

Sooloos music server system

With four first-place votes and 16 votes overall, the Sooloos music server takes this year's ultimate prize.

Web Monkey Jon Iverson—who has been calling for intuitive, user-friendly, computer-based systems for over a decade—shocked no one when he dove so eagerly into the deep possibilities of the Sooloos system. It was just what he'd ordered. "This was clearly no me-too product," he said, "but a complete reinvention of how we relate to music."

But . . . *Michael Fremer*? Yes, even Mikey, our sober-minded analog guru, was held captive by the Sooloos. In fact, he bought one. With it, MF can

finally get rid of all those annoying CDs, and convert his vinyl to digital for easy access via the Sooloos's touchscreen. When you consider that the Sooloos system does a better job of communicating the addictive, visceral pleasure of a music collection better than anything this side of a 12" black disc, it sort of makes sense after all.



2008 RUNNERS-UP

(in alphabetical order)

Conrad-Johnson ACT2 Series 2 preamplifier
Continuum Audio Labs Criterion turntable & Copperhead tonearm
Hansen Prince V2 loudspeaker
KEF Reference 207/2 loudspeaker
Linn Klimax DS network D/A processor
Magico V3 loudspeaker
Parasound Halo JC 2 preamplifier
PSB Synchrony One loudspeaker
Revel Ultima Salon2 loudspeaker
VTL MB-450 Series II Signature monoblock power amplifier

Left: Sooloos music server system

Traditionally, as *Stereophile's* long-time Editor, I have reserved this section to myself. But it seemed more democratic in this election year to allow all of the magazine's review team the opportunity to be involved. I asked each to name the component that had provided him with the most musical pleasure this past year, and to sum up in a single sentence the reasons why.—**John Atkinson**

John Atkinson: Revel Ultima Salon2 loudspeaker (\$22,000/pair; Vol.31 No.6, June 2008). "If it hadn't been for the Revel, the big KEF 207/2 would have got the nod this year. But I was won over by the Salon2's combination of superb speaker engineering, top-to-bottom balance and sonic coherence, and apparently unlimited dynamic range, with nary a trace of compression or distortion."

Brian Damkroger: Placette Active Line Stage (\$6995; Vol.30 No.11, November 2007): "The Placette is full-functioned, simple to use, and closer to perfectly transparent than any other preamp I've heard."

Robert Deutsch: KEF Reference 207/2 loudspeaker (\$20,000/pair; Vol.31 No.2, February 2008). "A great-sounding speaker that also measures well!"

Art Dudley: Schopper mods for Thorens TD-124 (Vol.31 No.5, May 2008). "When I look at the 1960s-vintage Thorens TD-124, I say, 'That is what good engineering looks like.' The full brace of Schopper refinements created a record player that could compete with virtually anything I've heard in

terms of treble openness and clarity, midrange detail, and—especially—bass extension."

Michael Fremer: Sooloos Music Server (\$7900–\$10,500; Vol.31 No.9, September 2008). "Easy ripping, instant access, iPodTouch remote controllability, great graphics, auto-downloaded credits from AMG, ingenious interface, sound that's as good as if not better than direct CD playback, and, best of all, it clears the shelves to make room for more vinyl."

Larry Greenhill: Revel Ultima Salon2 loudspeaker (\$22,000/pair; Vol.31 No.6, June 2008). "My new reference standard in floorstanding loudspeakers for its ability to combine neutrality, top-to-bottom coherence, resolution of detail, dynamics, transparency, and a bass response that is pitch-perfect, powerful, and extended."

Jon Iverson: Sooloos Music Server (\$7900–\$10,500; Vol.31 No.9, September 2008). "A bitchin' software/hardware interface that makes it a piece of cake to manage thousands of albums of music. A well-thought-out, top-to-bottom music-server system that focuses on the music and sound and hides all the tweaking, importing, and backup issues behind a simple yet powerful approach."

Fred Kaplan: Krell Evolution 505 SACD player (\$10,000; Vol.31 No.9, September 2008). "Through its CAST outputs, the Krell Evolution 505 is the best CD player I've ever heard in my house—maybe the best I've ever heard, period. I found its sound jaw-droppingly superb."

John Marks: Grace m902 D/A preamp/headphone amplifier (\$1695; Vol.31 No.10, October

2008). "Rich-sounding, versatile, easy to operate, beautiful to look at, and built like the pro gear it is. Bravi, bravi, bravi."

Stephen Mejias: Rega P3-24 turntable (\$895–\$1295; Vol.31 No.7, July 2008). "Ever since this damn turntable came into my life, I haven't been able to stop buying records. Dammit!"

Wes Phillips: AKG K 701 headphones (\$539; Vol.30 No.12, Vol.31 Nos.6 & 9, December 2007, June & September 2008). "Every time I think I have discovered how good these headphones are, I discover that they're even better than I thought—for example, hearing them through a single-ended balanced headphone amp recently showed me that, previously, I had only reached the limits of its ancillary components. If literature is news that stays new, surely a high-end classic is one that makes *everything* sound new."

Robert J. Reina: Audio Valve Eclipse line preamplifier (\$4799; Vol.31 No.6, June 2008). "A neutral, detailed, liquid, and dynamic performer with solid-state-like, kick-slam bass whose performance rivals that of competitors triple its price."

Kalman Rubinson: Oppo DV-980H universal player (\$169) & Integra DTC-9.8 A/V receiver (\$1600), in combination (Vol.31 No.1, January 2008). "Two bargain-basement products combine to offer outstanding multichannel performance from SACD/DVD-A, along with Audyssey room equalization."

Sam Tellig: Harbeth Compact 7 ES3 loudspeaker (\$3495/pair; Vol.31 No.6, June 2008). "Combines the (almost) full-range sound of a large monitor with the imaging of a small one, and that classic BBC sound that *never* goes over the top." ■