

SOURCES

Network Music Player of the Year under \$1000



Yamaha NP-S303

JUDGES' COMMENT

Streaming music is now the way of choice for a great many people — even collectors can stream casually, while keeping file collections for relaxed listening. And a network music player brings all these to your hi-fi.

A lot of the options here are small little things, but here our winner is a proper hi-fi sized bargain, at \$699 for a versatile streamer together with AirPlay and Bluetooth, and once networked via Ethernet or Wi-Fi you enjoy all the abilities of Yamaha's award-winning MusicCast multiroom platform — which means easy access to Spotify Connect, Tidal, Deezer, along with network streaming at up to high-res 24-bit/192kHz.

It is worth mentioning that all these abilities are shared by the smaller and much cheaper (\$229) Yamaha WXAD-10, which wins an award on p96. Where this NP-S303 scores over the smaller unit is not only in terms of build quality and rack presence, but also in the provision of digital outputs and in the quality of its analogue circuits, which Yamaha has stocked here with high quality components and separated physically from the digital section to suppress potential noise. It's great sound as well as versatility that wins the award here. Info: au.yamaha.com

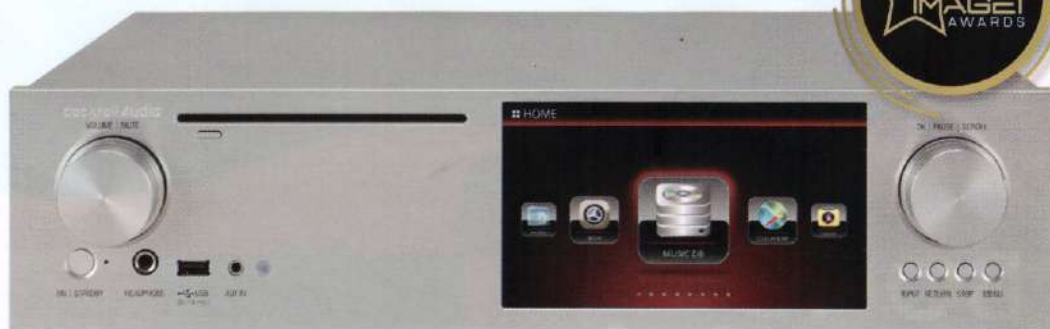
"Versatile app-controlled online and network streaming via MusicCast, plus great audio circuits for sound quality."

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"CD ripping to hard-drive, plus streaming and amplification in a just-add-speakers package."



Cocktail Audio X35

Our winner here could actually have gone in a number of categories, given the \$3499 X35 is a CD ripper and server, a network music player, and indeed it has amplifiers — though you can bypass those amps for a later upgrade, and it's the music serving that we were

particularly impressed by, so we're recognising it here. A full-colour seven-inch diagonal screen displays metadata from Gracenote, you can have a display on a TV via HDMI out, or there's an app, and also a web interface. As an amplifier it has a turntable phono input, one analogue RCA pair, and digital inputs — optical, coaxial and AES/EBU, plus a pair of USB 3.0 host slots, and 2 × 100W of Class D power to drive your speakers. As a streamer there's Gigabit networking to play up to

24-bit/192kHz PCM in FLAC or WAV, DSD up to quad-speed DSD256, DXD to 24-bit/352.8kHz, Spotify Connect, and Tidal integration including full MQA decoding. Plus DAB+ and FM radio, and that CD ripping and 2TB of hard-drive storage. included in the price. Hardly any room left to tell you how much we enjoyed it.... Info: www.tivolihifi.com.au