

Overall Products of the Year

Stenheim Alumine 5SE Loudspeaker

\$72,000

The three-way, four-driver Stenheim Alumine Five Special Edition (SE) loudspeaker from Switzerland is a unique combination of new and old. At less than a foot wide, just under four feet high, and a mere foot-and-a-quarter deep, its rectangular aluminum cabinet is fashionably compact. Of course, at 220 pounds it's a hefty little box, but its weight is proportionally no greater than that of many of today's other high-mass, ultra-high-end speakers. Indeed, the Five SE's aluminum enclosure, bulk, and squared-off good looks put JV in mind of earlier-gen Magicos, before Alon Wolf added curved carbon-fiber panels to the mix. However, the Five SE's twin, slot-like, front-firing ports—one above and one below the pair of 10" woofers on the bottom half of its facade—are anything but Magico-like. Neither are the drivers themselves (the two independently ported woofers, the largish 6.5" midrange, and the 1¼" dome tweeter), all of which use "old-fashioned" pulp or textile diaphragms and textile surrounds. Also very un-Magico-like is the Alumine Five SE's lofty 94dB sensitivity and stable 8-ohm impedance. How does this demure, high-efficiency combination of old tech and new sound? Well, as JV said about the superb Estelon X Diamond Mk II, the Stenheim Five SE is not just a great speaker; it is one of high-end audio's greatest speakers. Its uncanny ability to generate truly deep, powerful, linear bass, unusually rich and lifelike tone color (top to bottom), near-visible three-dimensional images, and astounding detail and dynamics from such a modestly sized enclosure is not just a surprise; it is one for the ages. Those of you looking for the ultra-high-end answer to a limited listening space look no further. Hie thee to the nearest Stenheim dealership—pronto. In cones-in-a-box loudspeakers, you just don't find this big a gift in this small a package every day (or every decade). (328) **tas**

