



conrad-johnson CT5 Line-stage

reviewed by Roy Gregory in Issue 42

conrad-johnson may not have been part of the very first wave of high-end designers, but they were central to the first real expansion. Across the years they've also been unusually consistent, producing products they believe in rather than following fashion, so that although their range includes valve, hybrid and solid-state designs, these have evolved at their own pace and in their own order, rather than in a rush to board the latest passing bandwagon. The common binding themes have been musical honesty and listenability and the CT5 embodies those virtues perfectly. It would have been easy, in following the stellar accomplishment of the ACT2, to concentrate on the flagship's obvious sonic strengths, rather than its more cerebral, musical virtues. Instead the CT5 takes the latter course: it's not the

most detailed, transparent or hi-fi line-stage out there, and certainly not at this price. But what it is, is powerful, rich and solid, an emotive performer that deals in the raw energy and presence of musical instruments and voices.

the music, the CT5 echoes generations of predecessors that eschewed the obvious in preference for longer-term satisfaction. It's the c-j way and the latest offspring remain true to the family values.



Remarkably even and musically coherent, it excels in reproducing the colour and texture in a performance, the finesse in the playing as well as the sheer gusto. The results are engaging and gratifying, centring attention on the music rather than its means of reproduction. Cutting to the core of



Price: £7450

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