

the absolute sound[®]

2006 Editors' Choice Awards

integrated amplifiers

Under €1000

Cambridge Azur 540A v2

€ 459,00

cambridgeaudio.com - dimex.nl

The Azur 540A is quite an overachiever, delivering ultra-smooth and almost tube-like liquidity from a budget solid-state integrated amplifier. The amplifier sounds more powerful than its 60Wpc rating, and a host of clever protection circuitry prevents amplifier or speaker damage. Nice build-quality, lots of features, and an outstanding remote control round out this tremendous bargain.

Reviewed by RH, Issue 162



CD players

Under €1000

Cambridge 540C v2

€ 459,00

cambridgeaudio.com - dimex.nl

The 540C CD player sounds far more sophisticated and refined than any €459 machine has a right to. The midrange is relatively grain-free, and the treble lacks the metallic sheen often heard in entry-level products. The player is beautifully built and packed with high-end parts and design techniques, including a beefy custom-made transport mechanism, generous power supply, and the same 96kHz/24-bit Wolfson DACs found in \$3000 machines.

Reviewed by RH, Issue 162



tuners

Magnum Dynalab MD106T

€ 5195,00

magnumdynalab.com - dimex.nl

A high-end system isn't fully dressed without a great FM tuner, and this all-analog triode design emphatically makes that case. Its quiet, black backgrounds, and sparkling, airy treble easily exceed Magnum's own budget-conscious winner, the MD-90. Terrific sensitivity and selectivity give the MD106T exceptional focus and soundstaging. A tactile pleasure to operate, the green tuning-eye tube makes fine-tuning almost as much fun as a vintage Marantz or Sequerra tuner.

Reviewed by NG, Issue 152



Loudspeakers

€1000 -€1500

Spendor S3/5 and S3/5SE

€1070 and €1310 pair

spendoraudio.com - dimex.nl

The S3/5 two-way mini-monitor is Lilliputian in size, so it has real dynamic and bass limitations, though lacks neither warmth nor richness. Blessed with exceptional tonal neutrality, openness, transparency, and imaging, it is like a Quad 63/988 in a shoebox-sized enclosure. At just 84dB sensitivity, it needs at least 25 watts of quality power, and stand-mounting is preferable. The SE version trades the neutral midrange of the standard S3/5 for a slight upper-mid forwardness and improved transparency, resolution, and dynamic range.

Reviewed by Paul Seydor, Issues 119 and 133

€3000 -€5000

Spendor S8e ▶

€2990 pair

spendoraudio.com - dimex.nl

Though neither the largest nor most expensive model in Spendor's S Series, the S8e just might be the range's best-sounding model. An heir to some of the great BBC monitor speakers of the past, the S8e offers glorious midrange and treble response, wide, deep soundstaging with excellent image height, plus "clean, clear, dramatic bass, even low bass." But the S8e's most compelling characteristic is perhaps the elusive and profoundly satisfying quality of musical "completeness."

Reviewed by SR, Issue 155

