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dCS is proud to honor Bob Ludwig as the first recipient of our dCS Legends Award.



no.100

December 2019

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dCS  
ONLY THE MUSIC

The 100th Issue

Introducing the New

# Triton One.R

from GoldenEar Technology®



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

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

—Neil Gader, *The Absolute Sound*

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

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

—Dennis Burger, *HomeTheaterReview.com*

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

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

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

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

—Al Griffin, *Sound & Vision*

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



Triton One.R  
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# In House

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

JBL

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JBL, Northridge, CA USA

What's the first record you experienced on a great hifi system?

Do you remember?

I wrote an article called "Ground Zero" in issue 48, discussing that magical moment, and consequently being thrown out of the store...

Who knew?

But, if you remember the album or track that brought you into our world, play it today and celebrate with us.

TONE100.005

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T O N E

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- stillpoints
- technics
- unison research
- woo audio

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The JBL L-100 Classic

Why do we like these speakers so damn much? Read on.



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TONE is published 8 times yearly in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. And except for that one print issue, we've been online only, Saving the trees since 2005.

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It's that time again, and this year we have something special.

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

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Homage to the lattes consumed to make this issue possible



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## Time Warp

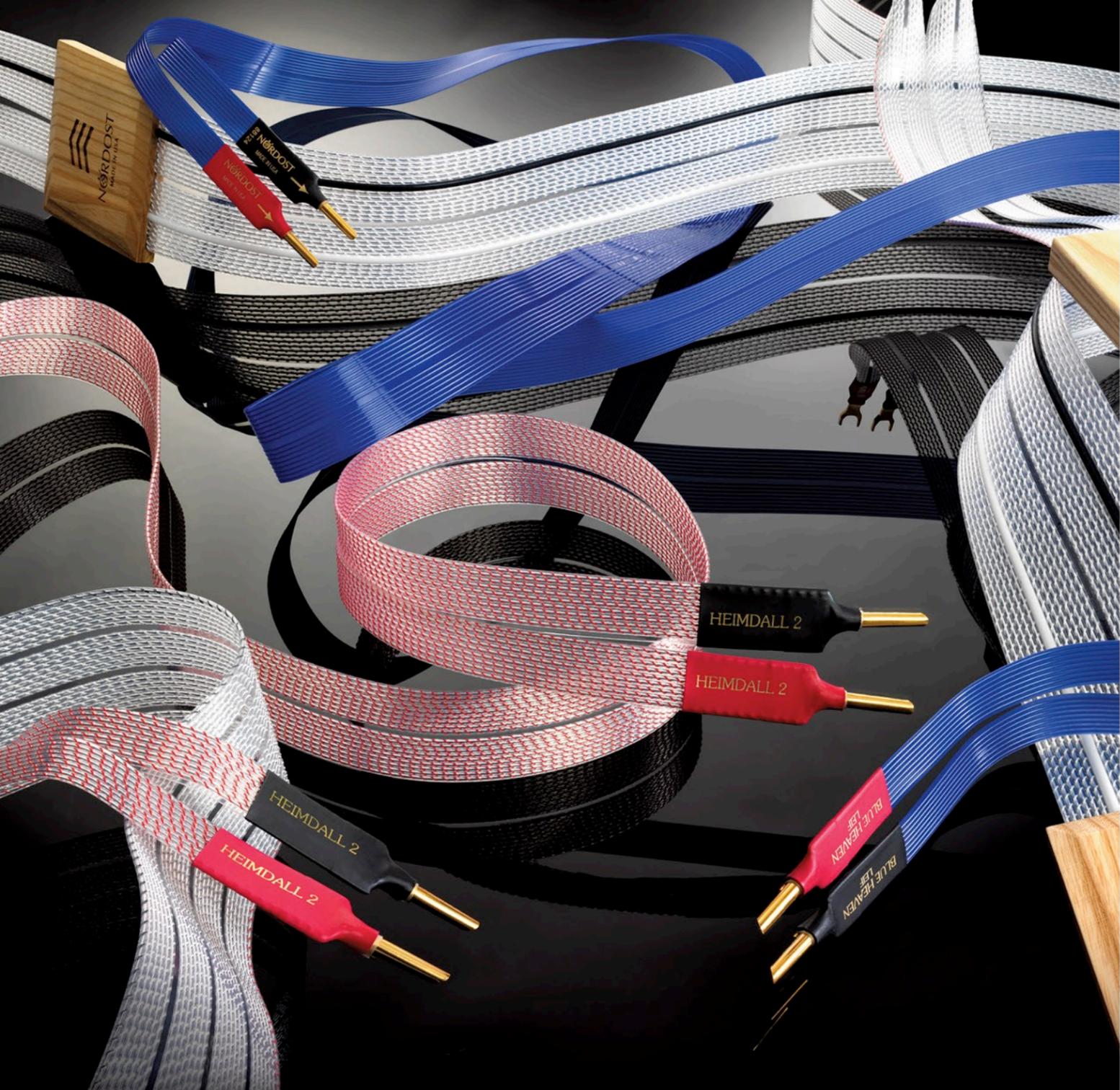
A few random snippets from TONE's memory bank.

# 151

## Future Tense

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





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## new arrivals...

Sean Zloch joins our team to help fine tune all of the digital images that go into the magazine. His help will be greatly appreciated, as we plan on being even busier in the new year.





# Time Warp

Assorted Bits of our history...



**"no matter what I listened to, I couldn't imagine the sound being much better"**  
*Soundstage! June 2017*

## Technology

Bryston's new patented Salomie Circuit is a revolutionary new way to reduce distortion and noise unveiling never before heard details only hinted at by other equipment. The input stage operates at distortion of less than 0.001 percent!

## Power

Cubed Series technology is available in 10 different amplifiers ranging from the B135<sup>3</sup> integrated at 135 watts per channel, the venerable 4B<sup>3</sup> at 300 watts by two channels, to the incredible 28B<sup>3</sup> 1000 watt mono block.

## Control

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

**I've been to the Rega factory a few times now, and it's always fascinating to see what Roy Gandy and his crew are up to.**

**Rega's factory is a model of efficiency, yet they still manage to keep it light, with the offices in the rear of the building, and a foosball table front and center when you walk in.**



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photo by Pam Dorgay



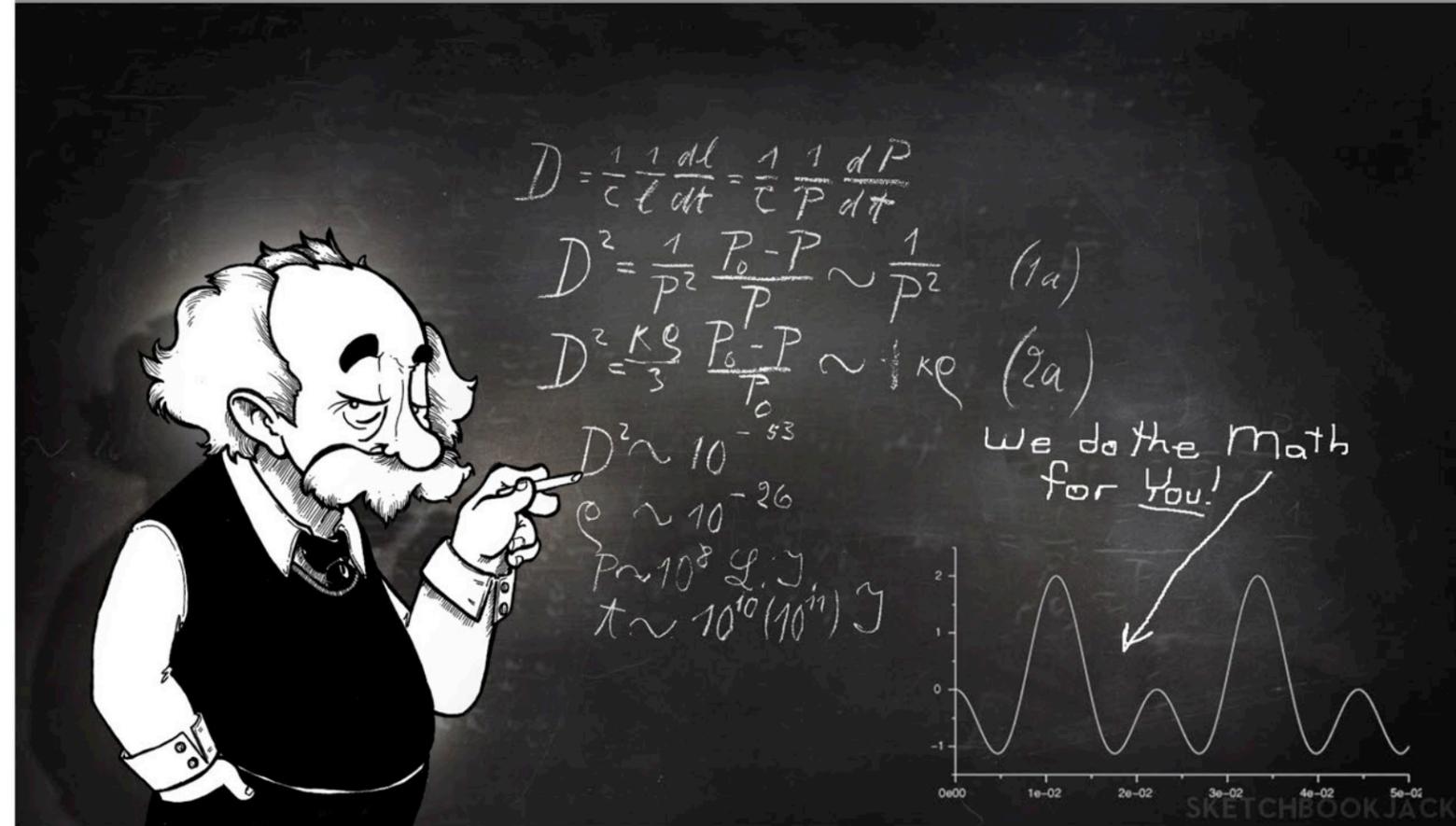
Cover Shot:

Considering how long I've owned a pair of JBL L-100's, what could be more fitting for the cover of issue 100 than a close up of that classic foam grille? JBL knocked it out of the park with the reproduction, and it brings back a lot of great memories.

Staffer Jessica Sieracki has my original pair, passing the baton to the new Classic 100s.

A big thanks to Steve Rowell at Audio Classics for getting me a pair!

Listening to music is supposed to be fun...  
 Math is sometimes hard. And not very fun...  
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MUSIC OR MOVIE SOUNDTRACK.”**

Darryl Wilkinson, *Sound & Vision*



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# no.100

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

Wow, issue 100.

We finally made it. Hey, the original *Star Trek* series only made it 79 episodes, so I feel pretty good about that. Despite an initial positive reaction at the 2005 Rocky Mountain Audio Fest, I clearly recall being across the room from *Stereophile's* John Atkinson at January's CES when I heard him mention us – and it wasn't kind. He said: "Well, it's a nice little *newsletter* they've produced, but we'll talk when they've done 100 issues." Nothing like a little motivation, ha!

It's been fun, exciting, challenging, and many other things. Reflecting back on 100 issues, the best part of this journey is the people I've met and the relationships we've built. *TONE* has taken me all over the world in search of music and hifi, and I've enjoyed every minute of it.

Though it may seem like not that much has changed in audio – we still have huge speakers, racks full of amplifiers, and speaker cables that look like garden hoses, how we listen to music is entirely different. Back in 2003, during the initial brainstorming for *TONE*, the iPod was still very limited in functionality and sound quality. The iPhone was still four years down the road. High-res audio was limited to SACD and DVD-a, neither of which had gained much traction.

Today we still have a minor format war with 24/192 PCM, DSD, and the format everyone loves to hate – MQA. Clearly, no one has learned a lesson here. Computer audio was in its infancy, and streaming files was a pain, but it would all go mainstream when the Sooloos system hit the scene. Like all tech at the beginning of its arc, it was big and expensive, but it was fast, and the first solution that was easy to use. The competition was eclipsed, and it remains so with the advent of ROON. It's no coincidence that this is brought to us by the same team of innovators that created the Sooloos system.

Perhaps not quite as sexy to some as the computer goodies, analog continues to be healthy, with performance improved at all price points, from entry to mega level. Who would have ever thought we'd have \$60,000 phono stages and \$15,000 cartridges in 2020? (but no flying cars)

The winner in all this is you, the consumer. With Amazon and Apple entering the high-resolution streaming game along with trailblazers Tidal and Qobuz, there's more music than ever at our fingertips. Even if you are a diehard vinyl enthusiast, streaming is an excellent way to vet your ultimate vinyl purchases. At \$40-\$125 per, that's not a bad thing.

Audio may seem the same as it ever was to the outside world, but we've seen quite a bit of change, and it's all been exciting. As for the next 15 years, I hope that you've learned as much from us as we have from you. I wouldn't have guessed I'd be here today, flipping through the pages of *The Absolute Sound* and *Stereophile* all those years ago. Thank you for following us.

# Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into



**Boz Scaggs -**  
Loan Me a Dime

**George Michael -**  
Hard Day

**Joni Mitchell -**  
Hissing of Summer Lawns

**Fiona Apple -**  
Valentine

**Slayer -**  
South of Heaven

**David Bowie -**  
Blackstar

**Spoon -**  
The Ghost of you Lingers

**Cecile McLorin Salvant -**  
Wild Women Don't Have  
the Blues

**Woody Herman -**  
Road Father

**Chicago Transit Authority-**  
Introduction

We asked our readers on Facebook to list some tracks they never get tired of. We got a pretty wide range of selections, so here's part one.

We'll list some more at the end of the issue.

no. 1 The World

Tone Playlists are sponsored by

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# Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

Words and photos by Juan Calvillo

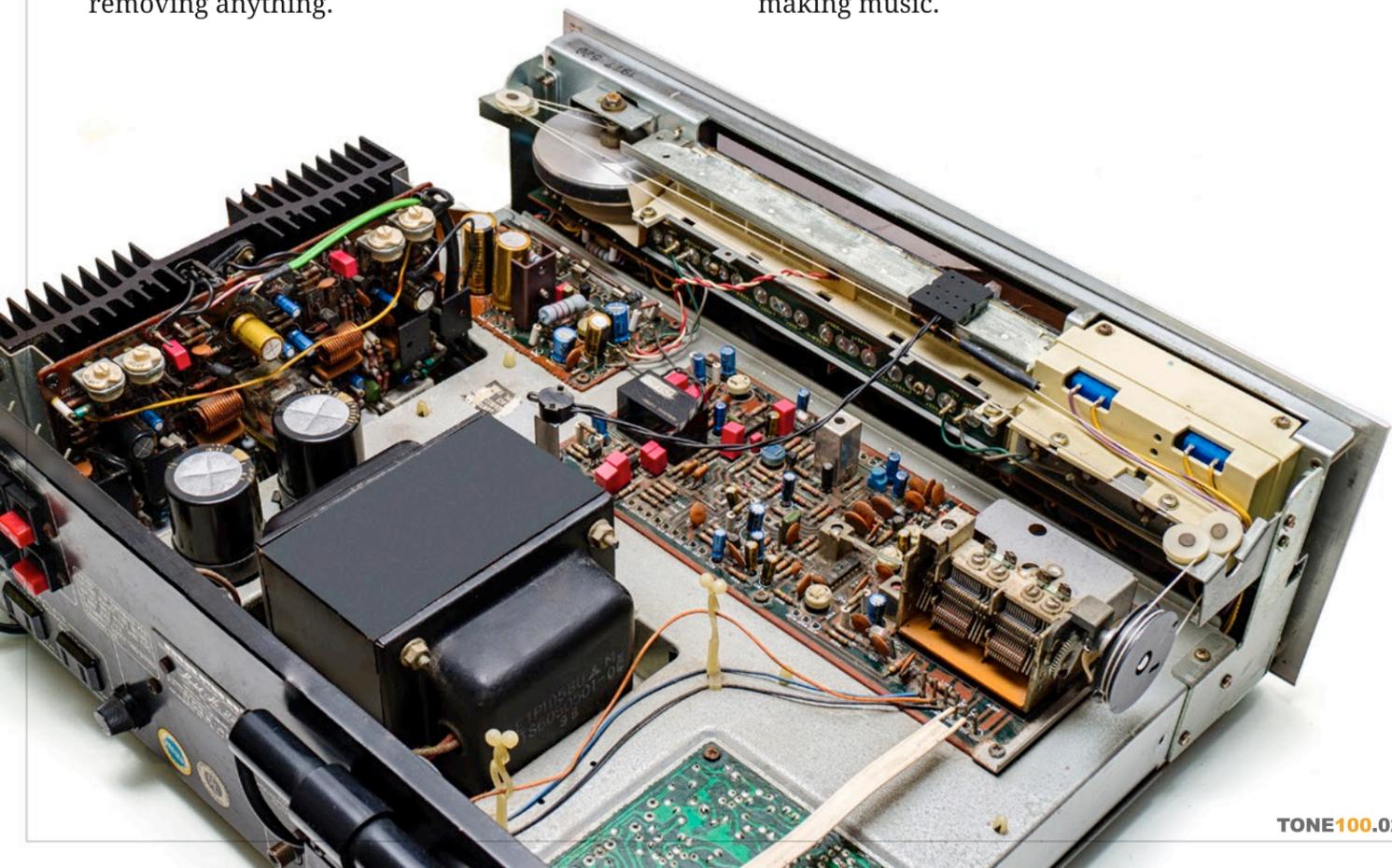
## The Marantz 2252

It was a beautiful fall day for a 150-mile drive to the Washington coast. A great looking, Marantz receiver at a bargain price was waiting for me in South Bend. My long-haired German Shepherd Tallulah and I made the drive, getting to the store around noon. The vintage Marantz was on the counter playing when I walked in. It sounded as good as it looked. I handed over the cash, walking to the car with a very clean Marantz 2252. A blackout-faced, model made for one year, 1977, then replaced with the 2252B silver faced model.

Returning home I realized it was playing when I arrived because the power switch is funky. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, power-up, and a scratchy volume control, so I popped the lid to do a thorough cleaning. The 2252s insides are nicely laid out and the pots can be easily sprayed without removing anything.

After a once-over with DeOxit, working the pots a few times fully throughout their range I moved on to the function switch, but made the novice mistake and sprayed some in the power switch. Bad idea. It arced and died completely on the next power up, causing a quick Dim Bulb Tester (DBT) shutdown.

What to do when you kill the new Marantz you are dying to listen to on a Friday evening and can't get a new power switch, right now? Frankenstein it; pull the dead switch and see if you can re-animate it. A reference photo was taken to document how the 4 wires were connected, and out came the power switch. After some cleaning and part flipping, the power switch was reassembled, the slider and catch greased, soldered in and mounted. A DBT power-up followed, with crossed fingers. Eureka, the switch felt smooth, the relay clicked and the 2252 was making music.



TONE100.021



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

- Jon Myles, HiFi World

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

- Ian Ringstead, Hifipig.com

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

- Jason Kennedy, HiFi +

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

- Chris Kelly, The Ear

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# Old School

Respecting HiFi's Past...

Words and Photos by Juan Calvillo

**T**he tuner is noticeably more sensitive than that on my 2230B, and though the signal-strength meter doesn't show much strength, the Marantz sucks in the stations, sounding fantastic. After a cursory cleaning of the tarnished RCA inputs on the back, the AUX and Phono functions are tested and sound as nice as the tuner. Later the inputs were buffed with Dremel tool powered Q-tips infused with metal polish. A new set of feet and a power switch are on order too, but in the name of science, replacing the power switch will be delayed to see how long this doctored part will go.

After a couple of weeks of listening I notice the 2252 really enhances the performance from my EPI 100Ws, and "poor man's Thorens", a Phillips GA 212 Electronic. It sounds so good, I decide to keep it and recap it. Over a few more weeks, the Power, Tone, Phono, FM and Amp boards are completely recapped. All went smoothly until the final phase, new filter caps and a recapped Amp board. Afterward, the unit was dark and the bulb on the Dim Bulb Tester stayed bright. No success just yet.

Stumped after hours of looking for bad solder joints, at polarity and values of the capacitors replaced on the Amp board, for loose wires, any cause of the problem, I went to bed exhausted. Only to wake up at 2 A.M. thinking,

## Did I get the filter caps right?

I pulled out photos a buddy on Audiokarma sent, taken as he recapped the same receiver. One look at the filter cap photo and I thanked the gods there hadn't be a Chernobyl type catastrophe when I'd tested the receiver. One cap needed to be spun 180 degrees and re-soldered!

This is the receiver I'll be keeping regardless of what else I happen upon. The 2252 has plenty of power at 50 watts per side, features classic Marantz styling, and is now completely recapped.

It's ready for the next 40 years.



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# Time Warp

Assorted Bits of our history...

**W**hen some audio magazine from the year 2085 sends a terminator back in time to stop TONE from happening, they're gonna take this guy on the right out. Sorry dude.

Hats off to my old friend Jonathan Spelt, from Ultra Fidelis in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The fellow that sold me my first "real" hifi system and entertained all my pesky questions for many years to follow. For now, we're still both here!



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# The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Smaller Spaces

## Walking a Different Path: The Pathos Logos Mk.II Integrated Amplifier

\$4,995  
upscaleaudio.com

**M**any audio enthusiasts have a preference for tubes, while others have more of a desire for solid-state. Both have their reasons, and usually, both are equally passionate about the reasons why they want what they want. And then there are the few rebels that want a bit of each - nothing wrong with that. No doubt, you've met someone with a system using a hybrid approach, more often than not, a vacuum tube preamplifier driving a solid-state amplifier to get that extra bit of tube-y warmth, yet that additional punch that solid-state delivers. Not a bad way to go at all, but it always requires careful auditioning and matching to the rest of your system to get the right balance.

For many of our space-restricted friends, or just those of you that don't want a massive rack of audio gear in your listening room, an integrated is often your salvation. Bam. Pathos gives you everything. How often does that happen?

The pair of 6922 tubes in the preamplifier section sound damn good right out of the box, but with numerous variations on this classic tube, you can fine-tune away on this one. Fortunately, the guy that imports Pathos is the best tube guy on Earth - no other than Upscale Audio's Kevin Deal. But I'll let you all argue amongst yourselves.

Mr. Deal informs me that my review sample has arrived with nearly 500 hours on the clock, so I can get right to work. The Logos Mk. II has a pair of big, 22,000uf filter capacitors per channel in the power supply, so per Deal, "just leave it powered up for 30 days and listen as the magic appears."

### Great from power-up

Beginning the evaluation with Miles Davis Sketches of Spain and the lovely JBL L-100 Classic speakers, it's easy to get pulled in to this combination. As someone who used to sport the hybrid combination in the past, there's a definite signature here, and it's great. The 110 watts per channel that the Logos MkII delivers has extra grip that neither the PrimaLuna HP integrated (with KT150s) or the Line Magnetic LM-805 have. All three amplifiers are right around the \$4,995 price point, and all are different.

# The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Smaller Spaces



The Line Magnetic is definitely the most romantic but has the least amount of bass control. The PrimaLuna is as good as it gets for tubes, with more grip than the LM, but less midrange magic. Part of this will depend on your personal preference, but if you want nearly all the magic that full tube design provides, but want more bass drive without having to replace power tubes on a regular (and at a higher cost) basis, the Logos Mk.II might be your perfect choice. And I say this with no disrespect to the PrimaLuna or the Line Magnetic. I actually own both of these amps.

Made in Vicenza, Italy, the Logos Mk. II is beautiful to behold. Actually, everything they make is. This amp is almost too beautiful to tuck in an equipment rack. From the curved front panel, exposing the two preamp tubes, to the cooler than cool heat sinks, extruded with the Pathos name in them, I suggest showing this amplifier off. Like maybe on a beautiful Roman column with a couple of spotlights on it?

Back to the sound

Gorgeous as this amplifier is, the sound still wins the day. The Mosfet output stage is a perfect match for the tube input stage, and the oversized, dual-mono power supply design gives this amplifier the current reserve to drive even difficult speakers. They powered my Tympani IVs with ease, and a set of Acoustat 2+2 ESLs equally well.

Mating the Logos Mk.II with everything from a pair of KEF LS-50s up to the Focal Stella Utopia Ems, proves a breeze. The higher quality your main speakers are, and the more bass extension they have, the more you can truly see what this amplifier is capable of, both in terms of resolution and control. The LS-50s, Falcon LS3/5as and Wharfedale Linton all make an excellent match. Great choices for those in a small to medium-sized space.

Selfishly speaking, the Logos Mk.II is an especially good amplifier to power the JBL L-100 classics with the grip of the output stage balances the slightly warm bass character of these speakers incredibly well, giving the JBLs even more cred.

Moving the amplifier to the living room, with a pair of Focal Kanta no.3s, also proves excellent. Tracking through several acoustic and solo pieces, settling on a long playlist of Lloyd Cole tracks clearly shows off this amplifier's ability to produce a broad, three-dimensional soundfield.

*Enjoy the Experience*



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# The Audiophile Apartment

Sound for Smaller Spaces



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Phantom III Tonearms

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\$899.99



**Audioquest**  
Tornado High-Current  
AC Power Cord (6ft.)

\$1,299.95



**IsoAcoustics**  
ISO-PUCK Mini  
Equipment Isolators

\$99.99 (Set of 8)



**Sieveking Sound**  
Omega  
Headphone Stands

\$179.99



**Audioquest**  
DragonFly Cobalt USB  
DAC + Preamp + HP Amp

\$299.95



**Sumiko**  
Blue Point Special  
Evo III MC Cartridge

\$548.99



**Nitty Gritty**  
Record Cleaner  
Model 2.0 (Solid Oak)

\$544.99



**VPI**  
HW-16.5  
Record Cleaner

\$699.99 (Packages Available)



**Epos Acoustics**  
K5 Bookshelf  
Speakers (Black)

\$494.99 (Pair)



**Final Audio Design**  
E5000 Earphones

\$278.99



**Audio Technica**  
AT-ART7 Dual  
Moving Coil Cartridge

\$1089.99

Cole's "Music in a Foreign Language" floats easily between the speakers, capturing every bit of tonal inflection he offers up. The Crash Test Dummies "Superman's Song" gives up more of the same. Trying to stay in the current day, tracking through the Billie Elish album is equally satisfying.

This is an amplifier that has just enough emotion to be engaging, yet not too much of a sonic signature that it appears overly colored. Again, all tube lovers will gravitate towards that anyway. The Logos Mk.II merely adds a bit more tonal saturation than the similarly priced competition that is all solid-state.

## Beautiful and functional

With four single-ended RCA inputs and two XLR inputs, you aren't going to run out of inputs. There is also an optional internal DAC board, so perhaps we can get Mr. Deal to send that by for a listen and follow up. More than likely, you have a DAC that you're already more than happy with. If not, the internal DAC is an excellent option for those where space is at a premium, and functionality trumps all.

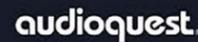
Those wanting more nuts and bolts can read the full specs here at the Upscale website.

A main power switch at the rear puts the unit in standby; depressing the top of the two small, round buttons powers it up. The bottom button cycles you through the inputs, and what looks like a volume control actually does not turn in a full circle. It's highly damped movement adjusts the sound level up or down by a slight jog to the right or left. A red LED display in the center shows the level. The Logos Mk.II is a rare product that is as much fun to look at as it is to use.

The Logos Mk.II does it all - dynamics, speed, control, and delicacy. All in a package that is stunningly executed. Our review sample arrived in the silver and black version, clean design to be sure, but when I think of Pathos, I always think of the wood inlays. It just seems to go with the warmth of the design. But hey, different strokes. If you've got a pair of Eames lounge chairs, go for the wood. A couple of Barcelona chairs or a black leather couch might suit the black better.

And wait till you see the remote. There's just something so inviting about Italian style.

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



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**KirmussAudio**  
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic  
Restoration System

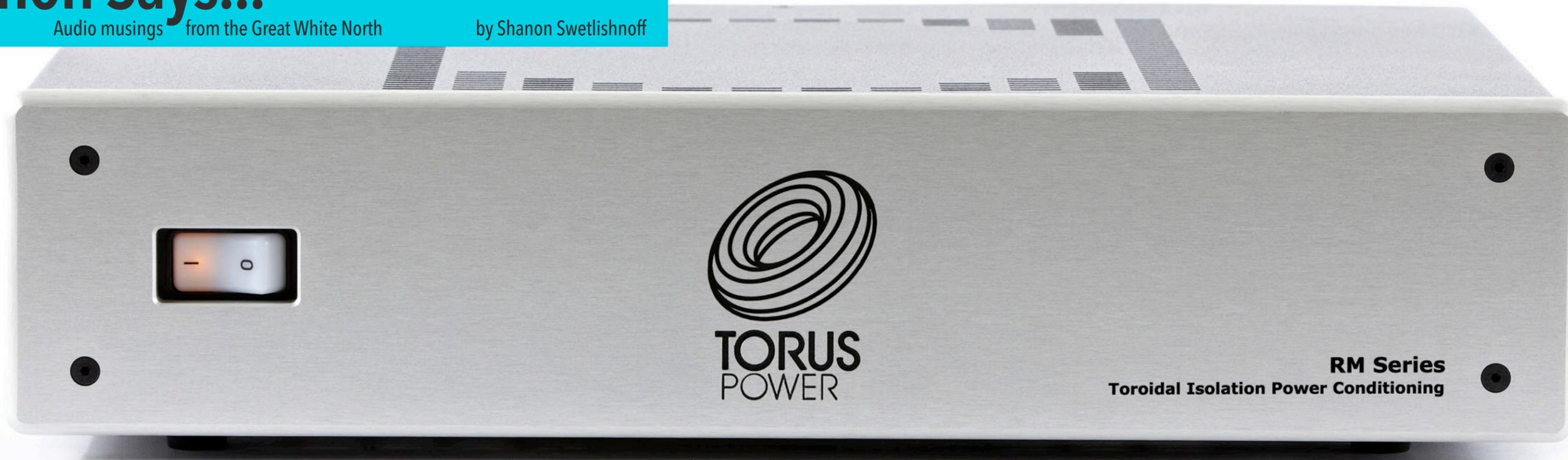
\$875.00



# Shanon Says...

Audio musings from the Great White North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff



## Torus RM15 \$2,300

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

One of the most important factors in keeping your gear performing at its best is the power it gets fed. We all know the “garbage in, garbage out” philosophy, so providing your system with clean, balanced consistent power, is essential for optimal sound quality. When it comes to toroidal power isolation transformers, this Canadian company from Toronto, Ontario has been doing it right since 1983. You may not have heard of Plitron Manufacturing, but perhaps you’ve heard of Torus, the subsidiary that concentrates on making isolation transformers for your home. You should hear what a Torus power conditioner can do for audio.

Plitron excels in research, design, development and manufacturing toroidal based products for audio, AV, and medical applications with over 400 off the shelf pieces. They also offer

customized products to suit a customer's specific needs. Torus Power models in the RM series remain unparalleled for performance, protection, and value, ranging from 5 Amp to 100 Amp. The goal here is to introduce you to the Torus RM15, a Balanced Power Isolation Unit (PIU) power transformer offering 120 V output with high power capability, isolation, surge suppression, and noise reduction. The RM15 is reasonably priced under \$3,000 Canadian (\$2,300 USD), offering tremendous value for the price asked.

When choosing a power supply, consideration should be given to the advantages of toroidal power as compared to EI transformers. The toroidal design virtually eliminates mechanical hum, running cool and silent as a result of the lack of an air gap in the grain-orientated silicon steel windings. This advantage reduces acoustic noise 8:1 over EI. What this means for the discerning listener is the elimination of floor noise or any background interference that takes away from recordings ultimate dynamics.

Toroidal transformers have 1/10th the magnetic field as their EI counterparts, reducing interference to sensitive electronics nearby. And toroidal power is highly efficient, requiring 1/16th of the electricity EI transformers need in standby. This steps right in line with Plitron's response to consumer demand for cleaner, greener power, by developing innovative energy efficient technology. This incredible transformer isolates 120 V to power your equipment with low impedance and high current. The result is pure isolation and consistency, even with spikes in household power or electrical storms that can damage your treasured equipment. The larger models have the ability to step 240 V power down to 120 for even more current reserve.

The RM15 weighs a manageable 21kg (46lbs) measuring 42cm x 29cm x 9cm (16.5"x11.5"x3.5") making it fit nicely into any rack. The front panel has a large recessed toggle switch which turns blue when engaged while the rear panel offers an AC input, 10 hospital grade outlets and a ground.



# Shanon Says...

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The biggest question for me was how would using the RM15 impact the music. I'm a vinyl enthusiast and a huge fan of classic rock but listen to a wide range of music in both digital and analog. Honestly, there was some initial skepticism that there would be a huge sonic improvement, but the RM15 made me a quick believer. When you are savoring time in your listening chair, you know how much full bodied bass, crisp vocals, fine details and unimpeded power add to the overall experience. The increased enjoyment the RM 15 brings to my entire music collection is instantly clear. Major improvements in texture, channel separation and fine detail resolution disappear the minute I go back to merely using the wall socket.

The RM15 brings bass out of the background giving it more kick and dynamic punch. Even without a sub added to the system, there is more bloom, texture and power to the low end. Going straight to *Who's Next*, the bass drum and guitar take on a more commanding role in this classic rock recording. While I usually need to play Rush's "Anthem" and "Subdivisions" at window shaking level, I found the power behind these cuts still on tap at modest levels, where I didn't before.

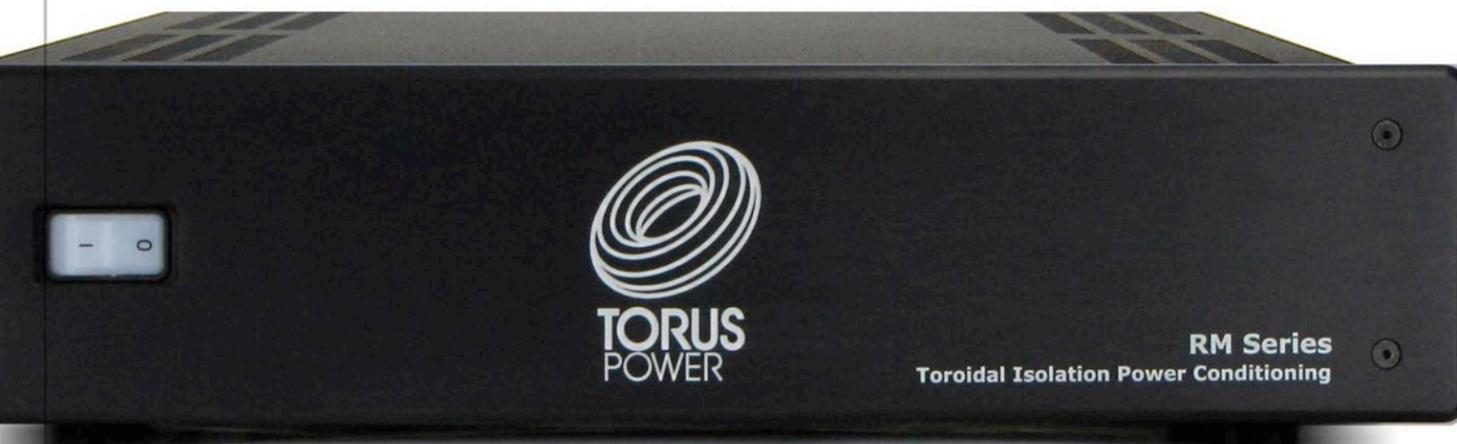
Small background details that often get lost are hard to miss while vocals are crisp and genuine too. Slowing down the pace for the Buena Vista Social Club record, Ibrahim Ferrer's voice mixed with the intimate percussion on these tracks feels more alive than merely plugging into the wall. I went back and forth a number of times, just to make sure I wasn't freaking myself out.

## It's hard to contain my enthusiasm for the consistent improvement that the Torus RM-15 delivers.

Now I appreciate the sweet spot more than ever, yet even off axis, I can still hear the improvement. If you haven't addressed this aspect of your system, your eyes and ears will be opened.

Time to crank up some more Rush...

<https://www.toruspower.com/>



TONE100.037

# Tone Imports

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# Playlist: What Our Readers Are Into



Ok, ok. Even though Christmas is past and some of you don't even celebrate the holiday (which is just fine, BTW), but Christmas songs are a big part of the season. This collection, versions 1, 2, and 3 are some of our favorites. Extra credit if you have the cassettes.

no. 2 Portland

TONE Playlists are sponsored by:



## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: THIN FILM ACCURACY, DEEP BASS THRILLS.

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No other loudspeaker features the controlled dispersion radiation pattern of a curvilinear electrostatic transducer combined with our reflection-defeating PoweredForce Forward woofer alignment. The result is breathtakingly accurate and seamlessly integrated full-range performance. On-board Anthem Room Correction (ARC®) technology instantly optimizes response for the best sound in any room.

Renaissance ESL 15A is a revolutionary melding of form and function. This is exactly what we mean by *Truth in Sound*.

The reviews are in. This is our Masterpiece

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

*"Yes, I've drunk the Kool-Aid for years. But even though I'm pre-primed to like electrostatic-panel speakers, I'd never found a one-stop solution I could live with. Now that a MartinLogan active subwoofer endowed with ARC-2 has been successfully mated to an XStat panel, anyone serious about big, full, accurate sound reproduction can start here. Unconditionally recommended."*

*Renaissance ESL 15A  
Jon Iverson, Stereophile*

*"...the best bass response I've ever heard in my room in the areas of overall smoothness of response and of clarity, definition, and pitch differentiation."*

*Impression ESL 11A  
Paul Seydor, The Absolute Sound*

*"It's a powerful, dynamic, musical fun maker with the usual MartinLogan characteristics of good imagery and great detail... and terrific integration between cones and panel. Factor in the benefit of subtle DSP room compensation and this electrostatic hybrid design comes extremely highly recommended!"*

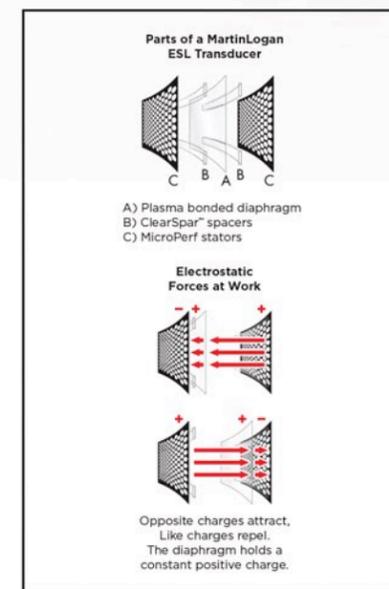
*Impression ESL 11A  
Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi+*

*"MartinLogan has hit a home run... This speaker improves upon the traditional MartinLogan strong points of transparency and detail and adds a much improved bass section to create a well-rounded, great-sounding speaker."*

*Expression ESL 13A  
Brian Kahn, HomeTheaterReview.com*

*"...a world-class speaker. It is revealing, accurate and has the huge soundstage one expects of a dipole radiator."*

*Impression ESL 11A  
Glenn Young, Secrets of Home Theater & High Fidelity*



*Renaissance*  
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by MARTINLOGAN

35 YEARS  
1983 - 2018

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



Beneath its timeless aesthetic and familiar curves, the new Aida has been completely overhauled. Years of tireless research and refinement have yielded a pristine electroacoustic engineering project featuring all-new drivers, crossovers and internal structuring. A dramatic improvement upon the speaker once called "as close to perfection as I have ever experienced."



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*Aida*  
LIMITLESS IMMERSION

sonusfaber.com

# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

## Personal Pleasure Focal Utopia Headphones

\$3,995  
www.focal.com

**H**aving lived with a number of Focal speakers over the last five years, the family resemblance between the Utopia headphones and their floor-standing speakers is unmistakable. The quick, lively, accurate sound I've grown accustomed to is now available for personal listening.

Long story short, we love them.

*Enjoy the Experience*



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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening



At \$3,995, these are top-tier premium phones to be sure. Yet unlike some of the other big guns, the Utopias sound incredibly good merely plugged in to my first gen Astell & Kern player or even the Dell desktop that I use to control ROON in my main system. Ditto for the iPad, so these are not like a number of other premium phones that absolutely require a major headphone amplifier to deliver great sound.



# TORUS POWER

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## INSPIRED PERFORMANCE

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# Headphone Art

The Fine art of Personal Listening

**P**ast experience with Focal speakers (and their beryllium tweeters) shows they need a while to break in properly, sounding slightly edgy out of the box. The Utopia headphones are similar, so they stayed plugged into the Dell with music on repeat for a solid week before beginning serious listening. I suggest you do the same, or the brittle sound you start with may scare you off.

Plugging in to a number of different headphone amplifiers, Kevin Deal from Upscale Audio suggests the Feliks Audio Elise. At only \$1,649, this makes for an incredible combination, where my Pass HPA-1 is still slightly forward for my personal taste. The Elise transforms the Utopias, mellowing them out that last bit. Passing from my desk to the living room where a pair of Focal Kanta no.3s are playing (via an all tube VAC i170) the sonic signature is wonderfully similar. We'll have a full report on the Elise very soon.

The Utopia uses a single, full-range beryllium driver, and I firmly believe that this lack of crossover is a big part of the coherent, open sound these phones deliver. Thanks to the low mass of this driver, the Utopias sound remarkably similar to my favorite planar phones.

No matter what kind of music you gravitate towards, the seamless quality of the Utopias will bring it out. Tracking through a long playlist of Blue Note classics shows off how well these phones capture the fine details of acoustic instruments. Horns and piano are full of texture, and thanks to the ultra dynamic nature of the Utopia driver, drums take on a new level of realism, capturing the initial strike of the drum heads with amazing precision.

Listening to Frank Zappa's *Freak Out!* reveals what makes the Utopias worth the price. Their ability to disentangle complex recordings is fantastic. Anyone who happens to be a student of Zappa knows how much he packs into any tune. The massive bass riff in the opening of "Who Are The Brain Police?"

is kept in balance with all the tinkly percussion bits, surrounded by layer upon layer of vocals – with Zappa staying front, center, right inside your brain as you listen.

The Utopias do an equally enticing job with sparse musical selections. Moving all the way through *Twin Peaks (Music From the Limited Event)* I'm stopped dead in my tracks on Sharon Van Etten's "Tarifa." If you aren't/weren't a Twin Peaks fan, at the end of the new episodes (produced around 2017) there is a different band playing in the bar. David Lynch had an incredible sensitivity for the music featured in the original series, continuing this trend here. It's worth a spin on your favorite streaming service, you might find a few good test tracks!

As you take the Utopias out of their supplied carrying case, you'll quickly notice the high level of fit and finish these headphones offer – just like a pair of Grande Utopia Ems. Everything is machined to a standard that you might expect from an F1 car or fine wristwatch. With Focal, engineering and craftsmanship always serves the art. Beautiful to behold, yes. But remarkable to listen to.

Well worth the price asked, these belong at the top of the premium headphone mountain.



# Time Warp

Assorted Bits of our history...

## The Beginning

Back in the summer of 2003, the Washington economy was fairly go-go, and no one wanted to rent us 1500 square feet of office space, because it wasn't a big enough transaction. So what next? Build a damn building in the back yard.

Once in place, I felt a lot like the mysterious character in Tom Waits' "What's he building?" As did the neighbors. But we all got along, and 96 sheets of dry wall later, TONE was up and running.



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**EAT**

European Audio Team

Distributed by VANA Ltd.

**MINE: it should be yours**

Welcome to MINE:

We're not just crazy about music and hi-fi here at TONE. While we can put many labels on our ethos, claiming to be music lovers, audiophiles, or perhaps even qualityphiles, that doesn't even cover it. Having me so many of our readers from all over the globe, as we are well into our 13th year, I'd say our readers are playful and inquisitive to say the least.

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

So, let's call it what it is - MINE! And we'll be sharing more of our favorite stuff as we go.

#### Adidas Classics

\$39-\$79/pair  
adidas.com

Just like hifi accessories, casual footwear has been sneaking off the charts, price-wise, so it's nice to see some re-issues that have been re-imagined with an eye on affordability. More money for records!



TONE100.049

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"The inaugural year of the FAE was a great success; the show was well organized, attendees were plentiful and interesting, with many new faces we don't see at the other shows. We will be back!"

— Jeremy Bryan, MBL North America

# MINE: it should be yours

## The Stylos Fountain Pen

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It's such an exquisitely analog experience.

Nothing less than you would expect from Kostas Metaxas, the man behind Metaxis & Sins studio. The same mind that brings us tape decks that look like they came from the 22nd century and a skull shaped headphone amplifier (among other cool things) brings his unique personal style to the pen.

Whether you are new or experienced with the fountain pen, this is a writing instrument you will enjoy. And, it is available in a wide variety of colors too.

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**MINE: it should be yours**



**The NASA Graphics Manual**

\$79  
nasa.gov

Packaged to look like the world's biggest pop tart, this is a very interesting bit of NASA's history, with a lot of details on how their graphics needs have expanded over the decades.

A must for your favorite space nerd.

# MINE: it should be yours

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TONE100.055

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8 DEMO ROOMS  
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# MINE: it should be yours



**UBeesize Tripod S**  
**\$17.99**  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

When you really need a low angle shot, the UBeesize Tripod S really helps make it happen, and is especially handy in low light situations.

In a pinch, it will hold a DSLR, but we wouldn't trust it there terribly long.

TONE100.057



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FELIKS AUDIO  
**Euforia**  
**Tube Headphone Amp**  
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Learn why Focal uses Feliks headphone amps to demo Utopia at our YouTube channel. Amps starting at just \$679.

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MINE: it should be yours



TASCAM DR-05x  
\$99  
amazon.com

For those of you doing any kind of live recording, or podcasting, the TASCAM DR-05x delivers surprisingly professional results at a bargain price. Even better with an external microphone.

TONE100.059

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# MINE: it should be yours

## Clear Click Video

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At first blush this might seem way out of our normal range of things on our radar. However, if you or one of your family members still has some memories on videotape, and a working VCR, this is a very handy way to transfer it to an SD card, and then into your computer, to edit at your leisure.



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\$599.99



**KirmussAudio**  
KA-RC-1 Ultrasonic  
Restoration System  
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**Music Hall**  
MMF-3.3 Turntable  
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\$699.99

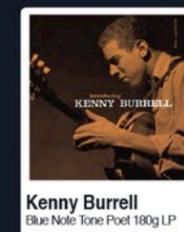


### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US:

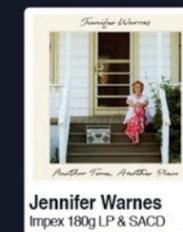
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**Kenny Burrell**  
Blue Note Tone Poet 180g LP



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



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



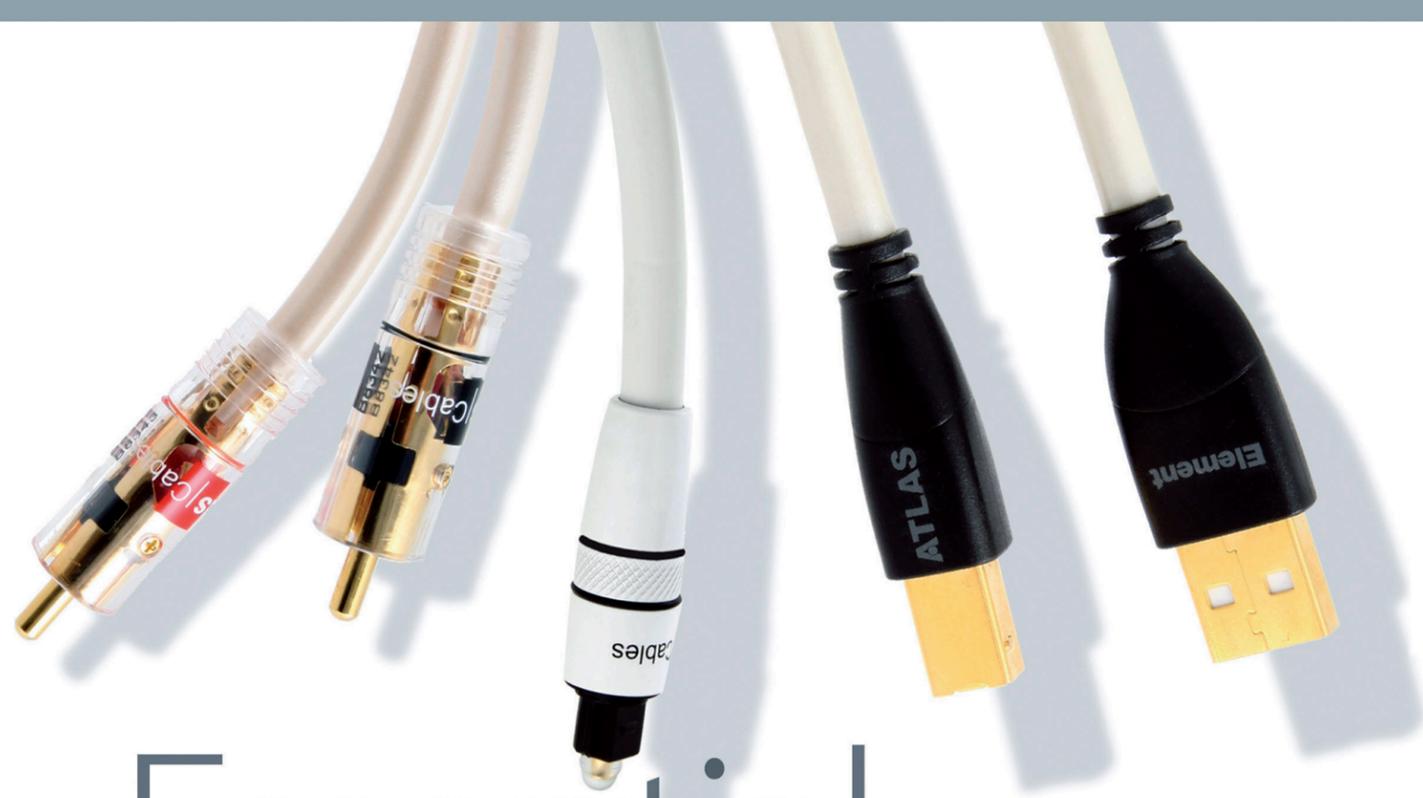
**Vanessa Fernandez**  
Groove Note 180g LP



**Beethoven**  
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# Can't Get it Out of my Head

By Jeff Dorgay



## Essential Elements.

The Element range is the starting point in our product line-up. But we view it as essential to getting a great performance from your kit.

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

**winner**  
BEST ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT  
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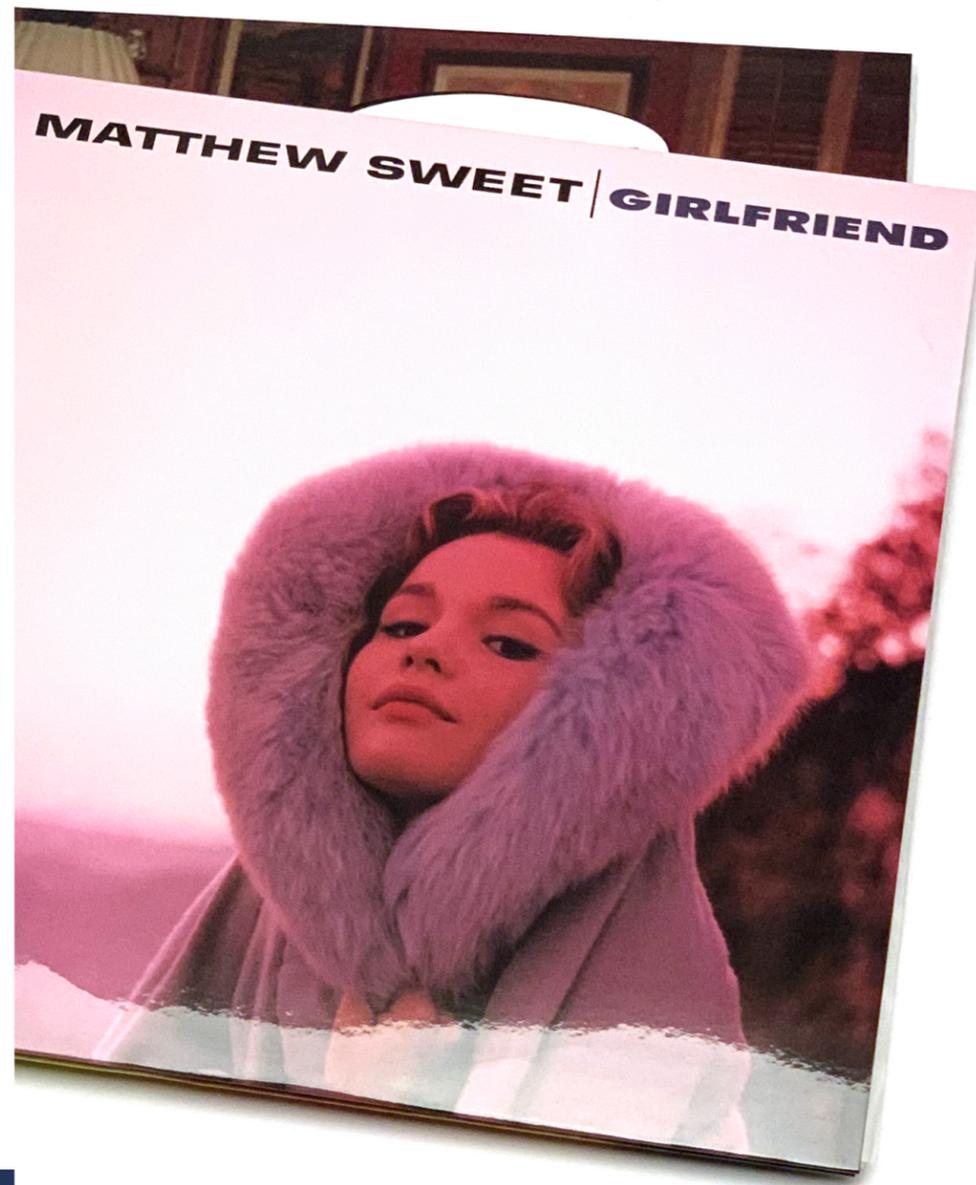
**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2012  
CABLES & ACCESSORIES  
BEST ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT  
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2013  
ACCESSORIES  
BEST ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT  
ATLAS ELEMENT INTEGRA

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2014  
Accessories  
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VanaLTD [www.vanaltd.com](http://www.vanaltd.com)

**ATLAS**  
the performance connection  
[atlas-cables.com](http://atlas-cables.com)



Emily Duff has been really busy recording a new album and taking care of holiday business, so we gave her the Christmas season off.

One record that is never too far out of my head is Matthew Sweet's *Girlfriend*. Many Sweet fans argue that it's his best work, while others like 100% Fun and Altered Beast better.

A while back, Intervention Records did a superb job remastering all three, with premium covers to match. If you can still find these rare treats, I suggest pushing the buy button instantly.

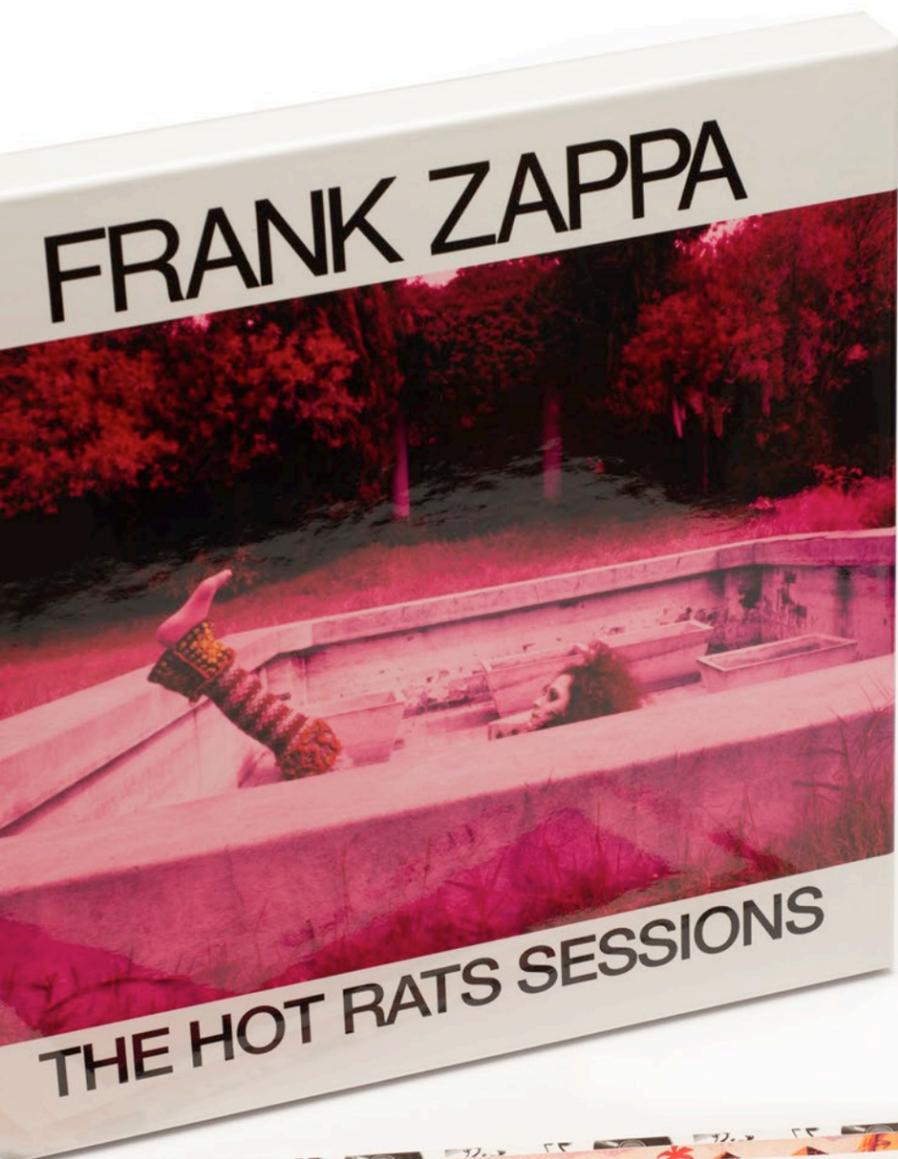
The sonics on all three are fantastic, and this is a record that draws you in, perhaps too far in, to Sweet's life after his divorce.

It's almost worth listening to one of the other two right after, if for no other reason than to lighten the mood somewhat.

But here's a tip of the parka hood to one of my all time faves.

# Can't Get it Out of my Head

By Jeff Dorgay



**F**rank Zappa took me away from day one, and my journey started with Hot Rats, “Peaches En Regalia” to be exact. In a room with a black light on.

But I digress.

The wacky lyrics, incredible guitar work and time signatures that are all over the board still blow my mind.

The “Sessions” collection is a six CD set (see I told you not to get rid of your CD players...) and includes every single variation on the theme during the creation of this legendary record.

In addition, a book full of liner notes from Matt Groening, and essays from Ian Underwood and Joe Travers complete the additional pictures supplied. And there’s a board game. Yeah.



TONE100.073



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**“Excellent depth and rich tonal characterization of orchestral instruments”**

Andrew Quint, The Absolute Sound RMAF 2018

**“Unanticipated ability to reveal honest instrumental textures, realistic weight, significant impact, and accurate body.”**

Greg Weaver, EnjoyTheMusic.com RMAF 2018

**“Its my take home speaker, I’ve never heard anything like this in this show...”**

Peter Breuninger Terry Eringi, Avshowrooms, RMAF 2018

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# Swill

Sponsored by Cardas Audio

By Jeff Dorgay

Sometimes you just need a good dark beer without getting too carried away with things. These days it's so easy to get lost in beers that have a more complex pedigree than the dog that won Westminster.

It's easy to forget or overlook the favorite that still gets the job done. Guinness Extra Stout is just the beer for the job.

Guinness claims that Extra Stout “is a direct descendant of a beer first brewed in 1821.” It's robust and smooth as a Dynaco Stereo 70 tube amplifier with NOS tubes.

Much like your favorite I.P.A., this is beer that fills you up. This isn't something to wash away your thirst quickly, it's more to savor.

Oddly enough, it's great for taking the sting out of super spicy food too.

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

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



# Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

*Wave* -  
Antonio Carlos Jobim

*Hejira* -  
Joni Mitchell

*Magic Touch* -  
Stanley Jordan

*Better Days Ahead* -  
Norman Brown

*The Nightfly* -  
Donald Fagan

*The Dynamic Duo* -  
Jimmy Smith and  
Wes Montgomery

*Come to my Garden* -  
Minnie Ripperton

*Inner City Blues* -  
Grover Washington Jr.

*Something/Anything* -  
Todd Rundgren

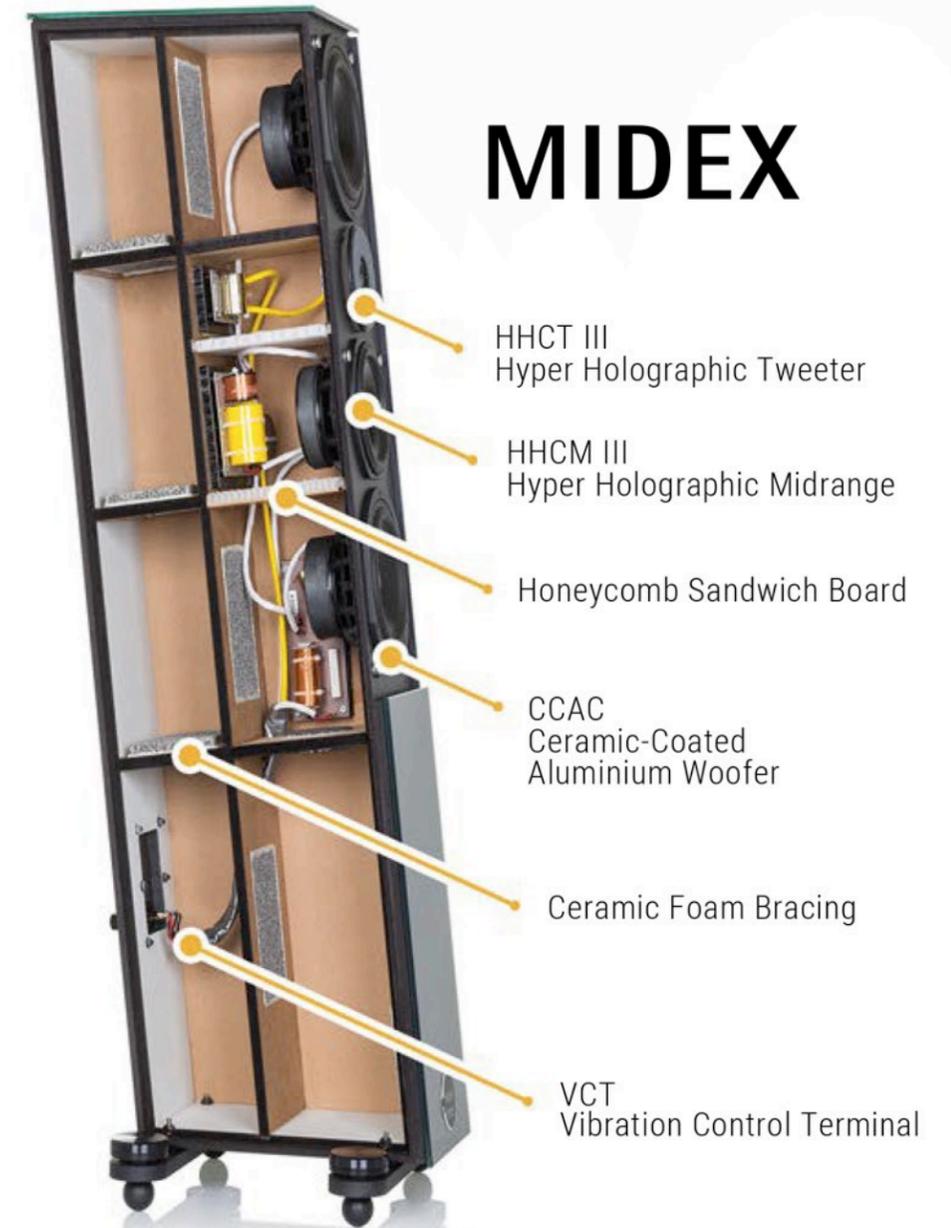
*Brazilian Love Affair* -  
George Duke



"Wonderfully rich...."

absolutely flawless...

energetic at low volumes."



## MIDEX

HHCT III  
Hyper Holographic Tweeter

HHCM III  
Hyper Holographic Midrange

Honeycomb Sandwich Board

CCAC  
Ceramic-Coated  
Aluminium Woofer

Ceramic Foam Bracing

VCT  
Vibration Control Terminal

**audio physic**

Distributed by VANA Ltd.

TONE reader and soon to be music contributor, Jeff Harris sent us a list of albums he loves to kick back to.

no. **3** Oregon

TONE Playlists sponsored by...

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# Cover Story: A Classic Reinvented.



**F**or some of us, big sound means big speakers. While today's technology has made incredible advances, a small speaker can still only move so much air.

Just as some transportation lovers prefer the inherent torque of a large displacement engine to the horsepower of a high revving, razor tuned small displacement engine, there's something about a big, pair of 3-ways to get the blood pounding.

Though the current JBL L100s don't have the recording studio pedigree that the originals do, they are better in nearly every way. Taking inflation into account, the \$273 each that a pair of originals cost, is about \$3,300 a pair today. So a 27% price increase over about 45 years really isn't that bad, is it?

**The JBL L100 Classic**  
\$4,000/pr  
jblsynthesis.com

In the 70s and throughout the 80s, the JBL L-100 was a very successful loudspeaker. Having a long production run from 1970 to the mid-80s, the L-100 sold in more significant numbers than any other JBL model, and is one of the greatest selling speakers in audio history.

Considering what three to four thousand dollars buys in a pair of speakers these days, the new JBL will not be everyone's cup of, but the value they do bring to the table is unmistakable. There are definitely more *audiophile-y* speakers out there, but to this writer, loudspeakers are like buying a painting. Some prefer the French impressionists, while others like Andy Warhol, and yet others like something else.



If you want more resolution and a broader sound field, think about a pair of comparably priced MartinLogans, or Magnepans. If you'd like midrange that does a better job with the human voice, think about some Harbeths, Grahams, or ProAcs. We all know that there are tons of choices, and \$4k/pair is an excellent speaker budget. You should be able to find something you love with four thousand big ones in your pocket.

But if you want a pair of speakers that really rock, get the JBLs. You either get this, or you don't, and I don't mean that in a bad way. Just as one person would rather peel out with a nearly 600 horsepower Dodge Challenger than a wimpy four-cylinder Porsche Cayman S that is only about 350 horsepower (but goes around corners way better), it's easy to see the attraction. Fun can be delivered within different paradigms and still be fun.

### Comparing to the originals

It's incredibly easy to let a romanticized past get the better of you. And as a boomer to all of you in Winter gets longer and more treacherous the older

you get. It happens. We try not to play it that way. With a pair of mint originals at hand to make a direct comparison, it underlines even further what great speakers the new Classics are. The originals still have an unmistakable cool factor, and there are several updated crossover kits on the market that claim to make the originals otherworldly. That's a project for another day. One can only tweak things so much and not lose their way.

Unlike today's reimagined muscle cars paying fairly close visual homage to their 70s counterparts, the L100 classic looks incredibly close, whether the grilles are on or off. The pulp cone midrange driver (albeit updated) and woofer (same) are still in place, though today's 12-inch woofer now sports a rubber cone surround, where the original featured a pleated paper surround. The paper coned tweeter in the original is now replaced by a titanium dome, which incidentally, JBL has done an excellent job at taming.

Best of all, the sculpted foam grille remains. When I sold these speakers back in the late 70s, everyone knew that grille. Whether on purpose or by accident back then, this was part of what made the L-100 an icon. And this charm remains. Foam choices remain orange, blue, and brown. My originals are orange, so it felt like a great idea to get more subdued brown ones this time. Fortunately, your JBL dealer can supply the other colors for \$249 a pair, so I foresee some blue ones in my future.

While many snooty late 70s/early 80s audiophiles dismissed the L100 of the day, it was a much better speaker than many gave it credit for. Unfortunately, most mass-market retailers sold em with a crappy Kenwood receiver (or something else equally dreadful) that didn't have the current drive to tame the woofer, or the refinement to get a decent top-end response. I always seemed to remember connecting connecting my pair up to a Conrad Johnson MV50 with great results, but again, that memory thing.

This time though, I was right. Hooking the old JBL's up to the PrimaLuna EVO400 monoblocks with a full complement of EL34 tubes is indeed glorious, and in fact, even *better* than I remember.

### Out with the old, in with the new

The L-100 Classics were far and away the hit of the 2018 Rocky Mountain Audiofest, even if they were hooked up to an awful sounding Levinson amplifier. As part of the same conglom, I'm sure they had to use that sterile, boring Levinson amp, but they should have pulled out a freshly re-capped Marantz 2275, or god forbid, a McIntosh MC275. Sometimes you have to cross party lines to reach the desired result. But I heard enough to get the essence.



ANTHEM

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Earlier this year, getting a pair of these for review proved nearly impossible. Getting someone at Harman to even pick up the telephone is almost impossible. So, the kudos for making this review possible go to Mr. Steve Rowell at Audio Classics for putting this together.

## I rarely buy a piece of gear before the investigation even begins, but I knew I wanted to get old with a pair of new L100s

Staff member Jessica Sieracki took the vintage ones off my hands after the review, so onward and upward.

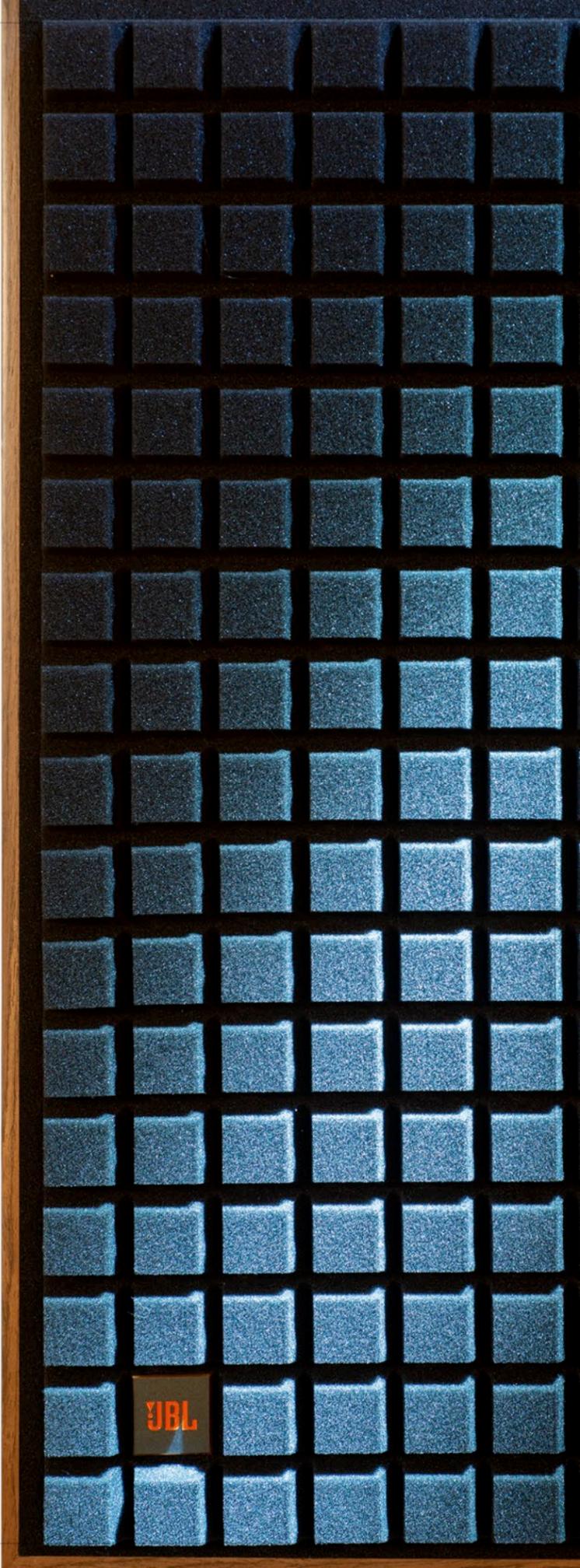
Like several other speakers with a metal dome tweeter, the L-100 is slightly bright out of the box. This went away after about 50 hours of play and entirely by 100 hours. The midrange and tweeter level controls are much more useful than they are on the originals and come in handy fine-tuning to your destination amplifier, cable, and room choice. My living room is a bit livelier than in the main listening room, so a nudge of the tweeter control is both handy and welcome.

### How do they compare?

Now that these speakers have been out for just over a year, the internet abounds with multiple opinions, many centering around the L-100 classic, not being an "audiophile speaker." It is, and it isn't. If by audiophile speaker, you mean hyper-detailed, with pinpoint imaging, and pretty much no bass to speak of, then the L-100 classic speaker is not an audiophile speaker.

While attending a demonstration of another manufacturer, the fellow running the show said that when making a speaker, you can go for accuracy, or you can go for something more fun. Clearly, the JBL engineers went for the latter, as these are without question one of the most fun pairs of speakers I've ever used.

Like the originals, these are genuinely a garbage in, garbage out speaker. Pair them with a low quality, low-resolution equipment chain, and they will reveal what is behind them. Mate them to great electronics, and they stand up very well indeed.



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

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

The L-100s go deep. A comparable pair of monitors from across the pond sound absolutely wimpy at first blush in comparison. A side by side comparison with a pair of Harbeth Compact 7s reveals the Brit speakers cleaner and less cloudy through the mid-band - you can't argue with the BBC. Think of the Harbeths as a cool white color rendition and the JBL's a warm white rendition. I own both, I enjoy both, but if you have to choose one, it's probably going to be down to your personal taste.

The L-100s definitely go down deep, but the character of the bass rendered is slightly warm. This just seems to benefit your favorite classic rock and jazz tracks in a way that needs to be experienced.

Those of you on a quest for the absolute sound, whatever that is, will probably go elsewhere.

Much like the originals, plopping a Joni Mitchell record on the turntable and easing back in the couch with the L100 Classics is one of life's great pleasures. Especially with a good tube amp. I'd highly suggest the PrimaLuna or an MC275.

The JBLs paint a fairly big sonic picture, but it's more diffuse. While it expands slightly beyond the speaker boundaries, it's not all-encompassing the way a pair of panel speakers or a perfectly optimized pair of Falcon LS3/5as can. They don't entirely disappear in the room all the way, but that's ok.

One other forgotten aspect is the ability to play at a reasonably convincing level. When the other speakers have long run out of dynamic capability, the L-100 Classics still have plenty of headroom left to spare.

Oddly, while they are slightly grainy in comparison to a few other speakers, this does not increase at higher levels. There's no question the insights that JBL has gained in studio monitor and sound reinforcement have trickled down to these speakers. If you want a pair of real rock and roll speakers, these will do quite nicely.

At the end of the day, the JBL L-100 Classics remind me a lot of that great American amplifier, the McIntosh MC275. It's not the last word in any of the standard audiophile qualifiers, but I dare you to have a bad day listening to one. The same goes for the L-100 Classics. I dare you to have a bad time listening to your favorite music, no matter what generation it's from.

And that's their charm. Considering I've had a pair of the originals in one form or another for the last 40 years, the chance that these will be with me till the end is high. Want a good deal? Show up at the estate sale in 2055. I'm sure our kids will sell em to you cheap.



# Time Warp

Assorted Bits of our history...

## When too much is...too much

Near the fall of 2011, just before the first generation of Sonus faber Aida's arrived, it was time to tidy up the main listening room. Things had gotten just a bit out of control with a few too many turntables.

Fortunately, after the Aida's left, things were tidied up considerably, and these days, the main listening room is much comfier. And neater, except the week before deadline.



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

Jeff Dorgay, Tone Audio

**NAGRA**

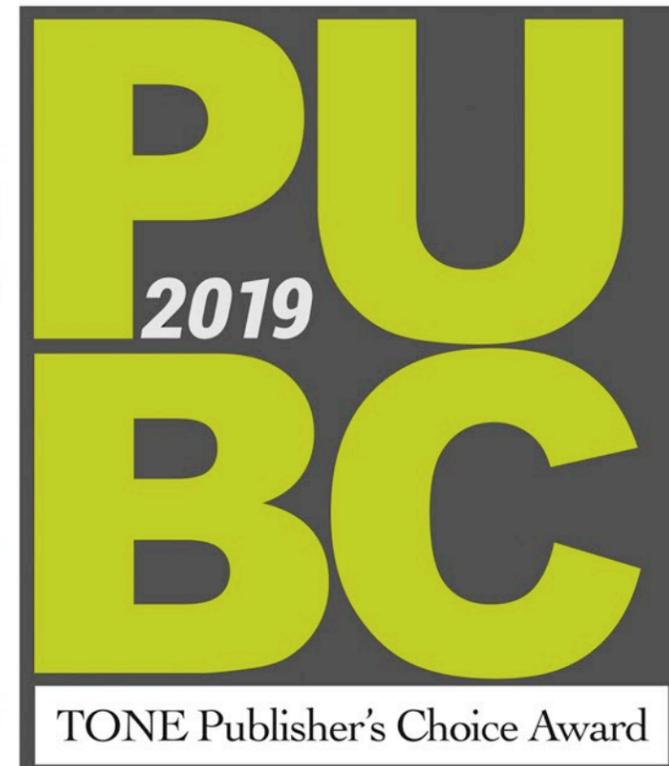
SWISS INNOVATION SINCE 1951

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

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

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

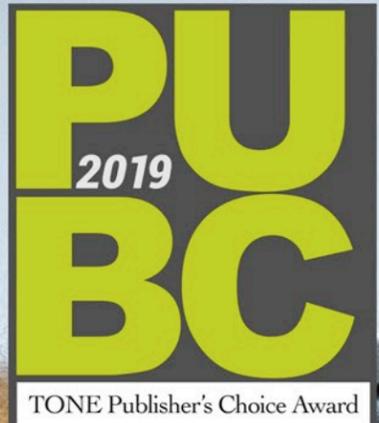
Enjoy.



# PS Audio Stellar Phono

\$2,499

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

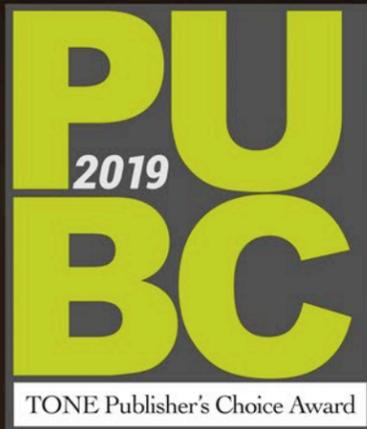


Stellar Phono Preamplifier

PS Audio has always been known for great performance and great value. Their new Stellar phono raises their game to a new level.

Two inputs, either assignable as MM or MC, and a level of refinement you'd expect to pay a lot more for. What's not to love?

[Read our full review right here.](#)



# Line Magnetic LM-805IA

\$4,999 [toneimports.com](http://toneimports.com)

If you've always wanted the seductive sound of an SET, but 3-9 watts per channel just isn't enough, the LM-805IA will do the job nicely.

Producing 48 watts per channel, this is an SET with some grunt.

Wonderfully executed, this is a joy to listen to. But not to lift! (It's almost 100 pounds, so get a friend to help.)



[Read our full review right here.](#)



# Abyss Diana Phi Headphones

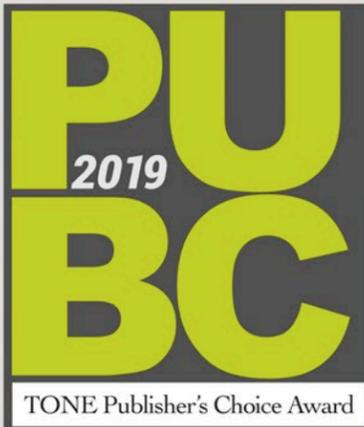
\$3,999 [abyss-headphones.com](http://abyss-headphones.com)

How do you improve on awesome?

Great as the original Dianas were, the new Phi version is better, lighter, and thinner incorporating what Abyss learned in creating their flagship AB-1266 phones.

Headphone listening takes on a new dimension with the Dianas.

In addition to being our publisher's choice for an award, they are his personal reference as well.



# Tellurium Q Statement Phono

\$4,499 [telluriumq.com](http://telluriumq.com)

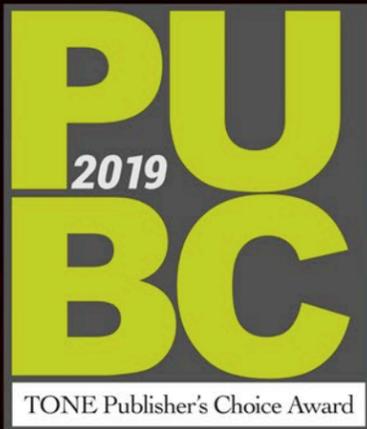
We postulate that there is no cable more important in your system than the one carrying that tiny signal from a moving coil cartridge. So far, nothing we've yet tried preserves the integrity of that signal than the Statement Phono from Tellurium Q.

At \$4,499, this is not an impulse purchase, nor is it a budget system purchase. This is a master class purchase. You've got the Pink Island first stampers, you've got the Koetsu Jade or the Goldfinger, and you still want more analog performance.

This is that final link in the chain.

It will take you there.





# Luxman C-900u and M-900u

\$15,000 each [luxman.com](http://luxman.com)

The easiest way to explain these two components is that they are flagship components for nowhere near the price of flagship components.

And the level of execution is beyond that of most top tier audio components. Those requiring more power need only flip the switch on the rear panel, turning the M-900u into a mono amplifier. Just add a second amplifier.

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

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

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

Here's to 2020!



# Bryston 28B Cubed Amplifier

\$11,995(ea) [bryston.com](http://bryston.com)



You might think we've gone completely mad for calling a 24 thousand dollar pair of amplifiers an "Exceptional Value," but when you compare these 1000 watt per channel monoblocks to their nearest competition, it's hard not to.

Bryston has raised their game both audibly and visually with the cubed series, and let's not forget their 20-year warranty. Come to think of it, have you ever heard of anyone with a Bryston product that's failed? We haven't.

If you have power hungry speakers, want more headroom than you'll ever need, or you just like to crank it up beyond the point of pain, the 28B Cubed monoblocks are a fantastic choice.



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# Totem Kin Play

\$1,150(pair)

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



While other manufacturers are offering powered speakers at this price, Totem gives you a pair of premium powered speakers along with a DAC and phono stage.

There's even a subwoofer output to make the Kin Play part of a 2.1 system.

The Kin Play is an entry-level music system without peer.

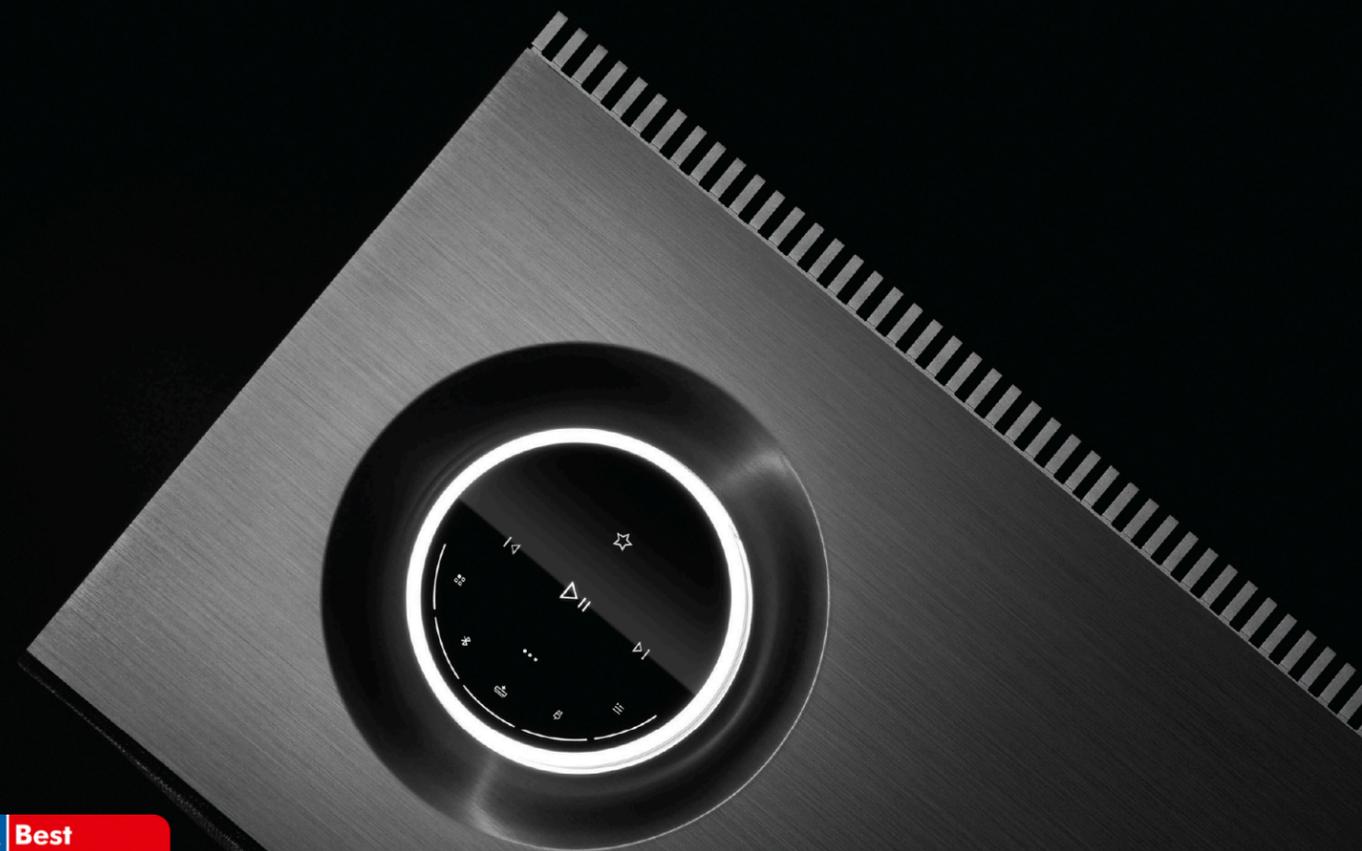


“ With the Mu-so 2nd Generation, Naim has taken that winning formula [Mu-So] and reinvented it, packing in both extra features and more sound quality, utilising completely new drivers co-designed with Focal, making this even more of a one-box solution for room-filling music ”



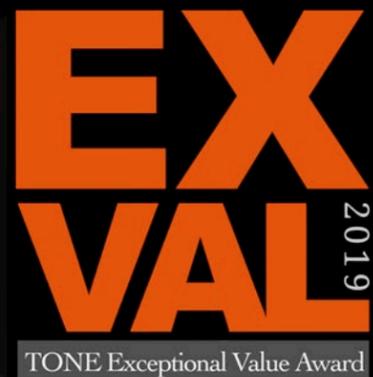
# Excellence Remastered

The Mu-so 2nd Generation from Naim.  
The premium wireless speaker your music deserves.



# Paradigm 700F

\$799/each [paradigm.com](http://paradigm.com)



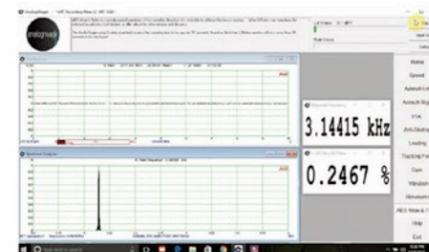
Paradigm does an incredible job with trickle down technology from their top models.

Sharing much from their flagship Personas, that cost ten times more, it's amazing just how much music these modest sized towers can create.

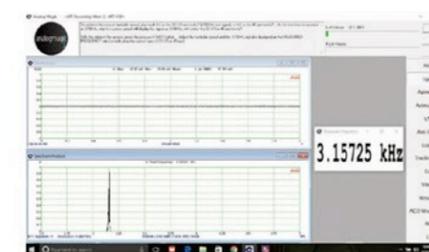
analogmagik™

## All In One Cartridge Setup Software & Test LPs

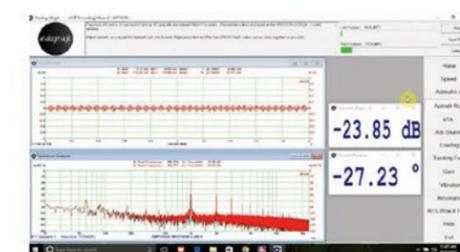
### Anyone Can Be A Setup Guru



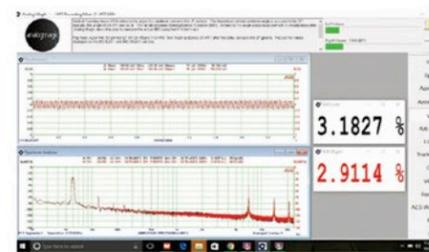
WOW & FLUTTER



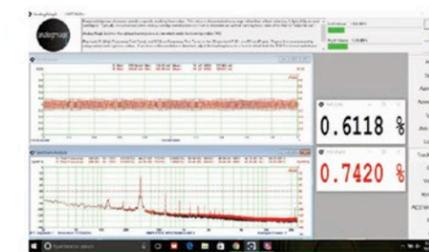
SPEED



AZIMUTH



VTA



VTF



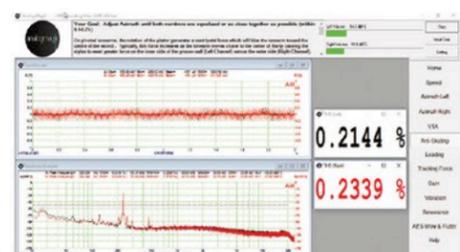
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Luxman L-509x - Stereophile, May 2018



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

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

[www.luxman-global.com](http://www.luxman-global.com)

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\$7,500/pair

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**EX  
VAL** 2019

TONE Exceptional Value Award



This company has been making a great showing all over the world. Their speakers tick all the boxes: great sound, great style, and great value.

And, they are easy to set up, as well as being easy to drive.



**EX  
VAL** 2019  
TONE Exceptional Value Award

## Whammerdyne DGA

\$3,299 [whammerdyne.com](http://whammerdyne.com)

If you're looking for the perfect amp to drive your super sensitive horn speakers, look no further.

The Whammer DGA (Damn Good Amplifier) will change your mind on what you think a Single Ended Triode amplifier can do.

And... they make a few models above this one, but it's such a great place to explore premium SET sound.

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# Anthem MRX 520

\$1,399 [anthemav.com](http://anthemav.com)



If you fall into that category of theater/multichannel enthusiast that doesn't necessarily need 11.2 channels (the Anthem MRX 1120 is perfect for that, if you do), there's the MRX 520. Our basic theater sensebilities have always liked the MRX5xx series, and the new 520 is better, more powerful and more capable in every way.

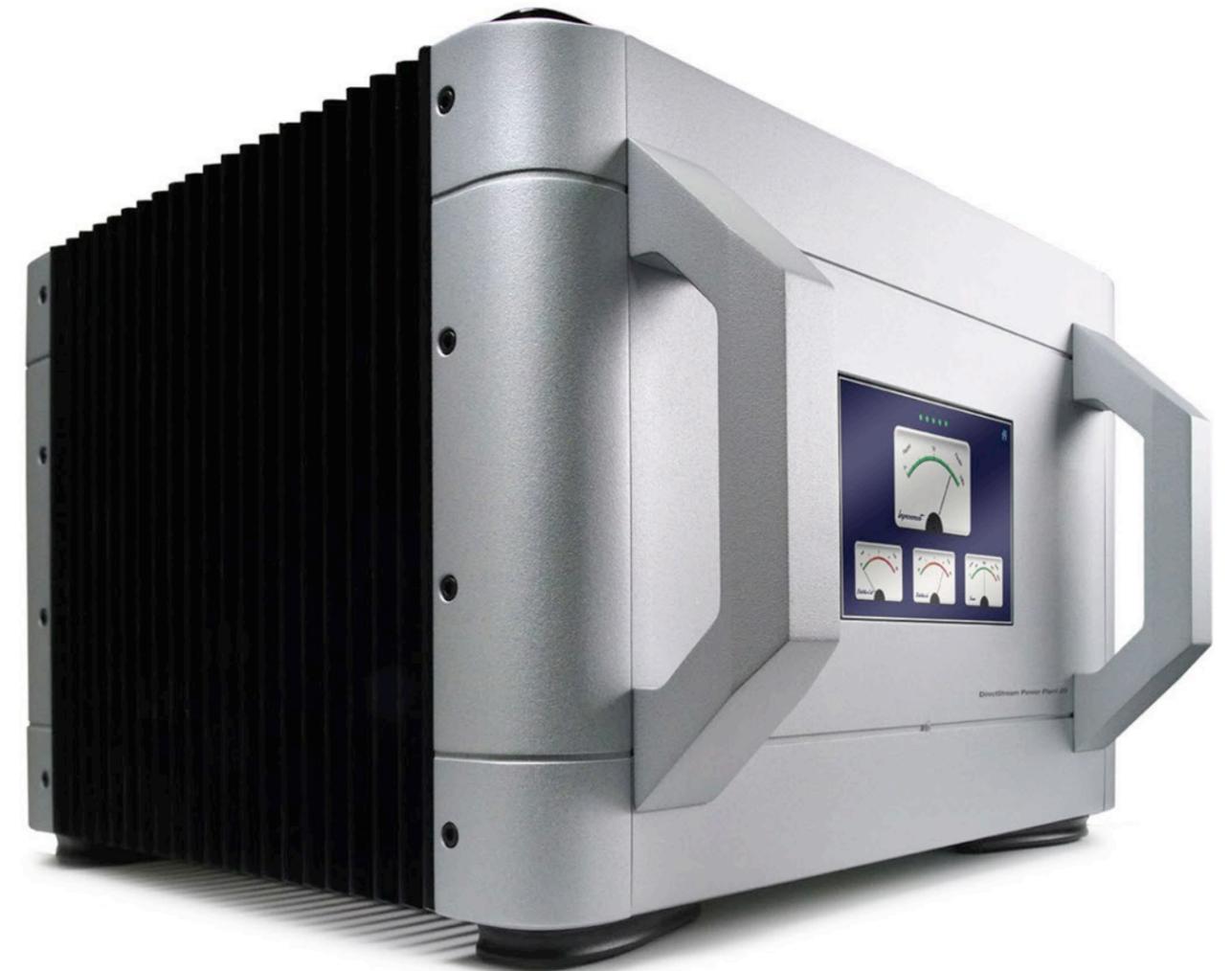
We'd be lying if we didn't tell you the deck was kinda stacked in their favor with this one. Anthem never disappoints.

We've often made the comment "a great place to start your audio journey," or "a great place to start your analog journey." The Anthem MRX 520 is the perfect place to start your home theater journey. And after almost a decade our MRX 510 is still going strong!



## The PS Audio DirectStream Power Plant 20

It will take less time to hear the improvement it makes, than it will to read this headline.



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

 P S A U D I O

[www.psaudio.com](http://www.psaudio.com) 720.406.8946 Boulder, Colorado

# Wharfedale Lintons

\$1,499/pair (with Stands)

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



We believe good hifi should be fun, affordable, and approachable. The Lintons tick all the boxes and then some.

Whether this is your first pair of serious speakers, or the anchor for a secondary system, you're gonna love these.

*Analog Excellence*



## Artisan Fidelity

When off the shelf won't do...

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

# SVS Prime Pinnacle

\$799.99(each) svsound.com



Some people think SVS only makes great subwoofers. But they have a full line of bookshelf, floorstanding and surround speakers too.

They offer maximum value by keeping it simple. Great products, great service, great sound.

The Prime Pinnacle towers make for an excellent anchor to your 2 channel (or 2.1) system, or the front channels to a surround setup. Either way, these are great audio building blocks.



## Where Have all the Good Stereos Gone?



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

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

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

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

echo)))  
audio

www.echohifi.com 888.248.echo



# Feliks Audio Elise

\$1,649 [upscaleaudio.com](http://upscaleaudio.com)

Bridging the gap between the mega headphone amps and the budget contenders, the Elise has way more in common with the top of the list.

And the sound will take your breath away.



You already own the music.  
You might as well hear all of it.  
Contact The Sound Organisation  
today for your closest retailer.



[support@soundorg.com](mailto:support@soundorg.com)  
(972) 234-0182  
[soundorg.com](http://soundorg.com)



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

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

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

We’ve completed full reviews on most of these, but a couple are still in process, with reviews to follow early in 2020.

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

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

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

All of these components pass that test.





# OVERALL: Pro-Ject PreBox S2 Digital

\$399 each

[pro-jectusa.com](http://pro-jectusa.com)

2019  
**TP  
OY**  
TONE Product of the Year

Now and then, we get accused of only being concerned with high pricetag gear, yada, yada, yada. But in today's world of mega components, with pricetags to match, there is nothing more fun than finding gear that is in everyone's reach, that truly sounds great.

We firmly believe that this is the way to involve the next generation of people that would like audio that performs considerably better than a bluetooth speaker, or some earbuds.

Pro-Ject's PreBox S2 Digital the perfect example of this philosophy.

While they are often better known for their high value turntables, the Pre Box S2 incorporates an awesome DAC, headphone amplifier and line preamplifier in a smaller package than a Big Mac. Start out with the the PreBox S2 and your favorite headphones, and add an amp and speakers when you get your next paycheck. It's that easy.





# Digital: Aqua La Scala DAC

\$7,700

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

**TP  
OY** 2019  
TONE Product of the Year

Aqua's LaScala DAC uses an FGPA architecture, bypassing off the shelf chipsets to tailor the sound in a more precise way. Somehow it seems like our favorite DACs all have this in common...

This is a unique product in the sense that it provides a level of finesse that is normally associated with much more expensive DACs.

This level of performance is usually more than enough to receive an exceptional value award. However, what makes the LaScala a POY is that this performance is delivered in the context of a total package.

Build quality, upgradability, aesthetics, and user friendliness combined with high sonic virtues is what makes it a product of the year.

This is one of the finest DACs we've had the privilege to use at any price.



# Analog: Pass XP-27

\$11,500 [passlabs.com](http://passlabs.com)

**TP  
OY** 2019  
TONE Product of the Year

This two input phonestage from Pass Labs is an update to the prior XP-25, which looked identical, featuring dials for resistive and capacitive loading along with a three position gain control all on the front panel. Pass has always eschewed the LED display and microprocessor controls used in a handful of other preamplifiers.

They claim the purist approach results in lower noise and higher signal purity, and we agree. The only downside to this approach is resetting the controls manually when switching from one input to the other. A small price to pay.

As with everything Pass, what they learn producing their top components always trickles down. The XP-27 is starting to gain serious ground on the XS Phono.



Resistive Loading



# Power Amp: PrimaLuna EVO 400

\$4,699(ea) [primaluna-usa.com](http://primaluna-usa.com)



Past PrimaLuna amplifiers have been excellent, but even their last round of monoblocks were still under the magic 100 watt per channel level. Oh, maybe we forgot to tell you that the EVO 400s can be used in stereo or mono operation by merely flipping a switch on the back panel.

With the supplied EL34 tubes (in ultralinear mode) they easily push out 140 watts each. Upgrading to KT150 tubes will get you close to 200 wpc.

The EVO 400 defines the “painless” tube amplifier category. They’ve written the book. But now with this level of refinement and power output, Prima Luna is ready to take on the rest of the tube world.

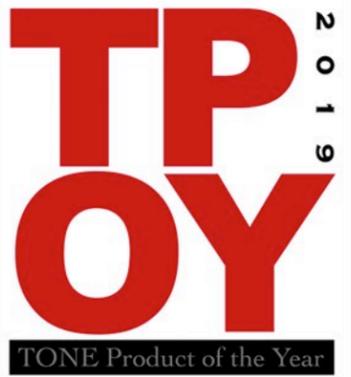
You’ll only need one quick listen, to see why we like these as much as we do.





# Preamplifier: PrimaLuna EVO 400

\$4,499 [primaluna-usa.com](http://primaluna-usa.com)



The companion to the EVO 400 amplifier, the EVO 400 pre provides equally stunning performance. Those staying in an all PrimaLuna ecosystem, or having a DAC and phono stage with single ended RCA outputs can opt for the slightly less expensive EVO300 preamplifier, which Kevin Deal tells us is sonically identical, minus the balanced input and output transformers





# Integrated: VAC Sigma 170i

\$10,000 - \$13,000 (config. dependent) [vac-amps.com](http://vac-amps.com)

**TP  
OY** 2019  
TONE Product of the Year

Integrated amplifiers have always been a “favorite thing” here at TONE, and in the last decade, a number of premium manufacturers have jumped into the game, producing integrated amplifiers every bit the equal of all but the most lofty separates.

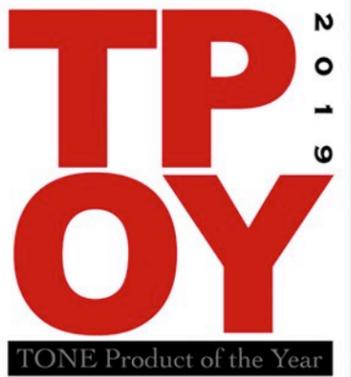
Considering where the price of premium cable and equipment racks has gone, the once lowly integrated is now the perfect choice for music lovers wanting high performance with a smaller footprint.

Valve Amplification Company hits it out of the park with the Sigma 170i, and offers you the option of ordering it with one of their fantastic phono stages built in, should you so desire.



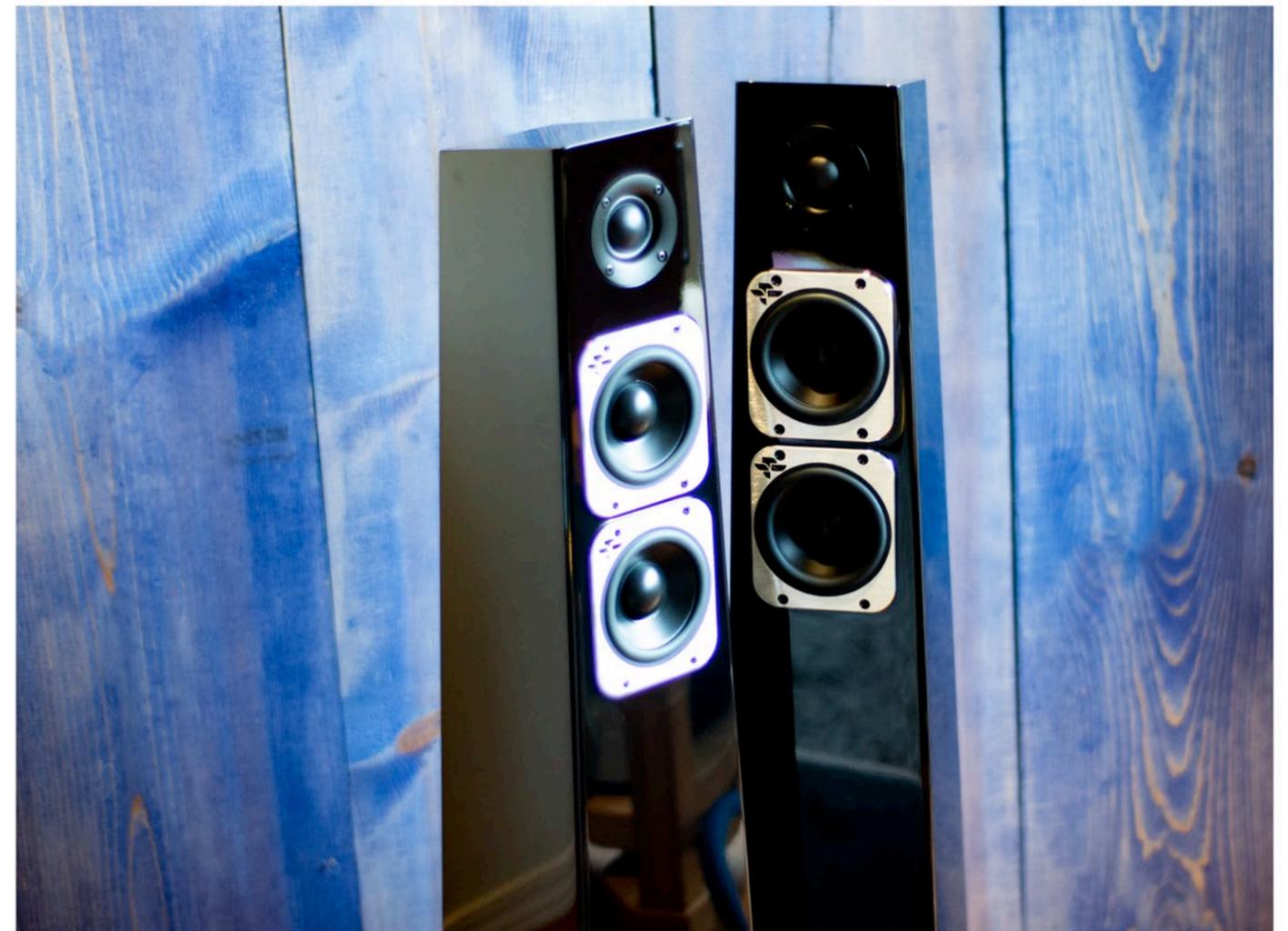
# Speaker: Totem Tribe Tower

\$5,300-\$5,800 pair (finish dependent)  
totemacoustic.com



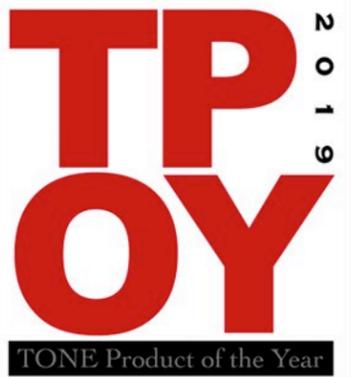
Again, Totem is our speaker of the year (and we've reviewed a lot of speakers this year). Every aspect of the Tribe Towers is off the chart good: in addition to providing way more sound than you'd ever expect to come out of these slender cabinets, the level of fit and finish is even higher than those of you used to Totem's lofty standard.

Best of all, they sound drop dead great, and are easy to place in the room, providing a great listening experience for all.



# Accessory: Kirmuss KA-RC-1

\$969.99 [elusivedisc.com](http://elusivedisc.com)



See those grooves? That's what super clean record grooves look like when they've had the Kirmuss treatment. Clean grooves mean no clicks, pops, or other distractions.

We've been cleaning records for a long, long time. We've pretty much tried them all, and a majority of the different elixers that claim to bring vinyl back to life (there's even one named "Vinyl Re-Virginizer" that's not half bad) but what makes the Kirmuss stand out above the rest is twofold:

First, it's cost effective. If you've got even a few hundred LPs that you cherish, investing in a record cleaning system makes excellent sense.

Second, it does an incredible job. Better than most, arguably better than the competition.

It is, however, a bit time consuming. Good, fast, cheap - pick two we like to say. At the end of the day, it's the one we use.





# System Enhancement: Cardas Nautilus Power Strip

\$1,500

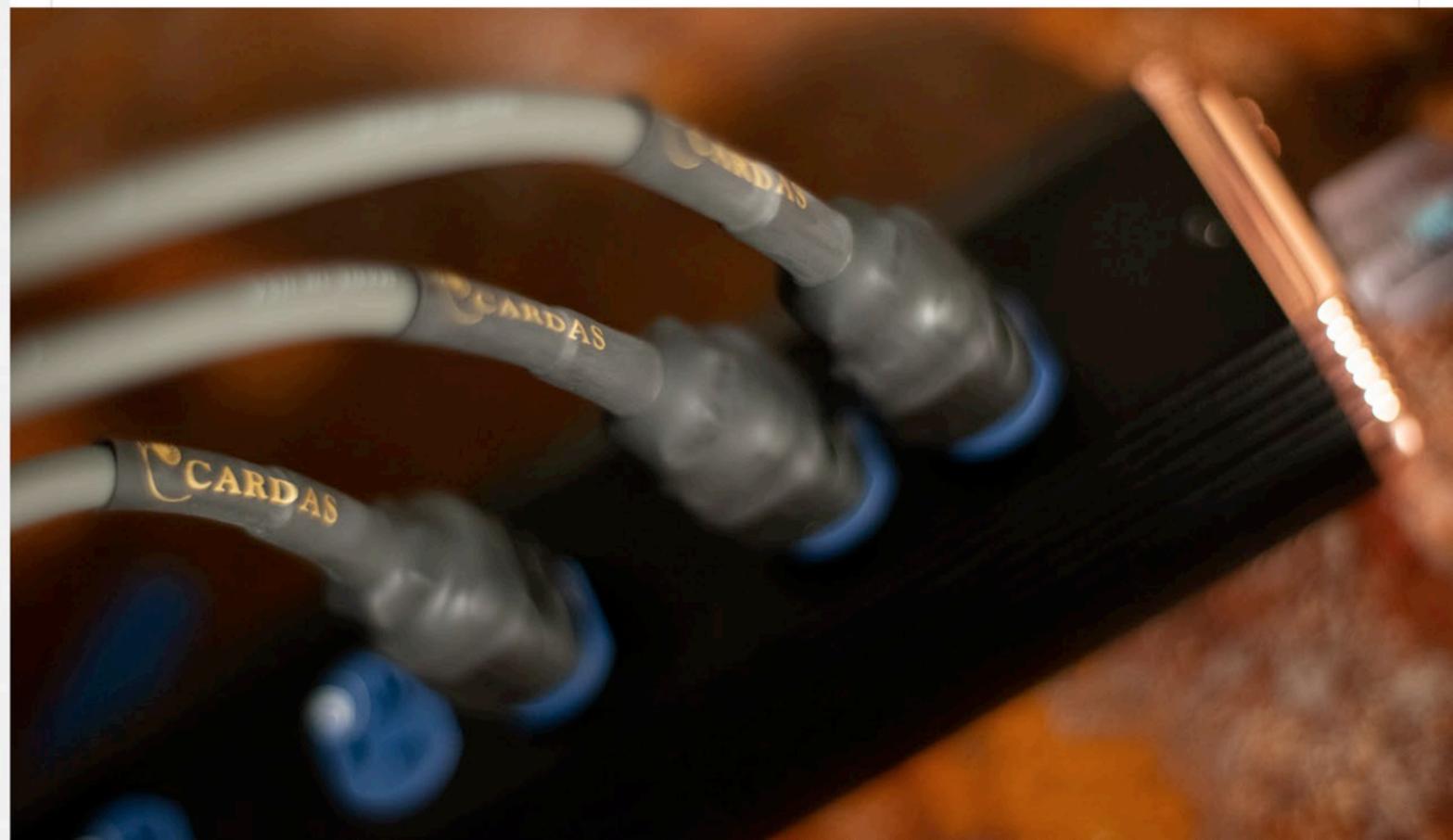
[cardas.com](http://cardas.com)

**TP  
OY**  
2019  
TONE Product of the Year

**W**hen you need more outlets, you don't want to plug all those premium power cords into a sub standard wall strip, do you?

We maintain that clean power delivery is a must for any high performance audio system. Every link in the chain is a potential weakness, and a chance that some of the resolution you've paid for, can be lost.

Thanks to premium construction, and a trio of Cardas 4181 outlets, the Nautilus Power strip will never be the weak link in your audio chain.





# Personal Fidelity: Warwick Aperio

\$25,000 [warwickaudio.com](http://warwickaudio.com)

**TP  
OY**  
2019  
TONE Product of the Year

In order to truly wrap your brain around the Warwick Aperio, you need to take a system approach.

\$25k for a set of headphones, and a matching amplifier is not for the light hearted, or light funded. But, as everything is relative in context of the \$80k Sennheiser system, the Aperio is a steal. If you moved from Tokyo to Scottsdale, three million bucks for a 6,000 square foot home would feel like nothing.

There are definitely a handful of \$10k headphone/amplifier combos that are on par with the Aperio in terms of headphone performance.

And then you need a DAC, and, and...

That you get a line level preamp and a DAC, that alone are worth more than the Aperio - along with a tip-top headphone amp and pair of matching phones is what puts the Aperio over the top.

This solution is not for everyone. But if this is the solution to your system requirements, nothing else will do.

And when headphones arrive in a flight cases this big, you know there's something cool inside.



# Playlist:

What Our Readers Are Into

**Rush -**  
Working Man

**Neil Young-**  
Cortez the Killer

**Steely Dan -**  
Babylon Sisters

**Talk Talk -**  
Happiness Is Easy

**Stevie Wonder -**  
Another Pure Love

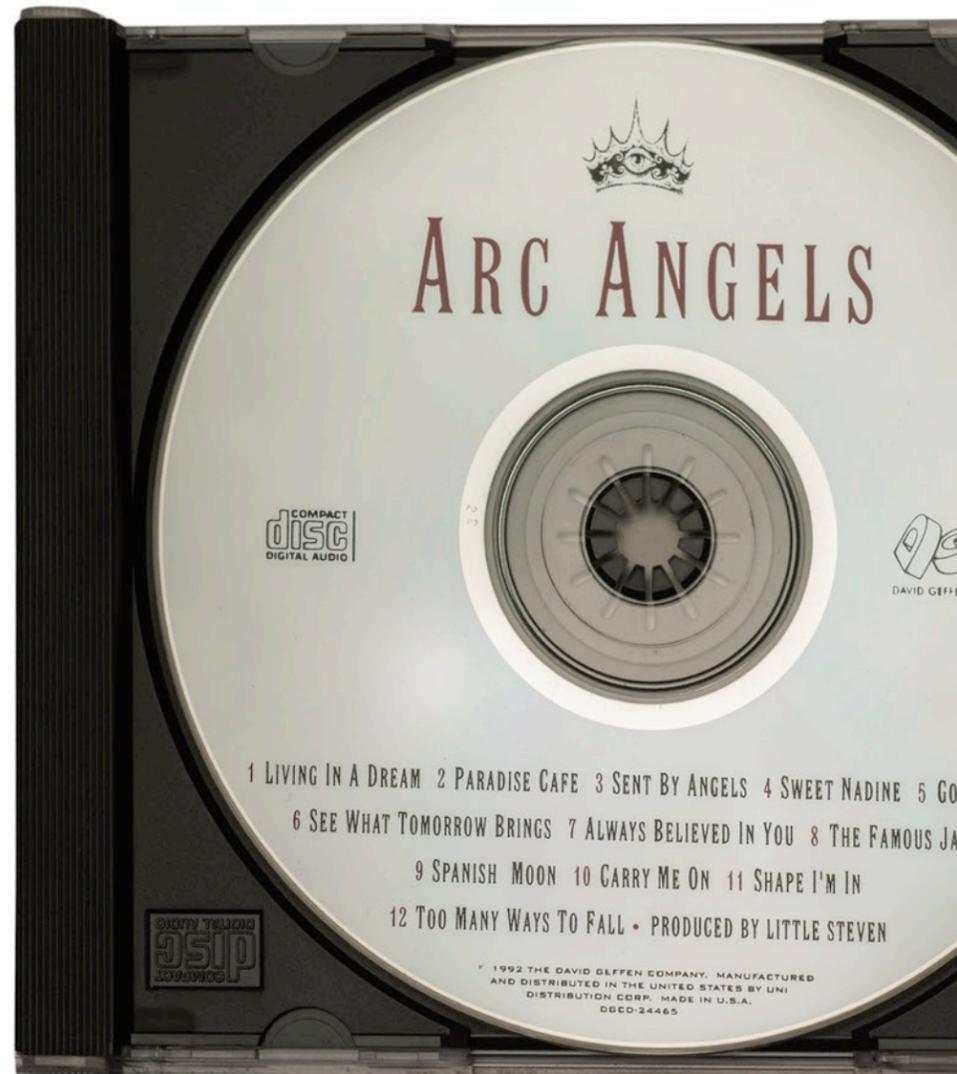
**Billy Idol -**  
Yelling at The Christmas Tree

**Flim & The BB's-**  
Tricycle

**Michael Jackson -**  
You Are Not Alone

**Bruce Springsteen-**  
My Home Town

**Arc Angels -**  
Living in a Dream



We asked our readers on Facebook to list some tracks they never get tired of. We got a pretty wide range of selections, and here's part two.

Ironically, one reader wrote: "Can't we give Nils Lofgren and Patricia Barber a rest?" Yes we can!

no. 5 The World

TONE Playlists are sponsored by...

qobuz

audio research  
HIGH DEFINITION®

REFERENCE 160 M  
VACUUM TUBE POWER AMPLIFIER



SOUND HAS NEVER BEEN SO TRANSPARENT

After two years in development, the all new REF160M is now shipping. It features switchable Ultralinear/Triode operation, proprietary auto-bias, output tube monitoring and protection, an innovative transparent power meter, and legendary Audio Research sound.

Contact your local Audio Research Dealer for an audition.

audioresearch.com

**A**t this point in my life and career, I may only get to do this once, so I want to make sure it counts.

I've been a serious high end audio consumer for forty years now. And I've been writing about this stuff for almost half that. While I haven't heard everything, I've had the good fortune to hear quite a bit of gear that matters. Some at shows, some at various factories, but much in the familiarity of my own space.

The three products over the next six pages, to me, are even more than products of the decade. These are three things that have completely redefined how I listen to, and enjoy music. They are not merely "teacher's pet" products.

Two of these products are fairly expensive, bordering on crazy. The other is approachable, but equally important to me. I own all three, so I have put my money where my heart is.

In the end, they have all advanced the state of the art in music reproduction technology.

What's on your list?

And seriously, I hope to see you all in 2029. Maybe we will finally get those damn flying cars they've been promising.





## REL no.25 Six Pack

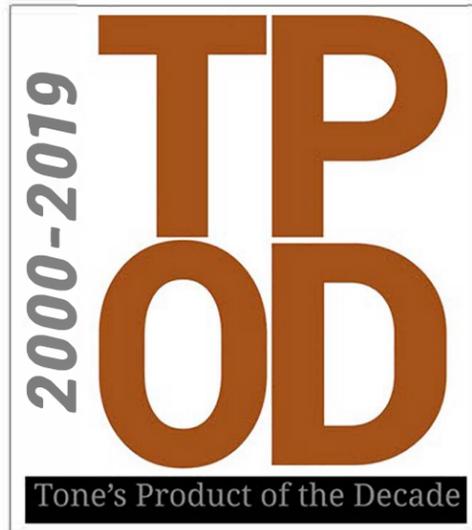
\$45,000 [rel.net](http://rel.net)

That's not a misprint.

Considering that 80% of the sonic information we hear and feel is in the lower registers, a bass system that has as much attention to quality as your main speakers kinda makes sense, if you sit and think about it.

Experiencing a six pack of REL 25's will open a new door of perception.

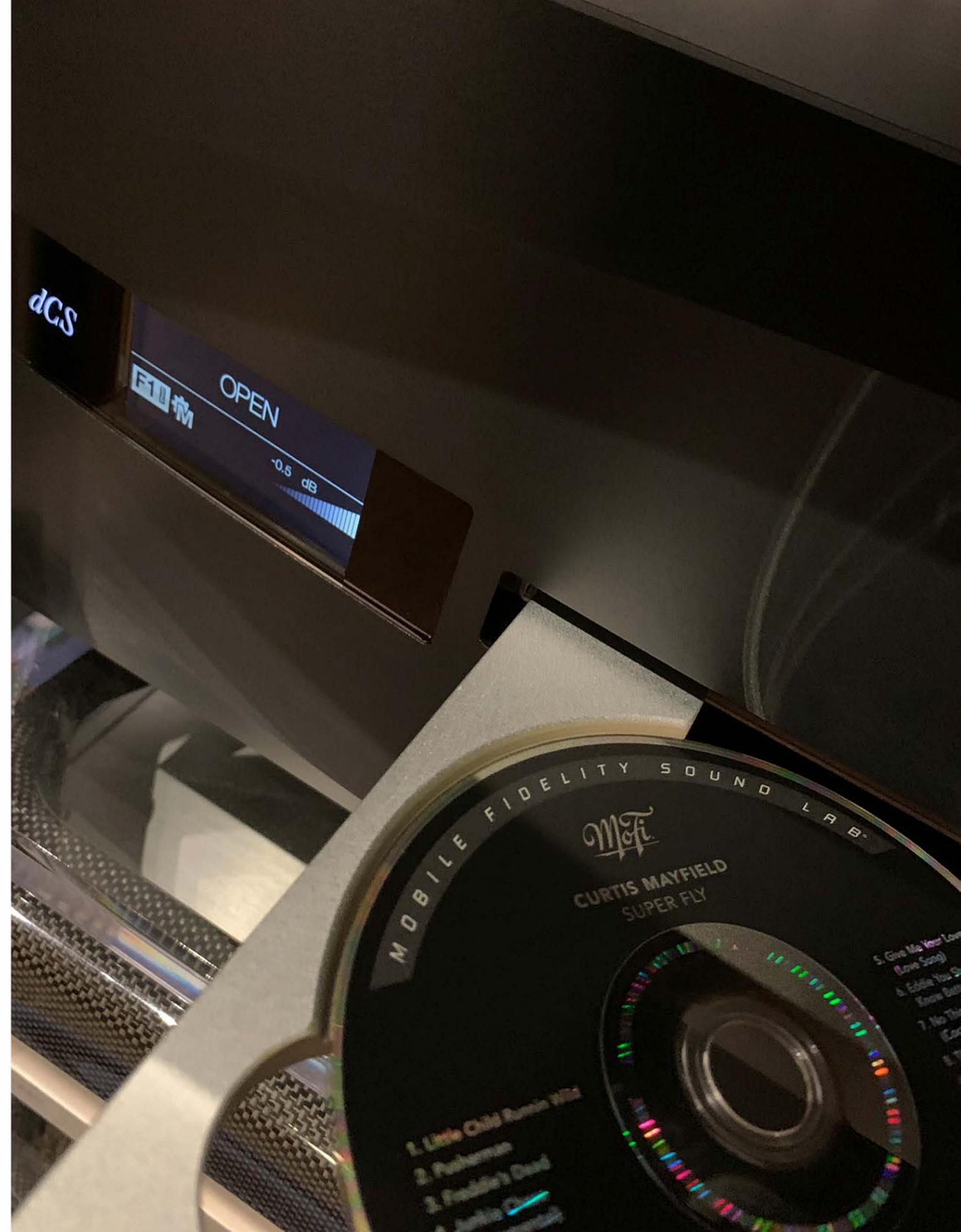


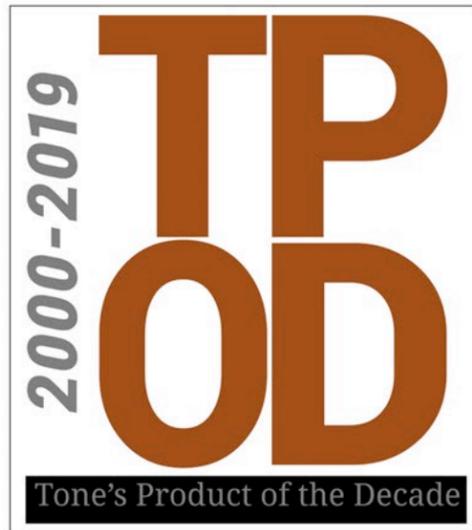


# dCS Vivaldi ONE

\$80,000 [dcsLtd.co.uk](http://dcsLtd.co.uk)

Whether you choose the single box Vivaldi ONE or a combination of the Vivaldi components to make a stack, dCS' flagship does such a convincing job of decoding digital files, you might just notice that turntable collecting more dust than usual.





# Roon

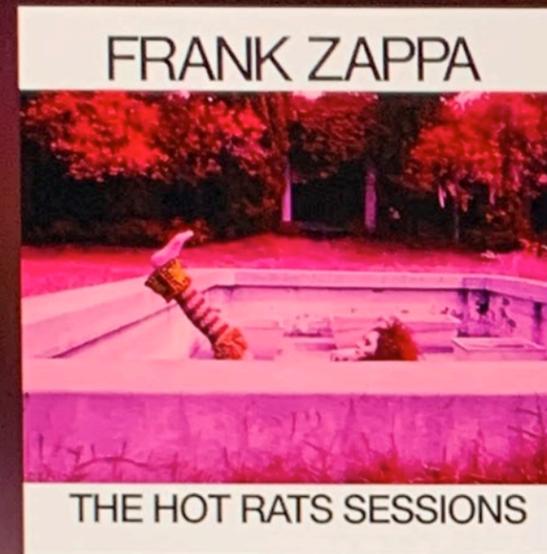
Pricing subject to solution roonlabs.com

The Team that invented ROON was on to something big when they created the Sooloos system almost 15 years ago.

Finally, computer audio didn't suck.

Finally, all the music you love is at your fingertips 24/7 and everyone can use it.

That's true freedom of choice



## The Hot Rats Sessions (6CD) Frank Zappa

Play Now Focus On Similar

Released 14 Nov 2019 Added 2 Dec 2019

☆☆☆☆☆ 1 PDF

FLAC 44.1kHz 16bit 7hr, 19min

Tracks Credits Versions

All Tracks | Disc 1 | Disc 2 | Disc 3 | Disc 4 | Disc 5 | Disc 6

Track	Disc	Duration	Play
Piano Music	3	2:12	▶
Piano Music	3	5:41	▶
Peaches En Regalia	10	5:56	▶
Peaches En Regalia	10	10:48	▶
Peaches En Regalia	10	2:04	▶

By This Artist



Jul 1966 \*\*\*\*\*  
Freak Out!



13 May 1968 \*\*\*\*\*  
Lumpy Gravy



Sep 1968 \*\*\*\*\*  
We're Only

The Pan Piper  
Miles Davis, Miles Davis Sextet, Gil Evans

# Time Warp

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

Originally, TONE was going to launch at the Consumer Electronics Show in January of 2006. But there was a new show, the Rocky Mountain Audio Fest, that had only been out for a year, with great success.

A number of friends and industry colleagues suggested that perhaps we launch the first issue "off Broadway," so we moved the launch date from January to October 1, 2005 and went for it. There would be quite a few more crowded elevators to follow.

Not sure if this photo is from that original RMAF, but it is fairly early, as there are no iPhones anywhere!

It proved to be a good move. We got a lot of valuable feedback, and by CES, we had made some good changes to the magazine. And by issue three we had already gone over 100 pages. Shades of things to com.



**Pro-Ject**  
AUDIO SYSTEMS

## The Classic SB

VINTAGE DESIGN MEETS MODERN TECHNOLOGY



We have turbocharged our EISA Award-winning "the Classic" to bring you this upgraded package - The Classic SB.

It includes key new features:

- Electronic speedcontrol
- Sumiko Blue Point No.2 cartridge
- Top grade Clamp It
- Leather It mat

ELECTRONIC SPEEDCONTROL



SUMIKO BLUE POINT NO.2 CARTRIDGE



For more information, visit [www.pro-jectusa.com](http://www.pro-jectusa.com)

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## ORA GQ Headphones

orasound.com  
\$499

Canadian company ORA's claim to fame with these new headphones is a driver made from graphene, the latest space age material with some pretty magical claims made for it.

Our initial listening is in fact exciting, and the GQ phones look to be a significant player in the \$500 headphone segment.

Review very soon.

# Formula xHD

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



## Unconventional DNA



La Voce S3 dac



La Scala Optologic dac



Formula xHD dac



La Diva cd transport

aquahifi.com

aqua  
acoustic quality

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Clearaudio Jubilee Panzerholz MM Cartridge

\$899.99  
clearaudio.de

We're big fans of the Clearaudio MM carts. They've applied so much of the technology from their flagship cartridges to affordable models, it makes great sound available to a wider range of analog lovers.

A big thanks to the staff at Elusive Disc for providing our review sample. It's a keeper for sure.

[click here to get yours.](#)

# *Some of us never quit....*

Reel to reel isn't the only revolution.

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

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

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

Hence the name.

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



# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## AVID Reference Ruby Cartridge

\$7,995  
avidhifi.com

Taking AVID full circle in the analog realm, they now have a range of cartridges to go with their world-class tonearms and turntables.

Spoiler alert:  
The Ruby is fantastic!



You already own the music.  
You might as well hear all of it.

Contact The Sound Organisation  
today for your closest retailer.

rega

ProAc  
*perfectly natural*

Quadraspire

THE  
**CHORD**  
COMPANY

BRVSTON

kit  
Face the Music

support@soundorg.com  
(972) 234-0182  
soundorg.com

The  
**s)und**  
Organisation



SOLARIS

CAMPFIRE  
AUDIO

WWW.CAMPFIREAUDIO.COM

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Clarus Duet Power Conditioner

\$1,250 (each)  
claruscables.com

Clarus claims that their new Duet Power conditioner is made specifically for monoblock amplifiers. We've got a handful of amplifiers we'll be running it through its paces with and report back shortly.

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## ARC PH9

\$8,500  
audioresearch.com

Often, when you mention Audio Research, the conversation goes straight to their Reference line of gear.

While the praise is deserved, not everyone has a budget for REF components, and doesn't want to buy a pre-owned component either. Their Foundation series is the answer, and though we reviewed the entire system a while back, we've spun around to revisit the individual components in-depth.

The PH9 has a lot of the performance of the REF Phono 3 at a much lower price. If you only need one input, its a steal.



TONE100.159

# SCULPTURE A



A.4 Silver

A.3

A.4 Copper



made by Ana Mighty Sound

## LE PHONO SE

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



## 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 phonostage and others.

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

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



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.

info@  
anamightysound.com

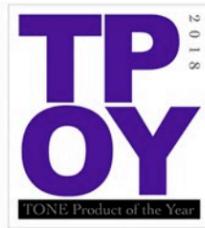
Ana  
MIGHTY SOUND





## IS-1000

### ALL-IN-ONE



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

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

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

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

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



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

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## MartinLogan

### Motion 40i

\$1,199.99/each  
[martinlogan.com](http://martinlogan.com)

MartinLogan is well known for their electrostatic panel speakers, but they've been quietly expanding the Motion range in the background for years.

In typical ML fashion, they refine, refine, refine and the new Motion 40is are a perfect example of this philosophy.

If you have had a chance to hear these at a dealer, or hifi show this year, you know how inviting these speakers are.

We've got reveiws on the 20i and the 40i you see here very soon.



# 3000 SERIES SUBWOOFERS

## Reference Subwoofer Performance Hits New Lows.

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

**New 13-inch high-excursion SVS driver with flat edge wound split-wind voice coil** generates seat-shaking bass with unerring accuracy and crisp speed in transients.

**Sledge STA-800D2 Amplifier with fully discrete MOSFET output** rated at 800 watts RMS, 2,500+ watts peak power unleashes massive amounts current to fully maximize on the potential of the robust 13-inch SVS driver.

**Groundbreaking SVS Subwoofer Smartphone App** manages volume and custom presets for one-touch tuning for movies, music and more. Also controls parametric EQ, low pass filter, phase, polarity, room gain, port tuning (PB-3000 only) and more.



PB-3000



SB-3000

Critics agree, 3000 Series subwoofers deliver unrivaled performance.

*"Even at reference levels, the subwoofer didn't break a sweat—each bass note hit with power, precision, and speed. I was completely blown away by my experience. It has no equal at its price."*

-Sound & Vision

*"Refinement and musicality that is genuinely excellent but still delivers seismic levels of low frequency energy."*

-AVForums

*"The bass I heard bordered on the difficult to believe -- very fast, very tight, very deep, with more than enough output to fill my room with sound-pressure levels that would satisfy the most demanding bass heads."*

-Soundstage



Learn more at [svsound.com](http://svsound.com)



# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## Boulder 866 Integrated Amp

\$12,250 - 14,450  
[boulderamp.com](http://boulderamp.com)

With 200 watts per channel, and a new touch-screen interface, the newest offering from Boulder is anything but entry level.

Following up their incredible 508 phono, the 866 builds on efficiency with the 866 integrated. The lower priced model has only line level (but all balanced XLR) inputs, while the higher priced version has a built in DAC and streamer, that is also a ROON endpoint.





## Quality Meets Quantity

“ THE REL 212/SE DOES **DEEP** AND IT DOES **LOUD**. ODDLY, IT ALSO DOES **SUBTLE** AND IT DOES **BRASH**, TOO. AND SOMETIMES IT MANAGES TO DO BOTH AT ONCE. IF YOU TRULY “GET” DEEP BASS, IF YOU LIKE YOUR KIT TO BE ON SHOW RATHER THAN HIDDEN AWAY AND — ABOVE ALL — YOU FEEL THAT URGE FOR **TRULY ENERGETIC AUDIO**, THEN THE REL 212/SE IS ACTUALLY **GOOD VALUE**. ” | ADAM RAYNER, HOME CINEMA CHOICE

Join the Pursuit™  
rel.net

Experience the 212SE's Twin long-stroke 12" Continuous Cast™ Alloy Bass Engines and dual 12" passives  
Visit [rel.net](http://rel.net) to learn more about REL and find an authorized dealer near you.

## Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

### Golden Ear Triton One.R

\$3,299 each  
[goldenear.com](http://goldenear.com)

Golden Ear's Triton REF was our product of the year last year, and it's no secret that Golden Ear always offers superior sound in their relative price points.

Still powered, like the Triton REF, the One.R is a click down on the size and price, for those with a slightly smaller room and budget.





Experience the new line of granite loudspeakers from Acora Acoustics. Hear the sonic advantages of utilizing granite enclosures. Granite provides rigidity that conventional enclosures can't. Granite allows you to hear the music, not the enclosure. This results in greater imaging and micro-dynamics leaving you with just the music, pure and simple.

*Acora Acoustics  
-Hear the Truth-*



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

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

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...

## Jico Shure Stylus

\$159  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

The Jico stylus for the Shure V15 series cartridges has been revered by many, for some time now.

This inexpensive update, combined with legendary trackability, makes for an excellent MM solution for vinyl lover on a tighter budget.



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The new V2 woofers are a dramatic advancement of our famous 7" Torrent driver. Evolved and meticulously developed over the past 10 years, exclusively by Totem, they are at the very top of the world's dynamic speaker pyramid.

***The New Element Metal V2 ... A state-of-the-art musical experience!***

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Audio Research 750SEL Mono Power Amplifiers

\$75,000/pair  
[audioresearch.com](http://audioresearch.com)

Audio Research has pushed the boundaries of their biggest monoblocks, resulting in the SEL you see here. Though it doesn't look different from the last two versions externally, ARC says that the 750SE model can not be updated to the current version due to extensive changes.

# Future Tense

Reviews in our immediate future...



## Luxman L-550AXII

\$5,500

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

Luxman makes some of the most elegant gear going, in sight, sound, and feel. We've always enjoyed the sound of their solid-state amplifiers, but the Class-A models are incredibly special.

The L-550AX Mark II is only 20 watts per channel, so it's not for everyone. But if it's for you, you will really enjoy this one.



Ktéma  
Premium Speaker

Accordo  
A Small Speaker

LICNEA  
Premium Public Speaker

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

# Dealers That Mean Business:

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

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

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

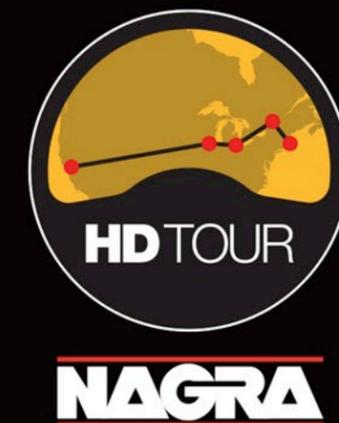
However, if you are going to spring for new gear, you need a good dealer. Someone who understands you, your music and most of all your perspective. You need someone to help you find the right components that will work together as a system, help you set it up in some cases, and offer support when things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

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

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

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

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



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DETROIT, OCTOBER 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**TONE OF MUSIC**  
SAN FRANCISCO, OCTOBER 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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

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

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

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NEW YORK, MARCH 2020



# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## San Francisco, California - AudioVision San Francisco

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

1628 California Street

San Francisco, California 94109

415.614.1118



## Austin, Texas - Whetstone Audio

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

2401 E. 6th. Street #1001

Austin, Texas 78702

512.477.8503



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Featured here is the No. 25 Line Array, three No. 25s arranged vertically, permitting bass to emerge more naturally as it propagates throughout the room, striking our sinuses, kicking at our chest cavities and rumbling along the floor with power and majesty. Welcome to the pinnacle of sound, 25 years in the making.



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# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Vancouver, Canada - HiFi Centre

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

433 Carrall Street

Vancouver, BC V6B 6E3

888.232.9995



## Gig Harbor, Washington - Gig Harbor Audio

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

3019 Judson St. Suite D

Gig Harbor, Washington 98335

253.228.6021



# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Marietta, Georgia - The Audio Company

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

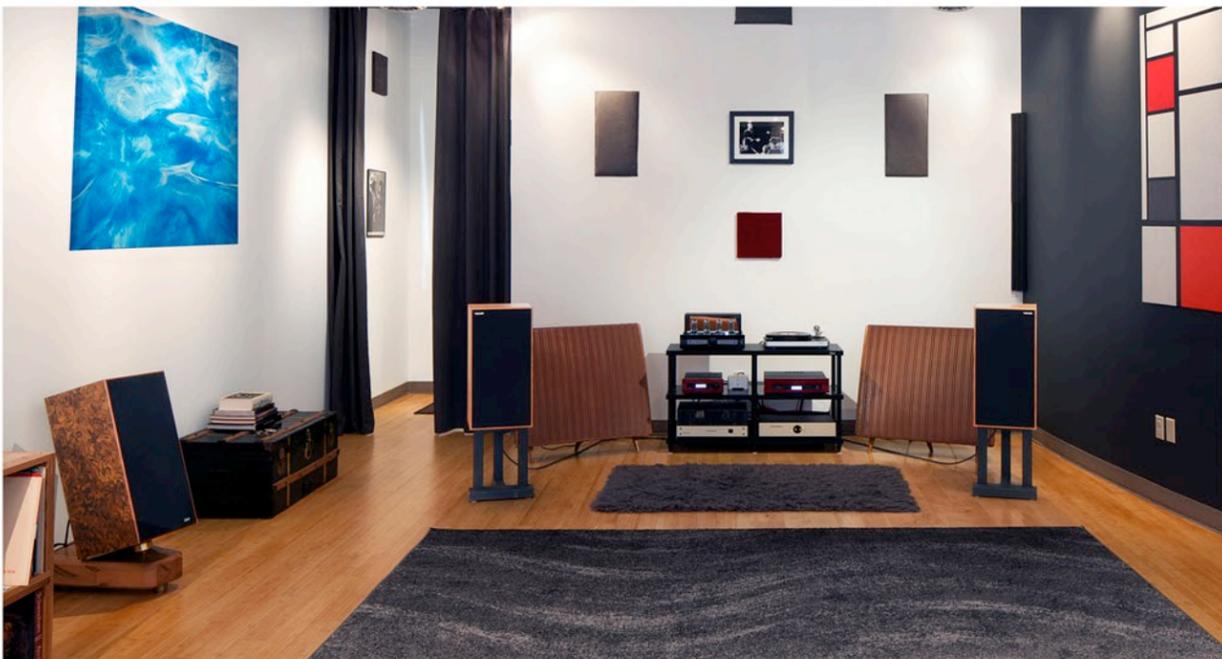
770.429.0434



## San Diego, California - Deja VU Audio West

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

858.412.4023



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Jeff Dorgay, ToneAudio



www.warwickacoustics.com/headphones

# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Sarasota, Florida - Suncoast Audio

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

7353 International Place, Unit 309

Sarasota, Florida 34240

941.932.0282



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

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

62 Cooper Square

New York, New York 10003



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## Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

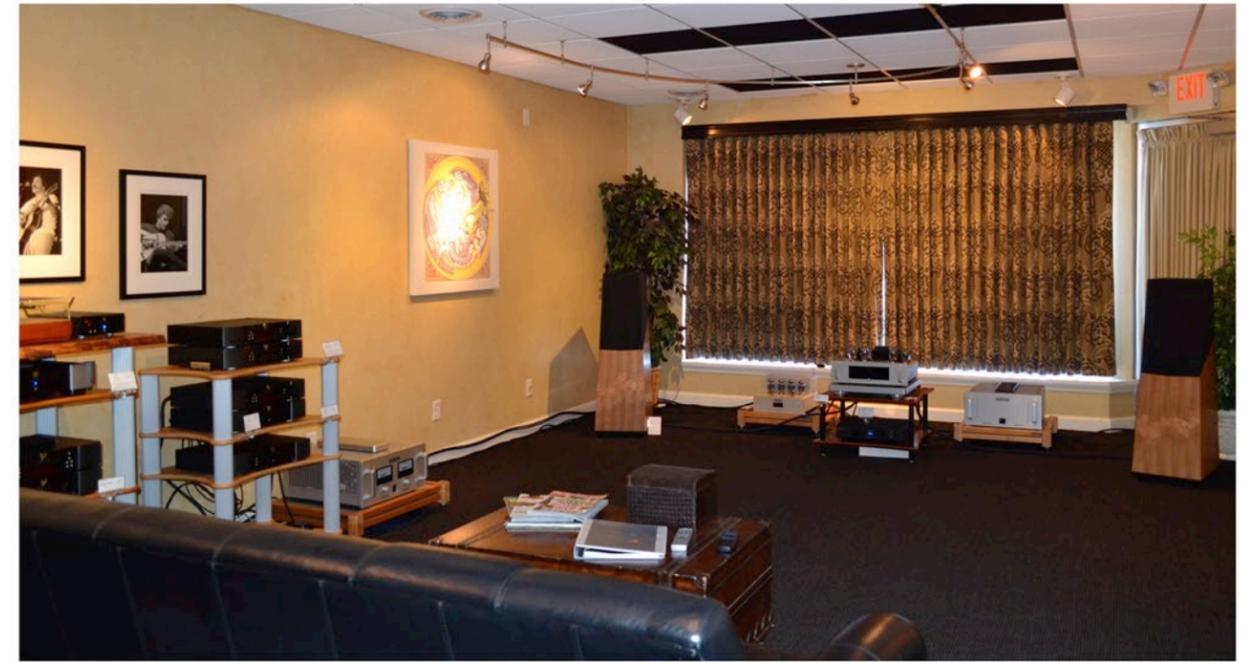
### Wauwatosa, Wisconsin - Ultra Fidelis

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

7125 West North Avenue

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

414.221.0200



### Portland, Oregon - Echo Audio

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

5904 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy

Portland, Oregon 97221

888.248.3246



# Dealers That Mean Business - Listings

## Morton Grove, Illinois - Quintessence Audio

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

847.966.4434



## Scottsdale, Arizona - LMC Home Entertainment

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

480.403.0011



www.gryphon-audio.com

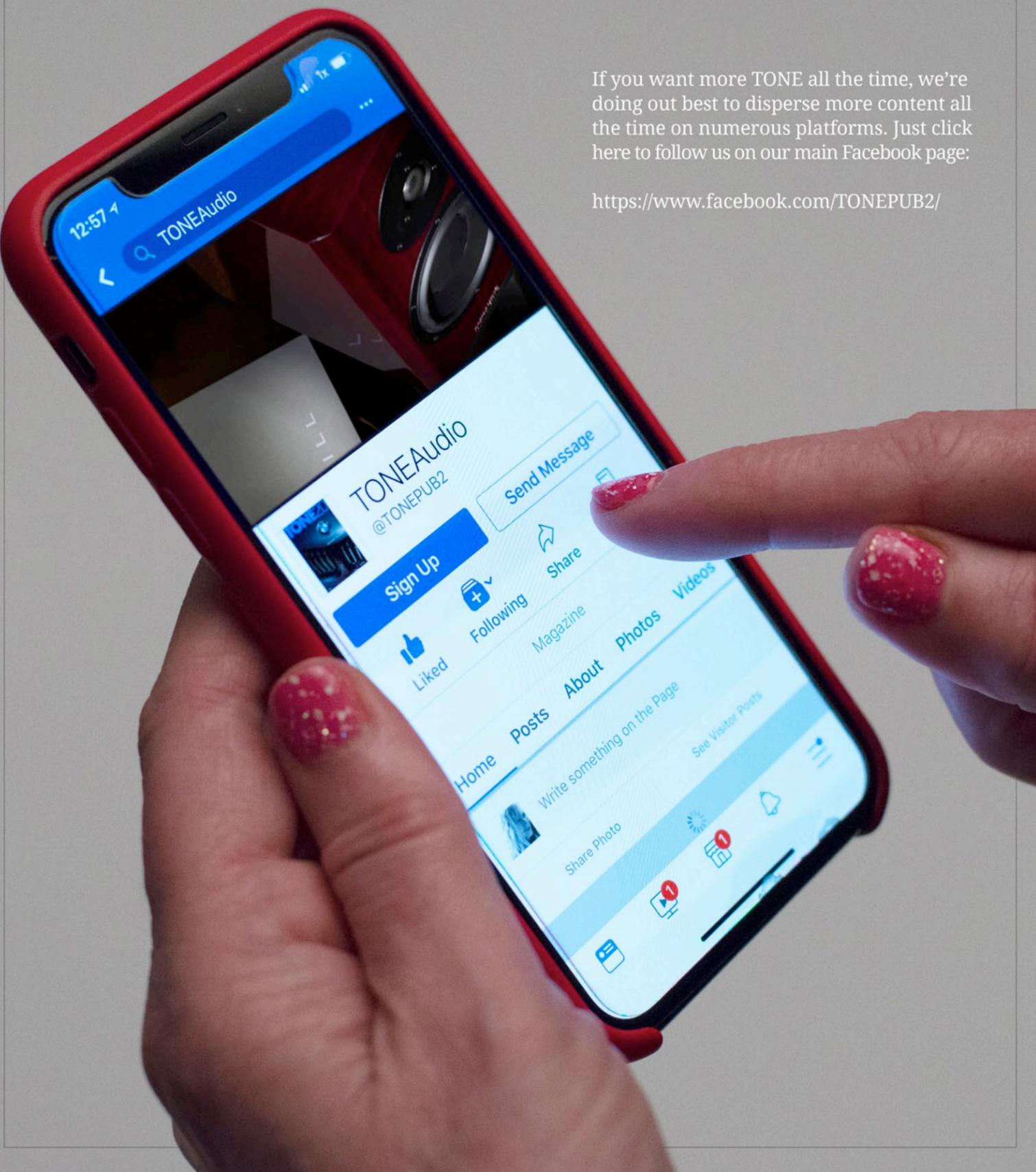


# Socially Speaking

TONEAudio's Online hangouts

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

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

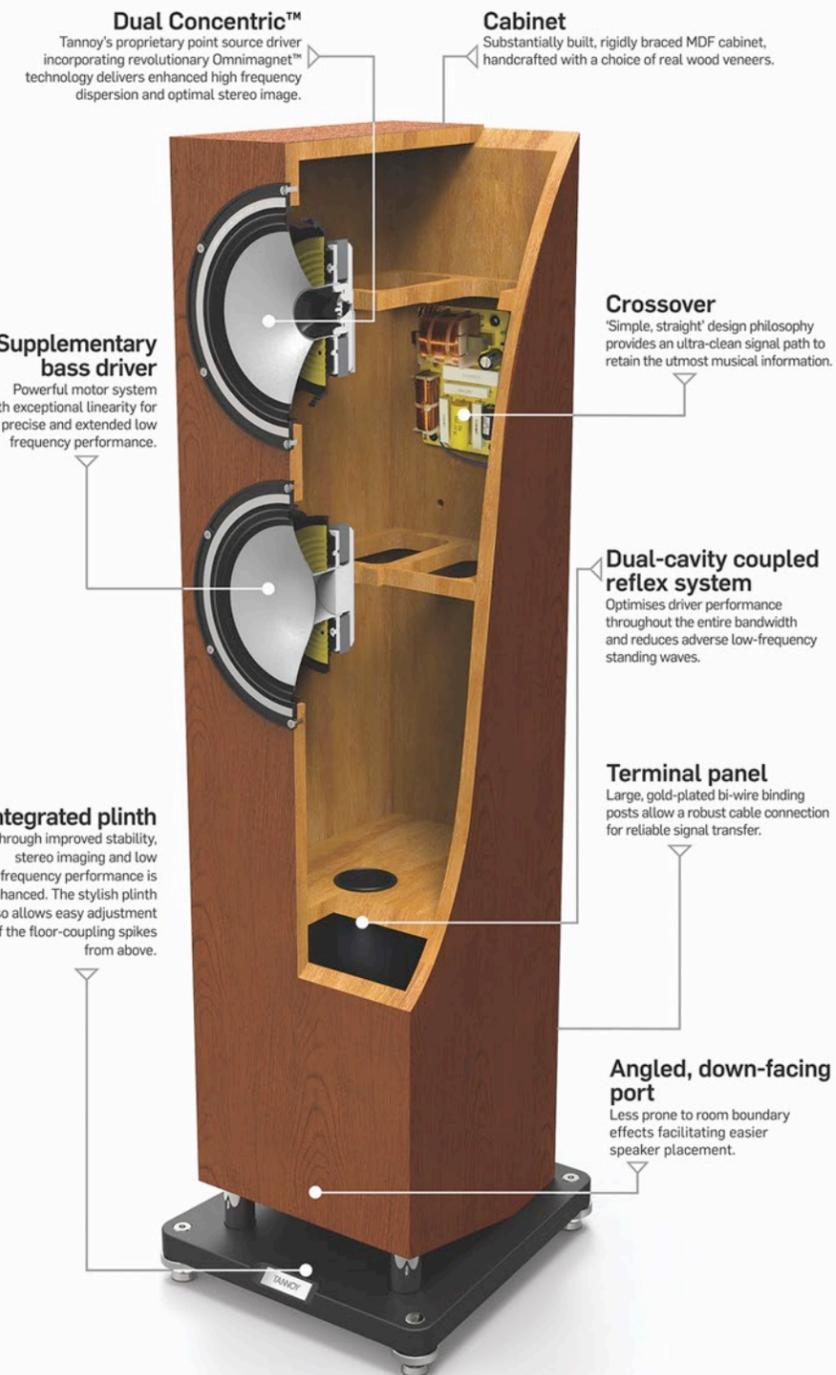


## Revolution XT 8F

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

AVAILABLE IN  
GLOSS BLACK  
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DARK WALNUT  
MEDIUM OAK

# TANNOY



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

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san francisco

welcome to the hifi show



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raidho/scansonic  
rel acoustics  
triangle  
warwick acoustics  
wilson benesch  
yg acoustics

anthem  
antipodes  
arcam  
astell & kern  
atoll  
audioquest  
bel canto  
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chord electronics  
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crystal cable  
deqx  
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primaluna  
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rega  
shinola  
sme  
sonos  
soundsmith  
stillpoints  
technics  
unison research  
woo audio

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

<b>Abyss</b>	abyss-headphones.com	<b>Chord Cable</b>	soundorg.com
<b>Acora Acoustics</b>	acoraacoustics.com	<b>conrad-johnson</b>	conradjohnson.com
<b>Ana Mighty Sound</b>	anamightysound.com	<b>Core Power</b>	underwood hifi.com
<b>Analog Magik</b>	analogmagik.com	<b>dCS</b>	dcsLtd.co.uk
<b>Anthem</b>	anthemav.com	<b>Dynaudio</b>	dynaudio.com
<b>Aqua Audio</b>	aquahifi.com	<b>E.A.T.</b>	vanaltd.com
<b>Artisan Fidelity</b>	artisanfidelity.com	<b>Echo Audio</b>	echohifi.com
<b>Atlas Cable</b>	vanaltd.com	<b>Elusive Disc</b>	elusivedisc.com
<b>Audio Classics</b>	audioclassics.com	<b>Esoteric</b>	esoteric-usa.com
<b>Audio Physic</b>	vanaltd.com	<b>Exogal</b>	exogal.com
<b>Audio Research</b>	audioresearch.com	<b>Focal</b>	naim-focal.com
<b>Audio Solutions</b>	highendbyoz.com	<b>Franco Serblin</b>	francoserblin.it
<b>AudioVision SF</b>	audiovisionsf.com	<b>Gig Harbor Audio</b>	gigharboraudio.com
<b>AVID HiFi</b>	avidhifi.com	<b>Gold Note</b>	goldnote.it
<b>Boulder</b>	boulderamp.com	<b>Golden Ear</b>	goldenear.com
<b>Bryston</b>	bryston.com	<b>Grand Prix Audio</b>	grandprixaudio.com
<b>Cardas Audio</b>	cardas.com		



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

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



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

HiFi Centre	hificentre.com	REL	rel.net
Kiseki	kiseki-usa.com	Qobuz	qobuz.com
Luxman	luxman.com	Rega	soundorg.com
McIntosh	mcintoshlabs.com	Sonus faber	sonusfaber.com
MartinLogan	martinlogan.com	Splicit	splicit.com
Musical Fidelity	naim-focal.com	Sumiko	sumiko.net
Nagra	nagraaudio.com	SVS	svsound.com
Naim	naim-focal.com	Tellurium Q	telluriumq.com
Octave	octave.de	Torus	toruspower.com
PS Audio	psaudio.com	Totem	totemacoustic.com
Paradigm	paradigm.com	Upscale Audio	upscaleaudio.com
Pass Labs	passlabs.com	VAC	vac-amplifiers.com
PrimaLuna	primaluna-usa.com	Vitus Audio	highendbyoz.com
ProAc	soundorg.com	Warwick Acoustics	warwickacoustics.com
Pro-Ject	pro-jectusa.com		



# Time Warp

The soundtrack of assembling the issue...

**T**hat's a wrap. Again a big thanks to all of you that have followed TONE's journey. And welcome to those that have just joined us.

I've been obsessed with music, and having a great hifi system as a way to enjoy music since my high school years.

Here's a snapshot of my system in 1983...

Acoustat 3s, Conrad-Johnson PV2a, Oracle turntable with Dynavector Ruby Karat cartridge, and a few other choice bits.

On many levels, it's come a long way, but it's still awesome.



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#### AUTHORIZED DEALERS

##### HOUSTON, TX

3mA AUDIO  
1431 W. Alabama St. HOUSTON, TX 77006  
(832) 530 - 4716 sales@3maudio.com

##### SAN CLEMENTE, CA

Cake Audio  
<http://cakeaudio.com>  
(949) 369 - 9262 ken@cakeaudio.com

##### LAS VEGAS, NV

Argutus AUDIO  
7650 Dean Martin Dr. STE. 101 LAS VEGAS, NV 89139  
(702) 888 - 3787 info@argutusaudio.com

#### NORTH AMERICAN DISTRIBUTOR

##### HIGH END By OZ LLC

11870 Santa Monica Boulevard 106672  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025  
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DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOME

# Last Word

Our parting thought to ponder.

That's a wrap.

On to issue 101 and 2020!  
Many quad mochas have been consumed.

# GRAND PRIX AUDIO Monaco Turntable v2.0

A new achievement in analog



*“Let the record state that this is the finest turntable I’ve experienced, at any price.”*

*-Jeff Dorgay, Tone Publications*

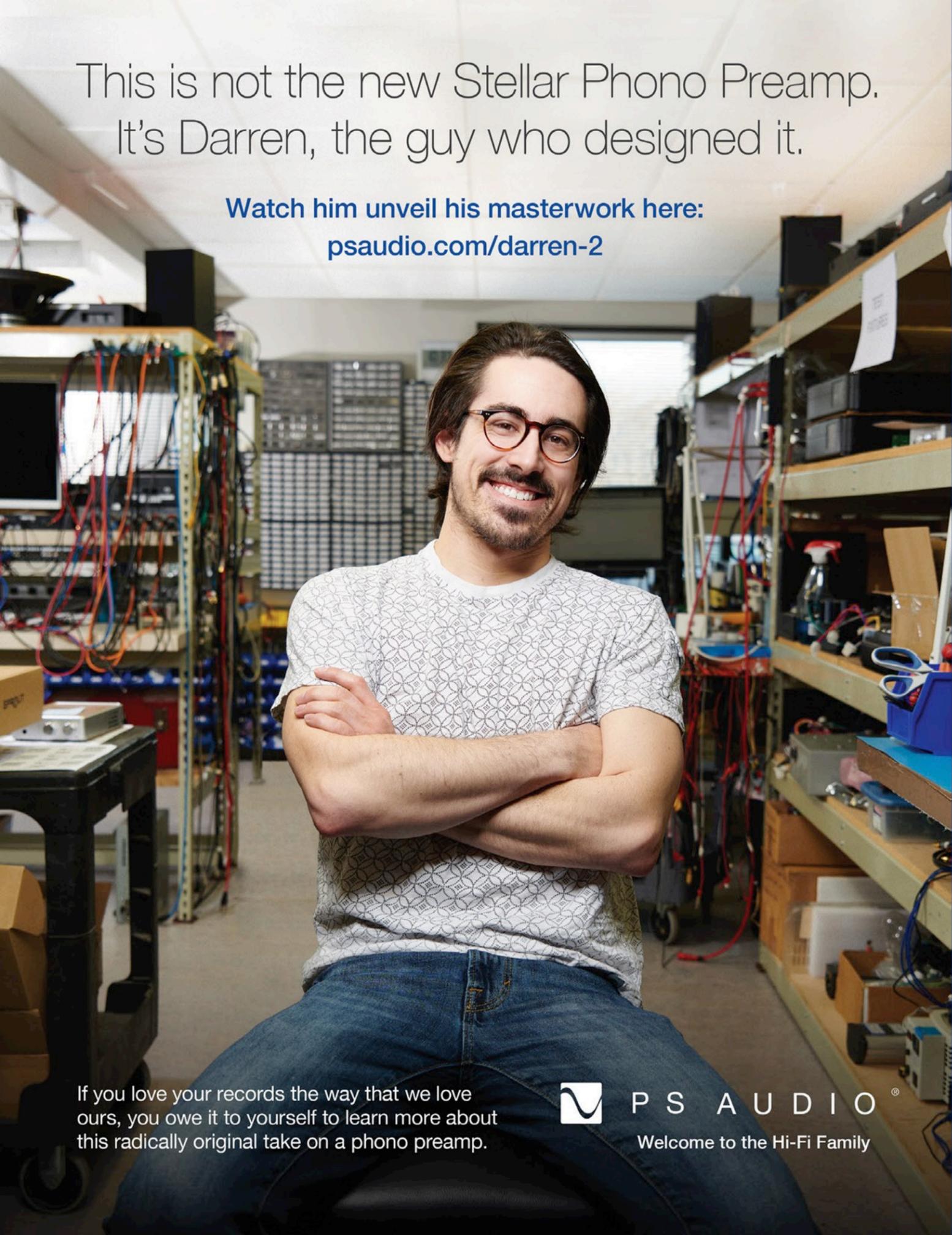
Music deserves innovation

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



This is not the new Stellar Phono Preamp.  
It's Darren, the guy who designed it.

Watch him unveil his masterwork here:  
[psaudio.com/darren-2](https://psaudio.com/darren-2)



If you love your records the way that we love ours, you owe it to yourself to learn more about this radically original take on a phono preamp.



PS AUDIO®

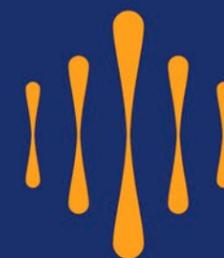
Welcome to the Hi-Fi Family

Next issue, **101:**

And it will be a surprise.

Not quite sure what 101 will be. We have a lot of content piled up here.

Happy new year to all.



TONE