

# AWARDS 2009



Welcome to Hi-Fi World's annual Awards special, where you'll find our favourite products reviewed over the last twelve months. Here's our pick of the past year's best offerings in specialist separates hi-fi...



|                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>TURNTABLE:</b>       | <b>EAT FORTE/IKEDA IT-407</b>  |
| <b>TONEARM:</b>         | <b>SME 312S</b>                |
| <b>CARTRIDGE:</b>       | <b>ORTOFON CADENZA BRONZE</b>  |
| <b>PHONO STAGE:</b>     | <b>ANT AUDIO KORA 3T LTD</b>   |
| <b>DIGITAL:</b>         | <b>DCS PAGANINI</b>            |
| <b>TUNER:</b>           | <b>ARCAM FMJ T32</b>           |
| <b>INTEGRATED:</b>      | <b>SUGDEN MYSTRO</b>           |
| <b>POWER AMPLIFIER:</b> | <b>ELECTROCOMPANIE NEMO</b>    |
| <b>LOUDSPEAKERS:</b>    | <b>USHER BE-10</b>             |
| <b>SYSTEM:</b>          | <b>NAIM UNITI</b>              |
| <b>COMPUTER AUDIO:</b>  | <b>MERIDIAN SOOLOOS 2.0</b>    |
| <b>INTERCONNECT:</b>    | <b>MIT CVT TERMINATOR 2</b>    |
| <b>SPEAKER CABLE:</b>   | <b>BLACK RHODIUM JIVE</b>      |
| <b>ACCESSORY:</b>       | <b>ORIGIN LIVE UPGRADE MAT</b> |



## INTEGRATED: SUGDEN MYSTRO

It's amazing how parochial different hi-fi markets are. In Japan, tubes reign supreme, and if you're running a solid-state amplifier then it's practically unthinkable for it not to run in full Class A mode. In Britain, the reverse has been true until recently. As a nation, pretty much all our modern amplification has been punchy Class AB solid-state, with a few notable exceptions. Sugden is one of them; the company has built its reputation on amplifiers that get hot under the hood like few others. The benefits of Class A operation are myriad of course; negligible switching distortion because the transistors are on all the time means a very clear

sound, one that can seem quite a revelation after the grey 'mush' that emanates from most Class AB designs.

It was with no little surprise then, to discover that Sugden had done a Class AB amplifier. Indeed, they themselves were initially quite bashful about it. Yet we found this amplifier auditioned exceptionally well. We run the far more expensive IA4 as a reference, and the Mystro, at just one third of the price, wasn't giving way. Of course, the IA4 has immense clarity, as befitting a pure Class A amplifier, which the Mystro could not match, but there's still something fundamentally very right about the way this £1,225 integrated

makes music. For starters, the amp has a big, bouncy and tuneful bass that's apparently unphased by what's going on elsewhere in the frequency spectrum. It bounds along, happy to follow the tune. Further up, and the Mystro is tremendously lucid. Whilst there's not the greatest level of detail, it still throws up an expansive soundstage and shows energy and dynamism that's simply exceptional at the price. Its treble performance isn't as smooth as the IA4, but it's nicely atmospheric and gels very well with the rest of the recording. All in all, Sugden's Mystro is a most aptly named new contender in the mid-price integrated amplifier category. We wish it well.

**SUGDEN MYSTRO**  
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