

## The Absolute Sound's 2014 Product of the Year Awards



### Affordable Sony HAP-Z1ES

**\$1995**

As the flagship model for Sony's "High Definition Music Initiative" the HAP-Z1ES defines what Sony sees as the future of two-channel audio. The HAP-Z1ES is a local network-aware device that plays back digital music files. It hooks up via either an Ethernet connection or WiFi to your local network and the Internet. The HAP-Z1ES also contains a 1TB hard drive for storing music files and has, as well, the ability to use external USB drives for additional storage. In overall sonic quality and build value for the dollar, the Sony HAP-Z1ES sets new standards. If you plan to spend more than \$2000 on any digital front end, whether it's an audio-computer, CD player, DAC, network player, or any other front end that uses digital files as a source, and you don't audition a HAP-Z1ES, you are failing to consider what may well be the benchmark digital product of 2014. (241)

**MUSIC SERVERS  
OF THE YEAR**

### Upper-End Lumin A-1 Network Media Player

**\$7200**

Computers and high-resolution downloads have become as inseparable as a plate of burgers and fries, but for those looking to quit the computer, there's the Lumin A-1. Capable of pulling audio media from external sources like a USB stick, a USB hard drive, or (ideally) over a network with a NAS, its Burr-Brown DACs snap into action playing back a multitude of formats including the current crop of high-resolution files up to and including 32-bit/384kHz PCM/DXD, and standard DSD. Operating wirelessly through its own terrific software iPad app, the A-1 releases all the reins of tension that accompany most digital recordings, adding warmer, weightier presence and velvety textures to instrumental images while dissipating digital artifacts. The sound assumes the compliancy of great analog. As with any high-brow source component the charms of the Lumin grow progressively more seductive with time, reaching a level of musicality that will make even diehard analog fans forget its computer roots. (248)

