

stereophile

RECOMMENDED COMPONENTS

UNISON
RESEARCH



Unison Research Performance: \$12,000

The 40Wpc Performance is a single-ended design that uses three KT88s per side and has four line-level inputs, a tape monitor loop, and a special input for using a Unison Research Simply Phono stage. It combined a tactile soundstage with an unusually sweet midrange and treble to present a more robust, strong, and dynamic sound than ST has heard from other integrations. "There was an ease about the Performance—a flow, an exceptional dynamic quality, both microdynamic and macrodynamic." Though bass was ample, it was not as muscular or as tight as with Unison's Unico SE. (Vol.28 No.5)

Unison Research Unico SE: \$3150

The Unico SE uses four pairs of MOSFETs per side to deliver 140Wpc into 8 ohms and, like the standard Unico, has four line-level inputs and a tape monitor loop. ST was captivated by the SE: "It's sweet, open, transparent, and powerful. It's fast and responsive. Transients are clean, clear, crisp. As for harmonic presentation, the Unico combines the magic of tubes with the control—and economy—of solid-state." ST's pick for "Component of the Year." Price includes phono stage. (Vol.28 No.5)

Unison Research Preludio: \$3700

"One of the most beautiful amplifiers in the world," said ST of the 14Wpc Preludio, the smallest in a new series of amplifiers from Unison Research—it uses just one KT88 output tube and one ECC82 input tube. Its exquisite looks, sound, and operation provided a sensual experience. Midrange and treble were sweet without obscuring detail, thickening bass, or romanticizing the overall sound. Bass was tight and controlled, but lacked some authority. Required 100 hours of break-in. "I've fallen in love with this thing," sighed ST; "its looks, its sound, its utter simplicity." (Vol.30 No.1)

Unison Research Unico Piccolo: \$1575

Very similar to the standard Unico, the 50Wpc Piccolo also uses two pairs of MOSFETs per side. Unlike the standard Unico, the Piccolo employs a single 12AU7 triode tube for both channels. ST preferred the standard: "More resolution, more extended frequency response, somewhat tighter bass. ... The Unico P seemed darker,

Audio Research Reference 3: \$9995

"The single most impressive and thought-provoking piece of electronics I've heard since the Halcro dm58," raved PB. Updates over the long-running Reference 2 Mk.II include four new circuit boards, two new transistors, and a graceful, minimalist faceplate marked by a large vacuum-fluorescent display. The Ref.3's neutrality, resolution, and timbral generosity and accuracy worked together to convey music with an "almost witchily organic sensuality." "The best I have heard," summed up PB. JA cautioned that the Ref.3 would work best in full balanced mode and into higher impedances, but shares PB's enthusiasm for the preamps' sound quality, as do WP and BD. BJR is working on a "Follow-Up" review. (Vol.29 No.12, Vol.30 No.5 WWW)