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### Home Page

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Loudspeakers  
Bookshelf  
Loudspeakers  
Subwoofers

### Amplification

Tube Preamps  
Tube Power Amps  
Solid-State Preamps  
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Integrated Amps/Receivers  
Phono Preamps

### Digital Sources

CD  
Players/Transports  
Hi-Res Disc  
Players/Transports  
Digital Processors  
Computer Audio  
Media Servers/MP3  
Players

### Analog Sources

Turntables  
Tonearms  
Phono Cartridges  
FM Tuners

### Accessories

Cables  
Phono Accessories  
Powerline  
Accessories  
Room Acoustics  
Treatments  
Stands/Racks  
Headphones & Accessories  
Miscellaneous

### Columns

As We See It  
Listening / Art  
Dudley  
The Fifth Element /  
John Marks  
Music in the Round /  
Kal Rubinson  
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### Features

Special Features  
Reference  
Interviews  
Think Pieces  
Historical

### Music

Recording of the  
Month  
Records 2 Die 4  
Music/Recordings

### Blogs

Stephen Mejias  
Robert Baird  
Fred Kaplan  
Wes Phillips

### Latest News

Audio News  
Past eNewsletters

### Show Reports

CES 2009  
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FSI 2008  
CES 2008  
RMAF 2007  
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HE 2007  
FSI 2007  
CES 2007  
China 2006  
RMAF 2006  
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## Features

### Stereophile's Products of 2005:

Amplification Component

### 2005 Amplification Component

**darTZeel NHB-108 Model One power amplifier** (\$18,181; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.28 No.4, April 2005 [review](#))



### Runners-up (in alphabetical order)

Aesthetix Calypso preamplifier (\$4500; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.28 No.7, July 2005 [review](#))  
Burmester 001 preamplifier (\$14,995; reviewed by Brian Damkroger, Vol.28 No.7, July 2005 [review](#))  
Channel Islands Audio D-100 monoblock amplifier (\$1599/pair; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.28 Nos.8 & 9, August & September 2005 [review](#))  
Classé Omega Omicron power amplifier (\$20,000/pair; reviewed by Kalman Rubinson, Vol.27 No.11, November 2005 [review](#))  
Coda Technologies S5 power amplifier (\$3950; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.28 Nos.5 & 8, May & August 2005 [review](#))  
Conrad-Johnson ACT 2 preamplifier (\$13,500; reviewed by Wes Phillips, Vol.28 No.3, March 2005 [review](#))  
Grace m902 D/A headphone amplifier (\$1695; reviewed by John Marks, Vol.28 No.6, June 2005 [review](#))  
Lamm Industries ML2.1 monoblock power amplifier (\$29,990/pair; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.27 No.10 & Vol.28 No.9, October 2004 & September 2005 [review](#))  
Quad II Classic monoblock power amplifier (\$2700/pair; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.28 No.8, August 2005 [review](#))  
Simaudio Moon Rock monoblock power amplifier (\$37,000/pair; reviewed by Brian Damkroger, Vol.28 No.9, September 2005 [review](#))

NHB stands for "never heard before," and the darTZeel NHB-108 Model One power amplifier just might live up to the name—there is nothing else quite like it. The thing is handmade, after all. As Wes put it, "The NHB-108 is a work of art painstakingly and individually assembled from raw components." Designer Hervé Delétraz says the unique design, which uses open-loop input and output stages with no global negative feedback, is based on principles of simplicity, purity, and reliability. Appropriately, there are no relays, switches, or fuses in the signal path, just six transistors per polarity side from input to output, and only a single pair of bipolar output transistors per channel.

Who cares about all that? How did the thing *sound*? So darn good it had WP pushing for a new classification in "Recommended Components": "Perhaps we should establish a super-category: Components I Would Run Off to a Tropical Island With."

Though WP warned that the darTZeel's operational idiosyncrasies could add up to shortcomings for some listeners, our editors finally found something they could all agree on: The NHB-108 received more first-place votes than any other component in our contest, outlegging its nearest competition by a significant margin.

[Article Continues: Joint Digital Source Components »](#)

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- Intro
- Joint Loudspeakers
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- Joint Digital Source Components

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