

The greater of two Evos

THE PRICIER – AND MORE AMBITIOUS – EVO MODEL FROM CAMBRIDGE AUDIO, THE EVO 150 IS A SERIOUS CONTENDER IN THE ALL-IN-ONE STREAMING SYSTEM ARENA. SHOULD THE LIKES OF LINN AND NAIM BE LOOKING NERVOUSLY OVER THEIR SHOULDERS, ASKS ANDREW EVERARD



The idea of an all-in-one system, to which only needs add a pair of speakers is hardly new: receivers combining radio tuners and amplifiers have been with us for many decades, taking on renewed prominence with the rise of surround sound to create models able to drive multiple speakers – a dozen or more in some cases. But streaming audio has seen such units take on new forms

In the network audio market, systems combining convenience of set-up and operation with performance to challenge a collection of separates have been with us for a good while: after all, the model sometimes credited with creating this market sector, the original NaimUniti, is knocking on its 12th birthday, and the arrival of similar products in the intervening years might lead one to forget just how revolutionary it was when it first appeared.

With some brands several generations down the line with such units, I guess this could be called a mature technology, but it seems every new arrival brings a new twist to the story. In recent years, for example, we've seen NAD roll out its compact Masters M10 model, and then parlay the same technology up into a full-size component, the M33, combining a streaming platform based on that of the

BluOS technology found across its parent company's range with the digital amplifier technology at the heart of its hefty Masters series power amplifiers.

London-based Cambridge Audio has been involved in the whole network thing for some years now: it has its own StreamMagic platform, successive generations of which have been at the heart of products from the entry-level network players of the past all the way up to the current Edge NQ preamp/network player, selling for just shy of £4500 as part of the company's flagship range. However, the plan for the new Evo models was even more ambitious: this isn't just a product launch, but one designed to set a new style for the company, and one that has 'legs'. In other words, Evo isn't built to allow the company to play catch-up, but to define it in its market sector for a good time to come.