

2022 ANNUAL EDITION

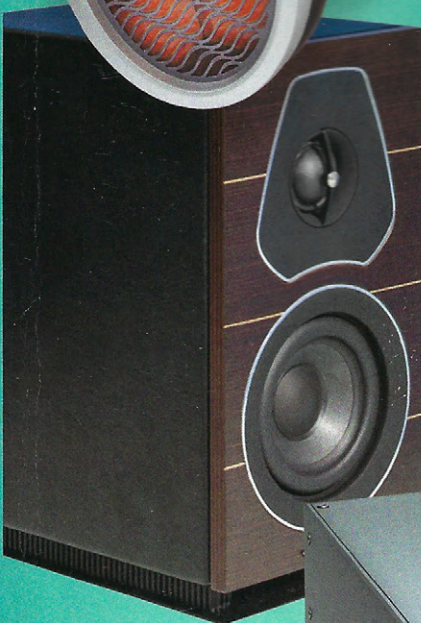
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2022 HIGH-END AUDIO BUYER'S GUIDE



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DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 31, 2022

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\$8.99US/\$10.99CAN

**NAD C658****\$1649**

NAD's C658 offers a wide range of features and functions in an affordable and good-sounding package. This streaming DAC, operated via the BluOS app or remote control, has a phono stage, analog inputs, subwoofer outputs with configurable crossover, full analog and digital preamplifier functions, and Dirac Live DSP room correction. This last feature has the ability to greatly improve the sound, particularly in problematic listening rooms. The C658's sound is excellent, with tuneful bass and a spacious soundstage. (313)

**NuPrime DAC-10H****\$1995**

Although the DAC-10H is only 8" wide by 2.4" high by 14" deep, which corresponds to roughly half the width of a "full-sized" component, it packs a lot of features and performance into a small package. The digital section is built around the ESS Sabre Reference ES9018 32-bit DAC. According to NuPrime this chip can deliver 135dB signal-to-noise with -120dB total harmonic distortion levels. The DAC-10H has borrowed the stepped, thin-film, switched-resistor ladder network for controlling volume from the NuForce P-20 preamplifier. This method uses a MUSES chip combined with a proprietary look-up table to ensure that only a single resistor is in the signal path at any volume setting. Inner detail and low-level resolution through the DAC-10 are as good as SS has heard through any DAC, including the Antelope Audio Platinum DSD DAC. The differences in depth recreation and soundstaging precision between his original 128x DSD recordings and 44.1k down-sampled versions were immediately obvious when comparing them through the DAC-10H. (255)

**Gold Note DS-10 Plus****\$3695 (PSU-10 adds \$1299)**

The Gold Note DS-10 Plus DAC/preamp with /PSU-10 power supply is capable of producing reference-level sonics and has a feature set that includes all the essentials, including Ethernet and Wi-Fi, a true all-analog signal chain, and 192 different filter settings. If you bypass all the offered flavorings, the DS-10 Plus sound is neutral, which is a good place to start, especially if you plan to alter the sound in some way. When you factor in a dedicated remote and headphone capabilities as well as Roon and MQA compatibility, you have a component that does everything that a current-generation DAC/preamplifier needs to do, and it does it well. (319)

DiDit High-End 212se**\$4000**

Built around ESS Technology's Sabre ES9018 sigma-delta 32-bit DAC, the 212se actually succeeds in sounding eminently musical and more relaxed than its competition. It shines in tonal conviction, deep bass solidity, and textural sweetness, while transient response, both at the point of attack and during reverberant decay, is enhanced by an exceedingly low noise floor. However, its most remarkable sonic attribute is spatial resolution. It delivers precise image focus and refined layering of the depth perspective. There are two operational modes: DAC and preamp. The DAC setting bypasses the volume control and emulates a regular DAC. The 212se circuitry is fully differential from input to output and only XLR output connectors are provided, which means that those of us with single-ended amplifiers or preamps will need to use XLR-to-RCA adapters. All of the unit controls are accessible via a cigar-shaped remote control. (283)

