



stereophile  
**PRODUCT**  
 OF THE YEAR 2008



Sooloos music server system

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(\$7900–\$10,500; reviewed by Jon Iverson & Kalman Rubinson, Vol.31 No.9, September 2008 WWW)

**T**his winner doesn't represent a hardware solution so much as it does a *software* solution. In a component category usually occupied by SACD players and D/A processors, and in a time marked by music lovers longing to reconnect with their libraries, the Sooloos hard-drive-based networked music system takes an undeniably fun and fresh approach to sorting, organizing, and experiencing music.

The Source:One currently uses RME-sourced 24-bit/192kHz converters, while the Twinstore hard drive is capable of holding over 2000 losslessly compressed CDs. What makes this product truly special, however, is its 17" Control:One touchscreen, which allows the user to find and play music in several intuitive ways. After only a few taps on the screen, our reviewers were entranced and invigorated by the Sooloos's potential.

Jon Iverson was won over immediately: "Using the Sooloos got me more deeply involved with my music library than at any time since I began collecting many years ago." Kal Rubinson was similarly swayed: "I am now convinced that, if you can afford it, the Sooloos is the way to go for CD listening." High praise, indeed, for a highly ambitious product. Thank you, Sooloos, for bringing us closer to our music.

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**W**ith four first-place votes and 16 votes overall, the Sooloos music server takes this year's ultimate prize.

Web Monkey Jon Iverson—who has been calling for intuitive, user-friendly, computer-based systems for over a decade—shocked no one when he dove so eagerly into the deep possibilities of the Sooloos system. It was just what he'd ordered. "This was clearly no me-too product," he said, "but a complete reinvention of how we relate to music."

But. . . *Michael Fremer*? Yes, even Mikey, our sober-minded analog guru, was held captive by the Sooloos. In fact, he bought one. With it, MF can finally get rid of all those annoying CDs, and convert his vinyl to digital for easy access via the Sooloos's touchscreen. When you consider that

the Sooloos system does a better job of communicating the addictive, visceral pleasure of a music collection better than anything this side of a 12" black disc, it sort of makes sense after all.



Above: Sooloos music server system

**T**raditionally, as *Stereophile's* longtime Editor, I have reserved this section to myself. But it seemed more democratic in this election year to allow all of the magazine's review team the opportunity to be involved. I asked each to name the component that had provided him with the most musical pleasure this past year, and to sum up in a single sentence the reasons why.—**John Atkinson**

**Michael Fremer:** Sooloos Music Server (\$7900–\$10,500; Vol.31 No.9, September 2008). "Easy ripping, instant access, iPodTouch remote controllability, great

graphics, auto-downloaded credits from AMG, ingenious interface, sound that's as good as if not better than direct CD playback, and, best of all, it clears the shelves to make room for more vinyl."

**Jon Iverson:** Sooloos Music Server (\$7900–\$10,500; Vol.31 No.9, September 2008). "A bitchin' software/hardware interface that makes it a piece of cake to manage thousands of albums of music. A well-thought-out, top-to-bottom music-server system that focuses on the music and sound and hides all the tweaking, importing, and backup issues behind a simple yet powerful approach."

**MERIDIAN** sooloos