

Lifestyle Feature

World's Most Expensive Stereo Components

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In the age of the iPod, does anyone need a fancy home audio system? The answer, if one is serious about music, is an emphatic "yes."

These days, music is portable and modular, served a la carte in a million ways a million times per day to millions of listeners around the globe. Whether through MP3 players, satellite radio or ripped from a CD on a PC, to many people the notion of having to sit at home to enjoy their favorite music is as archaic as using a mimeograph machine to make copies.

And if one is going to be listening at home, why spend too much money? After all, there are now enough peripherals for an MP3 player, such as Bose's Sound Dock--which costs around \$300--that lets users plug in their iPods and deliver quality acoustics anywhere in their home. Not only that, but for less than \$200 it is possible to walk out of a **Wal-Mart** (nyse: [WMT - news - people](#)) or **Best Buy** (nyse: [BBY - news - people](#)) carrying a mini audio unit from a reputable brand, such as **Sony** (nyse: [SNE - news - people](#)) or JVC, which is capable of cranking out 400 watts or more of sound.

But for music connoisseurs, comparing a glorified boombox with state-of-the-art audio equipment is like saying that it's just as much fun to drive a \$22,000 Pontiac Grand Am as it is a [\\$200,000 Ferrari F430](#). The two cars fulfill the same basic function, but the Ferrari does it on such an infinitely higher level of performance and craftsmanship as to render all comparisons absurd.

Take for example the [Ongaku amplifier](#) from **Audio Note Japan**. This 27-watt power amplifier uses a single-ended triode circuit and is hand crafted in a Tokyo workshop by Hiroyasu Kondo, a world-renowned engineer who uses 20 pounds of silver throughout the amp, including silver wire in the windings of the hand-made transformers. This audio work of art delivers a level of sound quality unmatched by any other amplifier on the market--and for \$80,000 it had better.

Think that's an expensive piece of stereo equipment? Try \$135,000 for a pair of [Alexandria X-2 loudspeakers](#) from Provo, Utah-based **Wilson Audio Specialties**, or the \$145,000 [Evolution Music System](#) from **Krell Industries** in Orange, Conn., which generate the kind of butt-kicking bass that doesn't just blow out windows but also knocks down walls.

Of course, many people may not need **Rockport Technologies'** 535-pound, \$73,750 [System III Sirius turntable](#) to enjoy their old collection of LPs. There are enough more-than-adequate turntables--not to mention amps, preamps, speakers, etc.--that cost thousands less and still deliver excellent sound.

But no one "needs" a Ferrari F430, nor does anyone "need" to go from zero to 60 in 3.9 seconds. Still, if you afford it, why the heck shouldn't you? Not only do you get major bragging rights, it's also a freaking blast.

[See our list of the World's Most Expensive Stereo Components.](#)