

**VPI Scout turntable**

**\$1800**

vpiindustries.com

**Continuum Caliburn turntable**

**\$125,000**

continuumaudiolabs.com

These two turntables are at the opposite ends of the hobby. The Scout blew me away with its control, detail, and zest for the music. I loved it. It's hard to think why anyone would want more. But if you do, the Caliburn, which I've been enjoying for a year since buying one, will help provide it. Like so many of the great 'tables available today, it boasts freakishly quiet backgrounds and thundering orchestral fortissimos. Its most salient characteristic may be a holistic sound that is never, ever tilted up in the top-end, but provides a remarkably even and smooth balance throughout the tonal spectrum. The Caliburn is not a product for the faint of heart, but it represents a path toward ultimate sound. (Not reviewed)

**PS Audio Power Plant Premiere**

**\$2195**

psaudio.com

Few products can be more vexing than power conditioners. They often rob Peter to pay Paul—producing blacker backgrounds at the expense of dynamics, clarity at the cost of bloom. The PS Audio Power Plant Premiere does neither. It's the first conditioner that I can unreservedly recommend. A completely different product from the earlier generation of PS Audio regenerators—it runs quietly and doesn't produce much heat—it delivers 1500 watts of clean power from the wall outlet, while measurably lowering total harmonic distortion on the AC line from 2.5% to 0.5% in my system. Music emerged with unprecedented authority from my speakers when using this ingenious device. (Reviewed by AHC in Issue 175)

**Aesthetix Io Eclipse phonostage**

**\$15,500 (\$20,000 with additional power supply)**

musicalsurrroundings.com

Aesthetix designer Jim White has done it again. This new version of the fabled Io phonostage represents a substantial sonic and aesthetic improvement over its predecessor. The all-tube Io, which shuns the use of either JFETs or transformers as gain devices, has always produced a massive soundstage, excellent bass, and bloom to die for. It also has adjustable gain and cartridge loading via small tabs that are easily moved. In its new incarnation, the Io has been loaded with expensive new capacitors that substantially reduce the noise floor and grain as well as provide even more dynamic power. In addition, the new chassis offers much better bracing and immunity to vibration. (Not reviewed)



**VTL Siegfried monoblock amplifiers**

**\$48,000**

vtl.com

It's easy enough to rave about the sound produced by these transparent, magisterial, and powerful amplifiers that boast control over the bass that few others can match. No, the Siegfried is not as refulgent as the mighty VTL Wotan monoblock amplifiers, which boast 24 output tubes in each chassis and can serve as a space heater. But VTL has gone a long way towards making high-powered tube amplifiers more user-friendly by incorporating microprocessors to monitor tube performance and regulate the power supply. Purists will blanch, but VTL firmly claims that they do not intrude upon the sound. (Reviewed in Issue 180)

**Einstein "The Tube Mk. II" preamplifier**

**\$15,700**

aaudioimports.com

Hailing from Germany, the Tube is frequently coupled with Acapella loudspeakers, and no wonder. The noise floor isn't close to vanishing; it seems nonexistent. It is, and not by a small margin, the most neutral and quiet preamplifier that I've encountered, and that includes a number of solid-state preamps. What's more, it features no fewer than 19 tubes. But in a very clever design decision, the preamplifier shuts off all the tubes that aren't in the specific circuit that's being used. If you're impatient and want to switch right away from input to input, this preamp is not for you, as it takes a minute for the output tubes to warm up. But the combination of ultra-quiet operation and thundering dynamics makes this preamp something of a wonder. My only quibble is with the right-angled power cord underneath the chassis, which is difficult to reach. (Not reviewed)