

**GREG
WEAVER**



Linn Selekt DSM Network Server

\$8755 as reviewed

Linn's complete reforming of its Network Music Player platform, introduced to the world last September as the Selekt DSM, brings a new level of convenience, functionality, and especially performance to the "lifestyle" category of product that Linn created. Combining a simple and marvelous user experience with a clean, incisive, and accurate sonic envelope, the Selekt DSM won me over in short order. The combination of its distinctly accurate and articulate sound, when taken to the next level by the application of Room Optimization (Linn's native room-correction technology), easily lifts this new, modular solution to the top of the list of a growing number of similarly priced products from competitors with names like Aurender, Cary, Esoteric, and most notably Naim. (Review pending)



Von Schweikert Audio VR-55 Aktive Loudspeaker

\$60,000

As my reference loudspeakers now going into their fifth year, the VR-55 Aktives continually impress me with their extraordinary resolution, transparency, and accuracy. With every component change, they reveal that they are even more accurate and refined than I had initially reported. While auditioning the new Audionet flagship Stern lineage and Heisenberg monoblocks, and the Valve Amplification Company's (VAC's) astounding new Statement 450i iQ integrated (full reviews forthcoming), the VSA VR-55 Aktives effortlessly revealed the enhanced transparency, resolution, neutrality, and naturalness those incomparable devices allowed them to express. VSA took advantage of lessons learned building their Ultra series products, including the one-off \$750,000 VR-111XS. Using VSA's proprietary Triple-Wall Laminate Construction in a compact, substantial, and striking-looking package, custom-built Accuton ceramic-on-Nomex honeycomb drivers (two 8.5" woofers, and one 6.5" midrange), a specially treated ScanSpeak 1" beryllium dome, and a RAAL designed 3" aluminum-foil ribbon tweeter (rear-mounted for ambience), and employing a dedicated 525W Class D amp to drive the twin custom woofers, the VR-55 Aktive makes a clear statement. The resultant resolution, transparency, and transient capability, along with the subsequent unmasking of extremely fine transient detail and subtleties of instrumental tone color and texture, set a new benchmark in loudspeaker performance in the below-\$100,000 price range. Factor in their remarkable soundfield adjustability, allowing them to play chameleon and seamlessly integrate into virtually any space, and the VR-55 Aktives have to be seen as one of the best values in high-end loudspeakers on the market today. (256)



Kronos Sparta Turntable/Helena Tonearm

\$21,500/\$6,500

Louis Desjardins' Kronos turntables employ a singular approach to managing vibration-inducing torque forces by employing two sets of identical platters, motors, bearings, and plinths in an inspired configuration. With one platter system mounted immediately above the other, both rotating at precisely matched speeds in opposite directions, the typical torsional forces that a single platter turntable must store (at a much more highly energized state) in its suspension are effectively eliminated. Combine this enlightened and creative drive/suspension system with the double-wall, carbon-fiber-composite, proprietary ball-and-spherical-mirror, uni-pivot Helena tonearm, and you have a system that is capable of recreating inner detail, fine resolution, timbre, staging, and imaging cues in a manner far beyond the capability of any other 'tables I've heard at anything like its price, and considerably beyond. I've used cartridges from Etsuro Urushi, Air Tight, Transfiguration, Clearaudio, Denon, and Sumiko over the four-plus years that it has been my reference, and I can say that I have not experienced an LP playback system that more clearly reveals cartridge differences or showcases their strengths. This 'table//arm combo maintains my highest recommendation and arguably represents the best value in high-performance analog playback available today. (259) **tas**