

We Pick the Best Audio Gear of 2016!

the absolute sound

2016 Editors' Choice Awards



MARCH 2016
\$6.99 US / \$6.99 CAN / £4.50 UK



0 744701 64765 2 03

DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 20TH 2016

800+

Speakers, Amps, DACs, Music Servers, Headphones, Portable Players, Turntables, Accessories, and More!

amplifier. Sonically, it has a full-throated midrange, good dynamics, and solid imaging. There is minor veiling on top and just a little speed-bumping of transients and deeper bass pulses. Soundstaging, however, is very good. MyAmp stands as confirmation that serious sound comes in all sizes. NG, 250

NuForce DDA-120

\$699

The DDA-120 was made for audiophiles who need a moderately priced, single-box amp/preamp to connect any conventional digital source to a pair of loudspeakers. If your speakers are at least 88dB sensitive and you can work around the DDA-120's ergonomic limitations, you may find that it is simply the best-integrated amplifier you've heard. (Now includes an analog input.) SS, 229

NAD C 356 BEE

\$799

The 80Wpc C 356 BEE borrows technologies from NAD's Master Series M3 dual-mono integrated. Its tonal balance leans slightly to the darker side, bringing a bit of extra wood to strings and burnish to brass. The soundstage is large, with a good sense of air around instruments, and a nice sense of depth. WG, 210

Cambridge CXA80

\$899

Cambridge really stepped up its game with its suavely restyled and affordable CX Series. A rung above its lower-cost sibling, the CXA60, the dual-mono, Class AB, 80Wpc CXA80 is battle-ready for the digital world. Thanks to the CXA80's Wolfson 24-bit/192kHz WM8740 DAC chip, computer audio is as close at hand as the USB input, or use the front-panel jack for MP3 players. Although it mysteriously lacks a display, you'll get over it given the CXA80's smooth, relaxed sonics, and abundant headroom for demanding

loudspeakers. Includes a full-function remote and headphone jack. NG, 257

Rega Brio-R

\$995

There's a lot to be said for an amplifier that doesn't sound conspicuously solid-state or tube, but suggests the strengths of both. The Brio-R impressed with its lifelike combination of body, timbre, and authority. Particularly well suited for smaller floorstanders and compact speakers of medium-to-high sensitivity. NG, 223

Arcam A19

\$999

Whether you are looking to purchase your first hi-fi component or need an affordable option for a second system, the Arcam FMJ A19 integrated amplifier sounds like a real high-end product—without the high-end price. Your \$999 buys you a musical, involving presentation with above-price-point performance in imaging and very low noise. At 50W into 8 ohms and 90W into 4 ohms, the Arcam also has plenty of power to rock out with most dynamic speakers. Plus its build-quality is solid. SHo, 245

\$1000-\$2000

Coincident Speaker Technology Dynamo 34SE

\$1295

The Dynamo offers an alternative to the traditional 300B-based single-ended-triode amplifier, using, as it does, a triode-connected EL34 pentode. Driving a high-sensitivity, high-impedance loudspeaker (96dB/8-ohm minimum), it is capable of an explosive first watt. Superlative soundstage transparency combined with 3-D image outlines produce a strong sensation of being there. DO, 250

Rogue Audio Sphinx

\$1295

Rogue products have, like their moniker suggests, usually gone



their own way in design, price, and value. The Sphinx integrated amplifier may be the most roguish of the lot. This is the first Class D amplifier (actually a hybrid with a pair of 12AU7 tubes in the preamp section) that RD feels offers true world-class sonics. Includes a very fine discrete headphone amp and a phono section that is worth the asking price all by itself. TAS' 2013 Tuber Integrated Amplifier of the Year. Ron Doering, 236

Wyred 4 Sound mINT

\$1499

Rated at 100Wpc, Wyred 4 Sound's mINT (Mini-Integrated Amplifier) isn't simply a Class D integrated; it also sports a built-in DAC with three digital inputs (USB, TosLink, and coax), a pair of analog inputs, and a dedicated headphone amp. The mINT has an easy, natural musicality, along with good pace and drive. Dynamic range is somewhat limited, as is ultimate volume, but the mINT is consistently able to draw you into the music, no matter the type. WG, 229

Hegel H80

\$1995

Those who are (sometimes justifiably) frustrated with escalating prices, take heart; Hegel's 75Wpc, solid-state H80 integrated amplifier with onboard 192/24 DAC answers the call for high-performing audio kit at a very reasonable price. The H80 delivers a nice measure of musical verve, accompanied by a lack of listener fatigue that one rarely encounters in \$3000 integrations—let alone in one priced at \$2000. TAS' 2014 Integrated of the Year. KM, 245

Naim Nait 5si

\$1995

One of the great bargains in high-end audio, this latest

version of the Nait 5i brings more than a taste of expensive separates to a mid-priced integrated amplifier. The Nait is sweet without sounding rolled-off, presents a huge sense of space, tremendous separation of images, and, most importantly, sounds like music. (Recently updated to the 5si.) RH, 183

\$2000-\$3000

Creek Evolution 100A

\$2195

The quintessential stealth amp, the 100A packs more surprises and configuration options than should be possible in a minimalist chassis. Class G topology significantly bumps up the power over its 50A sibling, but it's the addition of the superb 24/96 Ruby DAC module with multiple digital inputs and FM tuner that makes the 100A pop for today's listeners. Sonics are smooth, vibrant, and unhyped. Frequency extremes suggest some attenuation—but nothing that detracts from musicality. NG, 257

PrimaLuna ProLogue

Premium

\$2399

Sonically, the 35Wpc ProLogue Premium does not have the rosy colorations of traditional triode or SET tube varieties. True, there is a glimmer of romance and softness, but tonally it's a thoroughly contemporary tube amp that walks a mostly neutral line, yet still seasons the lowest level details of music with delicacy and resolution. NG, 212

Moon by Simaudio Neo 250i

\$2400

The entry-level Moon 250i (formerly the iL) is a fine example of why integrated amplifiers offer such superb value. Rated at a moderate 50Wpc, the 250i, nevertheless, delivers impressive large-scale dynamics, rhythmic liveliness, transient speed, and top-to-bottom balance. One of the purest-sounding integrated amps in its class. WG, 185