



# 2016 Recommended Components

## Loudspeakers

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### Loudspeaker Systems

**Editor's Note:** Class A "Loudspeakers" are sufficiently idiosyncratic and differ enough from one another that prospective customers should read *Stereophile's* original reviews in their entirety for descriptions of the sounds. I have therefore just listed every system or combination that at least one of *Stereophile's* reviewers feels, as a result of his or her experience, approaches the current state of the art in loudspeaker design. (Note that, to be eligible for inclusion in Class A, the system must be full-range—*ie*, feature bass extension to 20Hz. It must also be capable of reaching realistic sound-pressure levels without any feeling of strain.)

For those unconcerned about the last few hertz of low-bass extension, we have created "Classes A, B, and C (Restricted Extreme LF)" for those speakers that are state of the art in every other way. Candidates for inclusion in this class must still reach down to at least 40Hz, below the lowest notes of the four-string double-bass and bass guitar.

In addition, such has been the recent progress in loudspeaker design at a more affordable level that we have an extra class: E, for "Entry Level." Someone once asked us why *Stereophile* bothers to review inexpensive loudspeakers at all: In effect, aren't we insulting our readership by recommending that they buy inexpensive models? Remember: It's possible to put together a musically satisfying, truly high-end system around any of our Class D and E recommendations. That's why they're listed—and why you should consider buying them.

### A (Full-Range)

**GamuT RS7: \$39,900/pair** (Vol.38 No.9 WWW)

**KEF Blade Two: \$25,000/pair** (Vol.38 No.6 WWW)

**mbl Radialstrahler 101 E Mk.II: \$70,500/pair ★** (Vol.35 No.4 WWW)

**Revel Ultima Studio2: \$15,998/pair \$\$\$ ★** "FK's long-term reference. (Vol.31 No.3, Vol.32 No.12 WWW)

**TAD Laboratories Evolution One E1 loudspeaker: \$29,800/pair** (Vol.36 No.7 WWW)

**Vivid G3 Giya: \$39,990/pair** (Vol.37 No.4 WWW)

**Wilson Audio Specialties Alexandria XLF: \$210,000/pair ★** (Vol.36 No.1 WWW)

**Wilson Audio Specialties Alexia: \$52,000/pair** (Vol.36 No.12 WWW)

**YG Acoustics Sonja 1.3: \$106,800/pair** (Vol.36 No.7 WWW)

## A (Restricted Extreme LF)

**Aerial Model 7T: \$10,995/pair ★** "This compact (44.5" H by 9.7" W by 15.3" D), three-way floorstander uses a 1" soft ring-radiator tweeter with dual magnets and a machined waveguide; a 5.9" papyrus-blend midrange cone with a 1.25" voice-coil, dual magnets, and cast magnesium frame; and two 7.1" bilaminate-cone woofers with 1.5" voice-coils and cast magnesium frames. The 7T provided a well-balanced sound overall, with a stable soundstage, pinpoint imaging, detailed and transparent highs, a gorgeous midrange, and neutrally balanced bass. "The 7T is so good that it should provide any listener with joyful musical communication," KR concluded. JA found excellent measured performance. Price is for Metallic Black or High-Gloss Rosenut finish; \$11,795/pair in High-Gloss Ebony. (Vol.35 No.3 WWW)

**ATC SCM19 v.2: \$4299/pair** (stands necessary)

Designed around a sealed enclosure with curved side panels, a lute-shaped cross section, and a volume of 19 liters—hence the model number—ATC's SCM19 v.2 is a two-way loudspeaker with a 1" non-hemispherical soft-dome tweeter and a 6" woofer, the 3" dustcap of which is said to function as a midrange dome; both drivers are of ATC's own design and manufacture. The SCM19 v.2's cabinet is only 17.1" high, yet weighs a hefty 39 lbs; its frequency response is specified as 54Hz–22kHz, –6dB, its nominal impedance as 8 ohms, and its sensitivity as 85dB/W/m.

Comparing the ATC to a similarly small, sealed-box loudspeaker of some renown, the classic BBC LS3/5a, JM found that the SCM19 v.2 "exhibited an arresting increase in resolving power." Similarly, he wrote that the SCM19 "decisively strode ahead of" ATC's less expensive SCM7 v.3 in resolution and bass extension, noting that while the SCM7 "had no distortion that I was aware of, the [low-frequency] driver in the SCM19 was so much more revealing that it was not funny." JM summed up: "The SCM19 might be all the speaker most people will ever need. Well done. Highly recommended." (Vol.37 No.6 WWW)