



Clearaudio Goldfinger v2 moving-coil cartridge

\$8000

musicalsurrroundings.com

When it comes to realistic tone color, Clearaudio's latest (and greatest) moving-coil cartridge, the Goldfinger v2, has completed the virtual 180° swing away from the clinical sound of early Clearaudio 'coils. The Goldfinger now comes closer to "sweet, rich, and robust" than to "cool, lean, and analytical"; moreover, Clearaudio has accomplished this about-face without sacrificing the resolution, transient response, and soundstaging its 'coils have always been known for. (Reviewed in Issue 180)

Magnepan MMG planar-magnetic loudspeaker

\$550

magnepan.com

By cutting out the middle man to hold down price (this speaker is only sold factory-direct) and offering you a 60-day money-back guarantee, Magnepan makes trying out its baby planar-magnetic almost irresistible. What you will get if you do take the plunge is a wonderfully quick, full-range, detailed, and coherent two-way quasi-ribbon transducer that has the breath (and breadth) of life. As I said in my review, I not only haven't heard a better \$550 loudspeaker, I can't imagine one. (Reviewed in Issue 177)

Martin-Logan "The Source" hybrid electrostatic loudspeaker

\$1995

martinlogan.com

Up until I heard ML's latest hybrid, I thought that cones were cones and 'stats were 'stats and that whenever the twain met there was an audible dividing line. The Source proved me wrong. These demure, sexy-looking two-ways—with electrostatic mid/tweet and cone bass—not only sound seamlessly coherent, they flat out sound great, reproducing voices and instruments with uncanny realism. (Reviewed in Issue 180)

Parasound Halo JC 2 preamplifier

\$4000

parasound.com

Calling its latest solid-state preamp the JC 2—also the name of a legendary component from the early years of high-end audio—took a lot of guts. But Parasound's gambit certainly paid off, as this latest JC 2 (designed, like the original, by the great John Curl) is simple a marvel of neutrality, transparency, and resolution, with a sound not far removed from that of my reference ARC Reference 3. Undoubtedly, the best buy in a high-end preamplifier today. (Reviewed in this issue)

TW Acoustic Raven AC-3 turntable

\$18,000

highwatersound.com

This beautiful, superbly crafted, copper-topped, three-motor 'table from Germany's Thomas Woschnik (the TW of TW Acoustic) has garnered rave reviews worldwide. It surely deserves them, as it reproduces the duration of musical notes—from starting transient to steady-state tone to decay—with greater completeness and resolution than anything else I've yet heard. The result is astonishingly beautiful (and lifelike) reproduction of timbre and dynamic nuance. (Reviewed in Issue 180)

Audio Research Corporation Reference 610T monoblock power amplifier

\$39,900

audioresearch.com

I know, I know. I gave a Golden Ear to this 600W monoblock (and other assorted ARC gear) last year. But, folks, this thing is simply too good for one measly Ear. Yeah, it runs as hot as a kerosene heater; yeah, it's expensive to re-tube. But if you want to hear speakers sound their considerable best—their most lifelike—then nothing else I know of will do the trick like these inexhaustible pentode-powered masterpieces from ARC. (Reviewed in Issue 177)

Symposium Acoustics Panorama loudspeaker

\$80,000-\$100,000

symposiumusa.com

Although the Panorama is still a prototype (thus my uncertainty about pricing), I've now heard it in my home for long enough to confirm the ecstatic reaction Robert Harley and I had to its sound at last year's RMAF. This is a truly great transducer—a large, four-way, four-enclosure, ribbon/planar-magnetic/cone hybrid that somehow manages *not* to sound like ribbons, planar-magnetic drivers, or cones. Everyone who auditions it has the same reaction: "It simply doesn't sound like a loudspeaker." (Review forthcoming) **TAS**