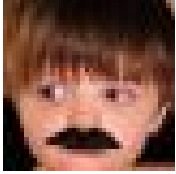


# RESULTS - Integrated Shootout with LSiM703



**DSkip** Posts: 9,015

June 24 edited June 24 in 2 Channel Audio

This is an extension of the original preview thread found here:

<http://forum.polkaudio.com/discussion/168111/a-shootout-with-lsim-703s-integrated-amps#latest>

We spent about three hours doing this, so its not an in depth review, but more a presentation of our initial thoughts. I asked Paul to write up his thoughts before I posted mine so I would not influence his. I tried not to offer too much input during the trials unless Paul didn't know how to describe what he was hearing. I will be mixing in my own thoughts with Paul's.

Paul's thoughts will be in normal font.

*My thoughts will be italicized.*

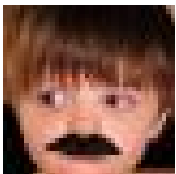
Here are the results:

Post edited by DSkip on June 24



« 1 2 »

## Comments



**DSkip** Posts: 9,015

June 24 edited June 24

1. iFi Stereo 50 - \$1500:

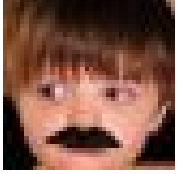


## Paul

This will be the hardest piece to review because we actually hooked it up twice (first and last). In the initial set-up, the bass was boomy and the highs were bordering on shrill. This is the piece that I wanted to like the most because it looks so cool, but it just wasn't what I was hoping for at the beginning. After moving a few things around in the room, we tamed the bass quite a bit. It was still boomy, but it was better. I believe Skip was running an external DAC during the initial listening session which was around 3:30 in the afternoon (nod to the "Listening and Time of Day" thread). We hooked this piece back up around 6:30 and while not bad, it was clearly my least favorite piece to this point in the afternoon. WOW! What happened in the 3 hours between the initial listen and the final listen? I believe the external DAC was removed, but it sounded like a totally different unit. The bass had the slightest boominess, but the borderline shrill top-end was gone. I went from disappointed to impressed.

## Skip

*The stereo 50 initially disappointed me greatly. It has been a great pairing with the Usher Mini X, and I expected its qualities to pair up very well with the 703. However, it didn't happen. The first go around, I had put some new components into the mix (iPurifier and iUSB Power) that obviously needed some break in time. Paul hit it on the head. I had decided to run through the rest of the gear and come back to the piece at the end, only after removing those pieces from the mix. The results were much better and more in line with what I expected. The bass was still a bit touchy, but the top end smoothed out drastically and the magic of tubes were evident. The sound was organic and naturally presented with realistic control. For obvious reasons, I am leaving the stock tubes in my demo piece, but one could easily make this thing sound MUCH better by rolling in their flavor of tubes.*



**DSkip** Posts: 9,015

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2. Parasound Halo Integrated - \$2500:

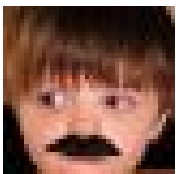


## Paul

After listening to a couple of songs I wasn't sure I wanted hook up my Plinius because I was afraid that it had been bested by the Parasound. I found the sound to be very balanced, clear, and natural with no listener fatigue whatsoever. I was very impressed with this piece.

## Skip

*I will admit that this piece impressed me more than I expected. I think this is a nice piece for sure, but I expected the iFi and Menuetto to best it from the beginning. I think we spent the most time listening to this piece because it sounded so much better than the first trial with the iFi. On the Mini X, this piece can be a little over the top with bass and highs. It has a little different sound than most Parasound gear I've heard - more neutral in tone as opposed to the warm sound they get credited with - but it paired up beautifully with the 703. Bass was very controlled, the tone was very well balanced, and on a few songs, it had Paul and I trading expressions of impression. I think this would be an excellent fit for any of the LSiM's.*



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3. Dayens Ampino \$560:



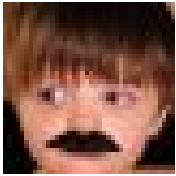
## Paul

Next up was the tiny little Ampino. After listening to the Parasound, I found the vocals to be just a bit forward. (Note: I defer to Skip on the use of “forward” here. Though accurate I’m sure, to be more specific, the vocals were just a bit louder to me.) This unit has deep accurate bass, plenty of depth and a nice sparkle on the top end. Though you will see where it ranks in a moment, this is the piece that left me most impressed. Though I’ll admit that I don’t have the experience of many on here, \$560 new for sound like this is unheard of in my somewhat limited time in the hobby. If you only have two sources and you want great sound for little coin, stop looking.

## Skip

*The Dayens products were ones I really wanted to hear with the 703. They are nice little products that offer a lot of bang for the buck. I decided to start with the Ampino because I expected the Menuetto to perform better, and didn't want to take away from the Ampino's abilities. This one had a very rich midrange to it, but did bring the lead singer out into the room more. It felt like he was about 3 feet out in front of where he was originally. This has to do with the emphasis on midrange that Paul mentioned above. Separation was good and it really didn't do anything poorly, but also didn't do anything exceptionally. At 25 watts per channel, its a tiny amp that packs a lot of punch.*

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4. Dayens Menuetto - \$995:



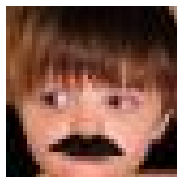
## Paul

A step up in price and a step in performance from the Ampino. My ears are not good enough to find any flaws with this piece. This was the Jordan Spieth of integrated amp world...it doesn't necessarily do anything great, but does nothing bad. Solid all the way around. I'll contradict myself here a little bit by saying that this piece was the most transparent of all the ones we listened to.

## Skip

*I have one word to describe this pairing - LIQUID. Holey crapola. This pairing rivals some of the best I've heard. Everything just sounded so natural, like watching water flow. Everything was in its place, had a sweet sound to it, and was extremely organic. It wasn't forward or recessed. Nothing was overemphasized or underemphasized. This is approaching that nirvana that people spend years, sometimes decades, trying to achieve. If you own LSiM's, you'd be doing yourself a disservice by not*

*giving this one a chance.*



**DSkip** Posts: 9,015

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5. Plinius 9100 - Roughly \$1500 on used market (Unless you get it on CP at a great price):



### **Paul**

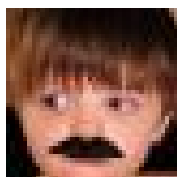
I'm obviously familiar with this piece since I listen to it on a daily basis (albeit in a terrible room). When we all heard this piece at Skip's January get together I thought it was the perfect match for the 703's and that it couldn't be beat. No need to say much else because I've raved about this combo many times on the forum. Comparing it to the others I realized it's a tad brighter than I had realized.

### **Skip**

*I had my doubts that this would've been beaten. Through experience owning it, I know this amp needs*

some good warm up time that it was not afforded in this trial. However, when everyone was in complete awe of it at my house back in January, it was under similar circumstances. The presentation was more forward than I remembered and had more midrange than I remembered. Compared to the others, it had much more serious competition when paired with the 703 than it had in January.

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**RESULTS!!!**

**Paul**

**Overall:** Let me be very clear that I could take any of these units home and be a very happy man. In my opinion the difference between #1 and #5 is a very slim margin. I do think #1 and #5 were pretty clear, but you could easily switch the middle three. As a matter of fact, I might even call the Plinius and iFi 50 a tie.

- 5: Dayens Ampino
- 4: iFi Stereo 50
3. Plinius 9100
2. Parasound Halo Integrated
1. Dayens Menuetto

**Bang for the buck:** These rankings aren't as close in my opinion. The Ampino is clearly the winner, Parasound is clearly #5, and the Menuetto is clearly #3. As in the previous rankings, I might call a tie between the Plinius and iFi 50.

- 5: Parasound Halo Integrated
- 4: iFi Stereo 50
- 3: Plinius 9100
- 2: Dayens Menuetto
- 1: Dayens Ampino

## Skip

**Overall:** The Menuetto walked all over everything else. It was ridiculously good. The remaining pieces are a little tougher to differentiate because it can really come down to preference.

5. Dayens Ampino
4. Plinius 9100
3. iFi Stereo 50
2. Parasound Halo Integrated
1. Dayens Menuetto

**Bang for the buck:** Like Paul, price separates these much more. The Parasound and iFi still represent great values because of the built in DAC functions. I have factored in cabling and separate components that would need to be added.

5. Plinius 9100 (Sorry Paul, didn't feel this way until the shootout)
  4. Parasound Halo Integrated (great piece, but also most expensive)
  3. iFi Stereo 50 (excellent value and would be higher if I also used vinyl)
  2. Dayens Ampino (great piece, but not the best pairing with the 703)
  1. Dayens Menuetto (Killed everything, and at \$1000 new, might be the best option for the LSiM lineup, period)
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