



★
BEST
PHONO STAGE:
WHEST AUDIO
PS.30SE
 REVIEWED: JUNE 2011

Phono stages come in all flavours, from rich and creamy to hard and salty. This Whest is very neutral – those seeking a sumptuous sound from their vinyl should look towards one of the many tube based designs on the market, but if you want an even handed, matter of the fact machine that just plays music, this is it. Yes, it's very expensive at £4,500, but we think those running top end vinyl systems shouldn't overlook its amazing incision and grip. It's as if the Whest ekes out information from those low level phono signals almost down to an atomic level – it shines a searching light into the mix and throws the music out at you with forensic precision. Yet the Whest doesn't sound technical and analytical; it's bubbling with emotion and visceral power that makes it as good at new wave guitar crunching as it is for genteel classical piano sonatas. An aural experience akin to standing three rows back from the stage at a live concert, the PS.30 SE gets down to convey the fizzing energy of any musical performance. There's an awful lot of competition in the phono stage market, but this is so good at what it needs to do that high end vinyl thrill seekers can't ignore it – and if it's above your budget then the company has some very capable, yet more affordable designs worth hearing.