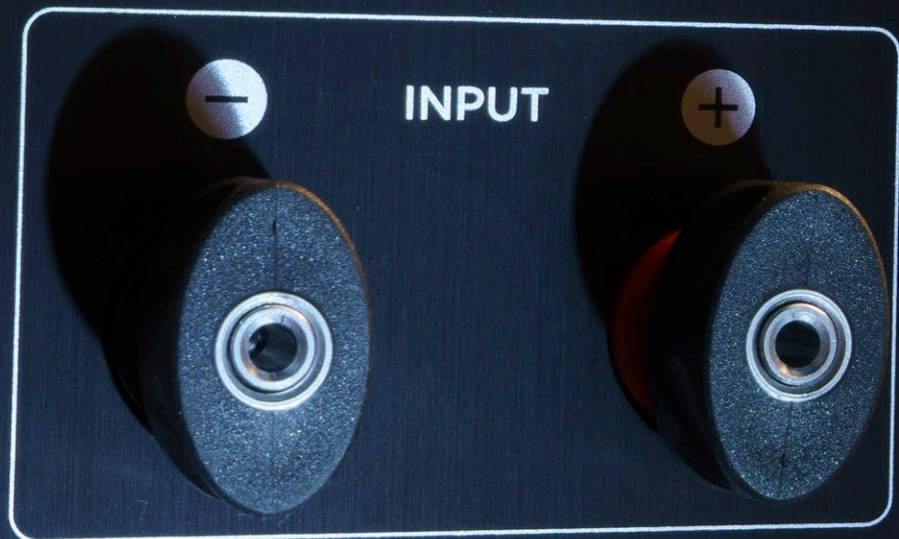
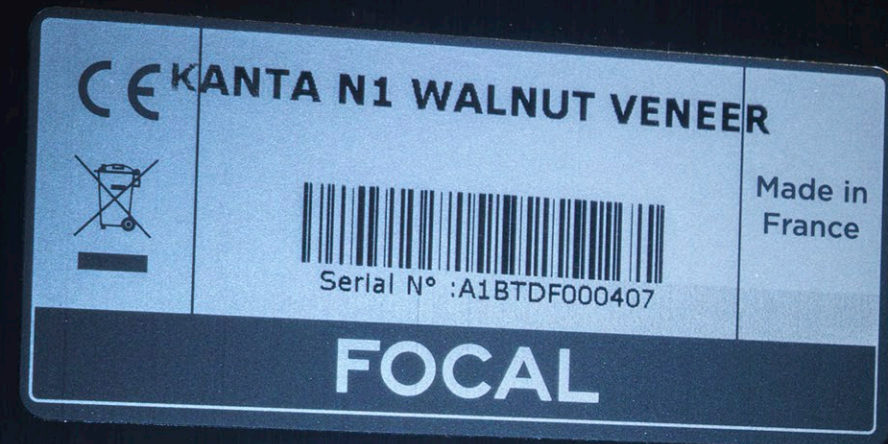
Those seeking an economical and great-sounding monitor will find the Elac Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52 speakers an excellent choice with the right upstream components. Kudos to Elac for bringing such a marvelous speaker within the financial reach of so many who love music. If you're new to the game, this is an excellent place to start.

Veteran audiophiles would do well to consider a pair for a second system too.

Elac Uni-Fi 2.0 UB52

MSRP: \$599
www.elac.com





Focal Kanta no.1

\$6,590/pair

focal.com

Focal makes a number of different speaker ranges, but their top three are Utopia, Sopra, and Kanta.

Each of these lines have their own sound, their own personality, their own design ethos, yet they all pull from Focal's huge pool of engineering and manufacturing ability.

Few speaker manufacturers have this level of depth, yet Focal manages to leverage their core technologies in a truly fantastic way.

Having had the opportunity to visit the Focal factory and see this all take place is an amazing journey.

Variations on the theme

Our review pair arrives with the matte front baffle and wood cabinet, with a number of different options, including the colored front baffle you see below. By only doing a major finish option on the front baffle, it keeps manufacturing time and cost down - part of which contributes to the lower cost, going from the Sopra range to Kanta.

Don't be fooled for a minute, these are pure Focal, through and through, from the binding posts to the beryllium tweeter technology.

All three Kanta speakers, (no.1, no.2 and no.3) share the same tweeter - which is unique to the line. Going up the range provides more power in the lower registers, yet maintains a family sound.

This is good for a number of reasons. Should you want to mix Kantas in a multichannel system, or if you ever feel the urge to trade up. The sound you've grown accustomed to will be preserved.

There will just be more of it.



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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Sopras get a little easier to set up, and easier to drive, where the Kanta is very freindly in terms of amplification they are used with. No doubt the Focal and Naim engineers figured that the Naim Uniti series would be a perfect match for these speakers. (and they are)



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We've got a more extensive reivew of the Kanta on the TONE website, and while we achieved great results with Naim's Uniti Star and our own Uniti Atom, these speakers mate well with everything, tube or solid-state.

A number of factors are at work here. Listening side by side to the Kantas (while we had Sopra 3 and Stella Utopia EMs on hand) reveals them to have a slightly warmer, more tonally saturated sound out of the box.

The dynamic immediacy of the Focal beryllium tweeter technology is still here, however it is a bit softer in rendition as the two models up the chain.

The good news, is that these speakers are easier to set up and optimize. However, they don't resolve as much dynamic scale or fine tonal detail as the more upscale Focals. As it should be. Yet the Kanta no.1 still has more than enough resolution to show the differences between all of the amplifiers we used for evaluation.

These speakers still need a bit more attention to detail in setup than most designs based on a soft-domed tweeter, but you will be rewarded!

Used within the context of a modest sized room, and some solid speaker stands, the Kanta no.1 is able to deliver solid bass response indeed. Most small space dwellers will probably not even long for a subwoofer.

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Late Night Garage Playlist -Jeff Dorgay

Cam's been busy getting married, and to an extremely lovely person we might add. So, he's a little preoccupied.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, so the recent acquisition of an AKAI 8-track deck has me working on the 2002, playing 8-tracks, but it kinda goes with the Marantz 2270.

This issue, I hit the motherlode, with a full case of tapes, including a Jethro Tull tape still in the shrink wrap. Made me think of trading the 2002 in on a Camaro. A Bitchin' Camaro.



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



JourneymanAudiophile

by Lawrence Devoe
photos courtesy of MartinLogan

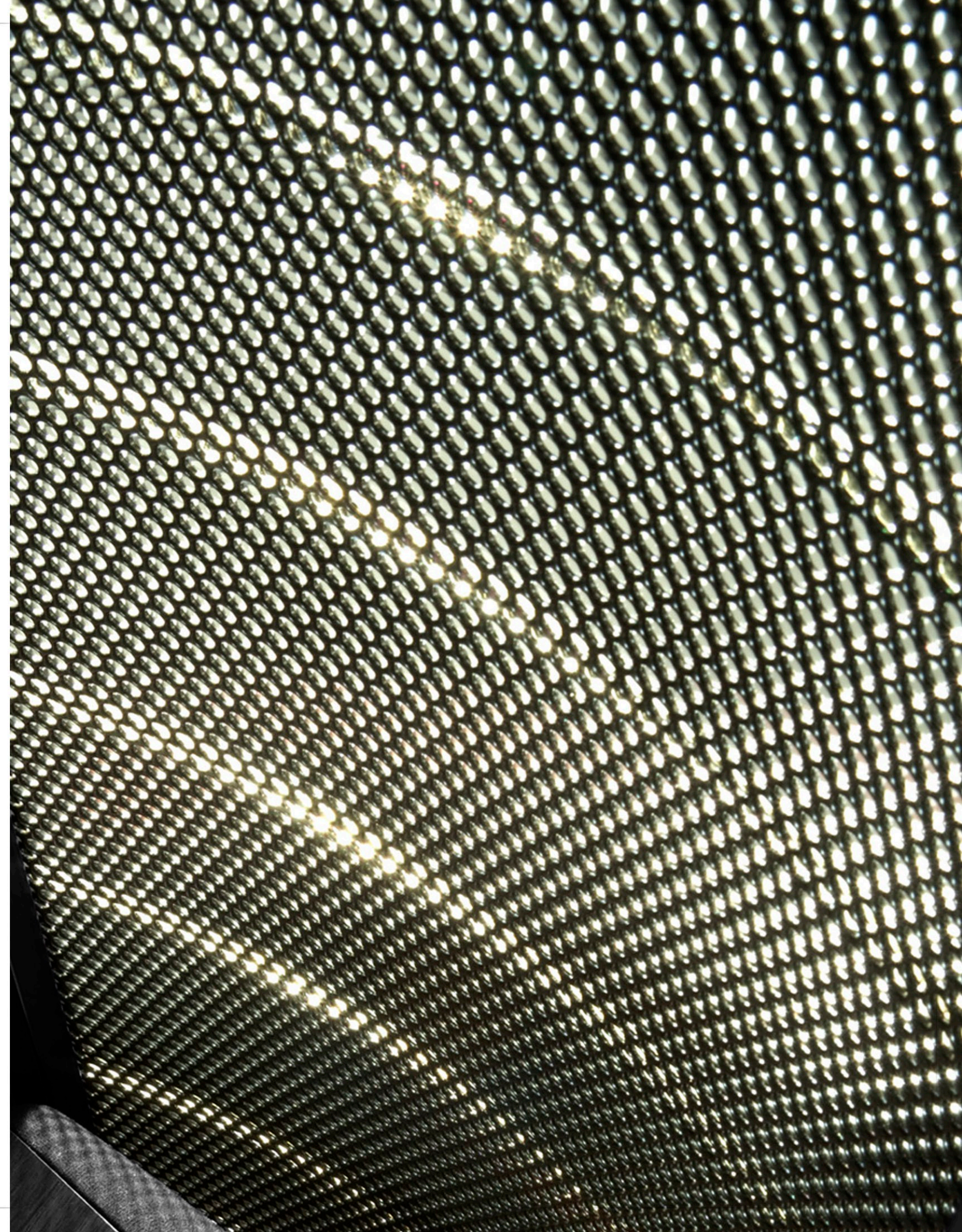
MartinLogan Expression ESL 13A

Martinlogan.com
\$14,998.98/pair

P

lease don't let my wife know about this, but I have enjoyed a four-decade long affair—that is with electrostatic loudspeakers (ESLs)! This “affair” started in the late 1970s with a pair of Koss Model 1/As, followed by Acoustat Model 2+2s, the humongous Acoustat Spectra 66s, and the Sanders Model 10 ESLs. I bought my first pair of Martin Logan ESLs—the Ascent-i's—a hybrid design in 2003 that gave way to the Summits in 2005. In 2009, a pair of the original CLXs displaced the Summits in my main system and have never left.

A few years later, I recognized the need for a second system to evaluate gear, that due to prices or specs, would not have matched up well with my Rolls Royce of a reference system. This second system has become the one I use most often to review equipment which, in the present case, is a pair of Martin Logan Expression ESL13A speakers. While these speakers are billed as the second entry in the second tier of ML's Masterpiece Series, as I soon discovered, they are anything but second rate.



Journeyman Audiophile

System Two's audio chain consists of a Pass Labs XP-12 line stage, XP-15 phono stage, and XA-30.8 stereo amplifier. Music sources include a Sooloos Control 10 digital music server, a PS Audio PerfectWave CD transport DirectStream DAC combo, and a VPI HRX turntable with a JMW 12.7 tonearm and Clearaudio Stradivari V.2 stereo cartridge.

Expression ESL 13A Speakers Arrive

The Expressions resemble the long-departed Summits, but the new speakers are much heavier, so getting them into my house was definitely a two-man job. Aided by a friend, the Expressions were uncrated and hooked up in my listening room in about 20 minutes. My System Two enjoys a cheerful 18' by 12' sunroom with two skylights, large panels of windows on one side and three wood-framed glass-doors on the other side. It opens directly into a smaller (14' x 10') sitting room. Sound treatment consists of a pair of ASC Tube Traps in the corners behind the speakers, three pairs of EchoBuster panels, a large area rug, and an assortment of potted plants placed throughout the room. A decorative tri-hinged panel is in the opening between the two rooms, about 8 feet behind the speakers. What I like most about this room is how most recordings benefit from a lot of air moving in an extended open space.

Weighing 103 lbs each, the Expression ESLs are a rather imposing 61.5" tall. The CLS Generation2 XStat electrostatic transducer, encased in an extruded aluminum alloy Ultra-Rigid AirFrame Blade Design, accounts for 44" of their height. Width and depth are 13.4" and 27.5," respectively. The bottom compartment houses a pair of 10" PoweredForce Forward woofers, described as cast basket, high excursion, rigid aluminum cones with extended throw assembly.



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The woofers are mounted in a non-resonance chamber format with one woofer facing forward, and the other backward, cross over at 300 Hz and have a 24-bit Vojtko™ DSP-engine, a Vojtko advanced topology crossover, and a pair of Class D amplifiers delivering 300 watts to each woofer. Anthem Room Correction (ARC Genesis) software smooths out the woofer's response and can be downloaded from the MartinLogan website. An optional ARC kit or a MartinLogan Perfect Bass Kit (PBK) has the calibrated microphone, mic stand, and USB cables needed for this task. At a mere 100 bucks, it should be considered an essential purchase.

Each speaker's rear panel has the following connections and controls: a J45 Ethernet port tethering both speakers together for simultaneous bass equalization (or individually). A mini-USB port for connecting each speaker to a PC or Mac. An ARC status light. A pair of WBT-0703Cu 5-way binding posts. A Mid-Bass level control (+ 2dB @ 150-200 Hz), speaker status light, and Bass Level control (+ 10dB <75Hz); a panel light switch. And finally, a power cord receptacle.

The Expressions come in four standard finishes (mine were Gloss Black) and seven premium finishes ranging from Desert Silver to Rosso Fuoco.

Break-in and Placement

MartinLogan suggests a break-in period of at least 72 hours at 90dB which I extended to 100 hours. After considerable experimentation, the Expressions end up 72" apart and 40" from panel centers to the side walls with the rear-facing woofers 33" from the two-foot-tall solid partitions separating both rooms. Their centers end up being 112" from my seating position. Minimal toe-in is required to get my ears in line with the inner third of the panels.

After checking to see that the "mood lights" worked, I left them turned off. I next installed the ARC Genesis software on my MacBook Pro, using my PBK to get two reasonably smooth low-frequency roll-off curves. Fine-tuning rake, bringing the panels perpendicular to the floor improves the Expressions' imaging.

During the following weeks, the soundstage became deeper, exhibiting a floating quality similar to a live performance in a good venue.

Despite their considerable size, the Expressions do a great job disappearing during playback - a characteristic that ML speakers are known for.

The Expression Experience

Diving into the deep end of the audiophile/speaker torture test pool, J.S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565 on The Power and Glory, Volume 1 (M&K RealTime Records) is an ear opener. Resident organist Lloyd Holzgraf works the keys, pedals and stops of the Skinner-Schlicker, the world's second largest organ housed in the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. From full-throated highs to subterranean lows, the ESL 13s provide a seamless, top to bottom tonality, with a realistic spatial recreation of the church's spacious interior, no easy feat for any speaker.

Two CDs follow, both featuring voice and small ensemble, beginning with legendary oud player/vocalist Hamza El Din performing his own composition "Helalisa" from Eclipse (Rykodisc). The transparency of the oud's strings and the warmth of Hamza's voice, backed by a hypnotic dance of background percussion, was flawlessly conveyed. In sharp contrast, Alison Krauss' folksy take on "Oh Atlanta" from Now That I've Found You I clearly illustrates these speakers' ability to get the musical pace just right.



I have one major reason for playing the opening minute and a half of "Hotel California" (44.1k/16bit download) from The Eagles' *Hell Freezes Over* live album—Scott Crago's heart-stopping drumbeats. Good speakers will give you the drums' wall of sound; the Expressions gives you all of that plus the occasional alterations in pitch and intensity as Crago's palms slap the skins.

The late Bill Evans recorded relatively few solo albums and, one of his best, Bill Evans Alone (Verve Universal Distribution CD) amply demonstrates a unique ability to take a standard song, in this case "Never Let Me Go," and create

a 14-minute etude that never strays too far from the melodic line. This is a very realistic, well-balanced recording and the keystrokes, pedals, chords and harmonics of his piano convinced me that he was actually playing in my listening room.

Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* (Reference Recordings CD) as performed by Eiji Oue and the Minnesota Orchestra runs the gamut of instrumental dynamics. I got all of the big drum thwacks, the air of the woodwinds, and the weight of the massed strings that this piece contains. Weeks of listening concluded with

Journeyman Audiophile

ranother Stravinsky work, L'Histoire du Soldat (A Soldier's Tale) (Reference Recordings CD), played by eleven members of the Chicago Pro Musica most of whom were first-chair members of the Chicago Symphony. The articulation of the individual instruments in Chicago's huge Medinah Temple was exemplary.

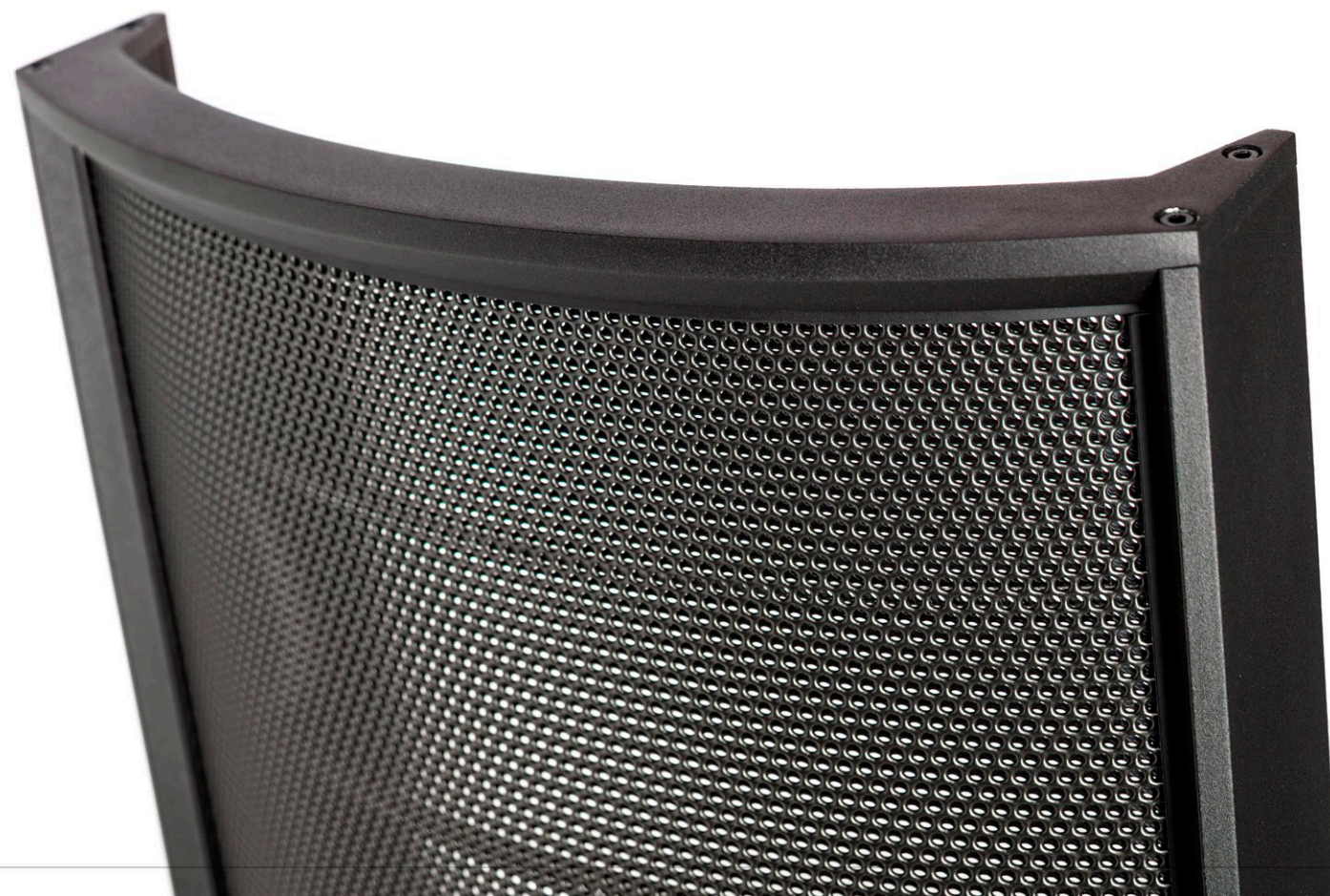
My Pass Labs XA-30.8, rated at only 60 Class A watts into 4Ω speakers, never seemed to run out of gas regardless of the demands of the source material. This was quite understandable given the Expressions' amp-friendly sensitivity of 91dB/2.83 volts/meter. The Expressions do have one idiosyncrasy: at the initial start-up, a couple of seconds pass before you actually hear the music. They then remain active long enough without any music playing for you to take a bathroom break. I was never bothered by this, but if you think you might be, you can simply recue your CD, LP or download and everything will be just fine.

Final Impressions

It has been a while since I have had a full range MartinLogan ESL hybrid in any of my systems. The Expression ESL 13As make a very strong case for how effectively ML's speaker designers have managed the challenging transition between electrostatic panels and dynamic woofers.

Having heard the Renaissance ESL 15As when they were first introduced, I can confidently say that, at \$14,999.98 per pair, the Expression ESL 13As deliver a lot of their big brother's performance at a fairly lower price. And like all ESL speakers, some of this is room dependant. If you have a smaller room

Having welcomed them into my home, they won't be leaving any time soon. Highest recommendation.



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Shh...

The fine art of low level listening
By Jeff Dorgay



We're back to the somewhat vintage thing again this issue. With a sweet sounding Sansui AU-717 integrated amplifier, that sounds particularly good at low volume, and some new speakers from Underwood HiFi that are easy to drive, it's all jake.

The AU-717 is fetching a premium price these days, and ours was no different. Lifting the cover reveals the new parts that the previous owner claims have been replaced, so we were ready to rock.

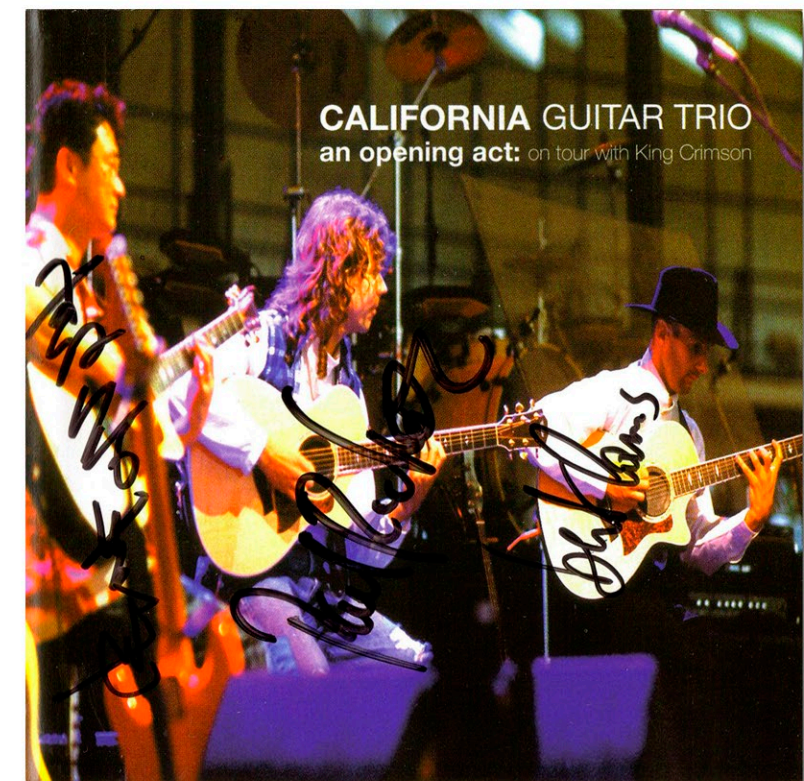
The Sansui's 90 watts per channel is way more than you'll ever need to drive the GE Audio (not a division of the refrigerator company) Teddy speakers, which have a sensitivity rating of 89db/1-watt.

However, the first few watts of the AU-717 are very sweet, and that extra power goes a long way at controlling those 10-inch woofer cones.



This pair (along with the Nakmichi MR-1 direct drive cassette deck on top) are not quite our usual pristine vintage samples. Both of these have had some use but they still work and sound great.

The Nak deck has great specs, thanks to its direct drive transport and three head system. Best of all, because it's a pro deck (thanks to occasional contributor Todd Sage's cleaning his studio out) it features balanced XLR connections, making it a perfect fit to run a second set of cables to the main Pass preamplifier. A Technics SL-1200 Mk. 5 rounds out the system, with digital coming from the dCS Vivaldi.



Our listening begins with the California Guitar Trio.

The album you see here is a collection of live tracks recorded when the Trio backed up King Crimson on the Thrak tour. Their rapid fire delivery and delicate fretboard work, is the perfect program material to experience with the lights and the volume down low.

Their records used to be tough to find, but now thanks to Qobuz and the other streaming services, easy to locate. Give this one a spin...

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Shh...

You heard right, we were talking cassettes before. With a large collection of pre-recorded tapes and new mix tapes being added, they sound surprisingly good at modest volume and are super convenient.

The cassette offers the same intimacy of listening to an album as the artist intended, just as a vinyl record does - down to flipping it over at the end of the side, without the chance for damage that records can when the adult beverages start flowing.

Cool as reel-to-reel decks are, the fiddle factor for casual listening is too high. The Cassette fills the void in the way nothing else can.

Laugh if you will, but if you stop over at our place for a few beers, you'll see just how fun this can be.



Cartridge Dude.

By Kevin Wolff

Keeping it in the groove.



Dynavector Karat 17DX Cartridge

\$2,250
dynavectorusa.com

I am grateful to have spent many years in the audio industry. The highpoints of this time are a long list of great friends and experiences enjoyed worldwide. If only I were able to remember them all. Fortunately, when I look back, some stand out in great detail. One such case involved the combination of great friends along with an evening of listening. The evening in question took place nearly twenty years ago and was also the first time I heard a Dynavector product. It was the famed XV-1s. Until then, I had no idea it is so large. It made the SME Series V look more like an engine dolly carrying a V8 than a tonearm suspending a high-end phono cartridge capable of resolving the most subtle detail. The pinnacle of the evening came at the end when our host brought out his 1973 Harvest Blue Label 1st pressing of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*.

I have never heard this album sound so magical. Not before, not since.

Today I have a new Dynavector Karat 17DX in front of me. The Karat 17DX is the latest iteration of the storied Karat cartridge. While not nearly as massive as the XV-1s, its shiny gold color and size are still hard to miss. The all-new body is now solid brass, employing new Samarium-Cobalt magnets versus the older Neodymium ones. The new body and magnetic structure's stated goal is to offer a more damped platform with sweeter high-frequency extension.

Cartridge Dude.

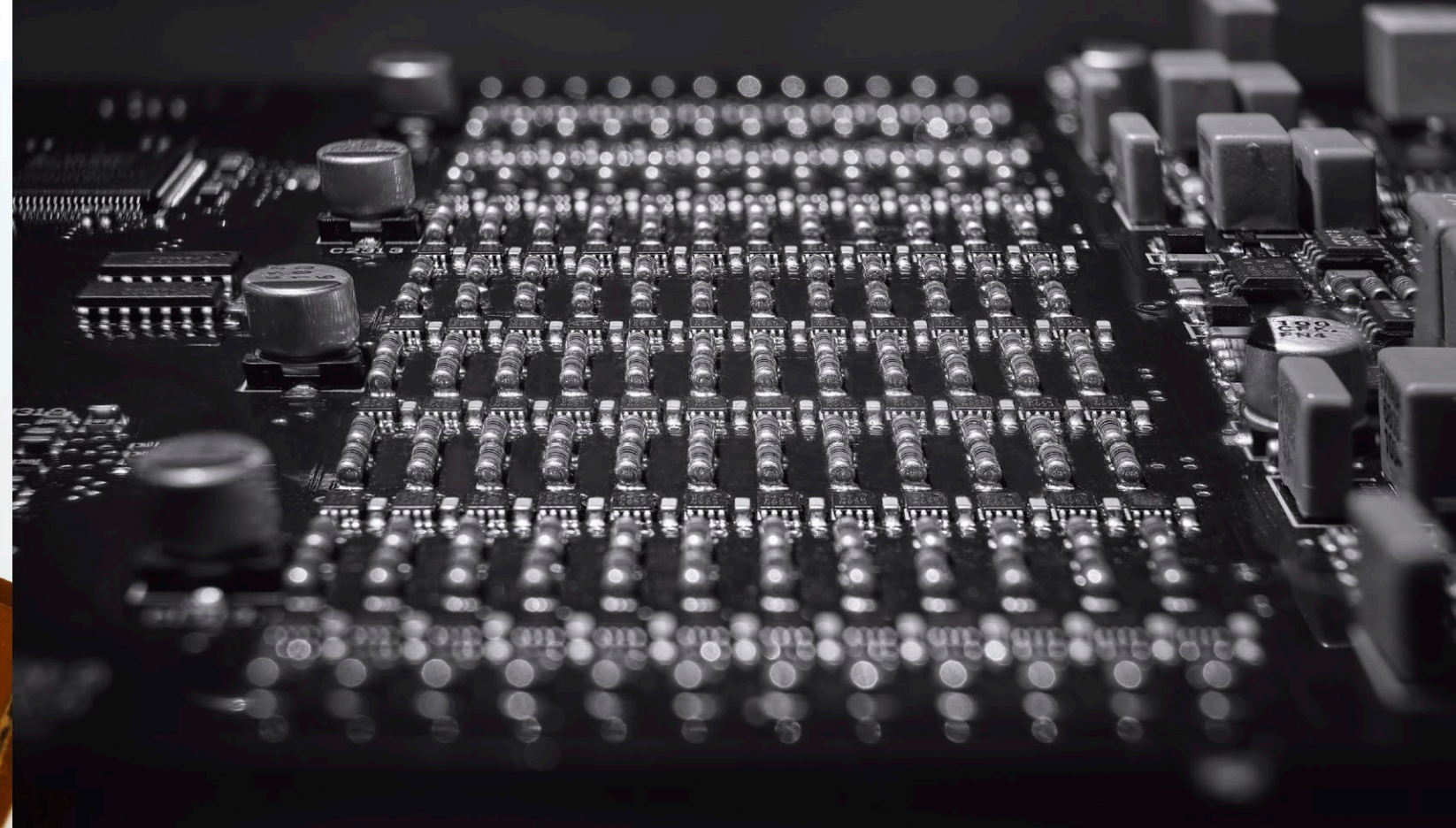
Keeping it in the groove.



The business end of the Karat 17DX is taken care of by way of a new 1.7mm Diamond cantilever and Micro-Ridge stylus. As a point of reference, the new cantilever is less than half the typical cantilever's length. The goal of this design is to reduce mass and resonance while increasing resolution simultaneously. While the new Karat looks much like its predecessor, let there be no confusion, this an all-new design.

Packaging for the Karat 17DX is simple but elegant. It has a stately but not over-the-top presentation. I particularly like the hardware supplied as I am a fan of stainless steel hardware. Dynavector provides an excellent selection of different lengths that should accommodate all but the most unusual tonearms or headshells. At 11g, the 17DX is a bit on the heavy side. As such, you may require a heavier counterweight. An additional consideration is its relatively low 0.3mV output.

This being on the lower end of the scale, even for a low-output moving-coil, the Karat 17DX will require more gain.



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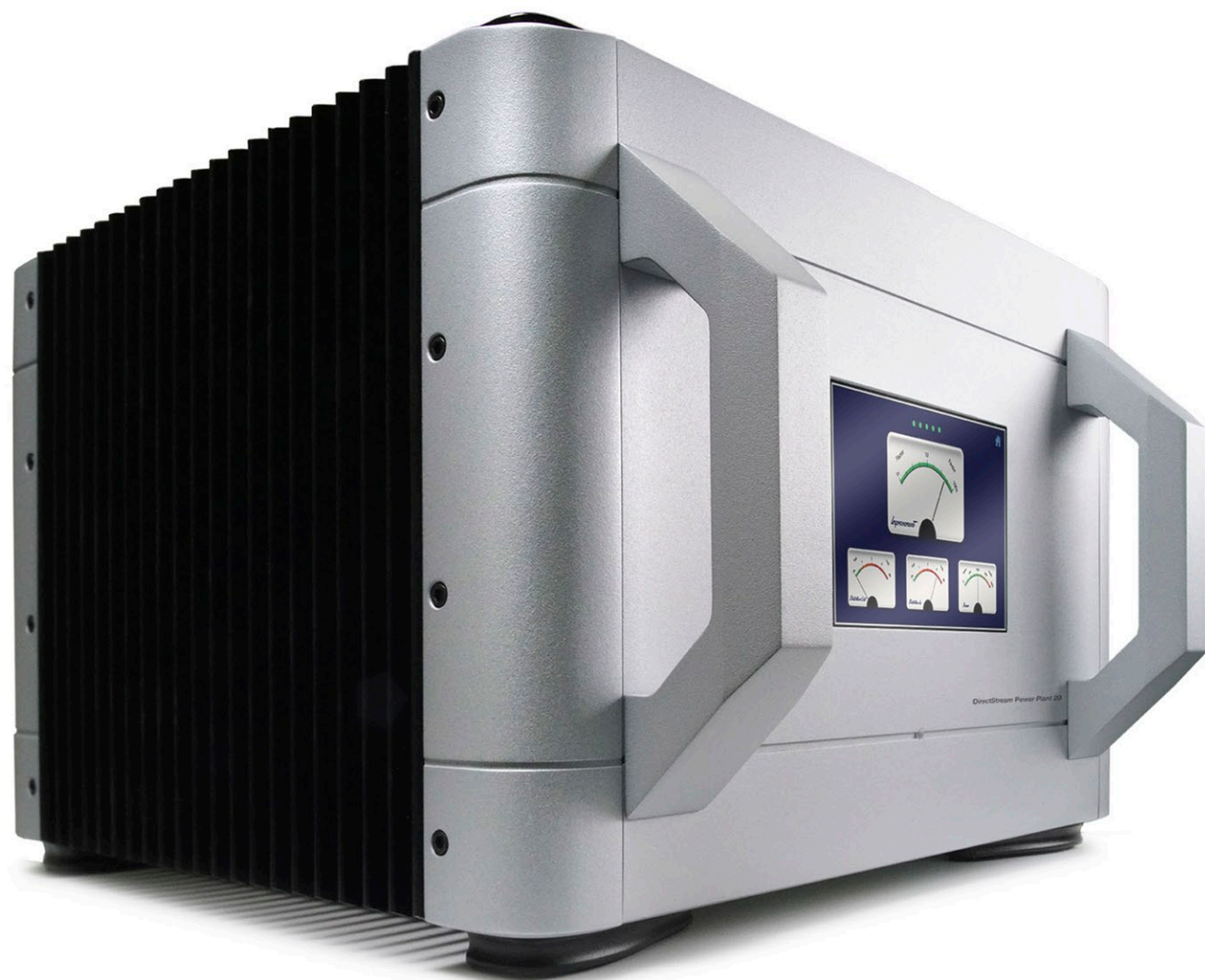
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Cartridge Dude.

Keeping it in the groove.



Mounting the Karat 17DX is straightforward and stress-free. While not as large as the XV-1s, the Karat 17DX is still substantial. This made mounting much easier for someone like me with large fingers. The clear view of the cantilever and stylus makes alignment a cinch.

I set tracking force at the low end of the recommended range of 1.8g – 2.0g. My setup method always follows the same process: vertical tracking force first, stylus rake angle next, and then work between the two finding a balance. My goal is to find the optimal balance between dynamics and resolution. The optimum adjustments landed me at 2.2g with only a slight bit of negative rake angle. Azimuth, as well as anti-skate, follows the same direct path. All in all, I find the setup of the Karat 17DX quite simple, given how responsive it is.

First up on my playlist is one of my favorite recordings, Itzhak Perlman's 1972 recording of Paganini's complete 24 Caprices. These were recorded over two days in January 1972 at Abbey Road Studios in London. I believe this is, in part, why there is such continuity from start to finish. The complete set is just over 73 minutes long, with only one break necessary to flip album sides midway through. Like the first time I listened to it, I find it mesmerizing with the Karat. Perlman's technical skills are shown in full force while simultaneously allowing the beauty and subtlety to shine through. The Karat 17DX allows me to disappear into the performance immediately

Next up is one from Blue Note's fantastic Music Matters Series of re-releases: Lee Morgan's 1968 *The Gigolo*. If I have one complaint about this reissue, it's the need for getting up so often to flip sides as it's a 45RPM pressing. Sonically this is so good that it eliminates all whining. The Karat 17DX digs right in on track one, "Yes I Can, No You Can't," delivering Bob Cranshaw's bass with just the right amount of bloom and rhythm. Most impressive is Wayne Shorter's Tenor Saxophone and, of course, Lee Morgan's trumpet. In particular, Lee Morgan's trumpet has just the right amount of bite to make it believable, avoiding slipping into a caricature. In the end, I need to spin the last song, Dizzy Gillespie's "You Go to My Head," one extra time.

Further enjoying my time with the Karat 17DX, I grab a few extra albums I typically don't use in these tests. One album is Lou Reed's, *Transformer*. Getting to the last cut on side one, as Herbie Flowers' bass line starts in on "Take a Walk on the Wild Side," really grabs my attention. The wood from his double bass rips through the house with his overdubbed fretless Fender Jazz Bass adding aid. While being carried away by the power and drive of this song's rhythm, the rest of the groove (pun intended) takes on new life I've never heard in a cartridge in this price range.



Cartridge Dude.

Keeping it in the groove.

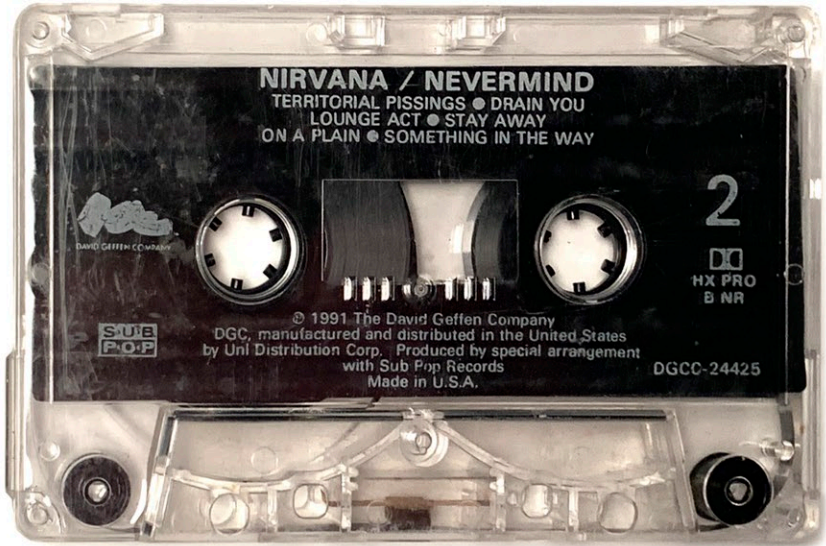


Perhaps it's a function of generation or even location. Still, I grew up in Southern California, whereas as a young adult in the early 1980s, a local band also represented local heroes. The band is Van Halen, where Eddie Van Halen and David Lee Roth reigned supreme. As I set up this cartridge, news hit that Eddie Van Halen had just passed away. Sad as this news is, some good was to come of it. I grabbed all my early Van Halen LPs (all of them through 1984) and put them through deep cleaning. While not played in decades, fun was all that would follow. The self-titled first album features the blistering "Eruption." How one person could make so much sound from one guitar at once is still impressive. From "Eruption," the album moves on to "You Really Got Me." Okay. So I don't remember breaking anything playing this when it first came out. It must have been because my system couldn't play as loud as I was playing my system today. The Karat handled this record with such skill. Now all I have to do is wait for the ringing in my ears to stop (what got broken remains a secret).

There are many reasons to like the Dynavector Karat 17DX. Sonically it is well balanced with lots of drive. Bass is tight and extended. The top-end is smooth and resolved without glare. When I tested the frequency response, I found a gentle increase in the bass peaking around 35Hz. I suppose this led to part of the fun. There are two concerns to keep in mind with the Karat 17DX. First, it is pretty heavy at the mentioned 11g. The other consideration is its limited output. You'll want a good phono-stage. With that said, this cartridge performs well beyond its price range, allowing for the investment in a bit more expensive phono stage. By improving your phono stage, you also have the added benefit should you ever find a want or need to upgrade further. I can highly recommend taking a listen to this cartridge.

Somehow the 90s is always a comfort zone. Laugh at the flannel shirts all you want, but there was some game changing music back then.

Here's a few faves we've been playing around the office on cassette, so these are full albums. Somehow it just feels right to listen to Nirvana, Mudhoney and the like, on cassette.



Nirvana - *Nevermind*

Dr. Dre - *The Chronic*

Radiohead - *OK Computer*

Oasis - *What's the Story, Morning Glory?*

Beck - *Odelay*

Nine Inch Nails - *The Downward Spiral*

Soundgarden - *Superunknown*

Wu Tang Clan - *Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*

Public Enemy - *Fear of a Black Planet*

Notorious B.I.G. - *Life After Death*

Jane's Addiction - *Ritual de lo Habitual*

Crash Test Dummies - *God Shuffled His Feet*

Mudhoney - *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge*



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The Dan Clark AEON

danclarkaudio.com
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As you read into the Dan Clark website, about their new planar driver, they use the word knurly to their approach to this design. To try and make it simple (or you can go to their site [here](http://danclarkaudio.com)), where other planar phones have a flat diaphragm that bows more during excursion, the DC V-Planar design looks more like a diaphragm from a ribbon tweeter with a semi-folded surface.

Where it differs from a ribbon driver, the DC driver doesn't have the deep folds like a ribbon, it looks more like a sawtooth wave on an O-scope trace. If you aren't one to use a scope, it just looks like a string of V's. Starting my listening with Charlie Sexton's *Under the Wishing Tree*, which features a lot of acoustic guitars and deep bass, it's easy to see how well this approach works. These are some incredibly natural sounding phones.



Though these will be referred to as “AEON 2” during the review, we are talking about the AEON 2-Noire version, which has perforated ear pads, which DCA claims tunes these phones closer to the “harman curve,” gently boosting bass and treble compared to the standard AEON closed back model. Because headphones are such a personal thing, (pun intended here) getting the perfect fit is a big part of your listening experience. Damn, if these phones don’t fit my ears perfectly. It’s like so many things; if it feels right immediately, you know you’re in for a treat.

As you unbox your AEONs, you’ll notice the quality of materials used. We’ve tried a lot of phones in this price range that are way too plastic-y. The headband and baffles are built from a titanium alloy, with aluminum and carbon fiber used throughout. Black is the only color available, but let’s face it, what doesn’t look good in black?

Looking forward, looking back

Comparing them to my ten-year old Auzenze LCD-2s, it’s a quick contrast in how far planar technology has come. Much as I love the old-school (remember headphone years are like dog years times two – this is where stuff is happening!) LCDs, the AEONs are smoother, clearer, and cleaner. Both ends of the frequency spectrum go further, it’s almost like my LCDs feel like an old pair of 80s Acoustat speakers, and the AEONs sound like a new pair of MartinLogans. (to be fair, their products have advanced as well) All the things you like about implementation of a planar phone are in both units, but the new phones are more revealing, without ever being harsh.

It’s also worth mentioning here that the team at Dan Clark Audio had some help creating the V-Planar design from Bruce Thigpen at Eminent Technology. If you aren’t familiar, Mr. Thigpen has developed a unique line of magnetic planar loudspeakers in their own right. (Not to mention, some amazing linear track tonearms) This is all exciting enough to earn the team a patent, so this isn’t just marketing double speak.

Switching to the self-titled debut from Crosby, Stills, and Nash instantly shows off the depth that these

phones are capable of. Heading straight for “Helplessly Hoping,” the AEON 2s keep these four voices, all recorded at nearly the same level, separate and distinct. You have to spend crazy money on speakers to get this. You can have it on your desk for \$899. Not bad. Not bad at all.

Getting current, the killer bass line in Holli Dior’s “Gumby” is awesome. This track is infamous for making phones distort like crazy, but the AEON 2s just roll with it. Everyone has their preferences, but I love closed back phones for this reason. They always seem to have a little more grunt on the low end. You may crave something else, but the AEON 2s will impress you with your favorite bass heavy tracks. Roon Radio sent me to DJ Sensui’s “M’s on My Mind Zawrudo’d” and that was trippy AF. Those preferring open back phones can tick the “Open” box and get the AEON 2s in an open back version.

Rather than go on with track after track, suffice to say that the AEON 2 phones have no shortcomings, and in addition to their tonal and dynamic prowess, they have great top to bottom tonal balance. A hallmark of planar speakers and phones. Just like with loudspeakers, I must confess a bias to planar drivers. The AEON 2s make for incredibly immersive listening in a way that nothing else does.

Head friendly

The AEON 2s come nicely packaged, and well built. A quick look at the carbon fiber on the back of the ear cups, the headband, and the firmness with which the cables plug in makes you feel good about the purchase. The box and case are well thought out, and very well executed, but not to the point of overkill, where you might get jumpy that too much of the purchase price went to the packaging.

Only weighing 328 grams (11.569 ounces) that’s 100 grams less than a Wendy’s Baconator. Or about as much as a Baconator with three big bites out of it. Save the empty calories and pack a pair of AEON 2s on your next trip. The light weight and durable case will make these easy travel partners.

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HeadphoneArts

Amplifier Friendly

Most listening was done with our reference Manley Absolute Headphone Amp. This seventh wonder of the tube world is fantastic, because it offers plenty of adjustment for different impedance phones, along with incredibly useful tone controls. Not to mention it looks incredible and has its own built-in headphone holder. The Absolute really enhances the desktop experience, though not everyone purchasing an \$899 set of AEON 2s will spring for a \$4,500 headphone amplifier. However if you do, you will not be disappointed in the least.

So, to be fair, we enlisted the Feliks Audio Elise (\$1,949 – also tubes) an old ALO Audio portable, and the output jack of my (very) vintage Nakamichi 600 II cassette deck. To be fair, even if you have to drive the AEON 2s with an iPad isn't awful, though to be fair, you will lose some dynamics and low frequency grunt. But if you value traveling light over audio obsession, you can probably live with plugging your AEONs right into your mobile device for short trips. That one's your call.

Additionally, there are five different cable terminations available – 2.5mm, 3.5mm 4.4mm, ¼ inch and XLR, in 1.2, 2, or 3mm lengths. A premium VIVO cable upgrade is available for \$200-\$250. Whatever system you're rocking, you'll be able to connect. Thanks to the quick disconnects at the earcups, a cable with different termination is at your fingertips, should your needs change.

Excitable boy

If you aren't a regular TONE reader, you don't know that I'm not really a major headphone enthusiast. The Dan Clark AEON 2s are really pulling me back into the fold, and this is what's so exciting about headphone tech. This is the kind of sound you would have paid quite a bit more to get, five years ago.

The lack of graininess and restriction the AEON 2s possess is spooky good. Thanks in part to their extreme comfort and light weight, with the cumbersome factor lifted, it's so much easier to enjoy the music and not feel like I have a pair of cans (the tomato soup kind, not the headphone kind) on my head. I suspect that this will go a long way to entice a potential user. Even after hours of sitting in the chair listening while editing, these are lovely headphones.

One of the things I've always found incredibly exciting about headphones is their minimal size requirements. It's easy to have three, five, ten (maybe more) pairs of phones for different moods, types of music, or just because you welcome. Whether you need a single set of headphones, or just want to add one more pair to your collection, I can't suggest these highly enough – these are an easy choice for one of our Exceptional Value Awards for 2021.



Can't Get It Out of My Head

July 4th Edition by Emily Duff

This issue, Emily Duff has some great tunes for us, and like any great songwriter, tales of personal adventure to tell. Here's the four records on her mind right now - enjoy!

When I happen upon a song called “Would You Like to Get Some Goats?” I light up like a Christmas tree!

Seriously, I kid you not. So when I stumbled on this gem from **Melissa Carper's** brand new release, *Daddy's Country Gold*, I threw that thang on the turntable and spun myself into sheer farm-raised and freshly churned, sweet cream delight. All 12 tracks are pure, old-time GOLD (just like the title says) and Melissa's voice is balm for everything that hurts us right now. Production, songwriting, performances and even the cover art will transport y'all to a kinder, gentler time when the threat of deadly viruses, vaccines and communist plots...oh wait, that was all happening back then too!!!

Perhaps that's why this gorgeous music exists. To right the wrongs and tame the evil spirits of outside forces looking to kill our Americana shuffle-boogie beauty! Melissa Carper gets my vote for Country Record of The Year for *Daddy's Country Gold*, cause it's Real Country and there's Pure Gold on every single track. BUY THIS RECORD and feel your shoulders relax for the first time since February 2020.

Standing in line at my favorite cafe in Greenwich Village I noticed a fella with a guitar and a vintage Fender Champ amplifier. Being a guitar player and a gear freak, I muttered through my mask, “that's the only amp you'll ever need,” to which he replied, “Too right!” He also informed me that this was a 1960 and his wife had a '59 that he thought was even better. We geeked out further and he introduced himself to me, “my name is Julian,” and then he suggested that we exchange numbers so we can meet up for coffee again and talk guitars some more. Lovely man. That new friend turned out to be **Julian Lage**. When I heard his new record, *Squint* I thought perhaps I had just been in the presence of the finest guitar player I've ever met with an uncanny ability to convey emotional intelligence and heartfelt passion and authenticity like I have never experienced before. Needless to say, I am sockless.

Emily Duff is a singer you won't be able to get out of your head.
Find out more at: <https://emilyduff.bandcamp.com>



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

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

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Can't Get It Out of My Head

by Emily Duff

Knocked off forever! "Saint Rose" takes groovy to another level, and I listen to it at least three times a day. The fact that I can text him and tell him how much I love it that this record makes me blush with excitement. I heart NY. Buy the record and TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS! You never know.

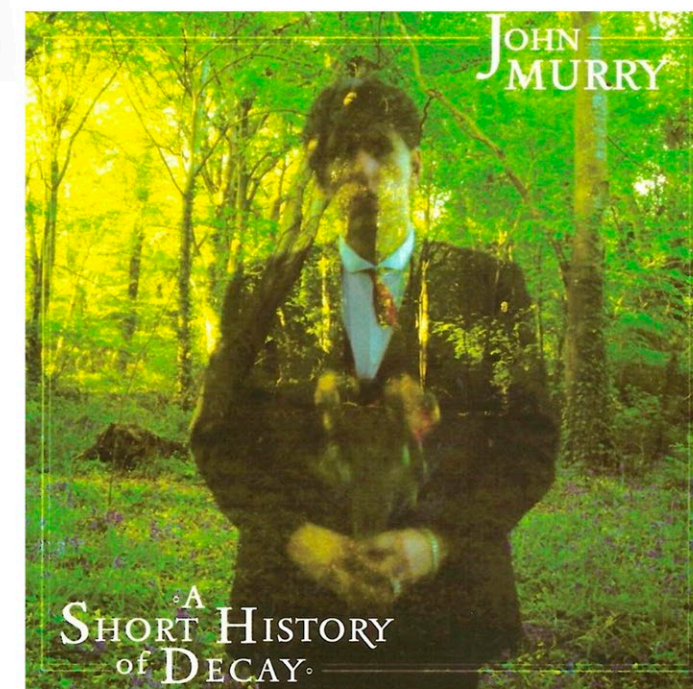


Bob Frank's 1972 record starts with a track called "Wino" that he sings like a poem over beautifully picked & recorded nylon string acoustic guitar. It feels like what Dylan just did but it took him 17 minutes to do what Bob Frank accomplishes in 2:24. Don't get me wrong, I'm not slagging off Dylan but I'm also not stroking his Nobel Prize winning, 400-million dollar song catalogue selling ego. Youse guys need to know Bob Frank and dig his songs. Simple, elegant, pithy and very current sounding considering it's an early 70's release. Just the right amount of hiss and close vocal warmth to wrap yourself in to feel "groovy."

John Murry has a new record called *The Stars Are God's Bullet Holes*. BUY IT. But that's not the record I want to talk about right now ;) In 2017 John Murry released *A Short History of Decay* and THAT record is freaking my head out every day since I got turned onto it a few months ago. Labeled as Americana (What the bloody hell is that anyway?), this is straight up Genius with a capital G. The lead off track feels like Nick Cave, and what follows conjures Matthew Sweet, Lou Reed, Miracle Legion and a slew of other artists and bands I am wild about; with his own crazy twitch in the production realm.

He takes cool chances and tries shit that I've been thinking about for a while. His lyrics make my head sweat and he's able to take a crunchy guitar and marry it with a simple lead to create pure pop perfection. It's tasty genre bending goodness that brings a smile to my face on the worst day. "Nightmares bore their fruit and the blood ran into my boots...." That's a smile right there ;).

You're welcome.



**TOM RAINEY
OBLIGATO**
RALPH ALESSI
INGRID LAUBROCK
JACOB SACKS
DREW GRESS



UNTUCKED
IN HANNOVER

Tom Rainey's Obligato *Untucked in Hannover*

Intakd - CD, Download

The third album by this wily Brooklyn ensemble is a well-recorded live date that finds the esteemed drummer/leader blending elements of swing and abstraction in equal measure. Makes perfect sense. At the age of 64, Rainey has absorbed a variety of changes in the always-morphing jazz vernacular, and his quintet pans across an array of dialects to reach its clever confluence. For a moment in the pensive opening of “There Is No Greater Love,” there’s a nod to solo percussion presentations pioneered by Andrew Cyrille and Milford Graves. As the band runs its group improv, shifting from open tempos to a hard-driving pulse, the fluid turns of Miles Davis’ second classic quintet show their stripes.

Rainey is regarded as one of jazz’s wisest progressives, but early on he spent time playing standards in the piano trios of Kenny Werner and Fred Hersch, using tried and true songs to springboard inventive forays. Obligato recalls those days. The band’s book is standards-only, and its mission to mess with the tunes’ DNA, making them vehicles for deconstruction without voiding the original designs - a revitalization gambit. His squad of bassist Drew Gress, pianist Jacob Sacks, trumpeter Ralph Alessi and saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock have the process down; *Untucked in Hannover* soars with the kind of deep accord a working band generates after years of camaraderie and a recent a string of gigs.

The program stretches from “If I Should Lose You” to “Long Ago And Far Away,” and its victories lie in the riveting way the band treats the music as a puzzle, piecing together the elements as each new idea falls into place. Rainey has said he likes this approach because the familiarity of the tunes gives them a “blank slate” quality - the musicians can do as they please with them while still accessing a bit of the romantic clout they exude. As Obligato applies a mild counterpoint to some of these pieces, flash points abound. Here’s a crew who knows how to make a performance come alive in a moment’s notice. *Untucked in Hannover* is an enticingly unsettled record, a kaleidoscopic experience that sounds a bit different each time you listen to it.



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Masabumi Kikuchi
Hanamichi: The Final Studio Recording
 Red Hook - CD, LP

Technique is always an asset for a musician; the more you can articulate, the closer you are to eloquence. Or not. Pianist Masabumi Kikuchi refuted his development and deployment of any technique in a New York Times interview a decade ago, and Kevin Whitehead brings up the artist’s statement again in Hanamichi’s liner notes. Yet eloquence resounds from the ruminations of this subdued recital. As the late pianist addresses two versions of “My Favorite Things,” a spin on “Summertime,” a shadowy standard, a curt improv, and a tender original for his daughter, a formulated tack floats through his keyboard process. Each passage is lined with fretted-over decisions, each phrase receiving its creator’s full attention.

If the final outcome wasn’t so fetching, there’d be plenty of reason to urge him into applying a quantifiable cadence or stressing more than a snippet of melody. But Kikuchi, a New Yorker who worked with Paul Motian and appreciated the unique drummer’s own dismissal of trad technique, was an expert at waxing mercurial. His previous solo album, made before his 2015 passing at age 75, was dedicated to free improv, yet dissuaded doubters from using the term “random” when describing its design. Deliberation is a constant as the pianist plots emotional direction, and cohesion is the fruit of its moment-to-moment methodology. Hanamichi is a blend of tunefulness and abstraction, and its aura serves an elegiac muse.



Gary Lucas
The Essential Gary Lucas
 Knitting Factory - CD

The Essential Gary Lucas is what happens when a voracious musical appetite meets an inquisitive stylistic approach. From noir raga to rootsadelica to a mix of freak folk and fractured soul, the improvising string player’s career is awash in wildly inventive and utterly distinct settings. This 36-track distillation, with tracks chosen by Lucas himself, paints the guitarist as a maestro of collaboration, his generous virtuosity finding a parade of artful soulmates to enhance its bounty. Things “rock” on the *Gods and Monsters* disc, but in the end I’m more partial to its mate, an insightful swerve through a comparatively tender program that stretches from Jimi Hendrix to Abdullah Ibrahim to Dvorak. My fave is the luminous “Dream of a Russian Princess,” which ponders whether Mississippi John Hurt was at all related to the Romanovs.

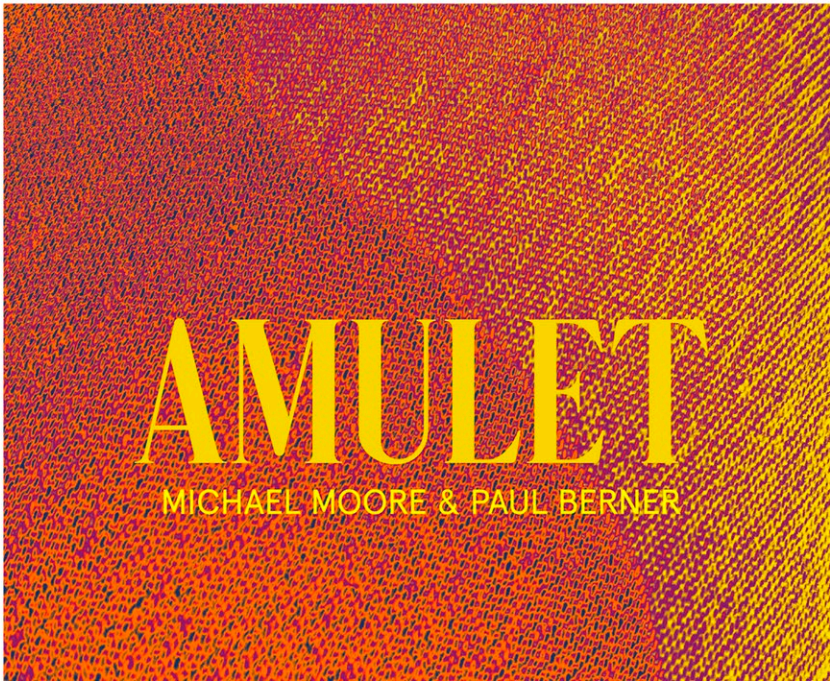
Paul Berner & Michael Moore
Amulet
 Ramboy (Bandcamp)

In the early ‘70s, Chick Corea and Gary Burton made a duet record called *Crystal Silence*. With just piano and vibraphone, they bet the farm on intimacy and designed a template for contemplative jazz duos. Almost a decade ago, bassist Skúli Sverrisson and saxophonist Óskar Guðjónsson cut a triumph of the approach, *The Box Tree*. Its artistry was imposing, but it was the music’s hushed nature that centered the program. Mildly romantic, utterly calm, their interplay glistened. Bassist Paul Berner and clarinetist Michael Moore accomplish something similar with *Amulet*.

These duets are the epitome of refinement, barring all things extraneous. They leave room only for melody, an aside or two, and the chance to absorb the natural beauty of their instruments. Expat Moore, a boomer who has lived in Amsterdam long enough to be considered a veteran of the city’s creative improvising cohort, is a key member of the esteemed ICP Orchestra; he has also recorded a wealth of original albums (don’t miss the most recent by his Fragile Quartet), and, with *Jewels and Binoculars*, two CDs of Bob Dylan gems. His clarinet work can be as elaborate as it is inviting, but here he plays to one of his strengths: simplicity.



Through a curt series of songs, one of our most engaging Moore invests in consonance and nods to pith. Bassist Berner, another Netherlands transplant of a certain age, is known for his agility and poise. His rapport with Moore is obvious. Through Louis Armstrong’s “Home,” Nat Cole’s “Answer Me, My Love” and Joni Mitchell’s “Night Ride Home,” a genteel spirit dominates as the exchanges play out. To steal descriptors from each of the participant’s individual liner notes, you can call this one a “heartfelt dialogue.”



JAZZ

By Jim Macnie

James Brandon Lewis & Red Lily Quintet *Jesup Wagon*

AUM Fidelity - CD, LP

For the last decade, with each new project, James Brandon Lewis has been revealing his many skills. Dynamic saxophonist, intriguing composer, wily duet partner, soundscape experimentalist, poetry maven. With the arrival of the 28-year-old bandleader's Jesup Wagon, you can add thoughtful conceptualist to the list. A proud searcher by design, this new outing places him in a spot where fluency meets expression, a confluence that enhances his work's impact. His previous records haven't lacked maturity, or meaning for that matter, but Jesup Wagon's seven pieces are the most mature and meaningful set of tunes he's delivered so far.

The album is a nod to the innovations of George Washington Carver: botanist, educator, inventor and artist. Inspired by Carver's polymath interests, Lewis convened cornetist Kirk Knuffke, bassist William Parker, cellist Chris Hoffman, and drummer Chad

Taylor to interpret some of his most enticing ensemble pieces to date. Proving himself to be a fierce exemplar of freedom swing, propulsion leads the list of attractions here.

Taylor and Parker have a way of thrusting the action forward while continuously developing the melodic labyrinth. The swirl of lines that mark both ballads and ravers adds combustion to the performances, similar to the work of mid-sized groups led by Charles Mingus or David Murray. With relentless drive a priority, the music is burly. Several pieces begin with a forlorn feel, but from "Arachis" to "Seer," the cheerful rumble of interplay fuels aggressive elaborations - an emotionally bewitching program. The apex of this complexity is the title track, named after the vehicle that took Carver from town to town while delivering his agricultural advice to southern farmers. Like his hero, Lewis presses on, prompting his squad to cultivate the fruitful ideas he puts on their plate.



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W H A R F E D A L E

The reviews are in.



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Jim Macnie was kind enough to give us a playlist of his latest finds. This one's a little more work as these are all albums. Good news - more music to explore!



Wadada Leo Smith - *Sacred Ceremonies*

Julian Lage - *Squint*

Gerald Cleaver - *Griots*

Anna Webber - *Idiom*

Christopher Hoffman - *Asp Nimbus*

Skúli Sverrisson ft. Bill Frisell - *Strata*

Hasaan Ibn Ali - *Metaphysics: The Lost Atlantic Album*

Anthony Braxton - *12 Comp*

Russ Lossing & Gerry Hemingway - *Twice*

Tony Malaby, Billy Mintz, William Parker - *Big Mammals: Turnpike Diaries, Vol 3*

Dahveed Behroozi - *Echoes*

Ben Goldberg - *Everything Happens To Be*

Jen Shyu - *Zero Grasses: Rituals For The Losses*

Orrin Evans - *The Magic of Now*

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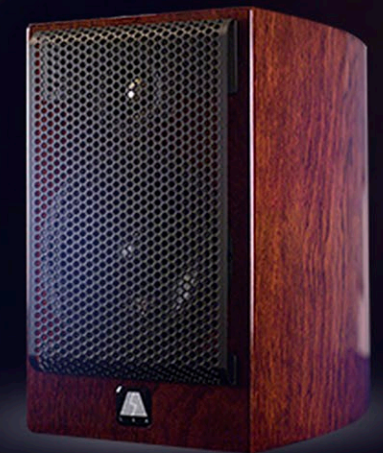


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Sam Rosen – September 2020 - [posit+ive feedback](http://positivfeedback.com)
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Setlist

Madison Square Garden

June 20, 2021

Photo by Colleen English

Many of us have been waiting for live music to return to our lives. Good friend and reader Colleen English, was so starved for some live music, when her friend from NYC told her she had purchased Foo Fighters tickets, Colleen not only jumped at the chance but jumped on a plane (from her home base of Southern California) to make the show.

That's dedication. Grohl and company put on an epic set of 24 tunes, all dedicated to their stage manager of 12 years, Andy Pollard. Makes you long for the show, doesn't it?



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Since its shocking release in 1960, Alfred Hitchcock's horror-thriller *Psycho* has gained in stature and now occupies an enviable place in the Library of Congress's National Film Registry. I remembered that, after seeing this movie during its first run, the famous shower scene frightened me so badly that I wouldn't get in our home shower for a month!

Secretary Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) makes two bad decisions leading to a tragic outcome, starting with stealing \$45,000 of her real estate company's cash to settle her boyfriend Sam Loomis's (John Gavin) debts. The second is her seeking shelter from a rainstorm by renting a room at the Bates Motel run by creepy Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) who lives with his mother in a neighboring old house. During a shower in her motel room, Marion is stabbed to death by a shadowy figure. Norman discovers her body, believing that his mother committed the murder, sinks the dead Marion and her belongings in a car in a nearby swamp. Private investigator Arbogast (Martin Balsam) agrees to help Sam and Marion's sister Lila (Vera Miles) find Marion who has been missing for a week only to become the Bates Motel's next victim. Sam and Lila visit the motel and when Norman is taken into police custody, he is finally revealed to be an unhinged serial killer with an alternate personality.

Oscar-winning American film composer-conductor Bernard Herrmann wrote more than fifty film scores, including nine for Hitchcock movies. His innovative film scores influenced a new generation of composers like John Williams and James Horner.

The 1975 LP version of the first studio recording has Herrmann leading the National Philharmonic on the Unicorn label (running time: 55:15). Two CDs of the *Psycho* score have been released: a 1989 Unicorn version from the same master tapes as the LP and a 1996 Varese Sarabande recording with Joel McNeely leading the Royal Scottish National Orchestra that includes an extra cut not used in the film.

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Soundtracks

by Lawrence Devoe

The original film score was recorded and mixed in London's Barking Assembly Hall under the direction of the composer. Herrmann justified his decision to write the score for strings alone to make its monochromatic tone color the equivalent of the black and white film, i.e., lacking the full palette of orchestral colors. Herrmann frequently used recurring, pulsating motifs like the one from the Prelude that is heard again subsequent tracks to set the moods for upcoming scenes.

There are five free-standing cuts and nine groups ranging from three to five cuts each, totaling 39 cuts in all. The playlist is below:

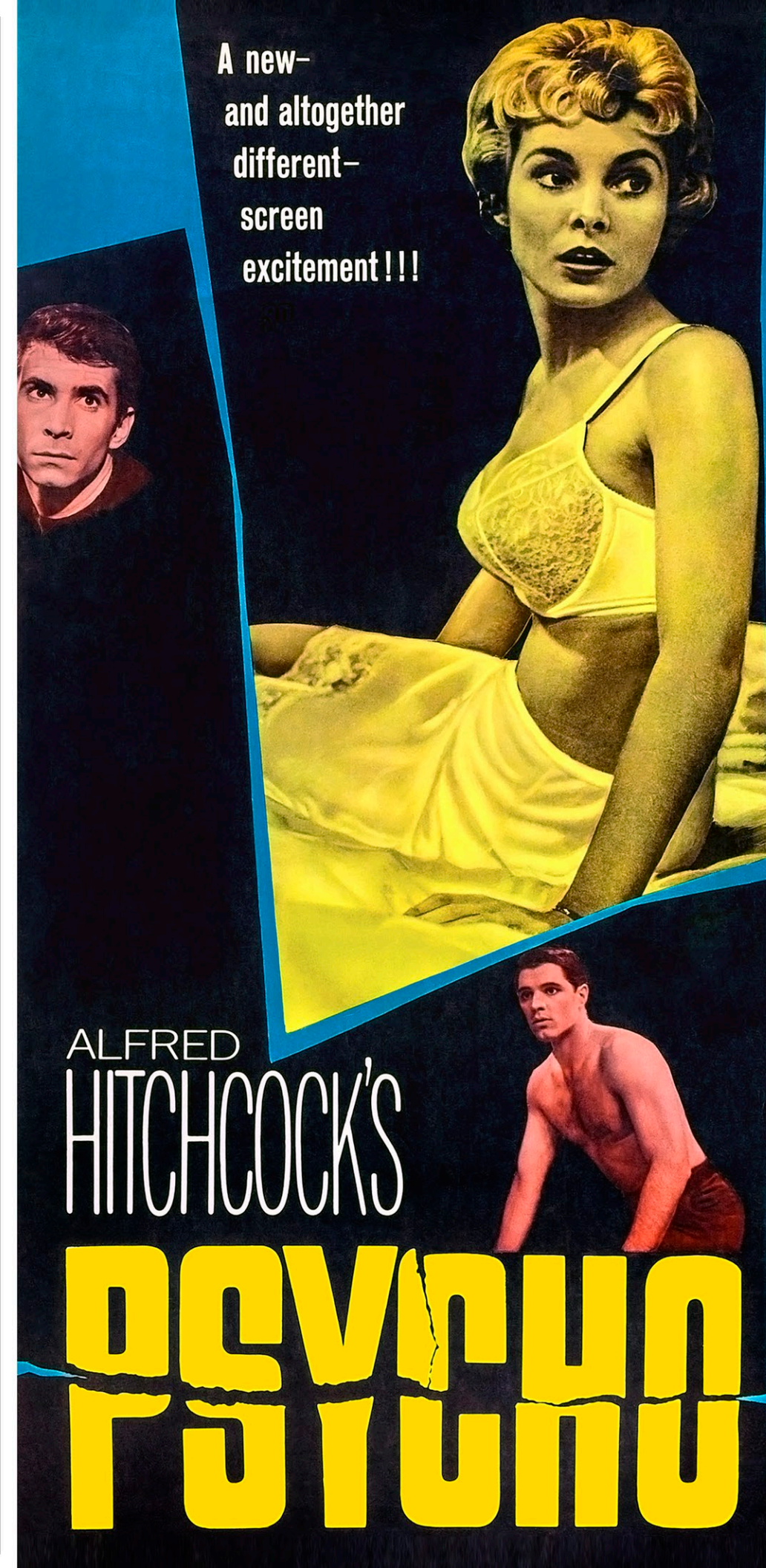
1. Prelude
2. The City, Marion, Marion and Sam
3. Temptation
4. Flight, The Patrol Car, The Car Lot, The Package, The Rainstorm
5. Hotel Room, The Window, The Parlour
6. The Madhouse
7. The People
8. The Bathroom, The Murder, The Body
9. The Office, The Curtain, The Water, The Car, The Swamp
10. The Search, The Shadow, Phone Booth
11. The Porch, The Stairs, The Knife
12. The Search, The First Floor, Cabin 10, Cabin 1
13. The Hill, The Bedroom, The Toys, The Cellar, Discovery
14. Finale

The original Unicorn LP is noticeably warmer than its CD counterpart so its screechy strings in the shower scene won't cause listeners' ears to bleed, but it sounds somewhat dated by today's higher resolution standards. While the Varese Sarabande CD is not the "original" soundtrack recording, its full-bodied, more detailed and spacious sound-stage is far superior to that on either Unicorn version.

Psycho was, in many ways, a trailblazing slasher film eschewing graphic displays of violence, leaving much of the murder and mayhem to viewers' vivid imaginations. Like the violins' shrieks during the shower scene—the best remembered sequence from *Psycho*'s soundtrack—Herrmann's score goes a long way to make what we don't see just as scary as if it had actually appeared on the screen. All told, this soundtrack demonstrates how a great film composer can deliver the dramatic goods without blood spatters obscuring the screen.



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Release



Knee deep in the European leg of the Tattoo You tour, the Stones gave a second blistering performance in Munich's Olympic Stadium, the night before.

True to the Stones' concert ethos, both performances only pulled five tracks from the current record they were supporting, yet did a great job of mixing the remaining tracks up from one night to the next.

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I know we keep teasing you about our podcast series but it's getting closer. Tom Piranha (my co-host) and I are wrapping the first few as we type this.

One of our long-time favorite artists is John Hiatt, and here are a few of Tom's favorite Hiatt tracks. (and one of mine)

We also have a review of the new album from new contributor Pam Szeto Griffin. If you have a sec, check out her Instagram page - she's got an amazing record collection, and we're glad to have her on board!



Riding With The King – I Don't Even Try

Bring The Family – Memphis in The Meantime
Have A Little Faith in Me
Stood Up

All of a Sudden – Marianne

Slow Turning – Slow Turning
It Feels Like Rain

The Tiki Bar is Open – My Old Friend

Stolen Moments – Real Fine Love

Terms of My Surrender – Long Time Comin'

Leftover Feelings – Long Black Electric Cadillac



John Hiatt with the Jerry Douglas Band *Leftover Feelings*

New West Records - LP, CD (vinyl reviewed here)

As one of America's preeminent songwriters, John Hiatt may well be able to turn almost any topic into a captivating story. In this respect, "Leftover Feelings" - his new album with the Jerry Douglas Band - fits nicely into his celebrated discography, with the lyrical depth for which Hiatt is renowned. At the same time, the album is distinguished by Jerry Douglas' prominent involvement. The dobro master produced it and, together with the other members of his band, provide the perfect accompaniment to Hiatt.

Douglas has moved well beyond the confines of bluegrass music, and his musical dexterity is well-demonstrated on this album. The band adapted their sound to compliment Hiatt's songs which are, as on many of his records, hard to confine to a single genre. The instruments - bass, violin, guitars, and Douglas' dobro and lap steel - create an array of tones and textures. One of my favorite sounds on the record is Douglas' reverb-drenched lap steel, which is reminiscent of a Daniel Lanois production. Another is the brief moment in "Long Black Electric Cadillac" when Christian Sedelmyer's violin sounds like a Brazilian cuica (the squeaky drum sometimes heard in Brazilian samba).

There are clear themes on this record - cars, southern towns, and people with unresolved problems, i.e. "leftover feelings." The topics range from the mundane to the tragic. "Keen Rambler" is about a man who likes to walk around town, and the listener has a good time following him. In "Little Goodnight," we sympathize with a couple that can't get their child to sleep. On the other end of the spectrum is the exceptional "Light of the Burning Sun," which tells the true story of Hiatt's brother's suicide.

After listening to the record several times, I've become very partial to the song "The Music is Hot." In it, a woman escapes the tedium of life's daily challenges through the music on the radio. As Waylon and Merle provide the song's protagonist with secular salvation, so Hiatt and the Jerry Douglas Band give their listeners a touch of musical grace with this impressive album.

-Pam Szeto Griffin
[instagram.com/pamsrecordcollection](https://www.instagram.com/pamsrecordcollection)

Swill

Sponsored by Cardas Audio

By Cameron VanDerHorst (words and photos)

Funny business from the Empire State.

Mention New York to most folks, and it evokes mental images of the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, or Times Square lit up at night. For comedy buffs like myself, storied clubs like The Comedy Cellar, Carolines on Broadway, and Dangerfield's are what comes to mind first.

There's more to New York (the state) than New York (the city). Stand-up comedy as we know it today got its start in the Borscht Belt, in the mountainous retreats of the Catskill Mountains upstate. Western New York houses the National Comedy Center, a uniquely interactive museum that chronicles the continuing history of the art form. And a few short miles away, nestled into the pastoral elegance of the region's rolling farmlands, you'll find Southern Tier Brewing Company.

In fact, I stumbled onto the place rather accidentally, the morning after performing a stand-up show at a venue a few miles away. Hair of the dog, anyone? It's worth noting that they're open at 11 AM on Friday and Saturday mornings, which, to working comics, is also known as the "ass-crack of dawn."

Established in Lakewood, New York in 2002, Southern Tier was formed by a trio of friends who wanted to explore new ways to enjoy beer. This spirit of experimental fun is employed to great effect in Nice Slice, a delicious, naturally-flavored watermelon session ale.

audio research
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audioresearch.com

*"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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Handcrafted in Chino, California

Swill

Sponsored by Cardas Audio

By Cameron VanDerHorst

As someone with an admitted fondness for grapefruit beers and the occasional lemonade shandy, I had to find out if Nice Slice was a viable choice for my ever-changing rotation of summer brews. When you're doing yard work, cleaning the garage, or changing your wife's oil (note: not a double entendre), you want beer that's equal parts intensely refreshing and mildly intoxicating.

Many flavored beers take things a step too far, with overpowering, sugary flavors that leave you feeling parched, yet unwilling to crack open a second can. Nice Slice, on the other hand, has easily the most subtle flavoring of any fruit beer that I've ever tried. It's remarkable how effectively they capture the essence of what makes watermelon so deliciously refreshing without overdoing it. I suspect that a lot of trial and error was involved. I wonder if they're hiring.

The key to this balance is that the prominent wheat flavor inherent in session ales is never compromised. A good session ale tastes like the best domestic beer you've ever tasted, with each ingredient making itself apparent to your taste buds while sharing equal billing. Nice Slice takes that formula and bathes it in a crisp pink coating of fresh watermelon flavor (minus the seeds).

If Southern Tier Brewing Co.'s Nice Slice was a stand-up comedy show, the wheat is the headliner, with a flowery, rosy flavor performing a feature set. A sweet, sugary guest spot starts the show, and the whole thing is emceed by fresh watermelon, reminding us politely to tip the wait staff and visit the merch booth after the show.

Southern Tier Brewing Company
2072 Stoneman Circle, Lakewood, NY 14750
<https://stbcbeer.com/>
<https://comedycenter.org/>



In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Donald Fagen - *The Nightfly*

In the midst of a massive decluttering operation, this popped up. But alas, there is nothing to play this on at TONE anymore. So much for the “total music experience.”

Need this one? Hit me up...



TONE107.105



Elegant. With a side of Muscle.

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

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



Whatever your preference happens to be in speakers, chances are it's different than the person sitting next to you. Let's face it, how many people have you met that have the same system, the same speakers that you have?

We all have different preferences, we all experience sound differently.

So, this issue, we've rounded up a selection of speakers big and small, that we hope will pique your interest. Regardless of taste, amplifier power at your disposal, we've certainly had a lot of fun auditioning this group.

Some already have full reviews on the TONE website, while the rest are in the works.



Listening to the gentle interplay of Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway on their classic track, “Where is the Love?” its panoramic presentation plays to the strength of Harbeth’s latest version of their ever popular Compact 7 monitor. Having owned the original and the anniversary version, the current “XD” series is the best yet – at least for most of us. If you’re the person that always likes the original version of something, claiming all subsequent versions to not only be rubbish, but not “the real example,” you might be a little put off by the extra resolution served up by this model. As they say in business school – “you’re not the right customer.”

Comparing these speakers to another British favorite, the Quad ESLs, the Harbeths reproduce so much music perfectly through the midband (a testament to owner Alan Shaw’s loyalty to the BBC ethos and the RADIAL2™ driver technology unique to Harbeth) you forget that they don’t have enough resolution to kill flies at 20 paces, and low frequency extension to loosen your dental work. And that’s just fine. Tracking through the Rolling Stones’ “I’m Just Waiting on a Friend” is absolutely lovely. Jagger and Richards’ voices occupy their own personal space, with the background vocals slightly off in the distance, yet Charlie Watts drumming is anchored solidly, and you can follow every note in the bass line precisely. The Brits call this “pace and timing.” This is what will keep you in the listening chair all day – this lifelike quality that the Harbeths present.

At first glance, \$4,890 (in cherry, seen here and \$5,190 for walnut or tamo ash) might seem a little spendy for a pair of Brit-Monitors, but the world economy, and shipping costs have been causing havoc for everyone, not just high-end audio manufacturers. These speakers are worth every bit of their price tag. Keep in mind, Harbeth speakers are still designed, and hand built in small batches in their UK factory.

Easy set up and integration

Harbeth’s Alan Shaw is a meticulous designer. I’ve been to the factory, and I’ve seen Shaw’s volumes of notes. These speakers are not merely a result of picking a few drivers, building some cabinets, and off you go. Everything is deliberate, everything is measured, and triple checked. The end result is nothing short of stunning, and a side benefit to this is a house sound in the best way possible. As you move up the range, each speaker is optimized to not only deliver more music, but in increasingly bigger rooms as well. Though I’ve been achieving great results in my larger 15 x 26-foot room (on the short wall), these speakers deliver an incredibly good balance of low frequency extension and upper bass/midrange balance in a room about 13 x 18.

Cover Story:

Further on up the road...

Harbeth C7ES-3XD

\$4,890 - \$5,190

(finish dependant)

Fidelisav.com

harbeth.co.uk

Harbeth



The level of output and articulation the XDs produce will not have many people clamoring for subwoofers. Their rated sensitivity is 86db/2.83v/1m, but that doesn't tell the whole story. While this suggests a relatively inefficient speaker, Harbeths have always been incredibly easy to drive. They are equally easy to set up. Thanks to their wide dispersion characteristic, they don't need a lot of toe in to sound "right."

With every stand mount speaker we've used, stand construction, interface between speaker and stand, and stand height is important. But again, there are a few trains of thought here. The C7s work well on low (approximately 18") medium (24") or high (28") stands. Some prefer them with minimal mass stands, while others like the weighted Sound Anchors, or something very similar. Your couch height and presentation preference will determine what your final setup will be. I have heard all three work. Our tests were all performed with 24" filled Sound Anchor stands with blu-tack between the speakers and stands, or the 18" filled stands that came with our Wharfedale Linton speakers. Harbeth suggests bringing tweeters to ear height for best results, and we concur.

While some feel the Harbeth sound is slightly "wooly," I submit that it's all about quality in the amplifier department. TONE has auditioned and/or owned all of the past models except the Monitor 30, and that has never been our experience. Connected to a low power, low quality tube amplifier with no control, or current capability, the new Compact 7 will leave you wanting more, but taking the perspective that an excellent monitor will expose the weaknesses up the chain – that's what needs to be investigated.

The new speaker is even more tube friendly than its predecessor, and when combined with the Octave V110SE, the PrimaLuna EVO400, or the new McIntosh MC1502, the results are nothing short of breathtaking. Of course, our results with Luxman, Pass, Boulder, Parasound, and Nagra on the solid-state side of the fence are equally compelling. However, the little bit extra beauty achieved with the Nagra Classic Preamp and the McIntosh MC1502 is tough to ignore.

The Harbeth C7ES3-XD



BRANDS

Aqua HiFi
Analysis Plus
Artesania Audio
AudioQuest
AURENDER
Avantgarde Acoustics
Avid HiFi
Ayre Acoustics
Berkeley Audio Design
Boulder
Bowers & Wilkins
Bryston
Chord Electronics
Classe' Audio

Critical Mass Systems
EMM Labs
English Electric
Esoteric
FOCAL
Franco Serblin
Furutech
Fyne Audio
Gryphon Audio
Harbeth Speakers
Hegel
HiFiMAN
iFi
IntegrityHiFi

IsoAcoustics
Kharma
KRONOS Audio
Kuzma
LUMIN
Luxman
Magico Loudspeakers
MSB Technology
MBL Audio
My Sonic Lab
Naim
ORTOFON
PASS LABS
Quadraspire

Shunyata Research
Simaudio
Stein Music
STILLPOINTS
Taiko Audio
TonTrager
Trinnov
VAC Audio
Van den Hul
Vicoustic
Viva
Vivid Audio
VPI Industries
Wireworld



Everything makes a difference

This brings us to the improvements on the XD models. While this version of the C7ES makes use of the same driver compliment as the last model, incorporating what Harbeth learned in terms of cabinet refinement and improved components in the crossover network has allowed these drivers to deliver even more performance. Shaw claims he's "flattened out the small lumps and bumps in the frequency response by using custom made resistors, coils and capacitors. So the overall sound is better integrated bass/mid/top."

The current model has all the magic, friendliness, and vocal/midrange accuracy that we've always enjoyed from Harbeth in the past, but with increased clarity – all the way through the range. I don't remember the minute details of the last version, so I borrowed a pair for a true side by side evaluation.

SCULPTURE A



LE PHONO SE

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



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

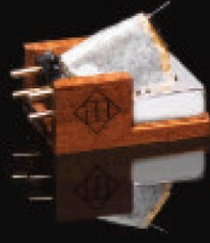
Le Phono SE, a solid-state design without the usual issues of tube electronics.

info@
anamightysound.com

Ana
MIGHTY SOUND



A.4 Silver



A.3



A.4 Copper



made by Ana Mighty Sound

A.3 & A.4 SCULPTURE A PHONO CARTRIDGES

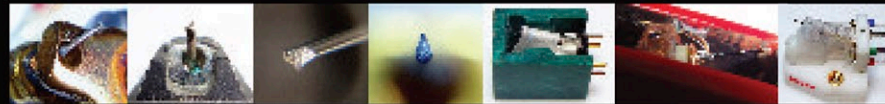
Already awarded by French press with a « Remarquable » award, the A.3 and A.4 phono cartridges display a minimum tracking of 90 micron @300Hz lateral that will allow you to get the full definition of your records. For this we have developed a specific damper and use only boron cantilevers with dedicated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

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

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

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

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



retip

Our insights on cartridge "repairs"

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

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

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

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

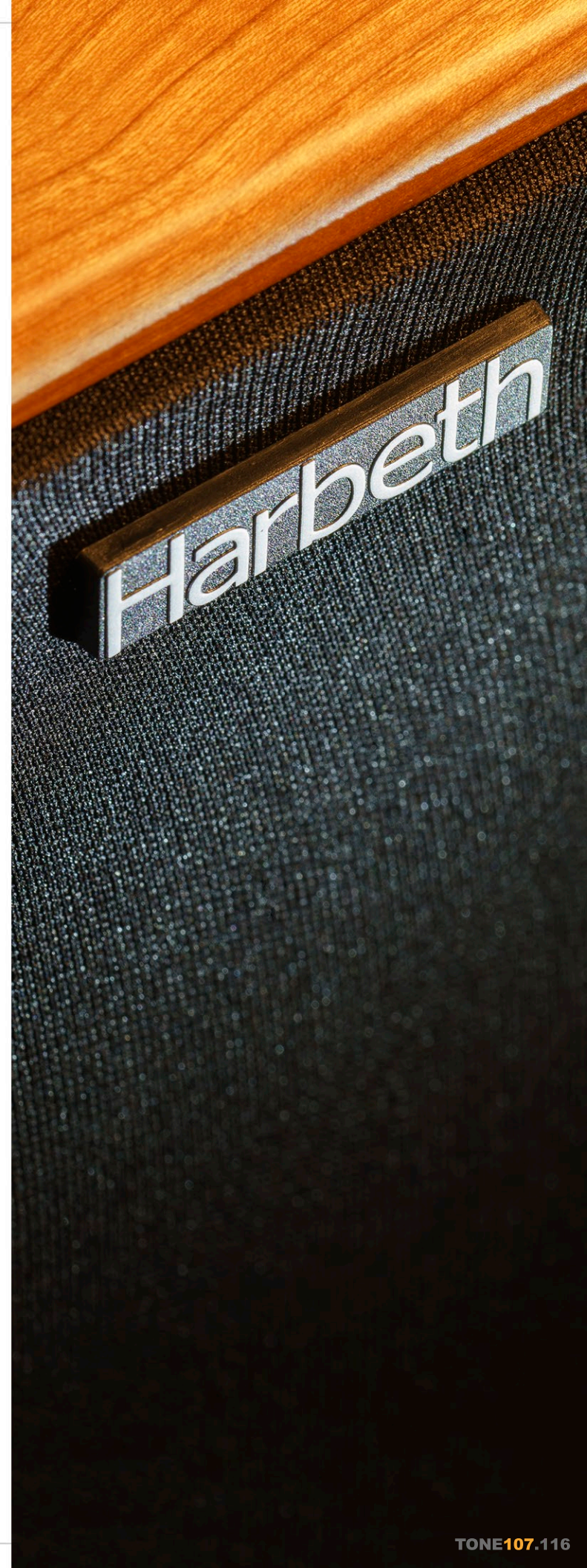
Unless you have canine hearing and photographic memory, enough of the Harbeth sound carries through both new and past generation, that after listening to the new ones for a while, you want to stay there. Yet switching back to the old ones, you'll instantly notice a little less depth, a little less sparkle on top and a bit less slam on the bottom, but after about an hour, the smile returns to your face. The most OCD of you might have to trade up. Yet, for the rest of you the current version will be an excellent choice compared to something else you might have been considering.

Back to the core

These speakers never sound harsh, forward, or fatiguing. Again, so much of whether a pair of these are for you will depend on what music you listen to, and how you listen to it. If you don't listen to the heaviest of rock music, or the punchiest electronica at punishing levels, you'll be surprised at just how much the current C7s can handle. Even when listening to things like Led Zeppelin, TOOL, or The Foo Fighters at less than brain damage levels is very rewarding. Tracking through an old favorite, Bruce Springsteen's *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* not only follows the dynamic swings, but reveals the nuances of Springsteen's voice and acoustic guitar in a way few speakers can. Again, this is what keeps you in the listening chair for hours on end. Mixing it up for some bass heavy tracks again confirms that there is more than enough of the fundamentals to get a solid musical experience.

Where a smaller monitor like the LS3/5A or Harbeth's own P3ESR (which we've also reviewed) often seems like it just won't play big enough, in the sense that the sonic image created in anything but the smallest of rooms is smaller than life, the C7 is just right. To counter this, there are times that the Quads produce an image that is overblown, though not to the extent that a pair of Magnepans does.

The C7s, properly set up with a bit of space between them (when the stereo image collapses to two individual mono speakers, you've gone too far in your quest) creates a sonic landscape that feels believable. In addition to the vocalists and instruments sounding natural, and realistic, the size and spatial relationships sound right. If you've ever heard a solo vocalist or small ensemble perform in a modest sized room, you know what we mean. The same thing goes for acoustic instruments. The more time you spend in the listening chair with Harbeth's latest, the easier it is to immerse yourself in the music being played.





The Harbeth C7ES3-XD

TONE107.117

The current version of the C7 looks like past models, but the new speaker is finished to a higher standard than Harbeth's past. It's smoother, less raw. The only complaint to make here, is that the wood used feels a little bit softer than past models, so handle them with the utmost care. But the new, satin-y finish is gorgeous, and maybe I'm psyching myself out, but the level of care used in past models at the joints and such feels even more meticulously executed. However, it is worth mentioning that these new smooth cabinets are easily marred. (Ask me how I know this) So, when you are unboxing and moving/setting up your C7s, be careful and use cotton gloves if you have them. (If not, invest in a pair.)

They might just be the grail you've been seeking

We can go on and on about this track and that; these speakers need to be experienced at a deeper level than you might get from a quick dealer demo or a cursory listen at a hifi show. Harbeth always makes a good showing in this context to be sure, but this new, XD version of the C7 begs a long listen – the equivalent of a road trip. The more time you can put in your listening chair with a pair, the more I suspect you will enjoy them.

With the cost to participate in a "high-end" audio system ever increasing, along with the complexity, and the myriad choices at your disposal, it's easy to lose your way. Past versions of Harbeth's C7 have always been Exceptional Value Award winners. The current speaker is better in every way, and even though the price is higher than when we first heard a pair about 15 years ago, they still represent tremendous value and performance. To be fair, \$4,000 in 2005 is worth about \$5,000 today, so no one's getting fleeced.



The Harbeth C7ES-3 XD's do so much right and nothing wrong. It doesn't get a lot better than that.

I'm also purchasing the review pair. These will become my benchmark to review realistically priced components. These are still worthy of our Exceptional Value Award for 2021.

Sometimes it's nice to get another chance at the one that got away.

Harbeth.co.uk (factory)
Fidelisdistribution.com (US Distributor)

We've been smitten with Dynaudio's Confidence line since their introduction at the Munich High End show in 2019. That seems so far away at this point...

Dynaudio has been no stranger to our listening rooms, and we've used no less than three other pairs as reference speakers in TONE's history, from the massive Eminence Platinums, to the compact Special 40.

Sharing the new 28mm soft dome Esotar 3 tweeter with the top of the range, Confidence 60, this speaker shares all the finesse of the flagship speaker, with less low frequency output. They are made for smaller room systems that still demand top quality sound.

The Confidence 20s earned our Product of the Year award in the speaker category, and we've spent so much time listening to these in room 3, that we've purchased the review pair. This is an easy speaker to live with on all levels, their wide dispersion makes them easy to set up, the included stands take the guesswork out of the speaker to stand interface, and the sound is out of this world good.

Dynaudio Confidence 20

\$11,999/pair (with stands)
[dynaudio.com](https://www.dynaudio.com)





CANTON
German loudspeaker tradition

Chrono SL 586.2 DC

weiss
white
blanc

high gloss

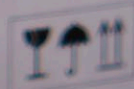
Made by Canton
Czech Republic

HiFi
Lautsprecher
Loudspeaker
Haut-parleur

Stück
pieces
pièces

1

CHRONO SL 586.2 DC
SN R 100266



Canton Chrono SL 586.2DC

\$3,495/pair
canton.de

The latest floorstanders from Canton tick all the boxes. They are reasonably priced, look fantastic, (in black and white gloss finishes) and sound great. For just under \$3,500 a pair they provide room filling sound. Sensitivity specs aren't listed, but the Chronos are easy to drive with modest powered amplifiers, tube or solid-state.

We've got a full review out on the TONE site, but suffice to say we've really enjoyed our time with these speakers. If you're looking for a stylish floor standing speaker with a modern vibe, and a full line of accompanying speakers, should you want to make them part of a multichannel setup, put the Cantons at the top of your list. Canton also offers matching stand mount speakers, subwoofers, center channel and wireless options.

Let's not mince words.

There just isn't a more enjoyable pair of speakers on this Earth for a thousand bucks. Or even close to two thousand bucks, if you opt for all the cabinet and crossover upgrades. In a world where \$1,500 buys you a pair of wimpy little speakers, you can buy a pair of Dirty Weekends and rock.

For all the internet newcomers and old-timers moaning about good sound being out of reach, shut up and buy a pair of Dirty Weekends. I did and they rule.

Forget about all the double talk, audiophile speak about pinpoint imaging, PRAT, and the like. If you're someone who really connects with music, and wants to have a bunch of friends over to cook some food, have some laughs, and maybe even have the cops show up because you're having so much fun playing music, that maybe the volume control got a little out of hand - these are the droids you want.

And isn't that kinda what a dirty weekend is all about in the first place?

If you're new to the audiophile game, these speakers are going to spoil you, because the price to performance ratio is so high, you'll never get this much sound for this little money again. Ever. If you're a seasoned vet, we dare you to listen to these for more than about 90 seconds and not have your perspective disrupted in a major way.

These are not half-baked loss leaders. Fit and finish is world class, and the DWs are made at the Zu factory, in-house, by people that give a shit. How cool is that?

[Click here to read Eric Neff's full review.](#)



Zu Audio Omen Dirty Weekend

\$1,000 - \$1,799/pair (config. dependent)
zuaudio.com



Sonus faber Maxima Amator

\$15,000/pair
sonusfaber.com

There's some real magic going on with the Maxima Amator. As you can see from the photo, this speaker is more reminiscent of Sonus faber past, sans the big chrome trim rings, and logos on the woofer dust caps that is now the norm.

If you are new to Sonus faber, you'll be taken by the sound, and the sheer beauty of the enclosures. The execution that the SF workers offer up is beyond peer in the industry. No one will ever tell you that you can't have a pair of these in the house.

However, if you're a longtime aficionado of the brand, you'll notice the blend, the homage, to everything that made founder Franco Serblin a household work (at least among audiophiles), gently blended with the best work of the current design team.

If this is the criteria for what you seek, the Maxima Amator may be the top speaker in the entire lineup.

They are that good.

[Please click here to read our full review.](#)



STENHEIM

Stenheim Alumine Two

\$11,900/pair (without stands)
stenheim.com

Stenheim's compact monitor is a Swiss masterpiece in every aspect. These speakers are really about design and execution excellence. Using aluminum for a cabinet is nothing new, but the tight tolerances and high level of finish is exquisite. The modern design aesthetic is timeless.

But these speakers are no mere style icons.

There is a clarity and pinpoint imaging to the sound, when combined with a system to back them up, that might just having you think of an ESL or mega quality single driver system. The Alumine Twos deliver incredible sound in a small to moderate sized space.

Those with bigger rooms need look no further than Stenheim's larger models. As impressive as the Alumine Twos are, we are looking forward to sampling those larger models soon.

Please click [here](#) to read our full review on the TONE website.

Acora Acoustics, of Ontario, Canada takes a completely different approach on controlling cabinet vibration and resonance. By building enclosures from granite, they definitely pass the “knuckle-rap” test. Seriously, don’t hit these too hard, or you’ll have sore knuckles!

The SRB’s bring a high level of clarity to the compact monitor concept, yet they generate serious low frequency energy as well. In small to medium rooms, you may not even think about adding a subwoofer. The bass they do produce is tight and articulate.

Even in our main 15 x 26 foot listening room, the SRBs deliver a stunning performance. Those craving more low frequency output, can always move up to one of their larger models.

Getting every last bit of sonics the SRBs are capable of will require their matching granite stands, but they are worth every cent. Get a friend to help or start working out before you take delivery of your SRB’s. These are not wimpy speakers! Please click [here](#) to read our extended review...

Acora Acoustics SRB

\$15,000/pair (stands, addl. \$5,000)
acoraacoustics.com



Rel Serie T/x and T/Zero MKIII

\$499 - \$1,499
rel.net

We've been using REL subwoofers in quite a few systems to excellent result for over a decade now.

While many of you know them for their massive "six-pack" line arrays, REL applies the core tech that makes their flagship products great to every model in the lineup. Even the small T/Zero MKIII you see here.

The updates they've made to the Serie T models and the T/Zero and neither subtle or minimal. As REL says on their website, "100% REL, just smaller."

Truly that says it all, but those wanting more can [click here](#) for a full Serie T/x review on our site.

The T/Zero is soon to follow.



SVS Sound has been disrupting the subwoofer scene since they joined the game.

Their latest 1000 series comes in a sealed (SB) version as well as a ported (PB) version, so you can choose the model that best suits your system requirements and room dimensions. The ported model goes slightly deeper, and gives your movies a little more impact, where the sealed model is a bit more “audiophile-y.”

Neither is a bad choice, and thanks to SVS’s built in DSP, controlled by your favorite iOS/Android device is a snap to set up and optimized. It’s perfect for those who can’t always put the sub “where it needs to go...”

At this price, it’s easy to add a pair, and thanks to SVS offering free shipping (and return shipping if you don’t love it, audio shopping doesn’t get any easier than this.

And, we’ve secret shopped them. Their customer service is excellent, so they will help you out when you get stuck.

SVS **SB and PB1000**

\$499.99 and \$599.99
svsound.com



Welcome to MINE:

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

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

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



The Vandel Iconic

\$300 (depending on exch. rates)
vandel.co

You know how much we love classic cars and classic footwear, so the Vandel line of driving shoes is a perfect fit for our interests.

We'll let you know how well they fit our feet and classic cars' footwell as soon as they arrive.

These look very interesting and very comfy..

THE COMPONENTS OF EXCELLENCE: LASTING VALUE

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



Made in the USA

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

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

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Piega Coax 711

\$25,000/pair
piega.ch

This speaker isn't what you might think. At first blush, you might be thinking "ribbon speakers," but the Piega's are much more. They use a proprietary coaxial ribbon driver, incorporating midrange and tweeter together for incredible phase alignment.

Mated to a pair of dynamic woofers, and passive radiators, these compact speakers dig deep. Thanks to a high sensitivity of 92db/1-watt, they don't need a massive power amplifier to generate serious SPLs.

The Piega's image with a precision unique to ribbon drivers, yet thanks to over three decades of refinement, they do not fall victim to the crossover mismatch that nearly always plagues this type of design.

Wrap it up in gorgeous anodized aluminum enclosures, (and Piega's been doing it way more than a few of the manufacturer's that would like you to think they invented aluminum enclosures) and the 711s offer a listening experience that is a joy to behold. Even when they aren't playing music.

Penaudio Lumi

\$2,995/pair
penaudio.fi

Sami Penttila has been making great speakers with an incredibly natural presentation for just over 20 years now.

His original Serenedes were our publisher's reference for a number of years - they helped to launch TONE. So we always have a bit of a soft spot for these understated Finnish masterpieces.

Lumi means "snow" in Finnish, and Penttila says that in the winter of 2018/2019, he spent a lot of time looking at the snow in the trees pondering this design.

Needless to say, if you are craving a highly accurate, yet natural small speaker, with way more low end response than you might suspect from a speaker this size - Lumi is for you.

Finland is known for its technology, and those long, cold winters are good for pondering, tuning. That's what makes the Lumis so good. They don't "defy physics," they are the result of hard work, refinement of concept and careful tuning.



MINE
it should be YOURS



Stay Fresh...

Aroma Diffuser
\$29.99
rightcarsolutions.com

If you happen to be someone that responds to aromatherapy, the aroma diffuser from right car solutions will keep your auto smelling yummy.

If not, they make outstanding silicone licence plate frames to protect your hands from those sharp edges!

Learn some cool sh*t on our [YouTube channel!](#)



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

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



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

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



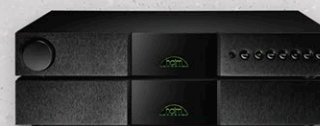
VPI
Super Prime Scout w/ 10.5"
JMW Arm & VTA On The Fly
\$2,899 (was \$58,997.32!)

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



PATHOS ACOUSTICS
Aurium
Hybrid Headphone Amp
\$1,295

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



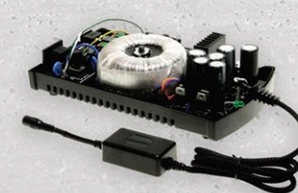
NAIM
NAC 152 XS + NAP 155 XS
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LUMIN
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aka Streaming DACs
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Lumin's secret sauce yields incredible musicality from digital files, Tidal, Qobuz, and more. Call us and do digital right.



SBOOSTER
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Euforia
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\$2,599

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

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

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MINE
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Keep your equipment boxes safe!

\$77 and up....
makeafort.fun

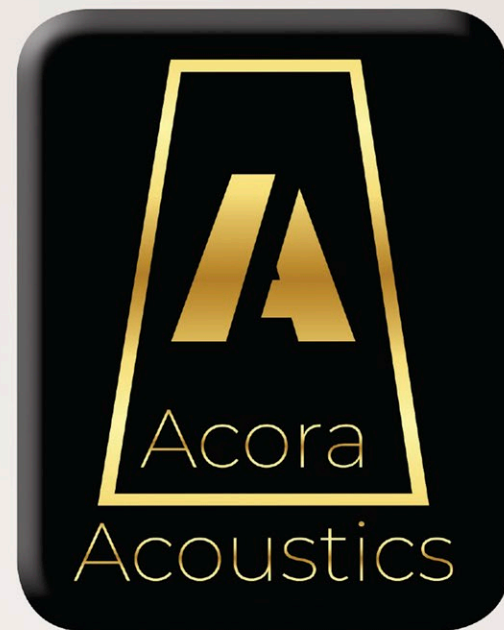
When your kids consider cannibalizing your new speaker boxes, politely take them away and give them a Make-A-Fort kit. This is super cool, fosters creativity, and beats the hell out of arguing about cables and measurements.

You might even buy a couple of these and take a day away from hifi! Or build a fort of your own that you can listen to headphones in.

The possibilities are endless.

Photo courtesy of Make A Fort

TONE107.143



-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-



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

MINE
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YOURS



A Classic Returns

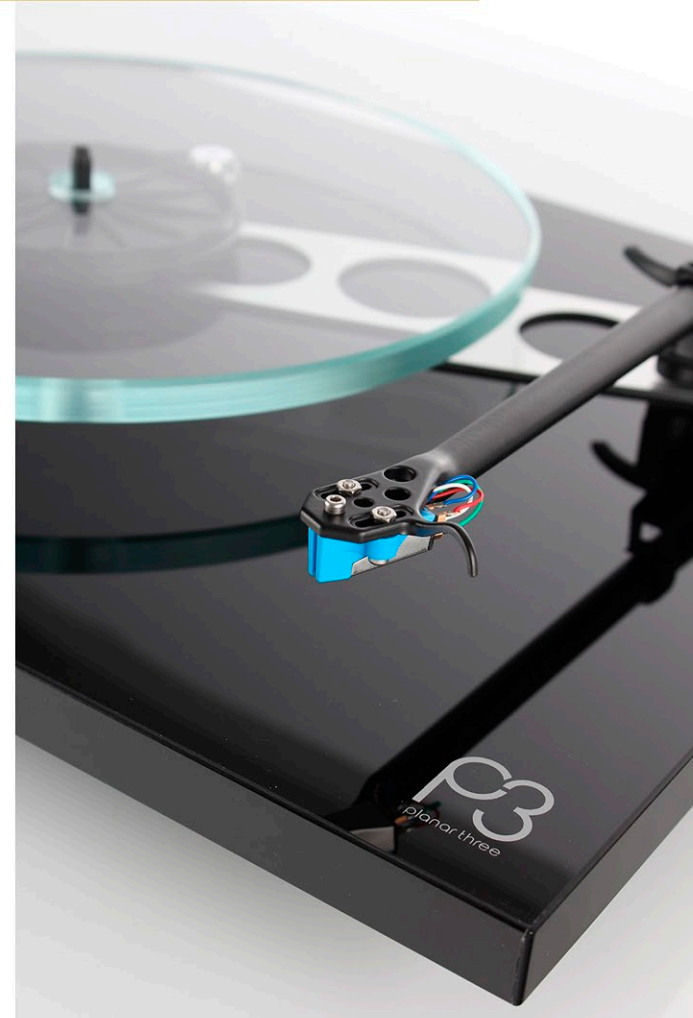
\$29.99
worldcircuit.ink.to/BVSC25

The Buena Vista Social Club is celebrating the 25th anniversary of this legendary recording, with some new, unreleased tracks, (mastered by Bernie Grundman) other bonus material, and a 40-page book, with expanded liner notes.

It will hit the shelves in early September.

TONE107.145

rega



P3
planar three

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music first.

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COMPANY

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Save your spine

\$119
us.ablespine.com

Now that many of you are spending way too much time in a chair, at home working, maybe your back isn't feeling as good as it should?

This bug shell shaped thing, only requires about 10 minutes a day, and we've had excellent luck. Like we say with our favorite hifi components - highly recommended.

Disclaimer - we take no responsibility for this being a solution to any back/medical issues, so use at your own risk. (However, ablespine does have a money back return policy.)



TONE107.147

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We Are
Fun.

We Are
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TOTEM 
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aptX HD

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

Keeping it Real

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huckberry.com

Run D.M.C was practically ground zero of hip hop. A few others came first, but the trio from Hollis really made it stick. When they blew up, everyone took notice, with a wave of creativity to follow.

Sonic Editions has produced a limited number (495 total) of this iconic image of Run-D.M.C. on the streets of New York City back in 1985, from photographer Derek Ridgers.

These are printed on Fuji Crystal Archive paper, numbered and certified.

Final framed image is 20 x 24 inches.



HIGH END BY OZ

THE WIZARD OF SOUND

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



Thrax Enyo



North American Importer & Distributor

www.highendbyoz.com “The Wizard Of Sound”
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North American Dealers

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NV 89029 USA, (702) 299-0567
www.audiolimits.com

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www.stellarhomeaudio.com

Audio Den
105 Desperado Rd, Bailey, Co.
USA (303) 478-8221
www.audioden.net

United Home Audio
Stafford, VA
USA, (540) 295-8313
www.unitedhomeproducts.com

The Sound of Space...

Currently on Back Order

<https://lightintheattic.net/releases/3867-the-voyager-golden-record-eu-uk>

If you love space exploration, this box is a treasure trove of interstellar information. It has three LPs and two CD's with all of the Voyager audio content (remastered from original analog tapes) along with imagery from the Voyager probes and news media coverage from back in the day.

Finally, there is a 12x12-inch book, and the original essay from Timothy Ferris, the original producer of the 1977 record.



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www.penaudio.fi & www.audiomania.fi

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Right Now...

Fuji's Instax mini40
\$99 and up
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Polaroid/instant film fans rejoice. Fuji is back in the game with their Instax series, and these are great little cameras.

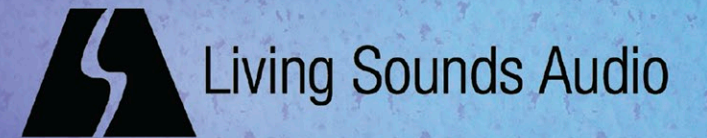
In our all-digital, disposable, virtual world, a photo that you can hold in your hand right now is pretty cool.

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

George Harrison - 50th Anniversary All Things Must Pass Box

Can't talk about this yet.



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Better than the big boys at one-third the price

underwoodhifi.com 1.770.667.5633

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TECH AV**

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HEAR THE HIDDEN DETAILS



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The Best Blades

\$15/pkg of 4
amazon.com

Tired of dull blades?

If you use a box cutter as much as we do for packing and shipping, you know how fast these blades go dull.

Especially, if you go off the path and cut something NOT made out of cardboard.

You can cut your lawnmower in half with these. Brought to you by the same people that make great scissors. Expensive but worth it!



Boulder

866 Integrated



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Roon Endpoint

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

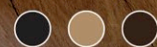
**“When it comes to sound
quality, the main reason we
are all into this wonderful
hobby, the 866 Integrated is
fantastic.”
-The Computer Audiophile**

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

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HIGH-FIDELITY LOUDSPEAKER | CHORA 826

MADE IN
FRANCE

The Chora 826 bass-reflex loudspeaker is the embodiment of an accessible high-fidelity solution for a complete listening pleasure. Equipped with the exclusive Slatefiber cone developed and manufactured at the Focal site in France, the speaker drivers deliver balanced and precise midranges and perfectly articulated bass; leaving you to enjoy a big, full and generous sound. In addition, the presence of an aerodynamic front port eliminates distortion and gives more impact in the bass.

The flagship model
\$1,095

FUTURE TENSE

Reviews in our immediate future...

EJ Jordan LTD Marlow

£1960.00 (ex VAT), Marlow CE, £2280 (ex VAT)
ejjordan.co.uk

Though they do not have a US/North American distributor yet, the folks at EJ Jordan were kind enough to send a pair of Marlow's our way.

These "BBC-inspired" single-driver speakers are beautifully built, and have a unique sound, suited to smaller rooms. Those of you that are single driver fans, know of the purity we are hinting at...



TELL YOUR SACDs: THE WAIT IS OVER

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

Unlock the potential of your SACDs and let
them shine with staggering clarity, dynamics
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D.BOB
DIGITAL BREAKOUT BOX



the absolute sound
2021 HIGH-END AUDIO BUYER'S GUIDE



GEERFAB
AUDIO
geerfabaudio.com

FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

ampsandsound Nautilus

\$8,500
ampsandsound.com

A 68 pound headphone amp? It comes in bright orange?

Where do we send the check? All kidding aside, we've heard great sound from ampsandsound at more than one show. If you can get great sound at a show, you know there's way more to be had up close and personal.

These amps are beautiful, inside and out. And they are built to last. Like, hand em down to your grandkids built to last.

It will be arriving soon.



\$9k for a 15lb preamp?!

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

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

Learn the truth on the PrimaLuna  YouTube channel.

PrimaLuna EVO 400 Preamplifier

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

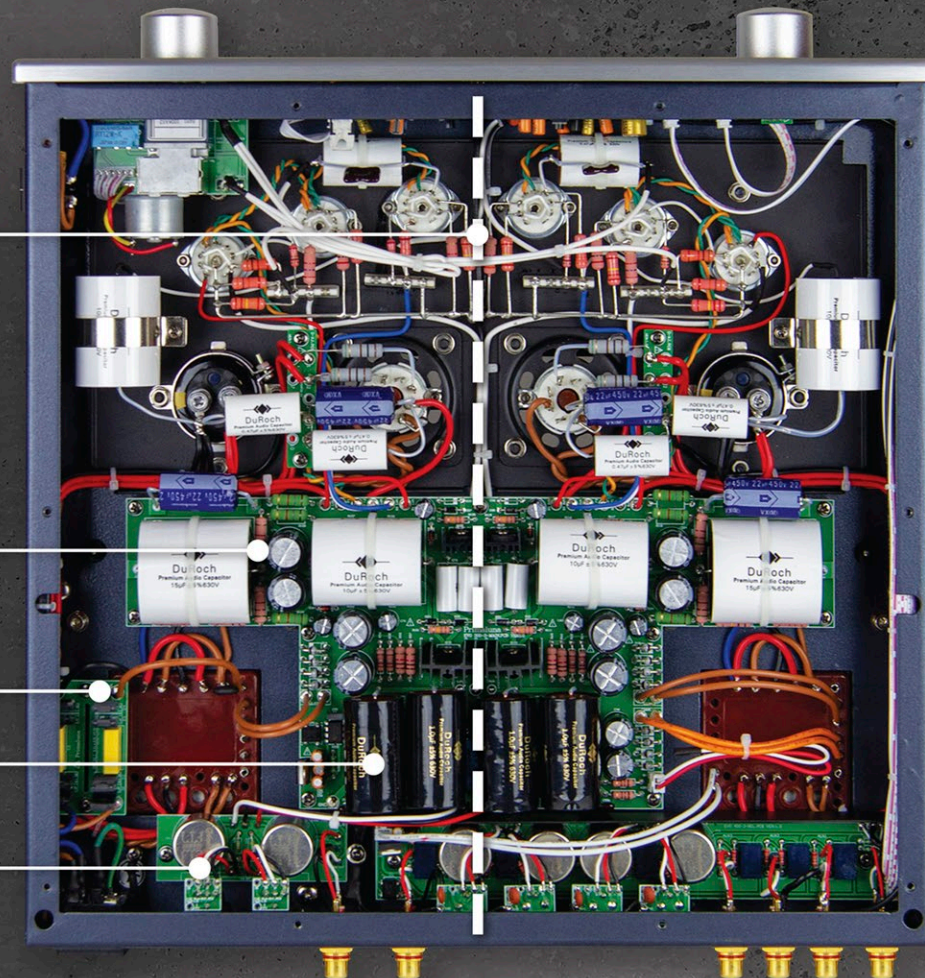
Point-to-point wiring with **Swiss-made silver-plated OFC wire** improves sound beyond what's possible with PCBs

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

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

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

Transformer-coupled XLR plus RCA connections for ultimate flexibility



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

The Absolute Sound
Product of the
Year 2020



TONE Audio
Product of the
Year 2019



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FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...



LSA HP-3 NOVA Phones

\$800 (check site for current pricing)
underwoodhifi.com

Underwood HiFi does it again, delivering killer headphone sound at a price everyone can afford.

The key to this phone's sound is the hybrid Mylar and powdered Graphene driver.

Great looks, great sound, great price. Review almost done.

Perfectly Balanced.



Announcing The New VK80i Integrated.

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

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

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

A Truly Balanced Approach.

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

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

BAT

For more info visit Balanced.com
sales@balanced.com | 302-999-8855

FUTURE TENSE

Reviews in our immediate future...

Chord Huei Phono

\$1,495
soundorg.com

And you thought Chord only made cute little DACs?

The Huei is a MM/MC phono stage with RCA and balanced XLR outputs, that is quieter than it is cute, however it does have the same form factor of Chord's famous QUTEST DAC.

Don't let the compact size fool you - this is a fantastic phono stage.



INTRODUCING 212/SX

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

1000 WATT NEXTGEN5
CLASS D AMPLIFIER

DUAL ACTIVE 12" DRIVERS

1 DOWN FIRING & 1 REAR
FIRING PASSIVE RADIATOR

REL
ACOUSTICS LTD



FUTURE TENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

Tactile 36" Mid-Century Modern Record Player Stand & Record Cabinet

Starting at \$1,295 (option and finish dependant)

tactileaudiofurniture.com

Have a minimalist system and no where to put it? We suggest the extremely stylish furniture from Tactile. They have a number of options for your records and system. We've ordered one and anxiously await delivery. Stay tuned.



Behold *The New* D-10X

Accuracy, Sensitivity, Musicality



LUXMAN

luxmanamerica.com

FUTURETENSE Reviews in our immediate future...

Fink Team Kim

\$12,800/pair
matterhornaudio.com

These new compact monitors from Fink Team have instantly impressed us with their sound and style.

Combining an AMT tweeter and an 8-inch woofer, the Kim is a potent two-way.

Stay tuned for the rest of the story!





Audeze LCDi3

\$899
audeze.com

A more reasonably priced pair of planar in-ear phones, based on the technology of their flagship LCDi4, these Audeze's leave nothing on the table.

Though Audeze claims they can deliver 130db, we suggest moderation to save your ears! Dynamic though they are..



VPI
JMW Fatboy
Tonearm
Armwand
\$3,999.99



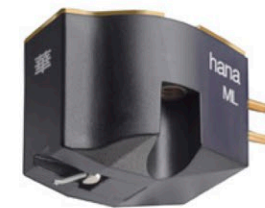
Nordost
Blue Heaven
Power Cord
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Anti-Static Dust
Cleaner/Sweeper
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Clearaudio
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Combo
\$3,199.99



Hana
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\$1,199.99



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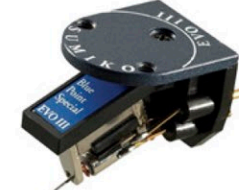
Quest For Sound
Isol-Pad Isolation
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Record Cleaner
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VPI
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Record Cleaner
\$1,599.99 (Packages
Available)



Edifier
S2000MKIII Powered
Bluetooth Speaker
\$399.99



Final Audio Design
E5000 Earphones
\$278.99



Clearaudio
Performer V2
Ebony Wood MM
Cartridge 3.3mV
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KirmussAudio
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic
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\$899.00



Dealers That Mean Business:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY
TO HEAR THE BEST SOUND



Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

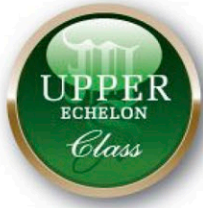
Marietta, Georgia - The Audio Company
www.theaudioco.com
146 South Park Square NE
Marietta, Georgia 30060
770.429.0434



San Diego, California - Deja VU Audio West
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“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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Sarasota, Florida - Suncoast Audio
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Sarasota, Florida 34240 941.932.0282



New York City, New York - Noho Sound & Stereo
www.nohosound.com
62 Cooper Square
New York, New York 10003



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Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

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Gig Harbor, Washington - Gig Harbor Audio
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Gig Harbor Washington 98335 253.228.6021



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Three brands, one collection

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www.audiovisionsf.com
1628 California Street
San Francisco, California 94109 415.614.1118



Austin, Texas - Whetstone Audio
www.whetstoneaudio.com
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Sonus faber

L U M I N A

Luxury experience Minimalist design Natural sound





THE TASTE OF SIMPLICITY

The Lumina collection has been conceived on the notion that it is important to savor time for ourselves. Lumina encapsulates the core values of Sonus faber and its iconic materials. It is the perfect combination for both traditional stereo enthusiasts and those looking for a multi-channel home theater system. Simplicity remains central to the collection's identity, which empowers everyone to enjoy a true Sonus faber experience. Completely made in Italy.

sonusfaber.com

Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

Morton Grove, Illinois - Quintessence Audio
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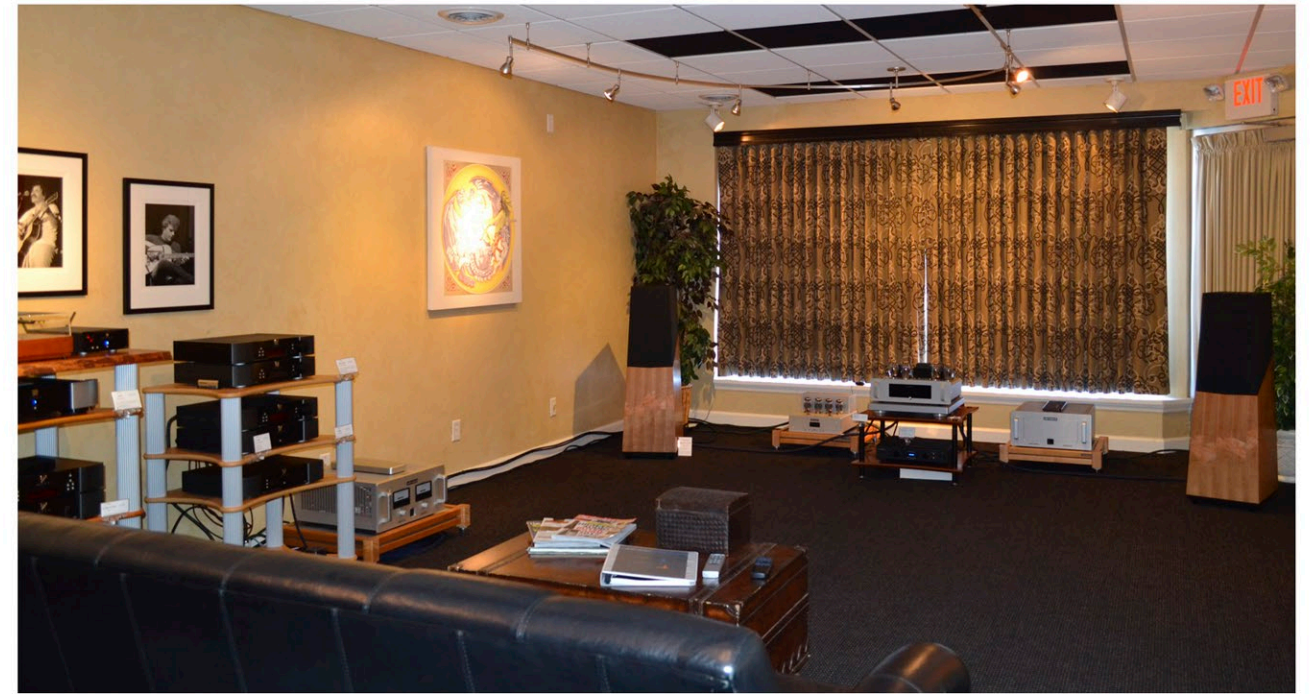
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Club Mix compilation expert, Scott Tetzlaff's theme for this playlist is "late night."

There's a real mix of old and new here, and it's pretty funky overall. Scott says "it's built to have surprises as you go along.."

Enjoy!



Gabor Szabo - Mizrab (Live Jazz workshop/ Boston)

Wax Tailor - Like This

Glacial - Tikkun

Ex-Terrestrial - Blue Smoke

Djako, Uht - Opium House (Uht Remix)

Mr. Day- Queen of the Minstrels

Chapelier Fou - Le Bruit des Gens de la Mer

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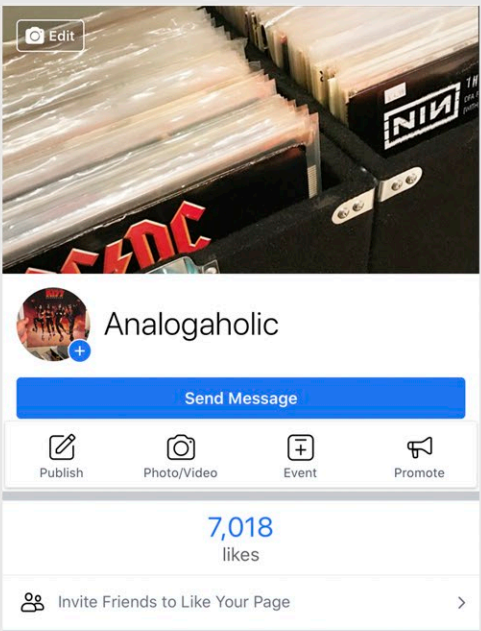
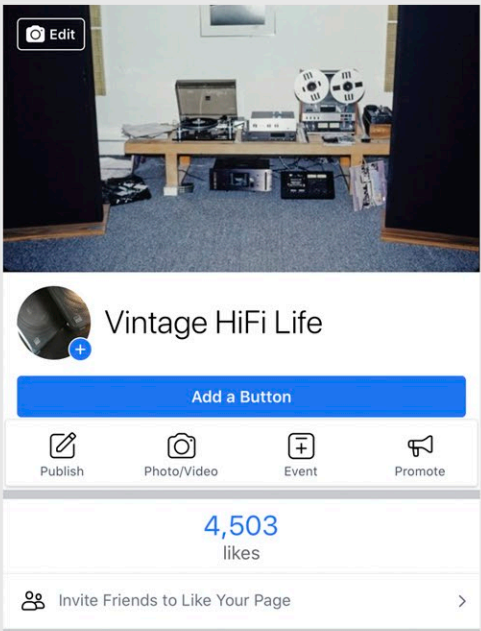
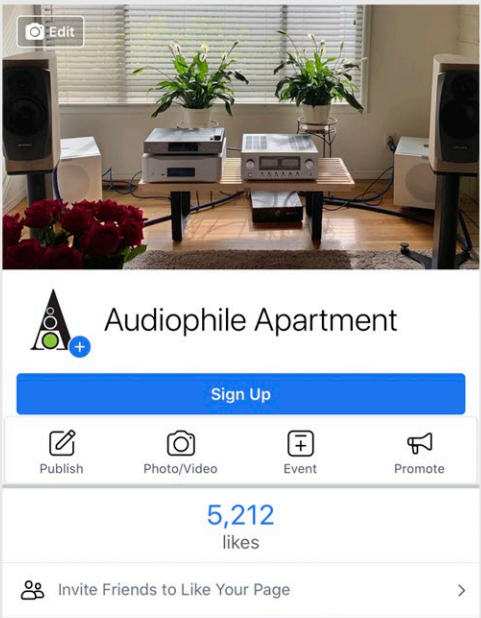
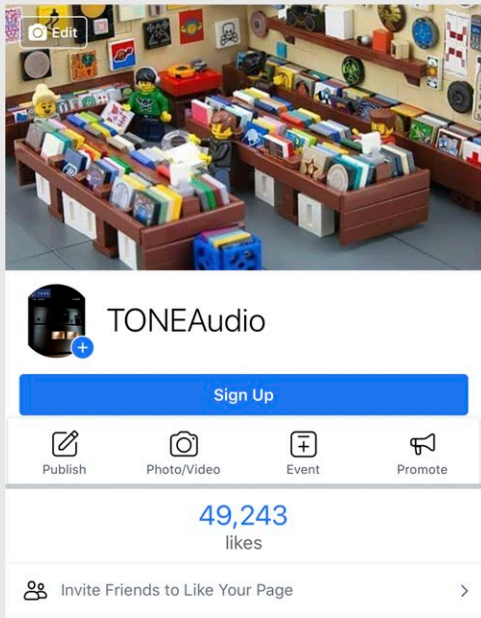
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We’ve tried to make it pretty easy for you to find us out on Facebook, and have divided up our pages to be a bit more subject specific.

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

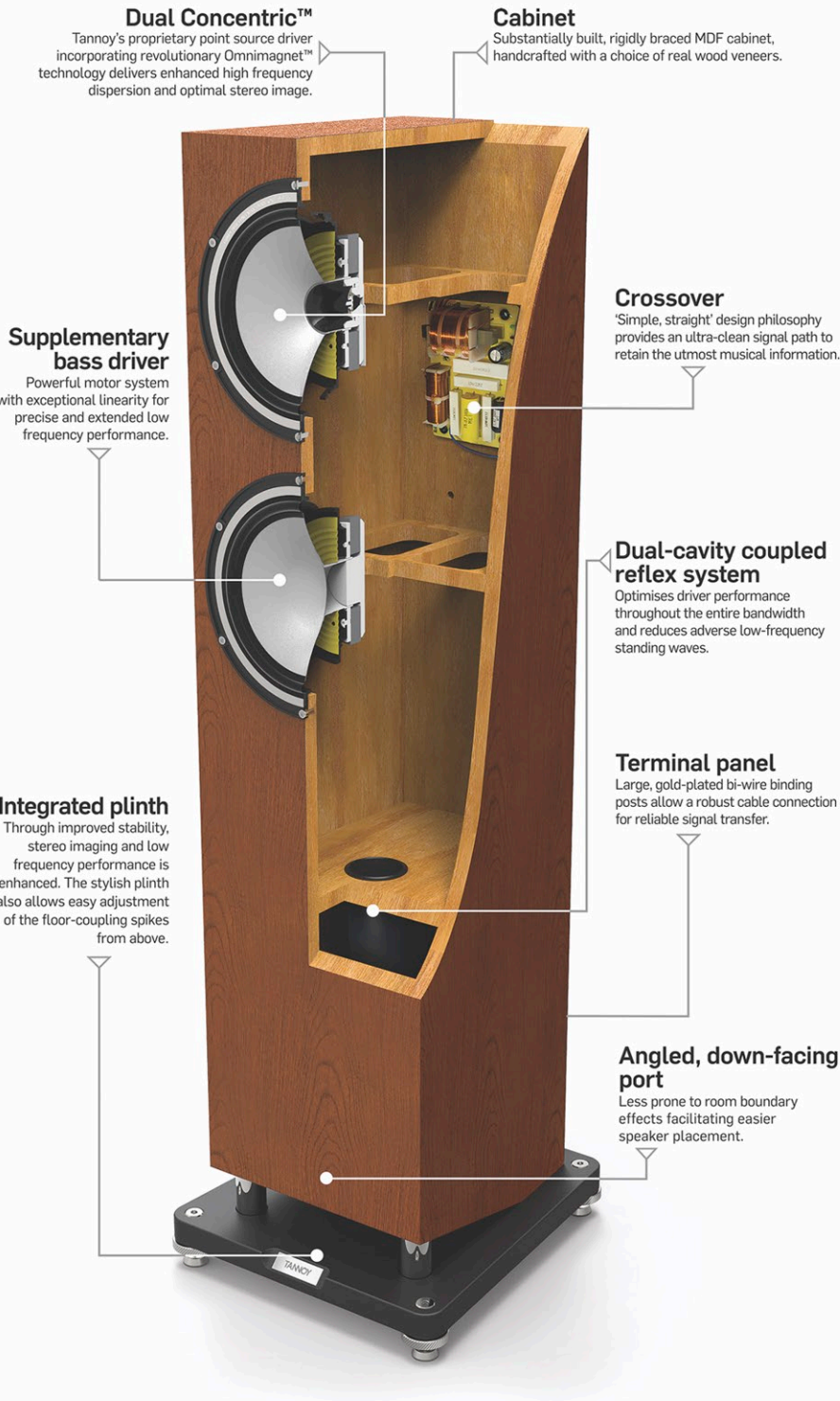


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“The Tannoy Revolution XT 8F was Robert Harley’s top discovery at the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show. His first impression was as follows: 'After listening to it and looking at the real wood enclosure, I guessed the price at \$7000 to \$10,000. The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

In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

John Hiatt - *Slug Line*

With all this John Hiatt going on this issue, it only seemed fitting to end the issue, listening to his third album, which was arguably right before Hiatt cemented his “sound.” But there is treasure to be had in these grooves, and if you happen to be perusing your local record store, you should be able to grab a copy for \$3. That’s less than a Big Mac.

And who knows? Maybe Hiatt started that whold trend of holding a picture in front of the album? Influencers, bow down in tribute.



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Not going to any hifi shows lately, had me reflecting on where I've been since starting TONE 16 years ago. A few issues into the magazine a friend of mine gave me these shoes that actually were prototypes from Nike.

Inspired by the legendary Peter Fogg, this shoe led to the highly successful Humara line of shoes, still produced today. This shoe was designed by Steve McDonald, another legendary Nike designer.

The most comfortable pair of shoes I've had the pleasure to own, they were reserved for travel, and they've been everywhere from the Montreux Jazz Festival to turn six at Monaco. If we've ever met at a hifi show or a dealer event, chances are high I was wearing these shoes.

Shoe history goes on to list Fogg as one of Nike's most successful designers. If anyone has a pair of Humara Air's in size 11, in the color below, send me a note. I'd love a pair to get me through the next 15 years.



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Next issue, **108:**

Our next issue will be somewhat random.

A handful of odds and ends that we need to give some coverage, so a little bit of this, a little bit of that.

And increasingly more music coverage as well.

Stay tuned.

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



TONE