



Primare I30 Integrated Amplifier

\$2495

sumikoaudio.net

Remarkably musical, accurate, exciting—on all kinds of music—the I30 integrated performs beyond anything in its class SR has heard. Sweet, clear, full, deep, it untangles musical lines without separating them into an amusical mosaic. Plus, it's built with great attention to detail.

Reviewed by SR, Issue 167

PrimaLuna DiaLogue 2

\$2625

primaluna-usa.com

The first product in PrimaLuna's higher-performance line of tube units is a real winner, surpassing the ProLogue Two's performance across the board. Rated at only 38 watts in ultralinear mode, it sounds much more powerful due to its outstanding transformers, but requires speakers that are at least moderately efficient. Remote triode switching and a home-theater bypass mode are welcomed additions.

Reviewed by JH in this issue

Pathos Classic One MK III

\$2750

musicalsurrroundings.com

This is not only a fine amplifier; it is beautiful in every sense of the word. But if sheer dynamic scale and loudness are priorities, this 70Wpc tube model may not be for you. Instead, this is an amplifier that always gets the tone, timbre, and balance of music right, but only if played at natural levels and over reasonably sensitive speakers.

Reviewed by PS, Issue 160

NAD Masters Series M3

\$2799

nadelectronics.com

Bristling with oomph, this pure dual-mono design boasts build-quality that shames some tonier brands. With 180Wpc on reserve, it conveys an easy-going neutrality and cushiony refinement. Bass is as controlled and extended as any integrated NG has encountered. The M3 may not have quite the air and bloom in the treble of the premium-spread *iberamps*, but it comes scary close.

Reviewed by NG, Issue 163

Ayre AX-7e

\$2950

ayre.com

The AX-7 has all the hallmarks of the Ayre sound, but scaled down in output power. This beautifully made integrated has dimensionality, openness, image specificity, and transparency that rival much more expensive separates. Don't be put off by the modest 60Wpc output rating; the AX-7 sounds robust and has bass extension that belies its modest specification.

Reviewed by SK and RH, Issue 171

\$3000 & above

Audio Research VSi55

\$3495

audioresearch.com

The VSi55 serves up a rich midrange, combined with smooth—but never dull—treble, and with speakers with smooth low-frequency impedance curves, its bass can be powerful and well-controlled. This amp also handles dynamics with greater authority than its power rating would suggest, while conveying a sense of the musical whole. Be aware that the VSi55 trades away some transparency to give you the natural, relaxed, “holistic” sound of tubes.

Reviewed by TM, AVgM, Issue 1

VTL IT-85

\$3750

vtl.com

The VTL IT-85 bathes music in a warm, golden glow that is hard to resist. While it is not the most powerful integrated amplifier—careful matching to loudspeakers (preferably mini-monitors) is a must—the IT-85 provides a large soundstage and effortless mids and highs. No other integrated in its price range comes even close to offering as musical and pure a sound.

Reviewed by JHeilbrunn, Issue 168

Plinius 9200

\$4395

plinius.com

The 9200 is a thorough and timely re-imagining of the brilliant but aging 8150/8200. Still compact in size, it pumps out a healthy 200Wpc, and thanks to its strong Class A bias, the 9200 is sweeter and richer than ever. Even the all-new phonostage is quieter and more dynamic. Bass doesn't sound as darkly ominous or extended as in years past, but control and definition are strikingly improved.

Reviewed by NG, Issue 156

Balanced Audio Technology VK-300X

\$4495–\$6495 (depending on options)

balanced.com

Available in your choice of three preamp stages—solid-state, tube, or “SuperTube”—BAT's VK-300X is an integrated amplifier. Although refinements occur with each upgrade, its basic sound is detailed, rich in timbre, and very in control. And with 150Wpc output, it will do pretty much any speaker, but it will do so with dynamic authority as well as agility.

Reviewed by WG, Issue 138

Edge G3

\$6150

edgeamps.com

Although it lacks some of the refinements that make Edge's separates so remarkable, it's remarkable how close this integrated comes to the sound of those designs. Although the G3 doesn't have the tonal “darkness” grain frequently heard from transistor-based designs, quite neutral in balance, with a lack of artifacts—brightness, edginess, harshness—makes it unusually easy to hear “the music.”

Reviewed by WG, Issue 152

Chapter Précis

\$6500

chapterelectronics.co.uk

Driven by Chapter's unique Class B stage (derived from Chapter's Coup amp), the Précis outputs 130Wpc, a full range that doubles into 4 ohms. Controlled by a multi-function knob (from the Précis preamp), the Précis is quiet, fast off, and notable for its lack of coloration. It's an integrated that is exploring the outer limits of what this technology can achieve.

Review by NG, Issue 167

Conrad-Johnson CA200

\$6500

conradjohnson.com

Essentially a power amplifier with a superb volume control, the CA200 is stuffed with a circuit topology and a part list direct from Connie's flagship separates. The sound is powerful and dense in the midrange, with effortless musicality across the frequency spectrum. Separates will buy you greater flexibility, but there's nothing to pinch more low-end slam, but there's nothing out there to surpass the CA200's fine

Reviewed by NG, Issue 173