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## JOINT BUDGET COMPONENTS OF THE YEAR

# Oppo BDP-95 universal Blu-ray player Peachtree iDecco D/A integrated amplifier

In part due to “The Entry Level,” my new column about affordable hi-fi, this year’s Budget category heaved with worthy contenders. But I can’t take all the credit. Like headphones and computer-audio products, affordable hi-fi is especially hot these days because it’s fun, exciting, and, well, *affordable*. Sure, it’s nice to dream of owning a cost-no-object product from one of the world’s most exclusive and exotic brands—but it’s even nicer to actually *own* something that will bring long-lasting pleasure and leave you with money to spend on more records. As I write these words, it’s been several weeks since the annoyingly named Pioneer SP-BS41-LR speakers were last in my listening room, and I still haven’t gotten over how much beautiful music they make for just \$149/pair. Have you bought a pair yet? What are you waiting for?

The Pioneer received three first-place votes, including mine, but didn’t

come close to the number of total votes awarded to our joint winners, the Peachtree iDecco D/A integrated amplifier (18) and Oppo BDP-95 universal Blu-ray player (17). At \$999 each, our winners aren’t exactly cheap, but they represent outstanding value for money, providing exceptional build quality and versatility and wonderful sound.

The iDecco combines a tube-buffered preamplifier, a 40Wpc power amplifier, a digital iPod dock, and a 24-bit/96kHz-capable ES9006 Sabre D/A converter with USB interface in a tidy, attractive package that shares the cool, retro-modern styling of other Peachtree products. Though it lacked the spatial depth, presence, and tonal color of more expensive components, the iDecco produced a naturally extended treble, fast and well-controlled bass, and a strong sense of momentum—and you know how Art Dudley loves a strong sense of momentum. “Great source, great styling, great sound,” he

concluded. Meanwhile, John Atkinson, aroused by the resolution and jitter rejection of the iDecco’s D/A section, bought an iDecco for his bedroom system. Sexy.

Speaking of sexy, Oppo’s BDP-95 Universal Audiophile 3D Blu-ray Disc Player boasts a solid, hefty chassis and a substantial toroidal transformer built by Rotel. Most significant, however, are the player’s two Sabre32 Reference ES9018 DAC chips: one for the 7.1-channel analog output, the other dedicated to the stereo output, thus improving the signal/noise ratio and allowing the BDP-95 to run fully balanced to its XLR outputs. In addition to its analog outputs, the Oppo provides an Ethernet LAN port, HDMI 1 and 2 outputs, two USB ports, and optical and coaxial digital outputs. Add it all up and you get a consistently open, spacious sound with superb articulation of instruments and voices. Yum. “An outstanding value in a universal player,” raved Dr. Rubinson.