


Best

DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER

**Logitech Squeezebox Duet**

This category is filling up fast, with exceptional products like the DS series from Linn, Wadia's iTransport (see below) and Logitech's own Transporter. But the standout product is the Squeezebox Duet from Logitech, which has the best overall package of flexibility, user friendliness, great sound and accessible pricing. Gary Pearce said: "My pick for the best of 2008 thus far, the Squeezebox Duet is an amazingly good piece of kit at a very reasonable price. Make room in the basement for your CDs!" Number one with a bullet on his Xmas shopping list. Reviewed in *Tone* 74, page 68.

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CD PLAYER

**Yamaha CD-S1000**

We're predicating the death of CD as digital streaming players and high-res downloads start their march to dominance. But don't worry, it's not going to happen for a while and as long as there are players like the CD-S1000 SACD player, there's reason to be cheerful. It's beautifully built like nothing else at the price and sounds fine enough that Editor Gary Steel couldn't bear to part with it. "In short, I'm sold," were his succinct thoughts on the subject. Reviewed in *Tone* 73, page 58.


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HI-FI AMPLIFIER

**Yamaha A-S1000 Integrated Amplifier**

The other part of Gary Steel's favourite toothsome twosome, the A-S1000 amp has taken up residence in his home system and it's not going back to the importer. The build quality is awesome, the styling is retro fantastique, the feature set is comprehensive and he's quite convinced of the audio quality of the combination: "Simply astounding, this dynamic and involving mid-price Yamaha pair gave me the sort of sonic jollies I haven't heard from gear five times the price." A dyed-in-the-wool hi-fi bargain. Reviewed in *Tone* 73, page 58.

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DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER - HONOURABLE MENTION

**Wadia 170 iTransport**

The first product to take full advantage of the iPod's potential as a pure digital source, the iTransport turns the little gadget into an audiophile playback device that rivals high-end CD players. This is Wadia quality at a silly price; get in before they realise how much it *should* cost. Reviewed in *Tone* 73, page 62.

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HI-FI AMPLIFIER - HONOURABLE MENTIONS

**Audiolab 8000M Monoblock Power Amplifiers**

These nicely priced monos perform like they're on steroids and got Gary Pearce gushing: "To say that I'm impressed with Audiolab's premier electronics is a bit of an understatement." Reviewed in *Tone* 73, page 54.

Naim Nait 5i Integrated Amplifier

Huzzah, 'tis the best of British! The newest incarnation of Naim's entry-level integrated offers an extraordinarily musical and tempting sound, along with great looks and the prestige of owning a Naim. Hard to forget once you've heard it. Reviewed in *Tone* 73, page 56.

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LUXURY/HIGH END

**Linn Klimax Components**

We've seen a wealth of splendid high-end kit this year, from super yachts to super homes to super audio visual equipment, but Linn's Klimax range of high-end hi-fi components combines all the best upmarket virtues of effortless world-class performance, distinctive design, ease of use, immaculate build quality, superb service from the local agents and an all-encompassing warm pride of ownership. Yes, the price tags are lofty, but at this level that's part of the appeal – you simply don't get a Rolls-Royce for Mini money. Reviewed in *Tone* 67, page 37.

LINN KLIMAX LOUDSPEAKERS

It was hard to ignore the beautiful Klimax floorstanders lurking in one of Linn NZ's listening rooms, and I wouldn't leave without a quick listen to these high-end (\$75,000) statements. With the top-of-the-range Klimax DS as the source (\$29,995) and a Klimax Kontrol preamp (\$21,995) feeding the 1750 watts of active amplification built into each gorgeous speaker, the results were awesome.

The lovely Shelby Lynne's equally lovely voice on her *Just a Little Lovin'* album purred into the room sounding very little like hi-fi and a lot like heaven. The stunning presentation left all five of the listeners lost for words. If I've heard levels of detail, micro-dynamics, space, a sense of ease and a practically perfect balance quite like this before, I simply don't remember it. This delicious experience absolutely has to be repeated and we'll be back for a much longer listen in the near future. And for any musically orientated CEOs or lottery winners reading this, a listening session should be a priority.

