

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...



HI-FI WORLD
AWARDS
2009

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



TO NEARM: SME 312S

This past year has seen a procession of new tonearms, all attempting to advance the black art of vinyl in one way or another. And as the last decade has progressed, we've seen ever more attempts to make the world's best arm, using a number of different approaches from air bearing designs to unipivots. Sassy, headline grabbing stuff, but given that some of the best pickup arms we've ever heard have been of conventional design, you sometimes wonder if the hype is justified. SME obviously don't think so, as they've stuck with their time-honoured formula pioneered in the late nineteen eighties with the remarkable Series V, for the new 312S, and

with dramatic results.

Whereas the 312 was essentially a 'long wheelbase' 309, the new S variant sits rather closer to the Series V in the family tree. It features the same superlative bearings as the aforementioned tonearm, and the same ultra light, non-resonant magnesium alloy armtube, but this time with an effective length of twelve inches instead of nine. The new £1,750 arm retains the 300 series counterweight system and detachable headshell, making it able to easily accommodate most cartridges between 6 and 15gm of average compliance. Effectively then, the new SME 312S is an exceptionally useable twelve inch arm, offering much of the Series

V's superlative build with the all important (for users of big turntables) extra three inches for reduced tracking distortion.

The result is an uncannily stable sound; if ever there was a tonearm that could be labelled 'transcription', this is it. Smooth and svelte is how the new design performs; with almost any cartridge you care to put in it, gone is the nervous, fidgety sound that most nine inchers provide. Even the nine inch SME V, brilliant as it is, cannot quite offer the stability and ease of this, with its expansive, deep soundstaging and inky black tonality. Given the right platform, the new SME 312S shows just what high end vinyl replay can do nowadays

SME 312S
SME Ltd.
www.sme.ltd.uk
tested:

£1,750
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