

AWARDS

2010 Exceptional Value



can't believe another year has gone by already! The Rocky Mountain Audio Fest is anniversary time for us, and in addition to seeing all the great gear, it means that the awards are here again. The Exceptional Value Awards are the only ones we mention throughout the course of the year as we review the components that we feel are worthy of this award, so this part of our awards issue is not draped in secrecy.

Somewhat in keeping with the wacky economy this year, 10 of our 12 finalists have price tags under \$2,500, as we sharpened the pencil as much as we could to find the things that we really felt represented the absolute best values. Ten of the 12 choices are from companies that have been around for quite some time, so it's great to see legacy companies not ignoring the new recruits. Of the other two, Hegel has been in business for awhile but new to the U.S. market and Virtue Audio is the new kid on the block. Here's to hoping at least one of these happen to be something you are looking for!

Prima Luna ProLogue 1 Integrated Amplifier

MSRP: \$1,279

www.upscaleaudio.com

Reviewed in Issue 31

PrimaLuna has become a household name in the past seven years and they've done it the right way by building high-quality products that also offer high value. Kevin Deal and his partner, Herman Van Dungen, have brought legitimacy to the words "Made in China" when uttered in the same sentence as high-end audio; they've kept their standards high and field failure almost nonexistent with the PrimaLuna brand. Today, the line has expanded quite a bit, but this was the amplifier that started it all. Staffers, family and friends have all bought them, and they are all digging the tube sound.

The ProLogue One uses a pair of EL34 tubes per channel, but thanks to Prima Luna's patented Adaptive Auto-Bias™, you can use a handful of other compatible tubes without issue; 6550, KT88 and 6L6's will work equally well. Another benefit of the auto-bias circuitry is that the care and feeding of vacuum tubes is a thing of the past. Power it up and go.

With 35 honest-to-goodness tube watts per channel, the ProLogue One will drive all but the most inefficient speakers to rocking levels. With a sound somewhere between that of vintage and modern tube gear, this amp oozes musicality.