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In my 20 years as a hifi journalist a lot of mysterious makers and products have already crossed my path. Leather mice of unknown origin e.g. that weigh five kilograms and whose special granulate filling has an extremely positive impact on the sound of loudspeakers – if you put the mice on the speakers and henceforth bear the malice that potential visitors will no longer deem you fully sane. In particular compact speakers love the extra piggyback mass which stabilises their imaging and bestows greater clarity to the sound. The fact that the extra weight comes with the shape and face of a mouse, with embroidered eyes (no joke!) and whiskers of thin metal wire, will probably contribute less to the effect – but who knows. Anyway, the mice are in regular use.

The very few speakers where the mice had no positive effect whatsoever include the "River's Tone" speakers presented here from Japanese maker Anodic Supply Ltd. Their cabinets are acoustically totally inert. Although our test system was merely the light version made of massive aluminium with a thick gilding. In its top upgrade version they're made of pure gold – more >

Number Three in Gold

For a main or second chain these noble nuggets from River's Tone may be too small. But those who can afford them will certainly have the right places for them, too.

than half a quintal of it.

The three-piece set – the speakers are complemented by an integrated amplifier of identical dimensions – is also one of the most enigmatic figures in the history of AUDIOPHILE. First because the manufacturer has never appeared in connection with hifi, second because he can't be found on Google and third is unavailable for direct enquiries. Therefore we need to depend on the scarce information that German agent Bodo Feldmann could give us, when he delivered the three little golden boxes to our editorial department in a discreetly worn flightcase one day. And on some private investigation, too.

So we found out that Anodic Supply is a Japanese mid-size industrial company which is actually not into electronics, but rather specialised in the surface treatment of e.g. tools and machine

parts. The brand name River's Tone brand (maybe referring to the nearby Arakawa River?) was invented by the company boss, whose name Ishikawa in literal translation means "stone river", and for whom the whole venture is probably not even a sideline, but just a hobby – though practised on a rather professional level. For the technical side River's Tone then also got a seasoned professional on board: Michio Sakamoto, a sound engineer who was the technical director of the large Sony studio complex in the Shinanomachi district of Tokyo during the 1980s and later held other high-ranking positions in Sony's music department. There's hardly any information retrievable about him on the internet, either, but in an old issue of the British professional journal "Studio Sound" which had published an ample coverage on Japan's recording

Fancy speakers: the diamonded faceplates in front of the drivers remind of reed grass with sparkling dew drops. They are made in classic goldsmithery style.

studios back in 1986. It was Sakamoto who was then leading the amazed colleagues through recording and control rooms which were so lavishly equipped as only a corporation like Sony in its heyday at the onset of the CD boom could afford.

Who knows about the often markedly pragmatic attitude of many studio folks can guess that Sakamoto must have been regarded as a true-bred audiophile among his professional colleagues – if this term was then common at all – or at least as a perfectionist. For instance, under his guidance even state-of-the-art devices were subsequently modified. The legendary Studer A80 tape machines e.g. were not equipped with their original heads, but with custom-designed units from Sony's "Magnetic Division". Which, >

” Designer Michio Sakamoto began his career in the studios of hard- and software giant Sony. River's Tone is the biggest imaginable contrast.



Singing gold ingots: slightly over twelve centimetres wide, the amp and the two speakers fit onto any desk, but also into the boudoir, the hunting lodge or the agile second yacht, which is given preference over the really big boat anyway.

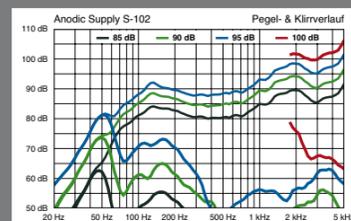
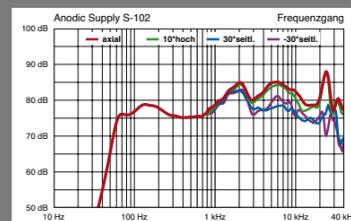
Anodic Supply Ltd The River's Tone

List prices: 1µ gold-plated from ca. 53,000 EUR, 10µ ca. 79,000 EUR, sterling silver 153,000 EUR, 24K gold 4,665,000 EUR
 Warranty: 5 years
 Weight: from 15 kg (33.1 lbs.)
 Dimensions (W x H x D): 12.4 x 13 x 17 cm each (4.9 x 5.1 x 6.7 in.)
 Finish options: gold-plated, solid Gold or solid Sterling silver
 Ornamental stones zirconia or diamond

Distribution:
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The Measurements

Measured in an anechoic chamber, the River's Tone speakers show a pronounced step in their frequency response, with the presence and treble region about 8dB louder than the bass and midrange (1). When used on a desktop or console, reflections from the table surface will smooth out the response considerably. The system shows low distortion up to around 95dB SPL.



according to Sakamoto, had "a totally different sound".

The principal engineer even had the power cables of all essential devices replaced with selected jumbos. But we come full circle with the TAD monitors, which were provided with a lining of lead plates at Sakamoto's behest – for sedating the cabinet walls.

Most of those metals with a higher density than lead are either highly toxic, radioactive, forbidden or otherwise unsuitable for building loudspeaker cabinets. Gold, by contrast, has only a single drawback: its enormously high price. But whoever has stashed the necessary 1500 fine ounces of it somewhere, could have them transformed just as well into this musical form and thus also have some fun before reselling it. The fact that the massive gold version is estimated at 4.5 million euros in the current price list, is mainly due to the material price for the precious metal plus the 40 carats of flawless brilliants

Spartan: other than a pair of RCA sockets the test device offers no inputs – the "series" (whatever that means in this case) will also have Bluetooth.

which set gently sparkling highlights on the speaker grilles shaped like grass stalks.

The test model with only a thick gold plating for an entry-level price of about 50,000 euros is decorated with zirconias instead. But even in this version the enclosures show perfectly smooth, polished surfaces like those of a precision optical instrument. Seen face on or from the sides, nothing disturbs the immaculate purity, no housing screws, no gaps or joints. Speakers and amplifier are rear mounted into their otherwise seamless metal shells and finally also sealed on the back in such a way that only the manufacturer can disassemble them again.

And what's inside? Each speaker features a 8 cm (3 in.) low-mid chassis made of woven carbon fibre that almost serves as a fullrange driver and passes on rather late, i.e. at 6-7kHz, to a silk dome tweeter. Both are driven by separate power amps via the included cables that are fitted with four-pole Neutrik connectors. According to River's Tone the latter shall make way for classic screw terminals in up-to-date incarnations – but who prefers the professional Neutriks can certainly get these, too.

”

The sound of a compact monitor at the price of an entire studio: River's Tone works at the intersection between artisan craftwork, high-end and hedonism.

The amplifying part is played by four switching power amps of unknown provenance that are located in the central housing and accessible for music signals via two phono sockets on the stern. Another access is granted via Bluetooth, and that's about it: one can turn on the system on the back, adjust the volume with the glamorous, handmade knob on the front and will never need to worry where the remote control has gone again – because there is none.

Normally you won't need one, either, because in any case the River's Tone system sounds best when listened to under nearfield conditions with the speakers placed at arm's length and approximately at ear level. For instance on my desk where the system was parked for several weeks and seduced me away from my regular headphones: it merged their wealth of details with a three-dimensional, palpable sort of ima-

ging as can only be achieved with "real" loudspeakers. Supported in the fundamental range by the tabletop, the tiny speaker cuties appeared tonally balanced and incredibly fine without sounding overly bright. Large, complex bodies of sound were also unravelled effortlessly while accurately preserving the timbral differentiation of the instrument groups. Evidently Sakamoto-san still seems to know what he's doing: the River's Tone can easily hold a candle to small nearfield monitors. The reason why it is much more expensive than its studio colleagues has to do primarily with its workmanship: it's the only hifi system that you can put into the shop windows of the finest jewellers without any problems. And which might well find a clientele there – maybe even in the multi-million dollar massive gold version that will definitely even sound a hint cleaner. <



Test-CD
 Annie Lennox
 Nostalgia

The solo album by Eurythmics vocalist sounds indeed nostalgic – both in songwriting and production. Over the River's Tone the lush arrangements sound pleasantly large-scale and transparent

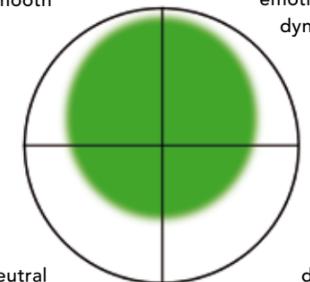


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 Bernhard
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In his main job AUDIO's chief editor. At home he preferably listens to current indie vinyl records on his old Naim system – when he's not chasing after 2nd hand professional espresso machines or new US made workboots.

AUDIOphile character

effortless, airy, smooth gripping, emotional, dynamic



AUDIOphile Potential



Recommendation

This very small system works best under nearfield conditions in not overly large rooms, ideally positioned on a slightly larger reflective surface such as a desk.



RIVER'S TONE

- Grill design may vary as each is made individually by hand; custom-designs available on request

- Bodies can also be made in Aluminum and Anodized-Coated, available on request

Main Specifications

- 2-Way Bass Reflex Speaker Design; Bi-Amplifier Circuitry; High Purity Speakers; Bluetooth Audio

- NEUTRIK SPEAKON Connectors; WBT Sockets available as option

Editions

Model	Housing	Grills
Aurum	Pure Gold	Platinum + Diamonds
Argentum	Sterling Silver	Platinum + Diamonds
AI -10 -Au	Gold-Plated 10 μ m	Silver + Zirconia
AI -03 -Au	Gold-Plated 3 μ m	Silver + Zirconia



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