

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...



TURNTABLE:	EAT FORTE/IKEDA IT-407
TO NEARM:	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





TURNTABLE: **EAT FORTE/IKEDA it-407**

Everything about the £12,400 EAT Forte is bold; its giddy price, the imposing physical size, its not inconsiderable weight. The EAT simply takes the best practice from just about every superdeck made since the mid nineteen seventies and puts it together in one package. And to underline its evolutionary approach, it comes fitted with a tonearm that epitomises this same design philosophy, the flawless but unflashy Ikeda it-407.

What's special about this design is the way it packages good ideas together to such a high standard. To obviate the many problems of suspended decks, the Forte simply doesn't use springs, relying on its

vast weight, including a 20kg platter; to take it out of the loop. To reduce noise to vanishingly low levels, it uses twin low torque motors, generating 2,700Kj of torque via twin pulleys and long diamond cut string belts to spin that massive platter. This delivers superlative wow and flutter figures. To accommodate its massy platter, the inverted main bearing, with a ceramic ball mating to a Teflon cup, is vast - and augmented with neodymium magnets to lower the pressure on the bearing. The Ikeda arm is a superbly damped 12" with exquisite bearings of almost no friction.

At first listen, the Forte sounds underwhelming, with nothing particularly distinct about it to hook on

to. But get past the first few bars of the music however, and you find yourself being carried off into the music. The deck simply lets you lock on to what's going on in the groove, making no attempt whatsoever to editorialise. The only way to describe it is 'mastertape-like'; there's simply no sense of listening to recorded material, as the music itself shines through so strongly. All of which is to be expected if you're spending the equivalent of a Ford Focus on a turntable, of course. But however you look at it, this is a very special record player. Imposing on the eye it may be, but there is immense strength in depth here. Subtle and unshowy it sounds, but sublime also.

E.A.T. FORTE/IKEDA 12"
Absolute Sounds
www.euroaudioteam.com
tested:

£12,400
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