

AWARDS 2014 STREAMERS



**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**

# Streamers

The streamer is an integral part of the music lovers' consciousness now. Find out how we made up our minds on the Award winners



## Best streamer £600-£1000 Cambridge Audio Stream Magic 6 v2

After a successful number of years for the first version of this streamer, Cambridge Audio has released an update - introducing new functionality that helps this versatile unit regain Product of the Year status.

A lot of things about it remain the same, and that's no bad thing. It's still an accomplished network player, capable of handling most popular file formats (AAC, WAV, FLAC, MP3) up to 24-bit/192kHz, and it can still be used as a DAC and digital pre-amp, bringing its influence upon a whole system's-worth of kit thanks to its plethora of digital inputs.

It looks almost exactly the same too, and its sound is as excellent as ever, offering a confident performance, no matter the genre or file size.

### Changing the game

Before we get into that though, it's worth considering what has changed. Native 24-bit/192kHz playback is now capable over wi-fi as well as via USB thanks to a more powerful streaming module. And a lot of work has been done, to great effect, to improve and simplify the user interface and control apps. This new processor architecture also means browsing menus are

much faster than on its predecessor, plus Spotify Connect has now been added to make this streamer more flexible and versatile than ever. Soundwise, it's a very similar character to before - powerful, with a strong rhythmic drive and a boundless enthusiasm for any music you throw at it.

Play a 16-bit/44.1kHz file of Kanye West's *Send It Up* and the Cambridge Audio shows good control over the shrill synth note, never sounding pushed or hard. Vocals are expressive, and the bass tight and agile.

### Captivating detail

Detail levels are certainly impressive, even on 320kbps streams from Spotify, where it still offers a decent level of insight without uncovering the fragility of weaker recordings. Dynamically it's superb too, demonstrating admirable precision with the way it deals with loud and soft, and the starting and stopping of notes.

Above all, it's as captivating as ever, and its new functionality makes it a better proposition than ever before. Back on the top and rightfully so - the Stream Magic 6 v2 is an easy choice for Product of the Year.