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the absolute sound

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The Absolute Sound's

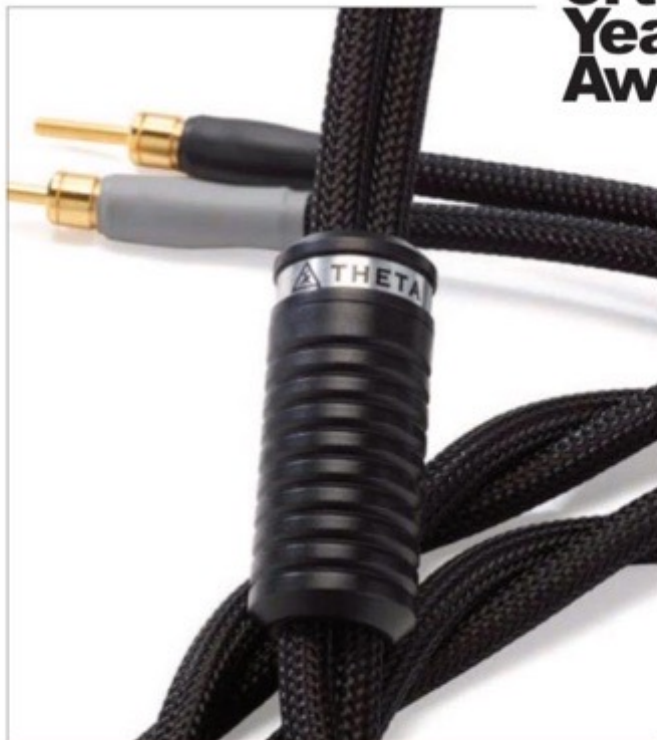
2025 Product of the Year Awards

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We choose the most impressive products of
this year in these our most prestigious awards.



Product of the Year Awards



Cable and Interconnect of the Year

Shunyata Theta

Interconnect RCA, \$1318/2m; XLR, \$1538/2m; speaker, \$1998/2.5m; power, \$998/1.75m

No mincing words here: Shunyata Theta cable is one of the, if not *the*, most consequential cable NG has ever evaluated. And compared with much of the current crop of to-infinity-and-beyond competitors, Theta is a bargain. Shunyata's Theta series features 16-gauge continuous-cast Ohno copper wire, an ultra-pure conductor known for its singular crystalline structure. They are then extruded with a fluorocarbon dielectric and custom-shielding elements using Shunyata Research's exclusive PMZ (Precision Matched Impedance) process, normally employed only on its top-tier offerings. Construction and terminations are top notch. And sonically, Shunyata brought its high-resolution A-game. Strong across the board, the Thetas offered impeccable spectral balance, nimble transients, smooth warmly lit harmonics, and treble octaves among the most revealing and natural of any NG has heard. Equally superb were dynamics on both micro and macro levels and an ineffable muscular density that seemed to ripple up from the lowest depths and gather strength as it rose through the octaves. (Reviewed this issue)



AC Power Cord of the Year

Crystal Cable 20th Anniversary Infinity

\$34,000/6-foot length

Almost all of us have heard the sonic differences that elite power cords can make. The rub, of course, is that differences are not necessarily improvements; instead, they can amount to distinctive sonic flavors. That is not the case with Edwin and Gabi Rynveld's newest offering. Their Crystal Cable Infinity power cords markedly lower background noise; increase resolution, density of tone color, and dynamic contrast; and add a more substantial third dimension to images. In a word, they are better. There is no "magic" involved in Crystal's products, Edwin is, far and away, the most scientifically grounded engineer working in the cable market. The Infinities, for example, employ coaxial conductors with a central core of pure, solid, single-crystal silver. With shields of braided silver and strands of silver-gold alloy, such a construction is said to "resist induced RF distortion and keep magnetic interference out of your system" And so it does, to an extent that has to be heard to be credited. Yes, Infinity costs a lot, and yes, it is worth every penny asked. The best power cord JV has auditioned and this year's TAS AC Power Cord of the Year. (Forthcoming)



Product of the Year Awards

Stand-Mounted Loudspeakers of the Year

MoFi SourcePoint 8

\$2750 (\$3299 w/stands)

The downsized sibling of the equally brilliant SourcePoint10, the SP8 is that rare breed of two-way compact that likes getting downright physical, relishing the challenge of reproducing music at full-throated, pulse-pounding dynamic tilt. Designed by Andrew Jones, a recent inductee into TAS's Hall of Fame, the SP8 is brimming with his signature sound. Fashioned in a retro, "big box" look evocative of mid-20th century audio, the SP8 is outfitted with a custom-tooled two-way concentric driver—a longtime staple of the Jones design philosophy. Sonically, it doesn't passively stand back or shrink from high-output demands. Built into its rich weighty midrange is a hint of a romantic streak, providing an instant likeability factor. There's nothing quirky or off-putting in its behavior, just a naturalistic allegiance to the music. Bass response is forceful, controlled, and pitched accurately, and it doesn't gum up the focus of the mids and highs. Hand in hand with its ability to focus images was the SP8's knack at reproducing a realistic soundstage. Able to match sonics with many *much* costlier compacts, it gives the lie to the idea that high performance equates with nose-bleed prices. NG called it the most satisfying compact he'd heard all year. He still does. A Golden Ear and now POY-worthy loudspeaker that's destined to stand the test of time. 346



Crystal Cable Minissimo Forte

(\$24,00; additional \$1400 for Scala "top hats")

Before one has heard it make a sound, the Minissimo Forte registers as a marvel of industrial design—an aesthetically pleasing apostrophe-shaped cabinet machined from a single block of aluminum/resin matrix, attached to an integral stand. It's a ported 2-way with Scan-Speak drivers, a 1" beryllium tweeter and a 5.5" paper-cone mid/woofer. Given their modest footprint, the Minissimos astound with their ability to fully express the dynamic life of music, a feat they accomplish even at lower playback levels. A user may experience considerably better in-room bass response than the 48Hz promised in the published specifications; you *could* add a subwoofer, but, honestly, you don't need one to achieve satisfying low-end weight and impact with most recordings. Several design features contribute to the Minissimo's success. Crystal Cable's proprietary MAD (Multiple Absorption and Dispersion) technology, in the words of CC's founder, Gabi Rijnveld, "keeps the sound lively without any resonance." Perhaps most significant is the loudspeaker's semi-active crossover. A Hypex NCore Class D amplifier, with zero gain, is inserted between the crossover and the drivers, eliminating the need for an inductor coil, which translates into improved dynamics and reduced distortion. (Yes, the Minissimos plug into the wall, but they are *not* active speakers in the traditional sense.) The optional solid aluminum "top hats" that CC calls Scalas serve to optimize the speakers' radiation pattern—they really shouldn't be considered "optional." The Minissimos may be relatively small speakers, but they are fearless, shying away from absolutely nothing, programmatically. (346)

