

# Purist's Ingredients Make for an Audio Feast

## A HORNICOPIA OF LISTENING PLEASURE

A great audio system is prepared like a great meal: complementary ingredients enhance one another to create a synergistic taste—or musical—experience. Listeners hungry for the sound of real instruments and voices can delight in this system, which is guaranteed to satisfy the most discriminating audio palate.

For an appetizer, we begin with vinyl, or rather, the means by which to spin it: the Nottingham Hyperspace turntable. These British-made turntables have achieved cult status among purist audiophiles. The Hyperspace is the culmination of Nottingham designer Tom Fletcher's decades of turntable design efforts. It is an exercise in intelligent engineering with tremendous attention to detail and craftsmanship. Looking like NASA-commissioned equipment, the slightly Darth Vaderesque design lets you know that this turntable means business. The music it renders is vivid



and dimensional, emanating from the blackest background.

Mounted to the Hyperspace turntable is the RS-A1 Tonearm from Japan. It is a quirky-looking—yet ingenious—unipivot design. Its unique feature is the headshell, an independent, rotating design that reduces tracing error and alleviates unwanted forces on the cartridge cantilever imposed by the record groove's opposing side walls, which vary in thickness. The sound is fast, clean, and extremely resolved, presenting a soundstage with great depth and correct scale.

Mounted to the tonearm is the ZYX R. 1000 Airy-S Moving-Coil Cartridge, the ultimate expression of current phono cartridge technology. A sophisticated generating system is employed in this design, which is cryogenically treated before the boron cantilever and custom solid-diamond stylus assembly are attached. ZYX construction techniques are beyond meticulous. This supremely

*The Hyperspace turntable (above) makes a serious commitment to vinyl. Emotive Audio is all about tubes; the Sira-LE preamplifier (below) boasts silkien controls and sound.*

*The Coeli-LE amplifier (opposite) features the king of tubes—Western Electric's 300B.*







Maya's horn-o-plenty makes exquisite sound with effortless efficiency.

musical component is the *grand cru* of cartridges.

With the musical signal lusciously served, the listener can indulge in the amplification entrée from Emotive Audio. The Emotive Audio Sira-LE Preamplifier and Caeli-LE Mono Power Amplifiers are among a small handful of the finest-sounding amplifiers on the planet. In the words of Emotive's creators Fred and Carl Volz: "A good stereo system should do more than just play music; it should transport you to the musical event." Their designs accomplish this brilliantly.

The all-vacuum tube Sira-LE Preamplifier is a purist's pleasure. Like all Emotive Audio components, it is hand-assembled and exudes quality with superb build and parts. Emotive Audio has achieved

the daunting task of designing a circuit that provides an optimum operating environment for the amplification stage tubes. The signal from this 18-tube preamp is transparent and effortless. Simply put, much more of the music passes through the Sira-LE.

Producing 10 glorious watts of power, the Caeli-LE Mono Power Amplifiers are a single-ended triode design using the Western Electric 300B output tube. The unusually stout power supply of the Caeli-LE employs three separate power transformers and filter chokes, and ultrahigh-quality capacitors and resistors, making the sound of the Caeli-LE amps tremendously robust. Voices or instruments like the saxophone are organic and eerily real. The most desirable sonic attributes are present in spades: dynamics, warmth, resolution, speed, openness, and well-defined space around each individual instrument. Perhaps most notably, music is presented with remarkable balance, producing a sound that is almost impossible to fault.

Any preamplifier or pair of mono amplifiers priced in the upper stratosphere had better look the part, and the appearance of the Emotive Audio gear is tasteful but dazzling. Framed in gorgeous granadilla wood, the nickel-plated chassis are artfully etched with intricate geometric patterns by Evy Rogers of Jacob-Rogers art furniture. Each chassis is unique and signed by the artist. This trio of components makes a visual statement as mouthwatering as its sound.

Dessert is in the dynamics, served up by the Maya Horn speaker. The more efficient a speaker, the wider its dynamic range. A wide dynamic range allows for the reproduction of an orchestral crescendo with all of its explosive energy, while maintaining the subtle inner detail of the softest passages. Nothing in music can accelerate the heart rate like realistic dynamics, and horn loudspeakers are unsurpassed at accomplishing the task. The first sight of the Maya Horn with its future/past styling is likely to raise the eyebrows of listeners new to the breed. The two-way speaker sports an impressive 30.7-inch diameter front horn, which employs the legendary Lowther full-range driver for the mid and high frequencies. This huge front

horn rests on a handsomely veneered wooden bass horn cabinet, which is loaded with an 18-inch McCauley woofer. The crossover-less design offers seamless frequency response and a mid-range with goose bump-raising immediacy. The Maya floats music into the listening space with holographic dimensionality, and with 106dB efficiency, the Maya can almost peel the paint off the walls with only a couple of watts of power. Like Emotive Audio electronics, it benefits from amplification of great purity and relatively modest power.

Descriptions of high-end audio are often humorously close to those of food, but with this audio purist's system, gustatory analogies are appropriate. The utterly lifelike musicality of these components is, in a word, delicious. Pull up a chair, tuck in your napkin, and enjoy the feast.

—JAY FISHER

All components for this audio feast are available through Foss Audio, 416.465.7649, [www.fossaudio.com](http://www.fossaudio.com)

Nottingham Hyperspace Turntable, \$4,299, [www.alpocorp.com/nottingham/](http://www.alpocorp.com/nottingham/)

RS-A1 Tonarm, \$980, [www.sabintsystems.com](http://www.sabintsystems.com)

ZYX R 1000 Airy-S Moving-Coil Cartridge, \$2,895,

[www.audioc.com/zyx.html](http://www.audioc.com/zyx.html)

Emotive Sira-LE Preamplifier, \$9,995; Emotive Caeli-LE Mono

Amplifiers, \$20,995/pair, [www.emotiveaudio.com](http://www.emotiveaudio.com)

Maya Horn Loudspeaker, \$16,000/pair, [www.moondogaudio.com](http://www.moondogaudio.com)