



Van Alstine Transcendence 8

\$1099

avahifi.com

Van Alstine's T8 is a mixture of old-fashioned and standard features. In addition to the obligatory volume pot and input selector switch, there are a balance control, mono-mode selector, two tape loops, and a headphone jack. Configured as a linestage (the optional phono stage fared less well), the T8 is one of those rare products that genuinely transcends the constraints of budget preamplification. Its sound is not particularly smooth or euphonic. But it won praise based on its stable imaging and killer dynamics. It benefits from being mated with a romantic tube amp. Reviewed by Dick Olsher, Issue 173

Manley Shrimp

\$1880

manleylabs.com

Not meant as a challenge to its, um, manliness, the Shrimp's name follows the Manley Labs' tradition of naming its gear after sea-dwelling creatures. Although it offers no phono or remote control, what the retro-looking Shrimp does offer is terrific build-quality, a superb lineup of parts, and knockout sound at its price. Its sonic virtues begin with a very low noise floor, and a seemingly boundary-free three-D soundstage with well-focused, nicely separated image placement. The Shrimp is also lively and fast, with a good overall balance and a weighty bass region. Reviewed by Sue Kraft, Issue 178

Artemis Labs LA-1

\$3500

aydn.com

One of three debut components from this fledgling Southern California company, the LA-1 is a linestage-only, non-remote-controlled 5687-based tube design that digs deep into the heart of the music. It's well built, too, with an engraved faceplate and first-rate parts throughout (including a superb stepped volume attenuator), a "cool-swap" feature that doubles tube life, and a valuable mono/stereo switch. Beautiful without being overtly romantic sounding, the LA-1 is exceptionally holographic, dynamically lively as well as nicely shaded, tonally and texturally natural, and, audiophile-speak aside, simply more musically engaging than most of the competition in this range. Reviewed by WG, Issue 155

Aesthetix Calypso

\$4500

musicalsurrroundings.com

The all-tube Calypso delivers much of the performance of Aesthetix' super-tweaky two-box Callisto for about a third the price. The Calypso is characterized by extremely wide dynamics and effortless presentation of musical climaxes. The soundstage is open and transparent. Although the treble is smooth and somewhat laid-back, resolution is first-rate. The bass tilts toward warmth and roundness. The Calypso is not only a world-class performer, but a stone-cold bargain. Reviewed by RH, Issue 151 **TAS86**

COMPARATIVE CHART

	PRICE	PHONO	REMOTE
Vincent SA-31	\$499	No	No
Rogue Metis	\$995	Yes	Optional
Van Alstine T8	\$1099	Optional	Optional
Manley Shrimp	\$1880	No	No
Artemis Labs LA-1	\$3500	No	Yes
Aesthetix Calypso	\$4500	No	Yes