

2008 Editors' Choice Awards

Audio Research tubes. Could have sworn I was, but, no, t'wasn't. This amplifier, with its positively enormous power output, is as sweet sounding and as uncharacteristically untransistorized-like as any big amplifier in my experience. Review in the works. To come.

Joule Electra Destiny VZN-350 OTL monoblock \$30,000 (the pair)

joule-electra.com

I am well aware I've been promising an assessment of this singular and highly powerful 300-watt OTL statement by Jud Barber. Some of the difficulties with getting this easily done have resulted from interactions between the amp's power requirements (the drain, let us say) and my circuit breakers, all state-of-the-art after the 1985 fire, but not thrilled at meeting their destiny. Nonetheless, when I've had it going, it's had me going.

Burmester 911 Mk III \$29,995

burmester.de

A sonic kissing cousin to the Burmester 011 preamplifier described above. It is

particularly good at lowest frequencies and is neutral at any and all of the Hertz, which it reproduces with a lucidity and impact not at all common in solid-state designs. One of my favorite amps. Truly, for me, a reference.

Wyetech Labs Sapphire (triode) monoblock \$7800 (the pair, with 300B tubes)

wyetechlabs.com

The best single-ended amplifier in my experience. More punch than its puny 18-watt rating would suggest, with less of the harmonic coloration that some, including me, find so colored, in the sound in other SET designs. Used with a relatively sensitive speaker, which I would urge you to do if possible, it is a revelation, and at both frequency extremes, and as they say, utterly natural in between.

MULTICHANNEL EQUIPMENT

The Super Maggie System w/(five) Nola Thunderbolt woofers:

Magnepan 20.1, 3.6, and CC-3 (two, stacked); Edge GAV amplifier (six modules version)

Prices: Magnepan speakers: \$37,980. The 3.6: 9990 (the pair), the center channel CC-3, (\$995 each). Thunderbolt (\$1795 each). Edge GAV: three module version, \$5995, additional modules (\$1250 each)

magnepan.com

nolaspeakers.com

edgeamp.com

For the last word in articulation—necessary if the dialogue tracks (or track) is to be understood beneath all the *Sturm und Drang* from the remaining speakers—and for a system that plays back music naturally, this is an unbeatable combination.

EMM Labs CDS D SE SACD disc transport; CDS DAE 6se, Revised & Special Edition

Price: Transport, \$9,900; 6se, \$13,500

emmlabs.com

I've been waiting for an update to Ed Meitner's superb DSD/SACD two-piece unit, one I thought sure to arrive