



2010 PRODUCTS OF THE YEAR

# AMPLIFICATION COMPONENT



## Audio Research VSi60 integrated amplifier

(\$3995; reviewed by Robert J. Reina, Vol.33 No.9 WWW)

**N**ow *this* was a surprise. Not that the Audio Research VSi60 integrated amplifier doesn't belong at the top of this list—it certainly does, and it got my vote—but you've got to admit that there are some other heavyweights in this category. We've got the jewel-like The Tube from Einstein Audio, the bespoke Fi 2b, and the extremely *pleasurable* darTZeel NHB-18NS, to name just a few. Meanwhile, at just under \$4000, the VSi60 is also one of the most *affordable* products in the running. How do you like that? I, for one, like it very much, but I'm not alone: The VSi60 received votes from seven of our writers, not only winning

this competition but pulling far ahead of the pack.

The 50Wpc Audio Research VSi60 is a beast—a *sexy* beast, a *sexy American* beast. It looks as if it will whip the living spit out of your prissy little speakers. You want this thing in your listening room. In the VSi60, a passive line stage is combined with a JFET input stage driving one 6H30 driver tube per channel. Each channel's output stage has a matched pair of Svetlana 6550C push-pull tubes with a combination of pentode operation and ARC's "partially cathode-coupled topology." (Yeah, whatever. Tubes!) And it's convenient to use: The VSi60 provides 4

## 2010 RUNNERS-UP

(in alphabetical order)

- **Aesthetix Saturn Calypso Signature preamplifier** (\$6999; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.33 No.7 WWW)
- **Balanced Audio Technology VK-55SE power amplifier** (\$5995; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.33 No.4 WWW)
- **Convergent Audio Technology SL1 Renaissance preamplifier** (\$7995; reviewed by Robert Deutsch, Vol.32 No.11 WWW)
- **Classé CT-SSP preamplifier-processor** (\$9000; reviewed by Kal Rubinson, Vol.33 No.7 WWW)
- **darTZeel NHB-18NS preamplifier** (\$29,500; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.33 Nos. 5 & 10 WWW)
- **Einstein The Tube Mk.II preamplifier** (\$18,400; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.33 No.10)
- **Fi 2b preamplifier** (\$8200 as reviewed; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.33 No.7 WWW)
- **Leben CS600 integrated amplifier** (\$5795; reviewed by John Marks, Vol.33 No.6 WWW)
- **Manley Labs Stingray iTube integrated amplifier** (\$3400; reviewed by Erick Lichte, Vol.33 No.3 WWW)
- **McIntosh MC275 power amplifier** (\$4500; reviewed by Fred Kaplan, Vol.33 No.10 WWW)
- **NAD Masters Series M2 "Direct Digital" integrated amplifier** (\$5999; reviewed by John Atkinson, Vol.33 No.3 WWW)
- **Quicksilver Silver 88 monoblock power amplifier** (\$3700/pair; reviewed by Sam Tellig, Vol.33 No.4)
- **Rogue Audio M-180 monoblock power amplifier** (\$5495/pair; reviewed by Erick Lichte, Vol.33 No.1 WWW)
- **Shindo Vosne-Romanee preamplifier** (\$17,900; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.33 No.10)

and 8 ohm output taps, as well as four pairs of voltmeter test points to ensure accurate bias.

The sound? Though it lacked the ultimate control of more powerful amplifiers, the VSi60 combined a glorious midrange with clean, detailed high frequencies and outstanding low-level dynamic articulation. "In the VSi60, Audio Research has produced an integrated amplifier of staggering quality, versatility, and value," said Bob Reina. The tube cage adds \$500, but only sissies use tube cages.