

Anyone yearn for the days when audio was so much simpler?!?! That time when all you needed was a receiver, turntable and a pair of speakers (or two if you were into quad?). Yes, there are times when I close my eyes and imagine how much bigger my listening room would be without a pair of rather large monoblock tube amplifiers planted between the speakers. (Not to mention a whole lot cooler.) Something that would even fit in my equipment rack and eliminate one run of ICs.

Could the Ensemble Fuoco be the answer to mine and other audiophile dreams? Perhaps. The Fuoco has been in my system now for almost three weeks now and to say that I've been impressed with this unit's performance would be an understatement. This integrated drives the Magicos with aplomb and never draws attention to itself. Hybrid integrated amplifiers (or say combining say a tube preamp with a ss amp) offer the promise of the best of both worlds but rarely live up to expectations. Not here. This integrated amplifier really combines the control of ss and the musicality of tubes with elegance and finesse. The Fuoco's bass performance never ceases to impress me along with this integrated's ability to capture and portray the sense of space and ambience. This little integrated will with a Gary Karr LP rattle the room with organ music and at the same time with something like Grieg's Peer Gynt on Decca produce a vast and enormous soundstage. A soundstage swimming in ambience. And what's in between isn't left out either. A super smooth and unmechanical with rich overtones.

Ensemble believes in a system approach-as I covered in my review of an all Ensemble system including cables, speakers, etc. back in the early '90s-and little has changed. Out of all the various pieces, however, it's Ensemble's top-of-the-line Dalvivo power cord that has impressed me the most. I've used it with the Doshi phono and tape stage and it has totally brought out the best in each of these components. Not to mention bringing out the best of the SAT/Fuuga combination and closing a bit of the gap between LPs and tape particularly when it comes to resolution and bass.

The Dalvivo isn't cheap (\$1950 for a meter and a half) but neither is it close to the most expensive PC on the market. Here, the Dalvivo has out performed much more expensive power cords. What do I like about the Dalvivo? So much starting with the thunderous and clean bass, the paplability of the midrange, it's resolution, delicacy, finesse and freedom from artifacts, it's transparency and last but not least dynamics. But never do you think about these qualities because this PC simply brings out the best of each component and the system just disappears into the background.

Stay tuned for more on what I think is a pretty special product.

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- Magico S5 Mk.2 speakers with SPod feet
- cj 40th Anniversary ART300 monoblock amplifiers
- Ensemble Fuoco hybrid integrated amplifier
- cj GAT preamplifier Series 2 preamplifier
- Doshi V3.0 phonostage
- VPI Vanquish direct-drive turntable
- VPI 12-inch 3D Fat Boy dual pivot tonearm, VPI 12-inch 3D Fat Boy gimbaled and SAT LM-12 arm
- Lyra Atlas SL, Fuuga, vdh Colibri Master Signature, MOFI Master Tracker, Sumiko Songbird cartridges
- Technics RS1506 with Flux Magnetic heads, Doshi V3.0 tape stage (balanced)
- Assorted cables including Transparent XL Gen. 5, Allnic cables, Skogrand, Viero, Kubala-Sosna, MG Audio, Audience Au24SX, Genesis Advanced Technologies Power Cords
- Accessories including Stillpoint Aperture panels, Cathedral Sound panels, Furutech NCF Nano AC receptacles; Silver Circle Tchaik 6 PLC, Symposium ISIS and SRA Craz racks, Audiodharma Cable Cooker, Symposium Ultra and assorted SRA platforms.



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