



recommended products

and harmonic sweetness we normally associate with tubes, superb deep bass, overall neutrality, and good dynamic contrasts.

(Reviewed by Anthony H. Cordesman in Issue 128)

HOVLAND HP-100

\$6500 (with MC phono stage)

www.hovlandcompany.com

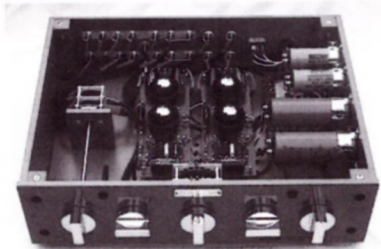


The Hovland HP-100 captures the essential "rightness" of music without sounding nearly as "hi-fi" as most of its competition. It is not, in longer-term listening, difficult to hear its flaws, but the HP-100 reminds us just how clinical, ultimately, almost all components sound, and it does so by sounding as "unclinical" as anything HP has heard. (Reviewed by PB in Issue 131; HP's Workshop, Issues 131 and 137)

WYTECH OPAL

\$7500

www.wytechlabs.com



Built like a tank, this mauve, tubed, two-piece Canadian powerhouse projects seamless tonality, top to bottom, with natural, extended mid-and-upper treble, full, uncolored midrange, and powerful bass. Outstanding dynamics, ample microdynamics, and effortless climaxes, wrapped in state-of-the-art transparency with detailing to die for. (Reviewed by Dan Davis in Issue 127)

EDGE SIGNATURE 1

\$8950

www.edgeamp.com



Unusual because it can be powered by either

batteries or AC, the Edge—when powered by batteries, please note—has a glorious top end, a rich middle register, a wonderfully complex harmonic structure, and delivers plenty of ambient information. What it lacks is vocal body, low-frequency punch, and the last word in dynamic wallop. (HP's Workshop Issue 137)

BALANCED AUDIO TECHNOLOGY VK-51SE

\$9000 (includes remote)

www.balanced.com



BAT's top preamp combines authority, punch, detail, spaciousness, and precision into one beautifully made chassis. Using the company's 6H30 "SuperTubes" and "SuperPak" power supply, this dual-mono "special edition" linestage offers the best of both tube and solid-state sound. (Reviewed by Shane Buettner in Issue 143)

AUDIO RESEARCH REFERENCE 2MKII

\$9995

www.audioresearch.com



The finest linestage ARC has yet made. With superb soundstaging combined with a new-found image focus and top-to-bottom neutrality, the Ref 2MkII manages to sound big, airy, and bloomy without sounding over-inflated, "whitish," or aggressive. Superb inner detail, lovely treble and bass, and exceptional dynamics (for tubes). (Reviewed by Jonathan Valin in Issue 140)

PHONOSTAGES

Under \$500

GRAM AMP 2

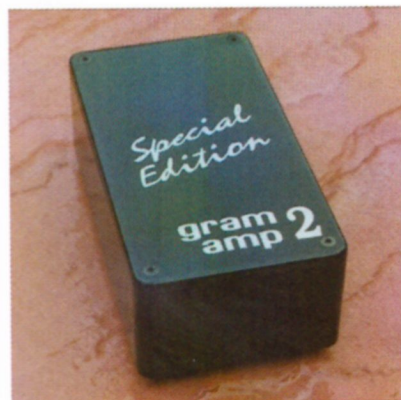
\$219

www.gspaudio.com

This stripped down little bugger has a sweet, mellow sound,



and very low noise and perceived distortion. It's strictly for moving magnets and high-output moving coils. The sound is a little veiled (though remarkably grain-free), and, while not the last word in wide dynamics, it has astonishing composure and musical integrity. (Reviewed by PS in Issue 134)



MONOLITHIC SOUND PS-1/HC-1

\$399/\$259

www.monolithicsound.com



It's solidly built (with optional dual-mono power supply) and flexible enough to mate with most linestages and cartridges. Harmonically and spatially full, with well-nuanced detail retrieval, admirable dynamics and solid, rhythmic drive. Slightly less extended at the extremes than the Plinius Jarrah and Lehmann Black Cube, but its purity of tone and openness in the mids is quite special for a unit at this price. (Reviewed by Stephan Harrell in Issue 128)

\$500-\$1000

GRADO PH-1

\$500

www.gradolabs.com

The wood-bodied PH-1 is a versatile unit that works equally well with high- and low-output cartridges. Though it is susceptible to environmental noise, the sound is open and easy, with an expansive soundstage, natural highs, and lower octaves with texture, tonal refinement, and power. (Reviewed by WG in Issue 141)