

## Ace Indeed!



### MOON by Simaudio's Neo ACE All In One Music Player

A number of well-worn clichés come to mind when attempting to describe the new ACE all in one music player from Simaudio; crescent wrench, Swiss army knife, etc etc. Yet none of them truly encompass how awesome it is. This Montreal audio company has been building award-winning components for 36 years and is well known for their massive amplifiers, DACs and killer phono preamplifiers; all having five figure price tags. Yet the ACE barely tips the scale at \$3,500. And that's for an amplifier, preamplifier, DAC, streamer, MM phonostage and headphone amplifier. You'd spend that much on five sets of moderately priced interconnects and power cords, not to mention a rack to hold all that stuff.

What you may *not* know is that Simaudio has been on fire for the last 3 years, taking the expertise that comes with having all phases of design, manufacturing and even metalwork under one roof and distilling that essence down to incredibly affordable components that do not sacrifice performance. Their award winning Neo 230HAD headphone amplifier and Neo 430HA headphone amplifier, both incorporate DAC's, function as excellent line stages, but the ACE does *everything*.

Having used many of their top components for years over at *TONEAudio*, Simaudio combines rock solid build quality (all of their components carry a 10 year warranty,

and their service department looks like something from a Maytag repairman commercial) with contemporary styling, and intelligent ergonomics. Most importantly, MOON components have always provided best in class sound to match the ergonomics and functionality. Even their instruction manuals are well written, and for those of you that normally blow off this stage of the installation, you can get up and rolling with the ACE ignoring the manual, but it offers such a depth of features, it will serve you well to spend some time with the manual. In the 60s and 70s, it was common to go to the hi fi shop and purchase a receiver; incorporating an AM/FM tuner along with a high quality phono stage, so that you only needed to add a pair of speakers and maybe a turntable or a tape deck and roll. Today, with streaming being the way most music lovers roll, the ACE has you covered, with Simaudio's MiND streamer built in. Just head to the app store, download "Moon MIND controller" and your zooming, with Tidal integration. You can also stream from your favorite mobile device via Bluetooth, so friends can easily share their music when visiting.



Thanks to its built in DAC with 8 digital inputs that accommodate anything you can throw at it, your laptop, iPod or other digital device easily integrates into your system. Everything from 16/44.1 CD quality files up to DSD is a breeze. You can even go completely old school digital and play CD's via one of the ACE's three analog inputs, which I took advantage of with a borrowed MOON Neo 260D CD player. Should you incorporate a MOON by Simaudio CD player into your ACE based system, the slender remote included will also control said player; again a nice touch towards simplicity. Rega's new Planar 3 turntable with Elys 2 cartridge (also in for review) proves a fantastic match for the onboard MM phono stage. Analog playback via LP is equally enjoyable through the ACE and after a couple of tracks, it's obvious that this was not an afterthought. Stepping up to a VPI Classic Two table and Sumiko Blackbird high output MC cartridge also was a lovely match with the ACE and this all in one is certainly up to the task of connecting an equally expensive

turntable. Rounding out the package, the headphone amplifier is stunning with Sennheiser, ADC, Audeze and OPPO phones, so it should be compatible with whatever you've got in your stable. Again, emphasizing convenience, Simaudio thoughtfully includes a 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch stereo jack on the front panel labeled MP, so that you can plug in a pad, pod or phone from the analog outputs should you so desire.



One more small, but significant touch in the ergonomics department, the ACE is the company's first product featuring an OLED readout, making it easy to read in any ambient light level. Here's to hoping this display makes it into all future Simaudio components. Another luxurious touch giving this product a much higher feel than its price suggests. The 50-watt per channel power amplifier proves to be up to the task of driving everything we have on hand for review, including the Quad 2812 electrostats and the somewhat inefficient Rogers LS5/9 speakers. The synergy with the \$10,000/pair Focal Sopra no.1 speakers in for review is stunning, but may be a bit more than you want to spend, but the point is that the ACE provides a level of sonic refinement way beyond what you'd expect for the price.



The MOON by Simaudio Neo ACE is a component you can live with for a long time, and make multiple source and speaker upgrades before you might even entertain going back to separates again. We're too new at The Audiophile Apartment to start handing out "product of the year" awards, but if we did, this would be a winner – by a long shot. Major audiophiles in the audience,

take note; TONEAudio will be featuring a more in-depth analysis in the weeks to come, running the ACE further through its paces with more analog and digital sources as well as exercising all of the digital options. However, the short recommendation, should you want a high performance, all in one component, the ACE is for you.