

CH Precision A1**\$37,475 each (depending on configuration)**

CH Precision, a relatively new but highly pedigreed Swiss manufacturer, has taken the groundbreaking design of its Goldmund ancestors—ultra-fast circuitry, mechanical grounding—and modernized it. The results adhere to the CH gestalt of linearity—in the frequency, time, and dynamic domains—and musicality in equal parts. The result is accuracy in the service of music, with plume-like orchestral colors, visceral transients, locked-down rhythms, and dynamics that range from subtle to epic. The amp makes it child's play to follow musical lines and instrumental interplay. All this makes for a captivating listening experience that few other amps in AT's experience can approach. The A1 is also one of the world's most configurable and adjustable amps (you can optimize it to your speaker's damping characteristics by setting the ratio between local and global feedback). It's worth noting that a single A1 can be configured for stereo operation, delivering 95% of its monoblock performance. ch-precision.com (239)

Absolare Passion 845**\$37,500/pr.**

These gorgeous, leather-clad single-ended-triode monoblocks deliver the glories of SET circuits in a cost-no-object implementation—gorgeous timbre, a smooth and relaxed treble, tremendous soundstage depth and dimensionality—but do so with enough power to drive real-world loudspeakers to satisfying playback levels. Their 52 watts, coupled with genre-defying bass extension and dynamic impact, deliver qualities that fly in the face of conventional wisdom about SETs. But the Absolare's real magic is in the sense of immediacy—that impression of hearing contemporaneous music-making unencumbered by the electro-mechanical contrivance of the playback system. The result is a deep immersion in the musical expression. absolare.com (234)

Ayon Vulcan II**\$40,000/pr.**

The Vulcan II is Austrian electronics manufacturer Ayon's cost-no-object, 55Wpc, all-tube, pure Class A, parallel SET, monoblock power amplifier. Combining the speed and verisimilitude of solid-state with the “you are there” holographic midrange of single-ended triodes (plus bandwidth extension, lighting-fast snap, and zero upper-frequency roll-off), the Vulcan II, said reviewer PB, “has the knack of presenting an extraordinary amount of detail without any edginess or sharpness,” making it a potential new reference for many music-loving audiophiles. ayonaudiouisa.com (211)

D'Agostino Master Audio Systems Momentum**\$50,000/pr.**

If anyone ever had doubts that Dan D'Agostino was one of the top designers in the high end, the D'Agostino Momentum monoblocks dispels them. D'Agostino is still at the cutting edge of audio design, and his skills have allowed his new company to manufacture products that are major advances in sound quality over what he built at Krell. A compact amp of almost Baroque beauty, the Momentum is capable of delivering 300 watts of power into 8 ohms, 600 watts into 4 ohms, and 1200 watts into 2 ohms. High power, however, does not mean the loss of even the subtlest detail. The Momentum has exceptional deep bass and is as musically realistic in the midrange as the recording permits, with an open and upper midrange to match, and an extended treble without any edge. Soundstage quality will be as excellent in size, depth, and width as your room, the rest of your system, and the recording permit. dagostinoinc.com (239)

Soulution 501**\$55,500/pr.**

Though these monoblocks from Switzerland are “limited” to 120W into 8 ohms (240W into 4, 480W into 2) don't let the specs fool you. Thanks to their new switching power supplies, these ultra-high-bandwidth Class AB solid-state amps are capable of delivering better than 75 volts and 45 amps into any load at a damping factor of over 10,000, giving them absolutely killer grip, extension, and clout in the bass—and everywhere else. Add to this a welcome newfound density of color in the midrange and an exceptionally sweet (albeit beguilingly soft) treble, and you get what were probably the most lifelike all-solid-state amplifiers JV had heard in his home until the arrival of the Soulution 711 stereo amp. When it comes to dynamics and ultimate SPLs, the 501s' seemingly inexhaustible delivery of power from top to bottom makes speakers, even difficult-to-drive ones like the Raidho C 4.1s, sound as if they were plugged directly into the wall. Simply and unflinchingly thrilling to listen to. axissaudio.com (236)

Soulution 711**\$65,000**

Soulution's new 711 is the best solid-state amplifier JV has had in his home. Like the 520 monoblocks this massive stereo amplifier is capable of virtually unlimited current and amperage regardless of load. Dark and rich in tone color, blessed with tube-like dimensionality and bloom, sweet and subtle in the treble, standard-settingly powerful and well-defined in the bass, ultra-fast on transients, superb at resolving inner detail, with a soundstage the size of the Ritz, the 711 hasn't any obvious weaknesses. Other solid-state amplifiers will give you different sonic emphases—the Constellation electronics, for example, are a tad higher in resolution and just as fast—and tubes and tube-hybrids (such as Siltech's SAGA System) obviously have their own charms, but in overall presentation JV hasn't heard a transistor amp that is more powerful, beautiful, and realistic than this beastie boy from Zurich. JV's solid-state reference. axissaudio.com (Review forthcoming)

Siltech V1/P1**\$75,000**

Though the Siltech battery-charged, tube-powered V1 voltage-stage amplifier and its companion P1 Class A solid-state 380Wpc current-stage stereo amplifier must not only be used together, but ideally should also be paired with Siltech's battery-charged, tube-powered companion preamp, the C1 control unit (another \$37,500), to complete the package, we have no Buyer's Guide category for a three-unit preamp/power amp combo—and even if we did, the SAGA System would be the only entry, since there really is nothing else like it. Though other manufacturers have offered battery-powered pre's and two-stage amps before, no one that JV knows of has put something like the entire SAGA System on the market. When you throw in the P1's Apollo Light Drive (a photoelectric device that biases the output transistors in “floating” Class A), you get an amp that is said to be capable of 145dB dynamic range. The SAGA's unique combination of very low noise, very high speed, and simply gorgeous (and exceedingly lifelike) tone color makes it extraordinary enough to become JV's new tube (er, tube-hybrid) reference. siltechcables.com (239)