



Shanling MC-30 Music Center

CD player and tuner with 3Wpc single-ended tube amplifier section, full remote control, and a built-in iPod docking station. The clean design is also a reflection of some innovative engineering: The top caps of the front pair of footers are in fact an input selector and a volume control. Shanling's trademark blue lighting enshrines the transparent CD transport lid. A gem of a conversation piece that cuts across all generations.

**Music Hall** also has reintroduced its CD receiver, the \$999 **Maven**. Equipped with 24-bit/192kHz upsampling, a digital input, video switching, and dual sets of speaker terminals, this all-aluminum beauty with 100Wpc is going to set hearts aflutter as its price drops from \$1500 to \$999.

Likewise, **Primare** of Scandinavia is not generally known for electronics that hew to the "lifestyle" model. Its amplifiers, preamps, and processors are robustly built, richly but modestly styled, and powerfully equipped. But once again, thanks to the iPod, the need for minimalist second-room stereo systems is too much of a marketing opportunity for any company to pass up. Unlike the more retro-appeal of the Shanling, the **CDI-10** CD receiver (\$2195) is as contemporary as audio components come. It employs a heavy-gauge steel chassis and a powerful

cutting-edge 75Wpc Class D switching amp—in this instance, proprietary to Primare. Distributor Sumiko also stated that we'll be seeing more of this Class D technology from Primare in the year to come. It uses regulated power supply technology, is fully remote controlled, and has incorporated an interesting and elegant twist on iPod connectivity. Rather than the increasingly common docking station, it has a front-panel mini-jack that is switchable between input and output. This enables it to be used for headphone use or jacking into an iPod.

## A Bonanza of Integrated Amps

The resiliency of the integrated amplifier market has been nothing short of spectacular. It appears to be accelerating in popularity at all price points. The new **PrimaLuna Dialogue One** (\$2199) has to be one of the steals of the show, especially if you're a tube aficionado. It combines the features of all PrimaLuna amps but adds the choice of 18Wpc triode or 36Wpc ultralinear switching, a true home-theater bypass, and a sturdy brushed-aluminum remote control. But, like they say on the Home Shopping Network, there's more!

For an additional \$300, PrimaLuna offers the **Dialogue Two**, tricked out with KT88 output tubes, Solen caps, and a higher-gloss finish and faceplate. PrimaLuna is offering something to enthusiasts that's in increasingly short supply in the high end—great performance and a boat load of fun.

Who would have guessed that when you mate a pair of Snappers out would pop a **Manta Ray**? Some would say only from the mind of EveAnna Manley, the forward-thinking helmer of **Manley Labs**. While other high-end companies ponder the multi-channel future or dismiss the iPod as a prank, Ms. Manley



PrimaLuna Dialogue One



Primare CDI-10



happily steps out of line and introduces the 100Wpc Manta Ray integrated amp (est. \$4000). Essentially a double version of the Snapper with a newly designed active preamp stage, it also sports five sets of inputs, an IR/RF remote controller, and an integral iPod docking station with an S-video output for the Video iPod. If that weren't enough, Manley has incorporated iPod A/V connectivity into a revamped Stingray II (est. \$2700). The Manley team also added new visual cues and a gorgeous, blue pin-lit, graduated volume control to both units. Both are great examples of a company that has struck the balance between old school and cutting edge.

**Naim** announced that it will premier a **Super Nait** this spring. Estimated at \$4500, it will feature more power (85Wpc) and a custom toroidal transformer with seven windings and 400vA output to handle the toughest transients. Unlike the Nait 5i, it will not use a passive preamp stage. Rather it will be based on the Naim 202/200 separates. The Super Nait will also include DAC inputs and be upgradeable with Naim's outboard power supplies.

**Musical Fidelity** goes the hybrid route with the new small profile **XT100** (\$1800). Using the same design concepts as MF's premium Nu-Vista, Tri-Vista, and KW Series amps, the XT100 outputs 50Wpc and includes a phonostage and a Triple-X power supply.

The new **Cambridge 740A** integrated was so new that information is still forthcoming. But what I do know is that it'll split the performance difference between the 640 and top-of-the-line 840 Series. There will be more power and Americanized connectivity, including a keyboard-activated A-Bus. Expected price: \$999.

For traditionalists, **Sugden** of England was making some really sweet sounds in the **ProAc** room playing through the new **Response D28**. As per Sugden practice, the minimalist **21SE** (\$4000) is pure Class A and outputs 30Wpc with relatively little heat for its size.

It never fails, but shortly after I reviewed the brilliant **Chapter Précis** integrated, Chapter promptly introduces a revamped version with a bit more power, an improved preamp stage, which the company feels is closer in performance to its stand-alone **Preface** preamp, and a redesigned and more conventionally attractive chassis. The good news is that Chapter has pledged to hold the line on price at \$6500.

Known for intimidating size and price, **Boulder** has created a mind-boggling integrated based on its Series 800 separates, the 810 pre and 860 stereo amp. The **Model 865** outputs a conservative 150Wpc, is built like a vault, and is balanced through and through. Unbalanced RCAs need not apply. Expected price: \$10,000.

Also welcome back to **Ensemble** of Switzerland. Its new hybrid **Fuoco** outputs 100Wpc, marrying 12AT7 tubes in the preamp input stage and bipolars in the amp's output stage. Expect the usual superlative build-quality Ensemble is known for. Price: \$8000.

## Preamps that let the DVD Player Do All the Processing

**Parasound** unveiled its new **P7** preamp (\$2000) with a unique twist that takes into consideration the realities of the roiling HDMI v1.3 multichannel audio standard. So what's the next best thing for audiophiles who put two-channel music at the top of their menu? Offer a classic stereo preamp, complete with mm/mc phonostage, but add dual sets of 7.1-channel inputs, trims on the fly, a left-plus-right subwoofer output, and built-in analog bass management with a 40–140Hz crossover. In this way, the user can enjoy classic stereo and switch to multichannel without compromising the sonics. And since your DVD player is likely to have DD and DTS processing onboard, movie watchers will not be left out in the cold.

In a similar vein, **Saxon Audio** from England introduced its **C700** remote-control preamp that only requires that you push an AV button on the front panel for instant "six in/six out

