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When hi-fi enters the realm of high art

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The more I get to understand ultra-high-end hi-fi, the more I see its similarities to art and wine. Take these new amplifiers, the D'Agostino Momentum, for example, a pair of mono amps that team up to reproduce stereo – and are being hailed by critics who know better than I as the best amplifiers in the world.

Well, before you take them, you'll need to hand over £44,000, accept that you'll need another £100,000 or so before they're ready to use – and, for that matter, lift them, since together (88kg) they weigh more than me. And then, when you've matched them up with suitably classy ancillary components, and rearranged your interior to accommodate their beauty and, yes, their enormity, you'll switch them on.

And just as we can all appreciate a 1982 Pétrus or a Degas without necessarily being able to elaborate on why it is so wonderful, the detailed, connoisseur pleasure of hearing music reproduced to perfection will probably end up being all yours. Hi-fi at this level is about technology, sure. But, as with wine and art, while specifics can be quantified, the overall effect, the net joy it brings, can't be measured because it's about emotion.

Listening to these amps as part of a suite of similarly fancy components, I did wonder just how much of the astonishing sound was down to the D'Agostino amps and how much to the rest – the Magico speakers, the Metronome Technologie Kalista CD transport, the darTZeel pre-amp, the C2A digital-to-analogue converter. The hi-fi consensus is that amplifiers are the weak link in a system and if sound input and speakers are good enough, you do need an amp that's up to the job.

An investment for your £44k? Maybe, although I wouldn't bank on it. But I did like the comment of one early-music lover in Hong Kong, who bought Momentum. "Thank you so much," he reportedly told the dealer. "Before these, I thought I had bought everything that you can own."