


Group test verdict

An impressive showing and decent mix of features from our sextet of integrations gives **Ed Selley** much to consider as he picks a winner

THIS IS A strong lineup and any one of these amps would make a solid basis for a talented system. For the Cambridge Audio CXA80, it isn't so much that it does anything wrong but that at £800, it doesn't necessarily deliver the performance expected and still has a few gaps in its specification. The NAD D 3045 by contrast is keenly priced, usefully compact and impressively flexible, but there are question marks over its ability to handle demanding speaker loads and the limitations of its performance at both ends of the frequency spectrum require careful handling.

The Yamaha R-N803D and Rega Brio could not be more different in philosophy and execution, but they tie for third place. The Yamaha could do with a fraction more attack to its presentation, but the incredible list of features it offers means it can operate as a system in itself and has to be seen as a bit of a bargain because of it. That it is still able to compare sonically is impressive. The Rega by contrast has a more limited set of features, but everything it offers it does brilliantly and does so at a very competitive price. For sheer listening satisfaction, it takes some beating.

The Musical Fidelity M2si is a slight conundrum. The feature count is virtually non-existent, which combined with the relatively high asking price, puts it at a slight disadvantage compared with some here. You can see where the money has gone, though. For more challenging speaker loads and larger rooms, it has reserves of power that no amp here can match. It offers a performance that's a lovely combination of forcefulness, delicacy and – above all – fun. Despite the parsimonious feature count, it nearly takes the top spot.



WINNER

Audiolab's 6000A is a borderline viceless amplifier. So long as it is used with efficient speakers, it delivers a supremely appealing combination of useful features and superb sonic performance, wrapped in a beautifully finished case at an impressive price.



Make/model **Audiolab 6000A** **Cambridge Audio CXA80** **Musical Fidelity M2si** **NAD D 3045** **Rega Brio** **Yamaha R-N803D**

	£600	£800	£800	£600	£600	£700
Price	£600	£800	£800	£600	£600	£700
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	A quite superb and well-featured amp that delivers very impressive results	Despite offering plenty of power and versatility, the sound feels uninvolved	Superb analogue performance, although features are rather limited	Despite some limitations, this is a sophisticated and versatile offering	A compact option with a consistently highly entertaining performance	Incredibly flexible design that lacks a little excitement and fine detail

Key features

	£600	£800	£800	£600	£600	£700
Quoted power	2x 50W	2x 80W	2x 76W	2x 60W	2x 50W	2x 100W
Phono stage	MM	No	No	MM	MM	MM
Analogue inputs	3x RCA	4x RCA; 1x XLR	5x RCA	1x RCA, 1x 3.5mm jack	4x RCA	4x RCA
AptX Bluetooth	Yes	£70 add-on	No	Yes, aptX HD	No	Bluetooth, not aptX
DAC	24-bit/192kHz	24-bit/192kHz	No	24-bit/192kHz	No	24-bit/192kHz

TRY WITH THESE

STREAMER: Auralic Aries Mini **£449 HFC 442**

The Auralic isn't the prettiest streamer going, but the level of performance that it offers is beyond anything else at the price. As well as superb sonics, you get an excellent control interface and it can even be used as a server.



FLOORSTANDING LOUDSPEAKER: Q Acoustics 3050i **£649 HFC 438**

The 3050i is far more than a breathed-on version of the previous 3050. It is a thorough rework and the result is one of the most supremely talented speakers under £1,000 and one that is relaxed about positioning and input power.



TURNTABLE: Rega Planar 3 **£625 HFC 411**

The Rega Planar 3 is the class of the field at this price point. It delivers a level of performance that is extremely hard to find fault with and does so while offering superb build and aesthetics and offers plenty of upgrade potential, too.

