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## The Ear's Best

By [Brent Butterworth](#)

In 1959, Sonny Rollins famously stopped recording and took to the Williamsburg Bridge for some lengthy practice sessions. Fifty years later, the audio industry has done much the same thing—it has taken a sabbatical from the headlong rush into new technologies and simply focused on getting better. While the industry produced nothing revolutionary in 2009, it nonetheless delivered some brilliant executions of familiar themes. This collection of *JazzTimes*' Gear of the Year features my picks of the most exciting products in each category. Of course, there are many other new products from 2009 that also merit your attention, but these 11 are the ones that left the biggest impression on me.



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TEAC AG-H600NT Reference Series Receiver

### **TEAC AG-H600NT Reference Series Receiver**

To those uninitiated in the ways of high-end audio, the massive bulk and exotic designs of many audiophile components can seem intimidating. TEAC's tiny Reference Series components provoke the opposite reaction—they're as instantly accessible as "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." The most exciting of the line is the \$1,499 AG-H600NT receiver, one of the first high-end components to include Internet radio capability. Besides the 12,000-plus stations available through the Internet, you can also get AM and FM, plus iPod music through an optional dock. The AG-H600NT might look underpowered, but its 75-watt-per-channel digital amplifiers and robust internal power supply assure you'll enjoy a realistic *thwak* every time Philly Joe Jones strikes his snare. [www.teac.com](http://www.teac.com)