

STEREOPHILE RECOMMENDED COMPONENTS 2021



We are honored that the following four MBL products are on Stereophile's 2021 Recommended Components list. Many thanks to Stereophile for the recognition.





Radialstrahler 101 E MKII: Class A (Full-Range)

The MBL 101 E MKII Radialstrahler loudspeaker has been evolving since its invention and refinement in the 1980s...

Michael Fremer, who also reviewed the original MBL 101 E, found that "The Reference 101E Mk.II is among the most revealing speakers you're likely to hear. The 101E Mk.II is remarkably flat throughout the midrange and treble...the MBLs produced as believable a rendering of the sound of a solo piano as you're likely to hear from any speaker, whether the instrument was recorded in a reverberant church (Hegedüs, Artymiw) or the drier-sounding Henry Wood Hall in South London (Lill)...The MBLs produced...convincing senses of space...and image solidity, carving out with almost alarming specificity the contours of the pianos within those spaces...The combination of MBL's 6010 D preamp and the 9011 amplifiers...driving the 101E Mk.IIs was among the most formidable-sounding audio systems ever assembled in my room."

After thorough measurements, Stereophile Editor John Atkinson concluded: "As I said of the original MBL Radialstrahler 101E, this is an intriguing design that works as advertised, providing truly omnidirectional performance at all frequencies." (Vol.35 No.4 WWW)

\$70,500 / pair



CD-DAC N31: Class A+

Designed to play “Red Book” CDs and, via its USB and other digital inputs, music files up to 24/192 and DSD64 (DoP), the Noble Line N31 is less a digital-audio Swiss Army knife than a luxuriantly attractive, 40lb monument to the idea of perfecting the playback of audiophilia’s best-loved digital formats. Built around the ESS Sabre 9018 DAC, the N13 offers a full-color 5" TFT display—the MBL player recognizes CD text and displays title information—and features an SDcard slot for firmware updates, a choice of three playback filters, and a remote handset that lights up before the person reaching for it has even touched it. Listening to CDs and even a CD-R through the N13 [N31], JA was impressed by the “sheer tangibility” of the MBL’s sound, noting that, with its Min filter engaged, the N31 “gracefully reproduced” one “overcooked” track, and that the differences among its three filters was “greater in degree than with other DACs.” Through the MBL’s USB inputs, even iPhones and iPads, their own volume controls disarmed by the MBL’s USB input, offered “excellent” sound quality. JA originally raised an eyebrow at the lack of a network port and the fact that the player’s filters can’t be selected via the remote handset, but both of these issues have been addressed in 2020 production with the optional Roon Ready Input Module. As with USB, the networked MBL rendered music with an excellent sense of overall drive and low-frequency impact, JA found, with low-level recorded detail well-resolved. JA concluded his original review by saying that digital sound “doesn’t get any better” than what he heard from the N31. He also noted that the MBL offered 21 bits of resolution—the current state of the art of digital audio. This prompted JA the measurer to agree with JA the listener: “Digital audio engineering doesn’t get any better.” Price is with factory-installed Roon Ready network module. Price without module is \$15,400. (Vol.41 No.2, Vol.43 No.12 WWW) \$15,400



Preamplifier N11: Class A

This beautiful, multiple-input, multiple-output line preamplifier can be used in its Unity Gain mode for maximum sound quality or with a higher-gain setting. JVS found that the N11 in its higher-gain mode “brought out the warm core of every note,” adding that it enabled him to hear “the subtle differences of interpretation, dynamics, and color that are the portals to the truth behind the notes.” He found that Unity Gain moved the soundstage farther back in his system with his D/A processors. While perspective was clarified, this mode made the sound less open with slightly reduced transparency and bass. Ultimately, he felt that the N11’s Unity Gain “toned down the noisy top ends of some recordings, making for easier listening.” The N11’s measurements revealed extraordinarily low noise and distortion, especially in Unity Gain mode. However, the CD input’s unbalanced impedance of 2.3k ohms will tax sources with a tubed output stage. Those can be used with the balanced inputs or the unbalanced Aux inputs, which have impedances of 10k and 47k ohms, respectively. To his surprise, JA found that inserting the N11 between his DAC and power amplifiers resulted in a more palpable presentation, with a deeper soundstage. (Vol.43 Nos.7, 11 & 12, Vol.44 No.3 WWW)

\$14,600



Mono Power Amplifier C15: Class A

Although it employs a custom-specified version of the popular Hypex class-D amplifier module, the Corona C15 monoblock, which offers 280W into 8 ohms, 520W into 4 ohms, is, according to its designer, a "Linear Analog Switching Amplifier," the overall design concept of which entails the use of a linear rather than switch-mode power supply—itsself built around a toroidal transformer with generous mu-metal shielding. (The latter is presumed to contribute to the amp's 48.5lb weight.) Indeed, in his measurements, JA confirmed that "the C15's transfer function appears to remain relatively consistent with both frequency and output current"; also unusual for a class-D amp was the C15's admirable output-impedance behavior: JA discovered that its low-pass function into loads of 4 and 2 ohms was "very similar to its 8 ohm behavior." In his listening tests, JA found that the C15's "intrinsic character was all about control, especially the tight control of low frequencies"—a quality that served well the amp's pairing with the somewhat rich-sounding woofer alignment of the Vivid Giya G3 speaker, but less so the Joseph Audio Perspective, with which the MBL sounded clean but lean. Especially when combined with the classic Rogers LS3/5a, JA observed "superb imaging definition and stability" with the good-looking MBL amps. (Vol.37 No.6 WWW)

\$20,000 / pair



This changes everything!