



the **Stereo Times**
The Complete Audiophile Magazine

most wanted components
Publisher's choice 2004

HOME ARCHIVES MostWanted RECORD REVIEWS AD INDEX CONTACT SHOW RE

Friday, November 27

The Stereo Times **Most Wanted** Components - 2003



Master Sound 845 Mono Amps (\$10,500) and Ayon Signature Speakers (\$10,900)

(Bruce Featherling, of Acoustic Dreams Importers, is all smiles while receiving his MWC Award). There is a singular quality to the sound of a single-ended triode (SET) amplification device. It is most evident in its ability to feature vocals and acoustic wind instruments: things that live in the mid-range. Actually, all amplification devices have a signature sound, whether you're talking about transistors, MOSFETs or any other gain device. And even within the SET tube category there are characteristic traits that distinguish the 300B from the 845 tube, for example. My previous encounters with SET tube amps left an impression of remarkable presence and intimacy coupled with some severe performance limitations at the frequency extremes and in macro-dynamics.

The Master Sound 845 monoblocks and Ayon Signature speakers were designed to complement each other. When they arrived, I was eager to see if the combo did in fact exemplify the characteristic glories and virtues of other SET based systems. The answer is a definitive yes! ... And r

First, all the SET magic is present. Just put on any vocal recording and watch what happens. Listeners practically melt in their chairs. Second, this combo will not disappoint in its performance at the frequency extremes. The same holds true for how it re-creates big dynamics. / Finally, this is the first SET combo I've encountered that is not only extended, but is also accurate to boot. You will not hear any frequency dips, swells or crossover anomalies.

I have rarely encountered this level of performance. While not cheap (the amps and the speakers, have a list price of around \$10,000), what the Master Sound 845/Ayon Signature speaker combo brings to the table is musically compelling that you might find yourself agreeing with Cler Perry: "The game is over, pal. That's my sound." See full review.