

the Stereo Times
The Complete Audiophile Magazine



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The Stereo Times 2007 Most Wanted Components Award

Loudspeakers



Almarro M3A Speakers (\$2,600/pair)

You really have to admire a company that listens intently to what their customer base has to say. Almarro's M2A speakers, which were a very nice speaker in their own right, were also a little difficult to setup to get the best out of them, and their customers made them aware of this. So Almarro came up with the M3A, which has a smoother in room response and has a lot more flexibility when it comes to set up. These speakers are not only musical, well made and easy to work with, they also are very affordable. [Michael Wright]

Audio Acoustic Sapphire Ti-C SE Tuned loudspeakers (Made

in the UK - \$85,000 retail w/ceramic tweeter)
Wow, talk about sound that is precise and magical - these speakers, sporting a special ceramic tweeter, are truly in another league with sound that comes to you pure and natural. Mated with top quality electronics and their incredible companion cables, be



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prepared for nothing less than the very best that music has to offer. In addition, the attention to detail is absolutely outstanding. These speakers provide a look and feel similar to that of an expensive luxury vehicle (ala Rolls Royce no less). Yes, these speakers darn near cost just about what that wonderful car costs but that's a whole different story. What we're talking about here is how good they sound. Just make sure to take the time required to get their placement right. Once this is done, you're in for a real treat. Clean, clear, and layered with musical textures, these speakers are wonderfully neutral, with minimal variation from purity. Expensive yes, but oh so very, very addictive. [Bill Wells]



Bosendorfer VC7 loudspeakers (Manufacturer in Vienna, Austria - \$19,000 retail - black satin finish, higher costs for more exotic finishes)

These are highly musical loudspeakers that are a ton of fun listening to music through. Relatively easy to set up and once broken in, getting excellent soundstaging and pin-point imaging is pretty much a snap. Sound from these speakers provided a wrap around effect with a full, rich and engaging quality. When you think about it, anything with the name Bosendorfer should probably exhibit these qualities, right?

In particular, the midrange is wonderful and captures the essence of real music. Bass has good punch and although they may not go super low, what these speakers provide in the lower frequencies is tuneful and authentic. Highs extend nicely and are totally in balance with the rest of the musical spectrum. This is complimented with a nice organic feel. When you listen to these babies, your toes will tap, you head will move back and forth and your ears will just simply wiggle and do the "thank you dance." [Bill Wells]

Editor's Choice! **Escalante Designs Fremont Loudspeaker** (\$18,990 - \$20,990 depending of



finish): Another company with their hearts and heads in the right place is Escalante Designs. Dave Thomas peaked my interest with his review of the stand mounted Fremont, as did my past experience with designer Tierry Budge's previous loudspeaker designs for Talon Audio and Wilson. So I decided to do a follow-up review. My pair came in a gorgeous high-gloss bamboo. Upon first listen, I can unequivocally say that DT got it right. Intense musicality without sacrificing transparency and detail, the

Fremont will have you wondering aloud, "Where have you been all my life?" If there is a speaker that can do it all, this may be it. [Greg Petan]

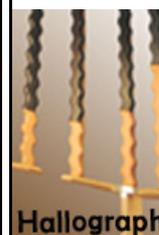


Gamut Audio L-7 Speakers (\$14,000) Review in progress

Who knew this legendary electronics company could make speakers that match or exceed the performance of their electronics? I must have missed that memo. The L-7 paints a vivid picture of what speakers at this price point are capable of in terms of dynamic performance, musicality, and the ability to involve it's listeners in the musical event. Not only that, but the L-7s are extremely well made and beautiful to look at. They should have a high WAF (wife acceptance factor). [Michael Wright]

King Sound King ESL (Around \$7,000/pair)

The King ESLs are, for me, the hi-end speaker discovery of the year. The Kings have everything that is great about electrostatic loudspeakers – a window on the sound, with outstanding transparency and none of the limitations of box speakers – as close as you can get to, "you are there" sound. What about the down side of ESLs you ask? You won't find it here – the Kings have unbelievable bass and dynamics. Suitably placed in a room large enough to accommodate them, you will experience a wide, deep soundstage without beaming – no need to find the one and only "sweet spot" where they sound the best. These speakers are not limited to small jazz groups or classical chamber works. They will make the most of large orchestral works, opera, rock music or anything you want to throw at them. Couple them with the Marantz MA-9S2 Reference Monaural Power Amplifiers and you have a system made in heaven. King Sound does not yet have an American distributor so good luck seeking them out. Their price? Probably around \$7,000 a pair (and a steal at that price). [Lew Lanese]



Nomad Audio Ronin Loudspeakers (starting at \$4,500/pair)



These are wonderful sounding speakers that compete favorably with speakers costing several thousands more. The Ronins have a wide and deep stage, a lifelike midrange that renders performers with presence, and possess deep, controlled bass. Fit and finish are above average for a speaker at this price point. Most of all, the folks at Nomad Audio know how music should sound and make it affordable. This is reflected wonderfully in their Ronin speakers. [Michael Wright]



Polestar Danavox Vanguard F1 loudspeaker

(\$1000) As the late, great Sam Cooke song suggested, "It's been a long time coming, but a change's gonna come." American high-end audio's motto of "price depicts performance", has finally received a strong voice of opposition which has resulted in a domino-effect: manufacturers like Melody, Shanling, Xindak, Opera Audio, Eastern Electric and Vincent have helped remove the cheap "Chinese-made" stigma. This raised their respectability despite their affordability thus, allowing other non-U.S. manufacturers to follow suit, namely, the Polestar loudspeaker.



Making products like the Polestar F1, with their real-wood veneer and custom built drivers will prove nearly impossible for manufacturers outside of Asia to match. This is another Taiwan based high-end loudspeaker manufacturer that boasts superbly built loudspeakers at unbelievable prices. But it's the floor-standing Polestar's sonic ease and superb low-end definition (if a hair too plump) that surprises everyone who listens to it. In fact, I think it could redefine the price-performance criterion for competing floor-standing loudspeakers under a grand—if they have any.

Editor's Choice! Penaudio Serenade (\$9,000/pr)



Tall, sleek, and sexy. That's typically how I describe myself, but this time I'm talking about the Penaudio Serenade. It combines a 1" tweeter and 4.5" midrange with a side firing 8.5" aluminum bass driver for a shockingly huge and immensely musical sound from a speaker with a fairly small footprint (6"w x 11"d). The result is a speaker that flat out disappears in your room. Its great looks will add to any music or living room. [Dave Thomas]



Selah Audio XT8 (\$8,000)



This 95 dB efficient line-source is a real beauty. The XT8 is constructed with eight Fountek ribbons and eight Vifa mid/bass drivers rendering a warm yet realistic sonic landscape. Casual and die-hard music lovers with a taste for macro and micro detail in recordings will appreciate the strengths of the XT8. [Dennis Parham]



Sun Union Dragon Prince Loudspeaker



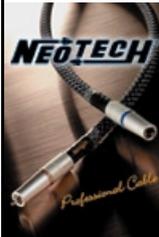
(\$28,000) Often, I wondered what a loudspeaker like this would cost if built around the dollar or Euro, which continues to climb. A remarkable musical transducer manufactured in China to standards that would make anyone envious. Employing the unusually rare Alain Benard French ribbon tweeter, this beautifully sculpted 3-way design placed me under its sonic spell at the '05 Munich High End show. Finally, after almost two years of further refinements, a beautiful review sample arrived and indeed sounds better than the original.

Sunny Cable Technology - H2W10 speaker (\$8,800.00)

Debating at the 2007 CES, the H2W10 took home theater to such a level that, if I had these speakers, going to the movies would be my second option because watching a DVD at home would be my first.

This 2-way (10" horn and 10" woofer), 91db efficient speaker design is physically and sonically beautiful with its specially prepared black lacquer finish and time accurate music presentation. I have

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yet to hear a speaker in this price range perform so well that you forget about cost and looks and just listen to quality music. This speaker has the uncanny ability to let you wonder if your listening position at home would be the same as a seat close to the stage at the live event. I like to call such an experience "Where fantasy becomes reality".
[Dennis Parham]



Sunny Cable Technology Loudspeaker (\$88,000): With proportions nearing that of a telephone booth, these immensely impractical transducers had Clement Perry trembling with delight and had me trying to figure out a way to smuggle \$80K out of my bank account and slipping these meat lockers into my living room. "Uh, what new speakers dear?" [Greg Petan]



The Stereo Times
Publisher's choice 2007

Sunny Cable Majestic Loudspeaker (\$60,000) This somewhat scaled down version of the larger Majestics, that I picked "Best Sound at Show" at this past CES, has me loaded with anticipation. Employing the exact same horn used in the larger Majestic but a smaller 15-inch woofer and slightly leaner cabinet is the only thing that separates these 500 lbs. (per side) behemoths from their even larger sibling. Stay tuned. [Clement Perry]

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Sunny Cable SW18 Subwoofer (\$8,000 each) Another interesting design from the mind of Sunny Lo. Sporting proprietary woofer technologies, Lo claims the 18-inch drivers in his SW18 are as fast as your standard 8-inch woofers. In addition, Lo used the old reliable "size equals scale" philosophy over small, oddly shaped enclosures boasting out-of-this-world technical claims. Sonically, the SW18s thoroughly outperformed my Talon Thunderbirds in every sonic parameter you can think of except real estate. These babies take up a lot of room.

The first question everyone asks that sees these monsters is, "How did you get them up the stairs?" I just smile and say, "I used a new Jiggetts machine." referring to my good friend Bill Jiggetts who's been a blessing because he's always ready, willing and able to help me get those oversized components up to my listening room. His only request is to try out whatever new piece of equipment I've got lying about. Heck, I might as well name my new break-in device "the Jiggetts."



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