

HI-FI CHOICE

www.hifichoice.co.uk | www.t3network.co.uk

UK'S BEST BUYER'S GUIDE
1000
MODELS
RATED!

AWARDS 2001

EUROPE'S SEXIEST KIT REVEALED...

- ...the best MP3 Player
- ...the best High End Audio
- ...the best Loudspeaker
- ...the best CD Player
- ...the best DVD Player
- ...the best CD Recorder
- ...the best Amplifier
- ...the best Car Hi-Fi
- ...the best AV System
- ...the best Subwoofer
- ...the best Style System

**PLUS! ULTIMATE
LOUDSPEAKERS!**

12 great models you must hear

BUDGET 'PHONES

Top headphones for under £100



marantz®



Experience the emotion - Total Eclipse!

The new Marantz Eclipse range is a stylish and versatile hi-fi system encompassing elegant, refined design and up-to-the-minute technology. The latest musical innovations, such as MP3 playback and rewritable CD, can be mixed and matched to form a sleek yet dynamic sound system. Proof indeed that you really can have beauty and intelligence.

Eclipse - get a glimpse at your local Marantz dealer.



Tel. 01753 680868 Internet: www.marantz.com

because music matters

CONTRIBUTORS



Tim Bown runs both stereo and multichannel systems with kit including Arcam, PMC, Bryston and TAG McLaren.



Dan George likes rock music and plays it on a Naim CD player, Bryston amps and B&W Matrix 801 loudspeakers.



Richard Black plays piano professionally and uses EAR electronics and ATC speakers for classical and world music.



Paul Messenger likes dance, folk, rock and classical music on vinyl and uses Linn, Naim and Rehdeko kit with gusto.



Paul Miller is the king of the technical world when it comes to hi-fi. He uses DPA amps and Audio Note speakers.



Alvin Gold prefers serious classical music and has a predilection toward expensive amps and JM Lab speakers.

HOW WE TEST THE PRODUCTS

Our reviewing process is the most rigorous in the business. We focus on transparency and resolution, mixing traditional hi-fi values with the latest technological developments via a blend of subjective views and scientific analysis.

■ BENCH TESTS Our main group test each month concentrates on a key area, with products from across the separates market. The testing consists of three stages: 'blind' listening, hands-on subjective testing and scientific measuring. The latter phase is conducted by our Technical Editor using the QC Suite Functional Testing Station.

■ GROUP TESTS Each issue features a number of additional tests aimed at narrowing the field in a specific product area. Here the testing involves just the reviewer concerned with no lab or panel testing, but plenty of comparisons.

■ SOLO REVIEWS As well as group tests we also review single components. In our First Impression section, you'll find brand new products that warrant early exposure, while High Performance concentrates on the latest aspirational, high tech components.

AWARD TAGS



BEST BUYS are considered to offer an excellent standard of performance at an attractive price.



RECOMMENDED products are first class components, losing out to Best Buys only because of a higher price or less competitive sound quality.



EDITOR'S CHOICE, A third award, **EDITOR'S CHOICE**, is reserved for those products reviewed solo and awarded where the Editor is convinced that a product offers exceptional quality for the price.

"WITH SPEAKERS, MORE THAN ANY COMPONENT, THE SHAPE OF THE ROOM AND THE VOLUME LEVEL HAVE A HUGE INFLUENCE ON THE END RESULT."



Europe is a big, lively place, full of enthusiasts who are just as obsessive as we are about the quest for absolute sound. They may go about it in a different way but the results are often extremely good. They also have their own magazines, and once a year I get together with the editors of these titles

to judge the best hi-fi kit on the continent. You'll find the EISA award winners, as these 'best in Europe' components are known, on page 40. I don't think any of them, with the exception of the in-car and video winners, will be strangers to regular *Choice* readers.

We've found a few more European stars in our loudspeaker bench test this month. Paul Messenger has been ploughing through his eclectic music, establishing which boxes are best – and he clearly had some trouble. With speakers, more than any component, the shape of the room and the volume level have a huge influence on the end result. This explains why the B&W CM4 that sounded so good in our office-based listening room was considered a little too relaxed by Paul and his panel. Which proves how important it is to audition speakers at home before committing yourself. Plenty of shops will let you bring speakers back and get your money back or change them for something more appropriate, and a few will even lend you a pair for a few days gratis.

Richard Black has been trying on a batch of budget headphones – not something he normally indulges in, which makes it all the more gratifying that he is having to question his prejudices on account of the high quality he found. If you fancy a bit of aural intimacy have a look at his findings.

I have taken delivery of my first DVD-A player, a Pioneer DV-939A, with which I have been exploring the expanding range of material available – and highly entertaining stuff it is too. So far it is the rock material that is proving most thrilling: Metallica's awesome *Black* album sounds much more substantial than it ever did and Deep Purple's *Machine Head* proves that they could make stunning rock recordings in the early 70s. I haven't gone down the multichannel route yet, but now that more software is becoming available it's not going to be long before I start making space for some extra channels. I've even devised a cunning plan to get hold of software – we're going to start reviewing high-res software. Watch this space...

Reviews

HI-FI CHOICE

october 2001 | Issue 219

22

RED ROSE BABY REFERENCE SYSTEM
NEW OFFSPRING FROM MARK LEVINSON

26

ARCAM FMJ DVD23
UPMARKET FMJ-STYLE VIDEO AND
SOUND FROM UK GIANT

28

AUDIO NOTE CD 3.1X
SERIOUS ONE-BOX CD PLAYER
GIVES A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

30

BRYSTON SP1 AND 9B
HIGH END MULTICHANNEL
WITH MULTI-MUSCLE

40

EISA AWARDS
THE PICK OF THE EUROPEAN CROP
AS BY HFC AND THE EISA PANEL

60

BENCH TEST: LOUDSPEAKERS
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO
UPMARKET LOUDSPEAKERS

82

GROUP TEST: HEADPHONES
WE CAN THE CANS WITH SUZY'S BIGGEST
FAN, RICHARD BLACK



COVER STORY

COVER STORY

COVER STORY

HI-FI CHOICE

Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street,
London W1U 6FP

EDITORIAL

020 7317 2600 Fax 020 7317 0275
Regrettably we can't speak to readers or
answer queries on the phone. Please
send a letter, fax or e-mail instead.

Editor Jason 'Kenney' Kennedy
jason.kennedy@futurenet.co.uk
020 7317 2496

Deputy Editor Tim 'Timaah' Bowers
tim.bowers@futurenet.co.uk
020 7317 2495

Art Editor Del 'Butters' Gentleman
del.gentleman@futurenet.co.uk
020 7317 2494

Production Editor David 'Screw you
guys, I'm going home' Bailey
david.bailey@futurenet.co.uk
020 7317 2493

Staff Writer Dan 'Pip' George
dan.george@futurenet.co.uk
020 7317 2497

Online Editor Lucy Knowles
lucy.knowles@futurenet.co.uk
01225 442244

Consultant Editor Paul Messenger
Technical Editor Paul Miller
Contributors Richard Black, Jimmy
Hughes, Wes Phillips, David Vivian

Illustration Anna Hughes
Photography Peter Dazely, Chris Foster
ADVERTISING Fax 020 7486 5676
Group Ad Manager
Rob Debenham: 020 7317 0239
rob.debenham@futurenet.co.uk

Ad Manager
Emma Lewis: 020 7317 0202
emma.lewis@futurenet.co.uk
Senior Sales Executive
Gina Fontanarosa 020 7317 2684
gina.fontanarosa@futurenet.co.uk
Sales Executive
Richard Dappiano 020 7317 0278
richard.dappiano@futurenet.co.uk
Sales Executive
Mark Smith 020 7317 2643

mark.smith@futurenet.co.uk
PRODUCTION
01225 442244

Production Coordinator
Faye Lloyd
MARKETING
01225 442244

Group Marketing Manager
Donna Holland
DISTRIBUTION
Circulation Manager Jason Comber
jason.comber@futurenet.co.uk
01225 442244
Distributed by Seymour Distribution,
86 Newnham St, London, W1P 3LD.
020 7907 6000

MANAGEMENT
Publisher Simon 'Chef' Davies
020 7317 2600
simon.davies@futurenet.co.uk
Creative Director Paul Kurzeja
Advertising Director Karen Needham
Group Publisher Andy Sutcliffe
Publishing Director Robert Price

BACK ISSUES - SEE PAGE 129 FOR DETAILS.

Selected back issues are available at £4.00 each (£6.95 overseas) inc.
p&p. Call (01458) 271147 to order - all major credit cards accepted.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - see page 94 FOR DETAILS

UK: £29.97. Europe: £43.00. North America: £49.99. Rest of
world: £56.99. Call (01458) 271147, 8am-8pm, Monday-Friday.

NEW PRODUCT INFORMATION

We welcome information on all new and upgraded products -
please send all press releases to the Editor. The magazine is
obliged neither to review nor return unsolicited products, and
does not accept responsibility for unsolicited copy.
Pre-Press Bureau Westside, London W1. Printing St Ives (Plymouth)
Ltd.



Hi-Fi Choice is the UK hi-fi magazine, repre-
sentative of the European Imaging & Sound
Association (EISA).
Every year EISA honours the finest hi-fi and
home cinema products throughout Europe.



Hi-Fi Choice is published 13 times a year by Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth
Street, Bath BA1 2BW

All material © Future 2001. All rights reserved.

This publication may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form in whole or in part
without the written permission of the publishers. While every care has been taken in the
preparation of this journal, the publishers cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of
the information contained herein, nor for any consequence arising

Overseas licensing department

Hi-Fi Choice is available for licensed publication overseas. For further details contact Chris
Power, on +44 (0)1225 442244, by fax +44 (0)1225 732384, or by e-mail
chris.power@futurenet.co.uk



Future Publishing is part of The Future Network plc.
The Future Network produces carefully targeted special-
ist magazines and websites for groups of people
who share a passion. We aim to satisfy their passion
by creating titles that offer superb value for money,
trustworthy information, multiple ways to save time
and money, and are a pleasure to read or visit. Today
we publish more than 30 magazines and over 30 magazine websites and networks from
offices in five countries. The company also licenses 39 of its titles resulting in over 150
local editions in 30 other countries.

The Future Network plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FNET)

Chairman: Chris Anderson **Chief Executive:** Greg Ingham

Chief Operating Officer: Colin Morrison

Interim Finance Director: Michael Pennington

Tel: +44 1225 442244 **www.thefuturenetwork.plc.uk**
Bath London Los Angeles Milan New York Paris San Francisco Wroclaw



News

6 FIRST IMPRESSIONS
SIX NEWCOMERS TO THE HI-FI SCENE MAKE AN EFFORT TO IMPRESS

14 NEWCOMERS MAKE AN EFFORT
OUR NEWS-GATHERING TEAM SHOW TREVOR MCDONALD A THING OR TWO

18 NEWS USA
WES INVESTIGATES PC AUDIO, STATESIDE

Attack of the Bluerooms!
Fight 'em off on page 7.



Sony's new style system,
reviewed on page 9.

Forum

32 LETTERS
WHAT'S YOUR POINT? READERS PEN ISSUES CLOSE TO THEIR HEARTS

34 WEBPAGE
HIFICHOICE.CO.UK GETS THE COUNTRY CONNECTED WITH CABLE TALK

36 HELP
IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, IF NO-ONE ELSE CAN HELP, AND IF YOU CAN FIND THEM... MAYBE YOU CAN HIRE THE CHOICE TEAM

Opinion

3 EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
WORDS OF INEFFABLE WISDOM FROM THE EDITOR

39 JIMMY HUGHES' TWEAKS
IN THE WAR ON DIRTY CDs, JIMMY CLEANS UP!

130 PAUL MESSENGER
SIZE CLEARLY MATTERS: PAUL CONSIDERS THE STRENGTHS OF 8" DRIVERS

PRODUCTS IN THIS ISSUE

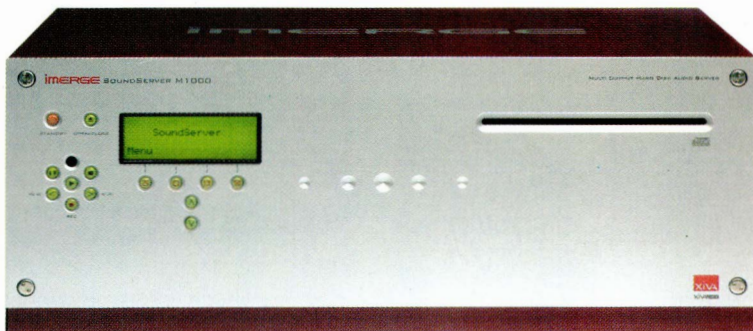
Onkyo TX-DS494	06	Samsung Photo Yepp WYP-P300	55
Blueroom Minipod and bass station	07	ATC SCM20SL	62
Mission M74	10	Audio Note AN-J/SPE	63
Sony CMT-C5	09	B&W CM4	65
Sony MDS-JE770	11	Castleharlech S2	67
Loth-X BS1	12	Chario Academy Millenium 1	69
Arcam FMJ DV23	26	Dali Grand Coupe	71
BrystonSP1/9B	30	Dynaudio Contour 1.3 mkII	73
Audio Note CD	28	JM Lab Cobalt 826	74
Red Rose Music Baby Reference System	22	ProAc reponse 1.5	75
Philips SACD 1000	42	Ruark CL20	77
Pioneer PDR-609	43	Spendor SP2/3E	78
JVC FS-SD 1000R	44	Triangle Antal XS	79
Creative Labs D.A.P. Jukebox	49	AKG k44	84
NAD C370	51	Koss R/200	85
Alpine F#1 Status	52	JVC HA-G77	84
JVC Cinema 100	56	Philips HP890	85
Onkyo TX-DS494	56	Sennheiser HD 570 Symphony	87
Sonus Faber Gravis B1	57	Sony MDR-CD480	87
KEF KHT 2005	57	Technics RP-F500	89
Panasonic DVD-RA71	52	Vivanco SR222S	89
Yamaha DPX-1	55		

Features

20 INTERVIEW
DAVID VIVIAN LOOKS TO THE FUTURE WITH THE LATEST SOUNDSERVER TECHNOLOGY

92 DIGITAL RADIO
RICHARD BLACK'S NO SHERBET, JUST A DAB HAND WITH RADIO TECHNOLOGY

Discover Imerge's possibilities on page 20.



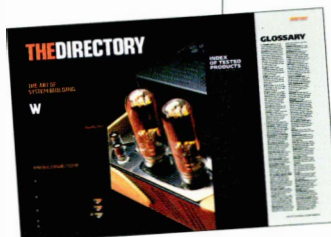
Services

102 HI-FI DIRECTORY
A complete listing of current hi-fi kit reviewed by us over the years, with ECs, BBs and Recs.

94 SUBSCRIPTIONS
Save time and money when you subscribe to the finest hi-fi magazine in the world.

101 READER'S CLASSIFIED
Track down a hi-fi bargain by checking out our plethora of pre-owned classics.

129 BACK ISSUES
Looking for a past review? This page tells you how to obtain a back issue or order a review reprint.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

TIM BOWERN AND DAN GEORGE RUMMAGE IN HI-FI'S BRAN DIP FOR THE LATEST KIT.



Onkyo's new multichannel amp has Pro-Logic II

ONKYO TX-DS494 5.1-CHANNEL SURROUND SOUND RECEIVER

★★★★★ £399.99



"AS A LOW-COST, ANY FORMAT SOLUTION, IT'S REALLY PRETTY GOOD."

DATASTREAM

DOLBY DIGITAL, dts and DPL II decoding, seven DSP soundfields, power rated at 5x55 Watts into 8 Ohms, AM/FM tuner with RDS, three composite A/V inputs (inc. one record loop), three stereo audio-only inputs (inc. phono and one recorder loop), three digital audio inputs (two coaxial, one optical), three S-Video inputs/one output, 5.1-channel audio input (DVD-Audio/multichannel SACD ready)

JAMO ☎ 01788 556777

Surround sound may no longer be the sole preserve of the home cinema fraternity, but building a multichannel set-up that does justice to your music like good stereo hi-fi is inevitably an expensive business. So how about those with more limited budgets – those who want to achieve a good level of performance with both two-channel music and movie surround, and dip their toes into the new high-resolution DVD-Audio and SACD surround music formats?

They could do worse than give Onkyo's new entry-level receiver a spin. As well as obligatory Dolby Digital and dts decoding, used primarily to play back data-compressed DVD-Video surround soundtracks, the TX-DS494 also one of the first to sport Dolby Pro Logic. Considerably more sophisticated than original Pro-Logic II, it converts stereo or Dolby Surround material into quasi-5.1 surround sound – music, TV, videotapes or whatever. If you've always wondered how your favourite CD would sound in surround, now you can get a taste – albeit an artificial and somewhat softly rendered one.

With plenty of logos like 'WRAT' (Wide Range Amp Technology) and '96kHz/24-bit' adorning

the literature, this is an entry-level receiver that sets its stall out as a high-resolution contender. An ambitious intention and not entirely borne out in practice, though it's fair to say it has a brave stab given the asking price. With both two-channel CDs and DVD-Audio surround discs it sounds smooth and decently detailed, but there's neither the bass definition nor the sense of space and timing you get with a good stereo amp in the same price sector.

With movie material it's generally satisfying, able to conjure a detailed and expansive soundfield guaranteed to help keep you riveted to the screen. It doesn't have the sheer punch of some competitors, but several of those sound less pleasant with music. As a low-cost, any-format amp solution it's really a pretty good all-rounder. And there's an AM/FM tuner with RDS to boot!

But despite all that, one of its greatest assets is ease of use. From the on-screen menu to the allocation of buttons, it's clear Onkyo has put a lot of effort into making this amp user-friendly. And in the complex and often cumbersome world of A/V amps, that alone makes it worthy of praise. **TB**



Sony's new stealth bomber mini system.

SONY CMT-C5 STEREO STYLE SYSTEM

★★★★★ £499.99

Sony's school of aesthetic design is getting increasingly high-tech. It could be its people are watching too many Manga movies. Or it could be they've

tapped into a post-Millennial demand for kit that looks as tasty as the technology inside. We're banking on the latter, in which case Sony's CMT-C5 micro system should hit the spot.

It may be small, but few micros strike a more aggressive pose. The main unit's CD case-size fascia is black, square and industrial, surrounded top and sides by mirrored metal armour. Like a rabid little pit-bull, it's clear this system means business. And then the speakers catch your eye. They're black and shiny, like the micro itself, their curvy elliptical bodies converging to a point at the rear. According to the legend on the side, this is an "Advanced Cyber Style Speaker System". But while it's pretty good at reproducing bleeps and whistles, it can't fix your X-Wing fighter like R2-D2 can.

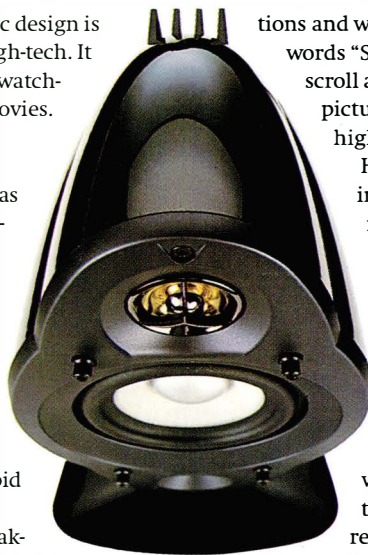
Unusually, the speakers attach via an eight-pin connector, the reason for which is apparent when you fire it up. The speakers' translucent cones are backed by a blue light, which shines through the grilles like a watchful cyber-eye. The main unit's controls sport matching illumina-

tions and when switched into standby the words "Sony Cyber Age Disc System" scroll across the display. We get the picture - how more high-tech can a high-tech thing be?

Hmm. A little more high-tech in the sound department, we reckon. Post a CD through its little letterbox opening and you're greeted by a sound that's solid and punchy, avoiding much of the excessive flab that inflicts some of the more 'boy racery' systems around. It's the sort of sound that hits quite hard with dance music, but beyond the upper-bass bloom there's really not a great deal there. It

sounds vague compared to the best micros around these days, like Denon's D-M30. A system like that will give you a more musical sort of experience if you're looking for something compact and stylish for a particular room in the house.

Where the Sony CMT-C5 does have most of them licked is in its facilities. Its built-in MiniDisc recorder features MDLP so you can squeeze on more music and its PC-Link socket means you can hook the MD deck to a computer via an optional kit. Hi-tech indeed. But hi-fi? No. **TB**



"IT MAY BE SMALL, BUT FEW MICROS STRIKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE POSE."

DATASTREAM

MAIN UNIT MEASURES

14.5x12.5x28cm (WxHxD), includes CD playback, MiniDisc recording/playback with MDLP, AM/FM/MW tuner with RDS, six sound EQ modes plus bass boost, PC-Link facility, power rated at 15 Watts per channel, 'Cyber Egg' style speakers
SONY ☎ 01932 81600

BLUEROOM MINIPOD SPEAKERS PLUS BASS STATION SUBWOOFER

★★★★★ LOUDSPEAKER £299.00 PER PAIR / SUBWOOFER £469.00

Blueroom's Minipod is the coolest little loudspeaker on the planet. The question is *which* planet, because its curvy celestial body is surely not of this Earth...

Further investigation reveals evidence to the contrary. Blueroom in fact started life as a subsidiary of UK speaker giant B&W before gaining independent status, burying itself underground in deepest Sussex then bursting back to life a couple of years back with the revamped, lower-priced Minipod. Since then the firm and its funky little speaker have been ticking along nicely, eschewing traditional promotional channels and immersing themselves in club culture and quirky TV appearances.

And now a new product is set to gatecrash the party. The Bass Station is an active subwoofer designed to augment the Minipod with deep, deep bass. It's not as curvy but just as striking – like a performance-size bongo with an upward firing drive unit and four spindly Sputnik legs. Like the Minipod, it's fashioned from moulded plastic and comes in the same variety of colours for the perfect otherworldly match.

Not that the Pod is overtly in need of a subwoofer to boost its performance. On its own it's

an enjoyably musical little speaker with an effortless midrange. Its compact shape minimises obvious 'boxiness' and sound hangs beautifully, abetted by that curious shape and an absence of parallelsides. It doesn't possess the sweetest of trebles, but its smoothly contoured port helps ensure an impression of weight reasonable for most musical purposes, in smaller rooms at least.

But still, there are applications where some added thump wouldn't go amiss. A spot of home cinema, for example. And so it proves. Used with a pair of Pods and a little careful adjustment, the sub punches out the bass lines while the Minipods' mid-drivers deliver the vocal with smooth, deliberate assurance. Add a further three Pods and you can use the combo for surround material, be it music or movies – not the most visceral sound around, but the combination of open midrange and solid (though slightly bulbous) bass makes a persuasive little package with style that's second to none. **TB**

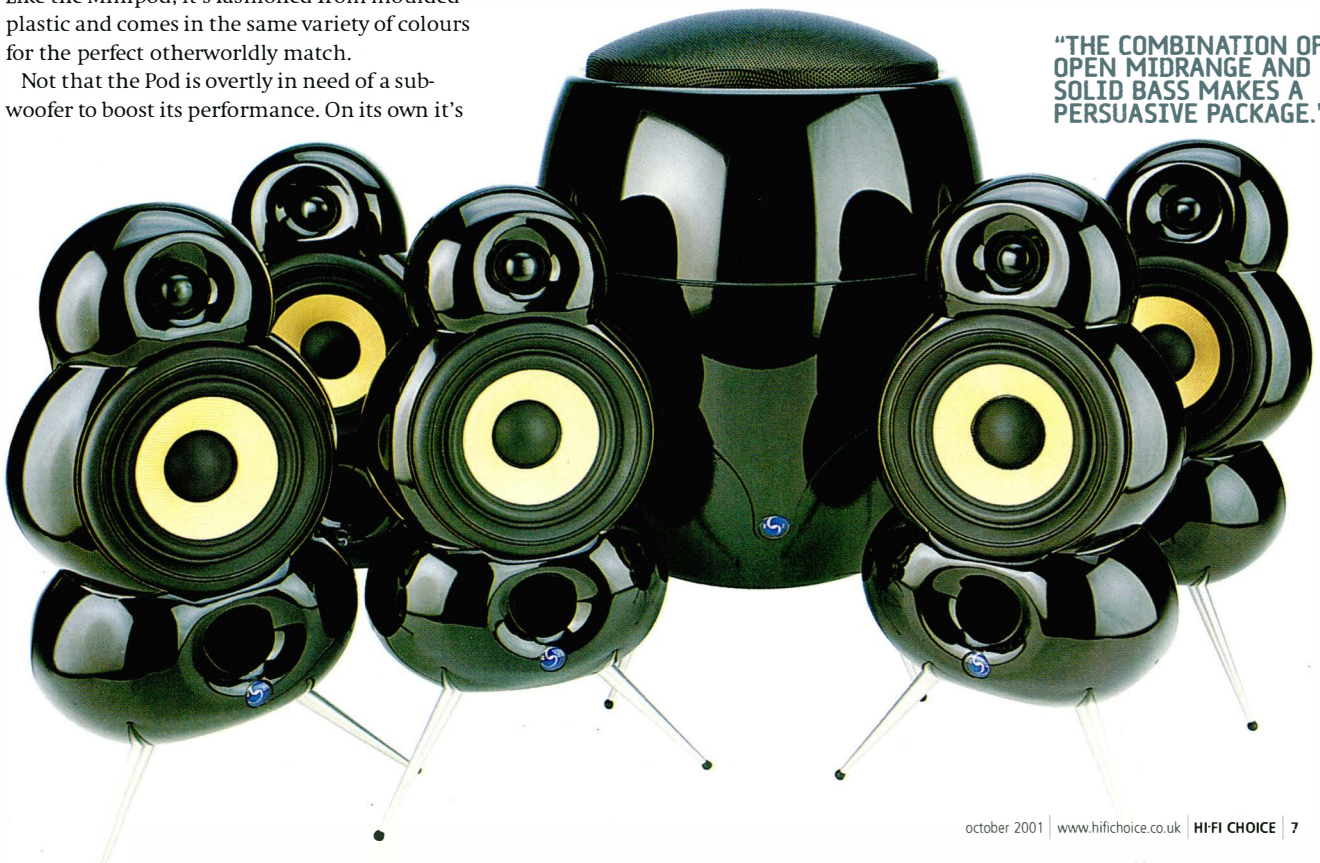


The controls of the Blueroom sub enable you to tailor its balance to the room.

DATASTREAM

MINIPOD: measures 21x44x22cm (WxHxD – inc. legs), 100mm Kevlar mid/bass cone, 26mm soft dome tweeter, sensitivity rated at 90dB, impedance rated at 4 Ohms.
Bass Station: measures 53x34cm (HxD – inc. legs), 250mm driver, integral 70 Watt amp, line and high level inputs/outputs, adjustment for level, phase and crossover frequency
BLUEROOM ☎ 01903 260033

"THE COMBINATION OF OPEN MIDRANGE AND SOLID BASS MAKES A PERSUASIVE PACKAGE."



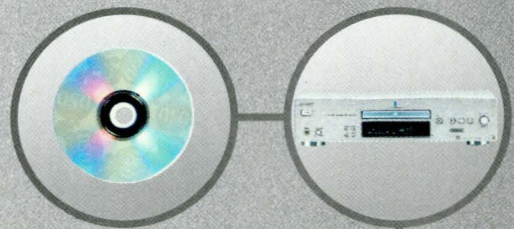


SUPER AUDIO CD

Get inside the music.
Sony Super Audio CD.



No other music system gets you closer. The Sony Super Audio CD provides you with unrivalled sound reproduction thanks to Direct Stream Digital (DSD). A clever little 1-bit recording system that samples audio signals at a rate 64 times higher than conventional Compact Disc. Giving you a dynamic range of over 120db and an unprecedented bandwidth of over 100kHz. With its multichannel capabilities, the new Sony SCD-XB770 immerses you in sound. So you do more than just hear the music, you are part of it. And because all Sony SACD players are compatible with conventional CDs, there's no need to replace your CD collection. To see the Sony SCD-XB770 visit your closest Sony retailer. To hear one, why not try your nearest concert venue.



go create

SONY

www.sony.co.uk

Customer information number 08705 111 999 Sony, Direct Stream Digital and Sony Super Audio CD are registered trademarks of Sony Corporation, Japan.

MISSION M74 LOUDSPEAKER

★★★★★ £299.90



They look a million dollars – but cost considerably less!

You could argue that Mission has done wonders for the hi-fi industry. Undoubtedly it has consistently contributed to the budget speaker pool, and who knows how many music lovers have got into hi-fi courtesy of the Huntingdon manufacturer. Mission has enjoyed a good degree of success with the new M70 range aimed at both hi-fi and multichannel markets: certainly the M72 and M73s tested here at *Choice* have won praise. Now comes the turn of the largest model, the M74, which is a beefy two-way design sporting twin 160mm glass composite drivers which surround a 25mm fabric soft dome tweeter.

The M74s have the distinctive ABS moulded baffle characteristic of the range, and this certainly looks better from a distance. Overall build quality is excellent, the woodprint vinyl is of a good standard, and the drivers look good enough to command a higher price than the modest £300 tag. The 40.5 litre MDF cabinets sport a considerable rear port, suggesting that near wall placement is not an option.

What's most striking about these speakers is the transparency and level of detail available for such a low price. Like others in the range, the M74s share a wonderful musicality and captivating rhythmic ability. What's surprising about them, however, is the forward balance. Treble can be lively at times and the presentation is undoubtedly lean in the midrange. Bass extension is good however, and it's very well integrated, but despite the significant balance criticisms, you can't help but enjoy this speaker for its wonderful resolution and sense of timing. It would be unforgivable not to audition this speaker if you have £300 to spend, but its balance may not be to all tastes. **DG**



DATASTREAM

MEASURES 200x950x325mm (WxHxD), 2-way reflex loaded design, twin 160mm woven glass mid/bass cones, 25mm fabric dome tweeter, 91dB sensitivity, 8 ohm impedance, black and European beech finishes.

MISSION ☎ 01480 423700



SONY MDS-JE770 MINIDISC DECK

★★★★★ £259.99

"THIS DECK IS EVIDENCE THAT THE GAP BETWEEN MD AND CD-R HAS NARROWED."

DATASTREAM

ATRAC R DATA compression format, full editing facilities, PC-Link, optional keyboard connection for track name entry, MDLP 'longplay' facility – doubles or quadruples recording time (with some quality loss), sampling frequency 44.1kHz. Inputs: stereo analogue, digital optical, digital coaxial. Outputs: stereo analogue, digital optical, headphone

SONY ☎ 01932 81600

People have been predicting MiniDisc's demise for some time now. Faced with the superior audio quality of recordable CD, not to mention the universality of CD as a music format, many claim that this particular dog has had its day.

But the format's creator begs to differ. Yes, CD-R is now more widely supported among separate manufacturers. And yes, everyone (Sony included) expects tiny solid state memory cards to become an intrinsic part of the portable music scene, a large slice of MD's current market. Yet Sony claims the format's inherent flexibility and robust, low-cost re-writable media will continue to give it an edge. And it's got the products to prove it.

Introduced this year, PC connectivity is a vital part of Sony's master plan. Various new products promote the feature, from separates to systems to personals. One of them is the MDS-JE770; the more costly of two separates set to join Sony's range.

It's a smart little deck with all the aesthetic trimmings attributed to Sony's latest gear – a neatly appointed fascia, circular buttons and slanted detail. A PC-Link socket resides front-left; using an optional kit, you can link to a PC and

open a whole world of new facilities. You can download tracks from CD to your computer's hard disc, then use Sony's optional M-Crew software to file and sort before transferring compilations to MiniDisc. And you can convert other types of data-reduced audio files to MD's ATRAC code, like MP3s downloaded from the Internet, so you can store them on MiniDisc for playback anywhere.

Even aside from this PC-related malarkey, the MDS-JE770 is an exceptionally cool piece of kit. Sony has gradually improved MiniDisc's quality through successive generations and this deck is evidence that the gap between MD and CD-R has narrowed. It's able to produce and play back copies with considerable zest and articulation, with less of the cold and distant quality that can hamper the format in comparison with 'bit-for-bit' CD-R recordings.

There is still a gap, mind – recordable CD takes the biscuit if optimum quality is your priority. But the wealth of facilities on offer here, the ease with which you can build and edit compilations and the sheer portability of MD ensure its relevance remains intact. **TB**



"THE RELAXED BALANCE IS REMINISCENT OF A WARM VINYL FRIENDLINESS."

LOTH-X BS1 LOUDSPEAKER

★★★★☆ £400.00

No matter how often you say it, it doesn't become any easier to pronounce. The Loth-X BS1 is the entry-level model in an interesting range of loudspeakers made by this Singapore based company which also produces a few nice turntables as well as some rather serious horns. Loth-X appears to have an affinity with the analogue domain and it happily advocates partnering the BS1s with low-power valve amplifiers. Their claimed 94dB efficiency should encourage such a partnership, as well as giving budget transistors an easier ride.

The 16kg speakers use a full range 140mm paper mid/bass cone with a fabric surround, and a 25mm fabric dome tweeter. A large rectangular front port increases sensitivity rather than bass extension. Most of the music comes from the main driver as the tweeter crosses over at 10kHz, effectively just handling harmonics. The idea is to replicate the sound of a full-range driver for a budget price.

Musically the BS1 loudspeakers' high efficiency makes them very dynamic and easy to enjoy. The lack of crossovers in the vocal range gives a seamless and wide soundstage with fantastic imaging. Vocals certainly are very impressive and a glorious sense of airiness around instruments is achieved, most notably on acoustic music and classical pieces. The relaxed balance is reminiscent of a warm vinyl friendliness, and sound is effortlessly produced in a laid back fashion. Despite the full range driver set up, sometimes the music gives the impression of having a narrow bandwidth. This is most obvious in the low frequencies, and sadly the speaker is let down by its obvious lack of bass weight and extension.

Although the midband is warm, the lack of guts low down means dance and rock music may be compromised. Tube amp lovers will rejoice that there's another highly efficient loudspeaker to try – but the lack of deep bass is a limitation. **DG**

DATASTREAM

SIZE 200x450x295mm (WxHxD)
2-way design, 140mm mid/bass paper cone, 25mm fabric dome tweeter, 8 ohm impedance, 94db sensitivity
EMINENTAUDIO 01223 203200

Small change

RECORD



Big difference



The new Philips DVD Recorder.



PHILIPS

Let's make things better.

For more details, call 020 8665 6350 or visit our website www.ce.philips.co.uk/dvdrw

NEWS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY TIMAAH BOWERN AND DAN GEORGE.

AESPRIT DE CORPS!

NEW ACOUSTIC ENERGY SPEAKERS ON THE WAY

Acoustic Energy has revealed a new six-strong range of speakers. The Aesprit Series slots in just above the established entry-level Aegis range and is designed to be equally at home with two-channel or surround sound applications. So far, so straight forward. But wait until you get to grips with the Aesprit numbering system...

Things kick off with the AE301, a two-way, non-ported miniature at £200 per pair, designed to be easily wall-mountable if appropriate. Then there's the ported AE300C stand-mount and the larger stand-mounting AE300. There's a centre channel speaker, the AE307, and a subwoofer, the AE308. The range is topped off by the AE309, a three-way floorstander at £700.

The enclosures for all models are made from 15mm MDF, with substantial 30mm MDF front baffles and covered in real wood veneer which is unusual at the price. A newly developed soft dome tweeter is combined with metal alloy-coned mid/bass drivers, magnetically shielded for use close to a TV. The entire range should be in the shops now.

Acoustic Energy ☎ 01285 654432



FAST AND LOW

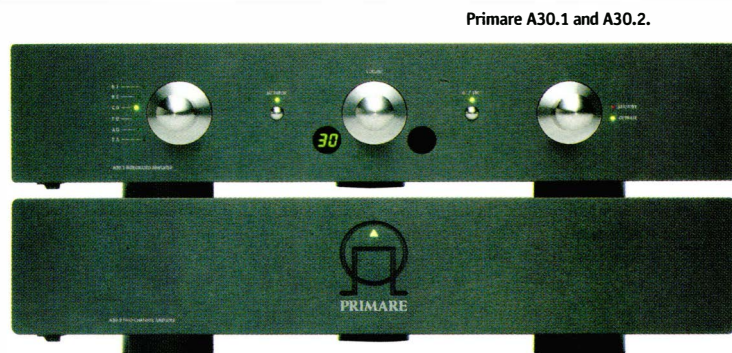
MONITOR AUDIO'S SUBWOOFER MEANS BUSINESS

There's bass and there's *BASS* – the kind that sends a kick drum thudding to your chest, or a makes a movie gunshot rattle your rib cage. If that's the kind of low-end you live for, cop a load of Monitor Audio's new FastBass FB212. Claimed to be "a new breed of subwoofer", this flagship bass box contains dual 305mm drive units with metal cones in a push-pull Isobaric formation, with a 380 Watt amp delivering the power. The result is said to be "slam with speed, power with poise, extension with control and muscle with musicality". It costs £1,399 and it's available now.

Monitor Audio ☎ 01268 740580



Monitor Audio
FastBass FB212.



PRIMARE GETS UPGRADED

INTEGRATED AMP AND CD PLAYER REJUVENATED

The latest version of Primare's excellent A30.1 integrated amp offers a new upgrade path to purchasers. Recipient of a recent *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buy, the new version adds a preamp output to the original's balanced, dual mono topology. To this may be added the new A30.2 dual-mono power amp, using the A30.1 as a preamp or configuring both to bi-amp; add another and you can tri-amp. Price for the A30.1 remains £1,500, with the A30.2 weighing in at £1,200.

Also new from the Scandinavian brand is a substantially revised version of its D30.2 CD player. Top-line 24/96-compatible Burr Brown DACs are now employed, two per channel, with a matching Burr Brown digital filter and a newly designed custom-built transformer. It comes complete with balanced audio outputs, offering a fully balanced CD/amp combo when partnered with the A30.1. Price is £1,500.

CSE ☎ 01423 359054

CHANGING ROOMS

NEW MULTI-ROOM DEVELOPMENTS FROM QED

QED continues its effort to create real-world, affordable multi-room solutions with the launch of the Arias – a compact full-range speaker suitable for wall-mounting anywhere in the house. Measuring 11.5x15.5x19.5cm (WxHxD), it's a stylish, unobtrusive little speaker with a sound said to reach surprising (bass) depths without the aid of a subwoofer. It's available in white or silver and comes supplied with a mounting bracket at £199 per pair.

In further news from QED, the firm's Systemline multi-room control system has been updated. Systemline S4.4 packs in several new features including an additional port for PC Link programming and an extremely powerful 'learning engine' to capture the control codes of even the most awkward A/V kit.

QED ☎ 01483 747474



QED Arias are go.

KRELL'S BELLS

KRELL UNLEASH NEW HIGH-END WONDERS

US high-end audio specialist Krell has unveiled a load of new kit, including its first DVD player. The DVD Standard is reportedly also the first player to use two new high quality video chips from Faroudja Labs for ultra-high quality picture performance. On the audio side, 24/192 compatible DACs combine with Krell's 'Current Mode' discrete Class A analogue output circuitry. Price is yet to be confirmed.

Krell aficionados with a multichannel bent can match the player with a new version of the £6,498 Home Theater Standard preamp/processor. This features various new technologies including 'MovieCAST' signal transmission for low noise and good dynamics, and an analogue input passthrough for optimum sound quality in the analogue domain.

Two new power amps have joined the lineup – the two-channel KAV2250 (£4,590) and three-channel KAV3250 (£5,790). For those requiring a two-channel integrated amp there's

the KAV-300iL, an update of the original 300i featuring improved preamp circuitry and a jump in power from 150 to 200 Watts per channel.

Finally, Krell's first speaker, the £39,998 floorstanding LAT-1 launched last January, has been joined by a two-way stand-mount. The LAT-2 costs £11,899 and features an aluminium cabinet with a dual-concentric tweeter and 178mm mid/bass driver. There's a three-way centre speaker too, the LAT-C priced at £22,000 and modestly described as "the world's finest centre channel loudspeaker". *Absolute Sounds* ☎ 020 8971 3909



Krell Home Theater Standard processor.



Myriad MCD600.

MAKE IT BETTER

MYRIAD CD PLAYERS REVAMPED

Myriad has upgraded its upmarket MCD200 and MCD600 CD players. Both models are fitted with a new transport and higher performance DACs, and feature cooler, cleaner fascias. The £800 MCD200 benefits from a different CD mechanism and laser, claimed to improve disc tracking, and a new main control processor supporting CD text. For an extra £500, the MCD600 features a Crystal 'Super DAC' – a 24-bit/196kHz multi-bit converter that claims to deliver reduced noise and distortion. Advanced digital filtering is said to improve sound quality further, and a revised power supply uses a low noise analogue filter. Both players are available now.

Sennheiser ☎ 0800 652 5002

IN BRIEF

SPALDINGS, the Croydon based hi-fi shop, has recently gone into receivership. The store was a BADA member however, giving any customers who have paid for and not yet received goods protection through the BADA rescue package. ☎ 0800 596 4444

MONSTER cable has launched an MP3 computer starter kit. The pack includes everything needed to record, download and play MP3 music from a computer to a hi-fi and costs £49.95. ☎ 01908 319360

DIGITAL ONE, operator of the UK's national digital radio multiplex, is contemplating extending its online auction facility to make it a regular feature on the website. A variety of DAB hardware is auctioned from various manufacturers including Videologic, Grundig and Psion. www.ukdigitalradio.com

PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENTS, the bespoke equipment support manufacturer, has launched a range of hydraulically damped racks. Three products have been developed from a variety of materials with prices starting at around £1,200. ☎ 01527 522413



ONKYO has launched a new mini-sized CD/receiver system called the CR-305X. The silver one-box unit boasts an RDS tuner, CD-R/RW compatibility and a 20 Watt amp all for £329. ☎ 01788 556777

A STUTTGART district court has decided to impose a levy on German-based manufacturers of recording equipment. US firm

IN BRIEF CONTINUES ON P. 16



Cambridge DVD300.

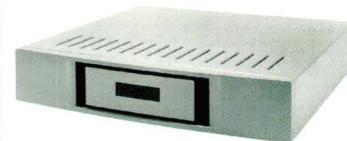
CAMBRIDGE GOES DVD

BUDGET BRAND ENTERS THE AV FRAY

Respected budget hi-fi brand Cambridge Audio is set to launch its DVD300 DVD-Video player. Priced at £300, it boasts built-in Dolby Digital decoding and will also output dts datastreams. There's a 24-bit/96kHz audio DAC inside and a full complement of connection options to the rear,

including both optical and coaxial digital audio outputs, and S-video, component, composite and RGB-Scart on the video side. Both silver and black finishes are planned when the player is launched in October.

Cambridge Audio ☎ 0845 090 2288



SKOTS POWER

LINN UNVEILS COMPACT 5-CHANNEL POWER AMP

Linn has launched a new multichannel power amplifier, the 5125. It weighs only 6kg but delivers 5x125 Watts; it's also said to be highly efficient, hum- and buzz-free (I should hope so – Ed) and immune to mains power interference and irregularities. With a choice of black or silver finishes, the 5125 is available now at £1,750.

Also new from Linn is a revised version of the Klassik – a one-box CD, AM/FM Tuner and amp. The new version adds two multi-room connectivity options, for connecting additional Classiks and controlling a Linn Knekt system. Prices remain unchanged and start at £995.

Linn ☎ 0161 280 5115



Castle Acoustics Warwick 3.

COMPACT CASTLES

NEW CLASSIC SERIES SPEAKERS AHEAD

Castle Acoustics has added a stand-mount model to its Classic Series of wood-clad speakers. The two-way Warwick 3 employs a 150mm mid/bass driver with a woven carbon fibre cone and a 19mm soft dome tweeter, offset to minimise diffraction effects and improve imaging. The cabinet is fashioned from 18mm MDF panels and clad in Castle's customary choice of nine real wood veneers. Despite being a relatively compact speaker, its bass is claimed to extend below 50Hz. It's available now at £549 in a choice of seven standard veneers, or £659 in deluxe yew or rosewood.

Castle Acoustics ☎ 01756 795333

THAT'S NEAT

A SPEAKER TO RE-VITO-LISE YOUR SYSTEM

Neat has unleashed a new flagship loudspeaker called the Vito. A 2.5-way floor-stander, it features a ribbon tweeter sandwiched between a pair of mid/bass driver assemblies with isobaric bass reflex loading. Its enclosure is built from 18mm MDF and extensively braced, it sits on spacers above a solid slate plinth. Rhythmic agility, powerful bass and airy treble are the alleged return on your £2,695 investment.

Neat Acoustics

☎ 01833 631021



IN BRIEF CONTINUED

Hewlett Packard has pledged to fight the ruling that would mean the company paying a fee for every CD burner sold. The ruling argues that the technology is being used to lift music from the internet in contravention of artists' copyright.

ARCHOS has released the world's first 6GB MP3 player/recorder. This portable device allows encoding of files from a variety of analogue and digital sources, plus the unit can

be connected to a laptop or desktop computer via the USB interface. Retailing at around £299, you can see the player in Dixons and PC World now. ☎ 01672 810366

MUSTEK, has launched two DVD players: the V300C and the V300K. The budget units at £139 and £149 respectively, feature variable speed playback and a wealth of format compatibility including CD-R/RW. The V300K has two microphone

inputs for karaoke lovers. www.mustek-europe.com

MAPLIN has, rather inconveniently, decided to discontinue the ASC 431 four way distribution block that we reviewed last month but does have a range of similar units available. www.maplins.co.uk

VAN DEN HUL has launched a new interconnect called The Integration, the first product in van den Hul's new Fusion

Series. At £180 for a 0.6 metre pair, the cable is a triple-shielded, quadruple-core design available in both balanced and unbalanced form. ☎ 020 8997 4280

THOMSON multimedia has a new audio compression format called mp3PRO. The format claims to provide improved sound and creates files that are half the size of original MP3 files. In addition mp3PRO offers complete backwards and for-

wards compatibility with MP3 files. Demonstration software can be downloaded from www.thomson-multimedia.com

SHARP has introduced the first portable audio product to feature Dolby Headphone technology. The MD-ST880 MiniDisc player will be released in Japan in August and uses Dolby processing to create a multichannel listening experience through conventional headphones. www.dolby.com/headphone

certain
people
have
it.

unique
1-Bit
technology
from Sharp

As if by a sixth sense, some people just seem to know exactly where the future's heading. Which explains why they're always the first to experience new ideas, like our unique 1-Bit audio technology. This lets you hear what was impossible, until now. Bringing together all the warmth of analogue and clarity of a digital recording it recreates more than just the music, it recreates the original performance space itself. 1-Bit CD/MD systems from Sharp.

...e of audio, for certain.

SHARP

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SHARP 1-BIT AUDIO, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.SHARP.CO.UK OR FREEPHONE 0800 1382326

ARE COMPUTERS HI-FI?

WES PHILLIPS GETS WITH THE INTERNET AUDIO REVOLUTION AND CONSIDERS WHETHER IT'S READY TO TAKE ON THE ROLE OF THE HI-FI SYSTEM YET.

If you read the American popular press, you'd think that the days of actually purchasing music were over. Any loon with a reasonably up-to-date computer and a wide bandwidth Internet connection can plunder all of recorded history without paying a cent. As for hi-fi? Forget about it! Buy a hot soundcard and a desk top speaker system and you're ready to kick sand in the face of the Krell/Wilson owner down the street.

Sounds simple, don't it?

So having recently bought a screaming hot computer with a high resolution sound card, I added a Yamaha RP-U1000 receiver with USB input and a pair of Linn Tukans and went in search of music.

I started with Internet Radio 'stations', thinking that would bring a world of variety to my desktop. The problem is, the sound quality of Internet radio reeks. Forget about the buffer constantly reloading, so you listen in fits and starts. Ignore the fact that actually using the computer, by saving a file to a floppy for instance, will stop the broadcast for the duration plus another buffer refill (and don't even dream of doing anything else while the buffer fills). What really stinks is the sound quality. If you think pop radio is compressed, listen to radio on the Net.

My fantasies about diversity were dashed too; listen for six hours and you'll have heard the entire playlist of some stations – sometimes even the play sequence. Feh!

So I decided to see if I – a compulsive and catholic record buyer – could be content with a steady diet of pirated MP3s (strictly for research purposes, mind you).

Now that Napster is no more, it sure isn't as easy as it once was. It took me an entire afternoon – and getting thrown off the Internet three times – just to download *Clint Eastwood* by Gorillaz. At

that rate, it's cheaper to just spend the day working and buy the damn thing. And the sound quality? Not bad for an MP3, but for close listening, it's horrendous.

Of course, I could go the Gnutella route, or pay for a DSL line (ADSL in the UK), but either way I end up inviting the public in to share my hard drive. Firewall or not, that's scary. So this audiophile isn't ready to ditch the corner record store or the local radio sta-



The Linn Kivor – where hi-fi meets the hard disc. But is it the future of music in the home?

“THE COMPUTER IS VERY GOOD AT THE INTERFACE ISSUES THAT HI-FI HAS NEVER RESOLVED.”

tions any time soon.

What about using the computer as an audio system? That screen in the middle doesn't do much for the Tukans' imaging, but the sound can be surprisingly good – especially if I stick to .wav files. Good enough for anything I'd listen to while seated at a workstation. Of course, music's such a hard disc hog at that playback level that I can only get about 150 hours onto an 80 gig drive – but still, with 80 gig drives costing \$250 these days, that's not too shabby.

THE ULTIMATE ARCHIVE

What the computer turns out to be really good at is storing, organizing, and archiving that music, not to mention all the disc and track information I've loaded. With the right software and interface – such as the Slink-e (www.nirvis.com), I can create playlists for just about any occasion by simply dragging and dropping. It sure beats work – and it certainly beats jumping up and down and loading and unloading the CD player all day long.

But it's still in my computer, damn it. And, having spent all day, almost every day, typing away, my computer isn't where I go to relax. Furthermore, the

best sound I can get in my house is still in my listening room. Maybe the future's not to be found in conventional amps and speakers and CD players, but it sure hasn't arrived at my computer terminal yet.

I truly think the future lies in some combination of audio product and computer, where the audio portion of the kit works as well as high end stuff traditionally does and the computer portion controls and commands the procedure. The computer is very good at many of the interface issues that conventional hi-fi has never successfully resolved. And in this brave new digital world, the old paradigm of listening to my music collection one LP side at a time makes very little sense. Hell, even having CDs to own and hold is starting to seem, well, wasteful. In other words, I don't think we'll be using our computers for audio any time soon – but I think our hi-fi audio is going to increasingly take a page from our personal computers.

Like the Linn Kivor, for instance.

Maybe Ivor's at the forefront of the revolution all over again.

Wes Phillips is our US news correspondent, blues music lover and vinyl enthusiast.

PROTECT ME FROM MYSELF

"I have to visit LIVE 2001!"
Martin, 28, DVD fanatic.



THE UK'S BIGGEST TECHNOLOGY
AND HOME ENTERTAINMENT SHOW.
21-23 September NEC, Birmingham.

I want to touch and try all the latest top name DVDs, TVs, WAP Phones, hi-fi's, stuff for the internet, games, mobiles and anything with the word digital in front of it. I want to try them all in one place, somewhere that's easy to get to. My friends want it too.

Call now: 0870 902 0444

www.liveXpo.co.uk

AUDIO • DVD • MP3 • DIGITAL • GAMES • INTERNET • MOBILE

BOSE
Better sound through research.



SIEMENS

UKonline

KENWOOD



digital radio
tomorrow's wireless™

ONE BOX SOLUTION

DAVID VIVIAN FINDS THAT TECHNOLOGY CAN TAKE ALL THE EFFORT OUT OF YOUR MUSIC.

We know what you're like. When CD arrived back in the mid-'80s, you didn't try to withdraw into the cosy refuge of vinyl, but embraced the high-convenience digital world with open arms. You never had a problem with MP3 as a music storage medium. Or using your computer as a conduit for its consumption. You rip, you burn, you download. When Napster was a free-for-all, it was your favourite website. The idea of using your computer's hard disk to store and playback music is fine, a further stride down convergence alley.

Technology has got you, and you don't mind at all. One day, when all media strands have been fused into one, technology will liberate us all.

If this is your mantra, you won't be in the least surprised by what I can see in the room just across the corridor: the whole spectrum of hi-fi experience reduced to a handful of hard drives, TV screens, touch-sensitive displays and PDAs.

I've come to the Cambridge-based headquarters of Imerge, the software development company that, last November, launched the SoundServer M1000 multi-room, hard-disk based stereo audio server and, some believe, changed the course of home entertainment for good.

This won't have passed you by as it did me. I was probably staring at my multiple World Trade Centre towers of CDs, wondering if this was the week they would topple over. You were envision-

ing the clutter-free listening environment enabled by the Big Idea behind SoundServer. Which is this. Record entire CD collection to hard disk, put CD collection into cardboard boxes and store, access music – plus a whole bunch of related info – via clever web-driven software interface called XiVA-Net. Record, play, edit, browse from the comfort of your armchair with remote, PDA or touch-sensitive display. Pure Homer Simpson.

SQUEEZE BOX

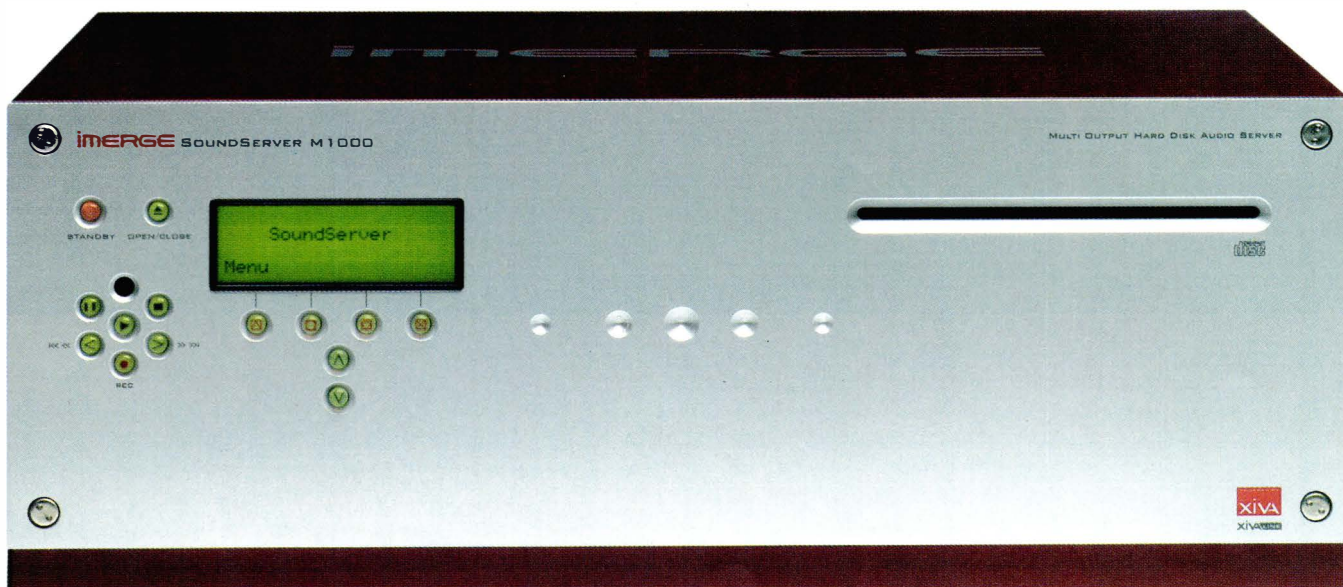
Jenny Cassidy, Imerge's marketing executive, demonstrates the ultimate in layzee-boy hi-fi with the new £1,200 S1000, the single-room version of the much bulkier and more expensive (up to £20k) M1000.

Jenny drops a CD into the transport tray; the S1000 asks if she wants to copy it as MP3 (three compression rate options) or uncompressed. "The average person we've come across can't tell the difference between MP3 and full audio," says Jenny. "There is an argument that with classical music, you might want to store it fully uncompressed. Record time is the same for both (one-sixth of CD's real time playback); uncompressed just takes up more hard disc space.

"As the S1000 starts recording it automatically connects to the Internet CDDb site and gathers

"THE AVERAGE PERSON WE'VE COME ACROSS CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MP3 AND FULL AUDIO."

Below: Imerge's single-room S1000 music system—up to 700 hours of music in one simple to use box.



track list, album and artist information. It also classifies it by genre. So you can sort through your music by album, by artist or by genre.”

The XiVA software powers all Imerge products (including a forthcoming AV server), as well as the Kivor Tunbocks from licensee Linn, a souped-up, audiophile-orientated derivative of the M1000. “You can either have it connected to your TV or a dedicated display or, in cut down form, on the front panel,” explains Jenny.

Jenny flicks from track to track, album to album. Access time is blisteringly quick. Back to the main menu. “You can also make your own playlists,” Jenny continues. “So if you’re having a dinner party on a Friday night, just set aside half an hour and select all the CDs you want to listen to, or the individual tracks.”

INFO FREAK OUT

With its 40GB hard disk, the S1000 stores just over 700 hours of MP3 music or about 70 hours uncompressed, or you can have a combination of both; 70 CDs take about 12 hours to load.

So we’re listening to David Gray and want to know more, such as what other albums he’s done. The S1000 connects to XiVA-Net and gets the information. It takes about 20 seconds. There are biog notes, too, and hot links through to other artists’ sites – if you liked this, try this.

“Quite soon we hope you will be able to download tracks or albums,” says Jenny, “but obviously only when the legal wrangles are sorted out.”

XiVA-Net launches on 1st August. It won’t have everything from Day One but there will be gig guides. Jenny elaborates: “The listings start locally and go further afield as you scroll down. In the longer term, we’re looking for people to be able to purchase tickets directly through the SoundServer.”

To which all I can say is “wow”. It’s like a Q magazine that can actually play music. Sublimely Homeresque. I leave Imerge dazed, amazed and a little queasy. A system in every room (so passe), CDs all over the floor (plain messy), the odd trip to the record store (what, leave the house?). But maybe that’s how I like it.

David Vivian talks to the movers and shakers in the hi-fi industry about the subjects close to their hearts.

IMERGE M1000

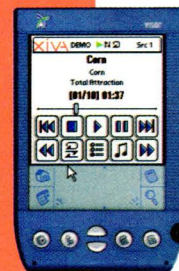
The M1000 is formidable in just about every sense of the word – not least the face it presents to the world. A big, heavy, fan-cooled metal box with a CD slot, simple backlit alpha-numeric LED display and two clusters of well-engineered buttons, it exudes a certain no-nonsense market presence and solidity. Largely wasted, though. The fan’s pretty noisy; hiding it away in a cupboard is mandatory. Unsurprising, really, since it’s aimed squarely at the multi-room custom install market.

I borrowed the £9,175 M1000-36-E – configured for 7 zones (including a digital output) and with enough hard disc storage for 2700 hours of MP3 at 128Kbs. Prices start at £3,300 for a two-zone unit (analogue outputs) with 45Gb storage (800 hours).

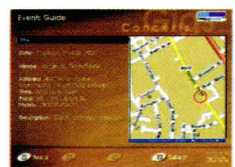
Leaving the multi-room side of things well alone, I homed in on sound quality. After all, what’s the point of committing all your CDs to hard disk if they don’t sound as good as they would played on a decent budget spinner? I won’t beat about the bush. They don’t. After such a promising start, too. But, MP3 compression at 128Kbs sounded much better than I expected – perfectly adequate for good quality background listening.

The leap to sparkling, pristine CD standard replay with non-compressed hard disc copies didn’t quite materialise, though. Hooked up to a Roksan Kandy integrated amp and AVI Nu-Neutron speakers, the best the M1000 could manage with Marcus Miller’s sensationally well produced *M2* was something that sounded a tad second hand: crisp, tidy and foot-tapping but lacking the full measure of the original’s weight, texture and dynamic impact.

Not quite purist hi-fi, then. I’d make a point of eating in a restaurant that had one, though.



Top: The Imerge HQ in Barhill, Cambridge. Above: The S1000 in its natural habit—stylish, discreet and not a CD in sight! Left: The Visor PDA—the perfect way to operate the S1000. Below: The system can tell you about gigs and how to get to them.



JUNIOR LEVINSON

MARK LEVINSON HAS A NEW BABY AND HE'S CALLED IT RED ROSE MUSIC. JASON KENNEDY LISTENS TO ITS FIRST WORDS.

h

REVIEW JASON KENNEDY

aving long since moved on from the high-end hi-fi company that still bears his name, electronics designer extraordinaire Mark Levinson has now joined forces with Victor Tiscareno, the man behind Audio Prism (some might recall its Blacklight CD accessory). The

result of this partnership is Red Rose Music, a brand that sets out to achieve the highest levels of quality without resorting to enormous boxes or complex interfaces – something previous Levinson brands have been inclined towards.

The first Red Rose products to reach these shores from their native New York are the Model 5 integrated amplifier and Reference 3 loudspeakers, which when combined with RRM's own cables, come together to make the £9,995 Red Rose Baby Reference system – saving you £2,000 over the cost of buying the components individually. The M5 amp normally costs £8,000 making it, maybe not the most expensive integrated ever, but the most expensive EL34 push-pull design to date. Yes it's a valve amp, which given the solid state nature of Mark Levinson's previous designs is a bit of a surprise, but quite a pleasant one which infers that even established pros can take a fresh look at technology.

This is no run-of-the-mill 'tube' amp: one look at the back panel reveals its high-tech nature. Next to the speaker output terminals are dials for adjusting feedback level – you choose the one that's most appropriate for your speakers and plug into the relevant outputs – and the output transformers have three 'taps' for 4, 6 or 8 Ohm speakers. Above the speaker output terminals are three switches, two offer varying degrees of earthing – a notorious source of hum irritation with valve amps, while the third allows you to change the way the amplifier operates. You can either select Ultralinear, the traditional mode for a pair of EL34 pentode tubes, or you can go for triode operation which is claimed to improve audio quality in exchange for a halving of power. The latter is specified at 45 Watts per channel in Ultralinear mode, which suggests that this is not a purely class A device.



"I WASN'T SURPRISED AT THE SUPERB MIDBAND RESOLUTION AND GORGEOUS TIMBRE THAT GREETED ME, BUT WHAT DID SURPRISE ME WAS THE DEGREE OF LOW-END GRUNT."



On the amplifier's beautifully constructed top plate you'll find a couple of other rarities, most obviously a bias meter and associated adjusters for each valve. Many valve amplifiers are self-biasing but this feature allows the user to monitor the condition of each valve or use alternative valve brands without having to purchase matched pairs. The manual predicts a lifespan of 10,000 hours for the Electro-Harmonix tubes supplied, which should keep most of us going for a few years. The other unusual, possibly even unique, feature of the amp is the output tube fuses which protect the rest of the amp from overcurrent conditions in the output tubes. It is also presumably indicative of the fact that power supply regulation is all solid state on the Model 5, the FET supplies being designed to ensure long tube life and consistent performance.

Just as cute, if somewhat more straightforward, are the Reference 3 loudspeakers, these £3,500 standmounters are no more coy about their technological advantage than the amp. Standing proud of the cabinet top is a baffle mounted ribbon tweeter. Designed by Red Rose's Bo Bennigtssen, it is a mere 45mm long and is partnered with a 125mm Dynaudio woofer in a compact reflex loaded cabinet (33x19.7x26.7cm) finished in a beautiful maple wood veneer. The speakers' specs claim flat bass extension to 46Hz, so those Dynaudio cones must be able to shift some air. It specifies a sensitivity of 87dB at 4 ohms, which looks a little on the low side but is said to have "a friendly impedance curve" and is thus suited to the M5 amplifier.

A set of Red Rose cables are supplied with the Baby Reference system. This comprises a pair of the rather oddly named 1934 interconnects (one metre) and a three metre terminated set of 336 bi-wire speaker cables. It even includes a decent mains lead fitted with a chunky Wattgate 320 IEC plug. There is also a set of purpose-built 55cm speaker stands available from stone stand specialist HNE for £499, and a pair was used throughout this review.

HIGH PERFORMANCE RED ROSE MUSIC BABY REFERENCE SYSTEM

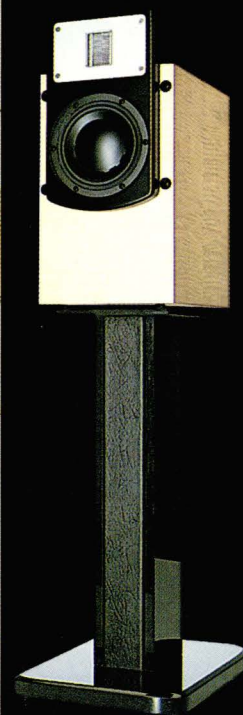
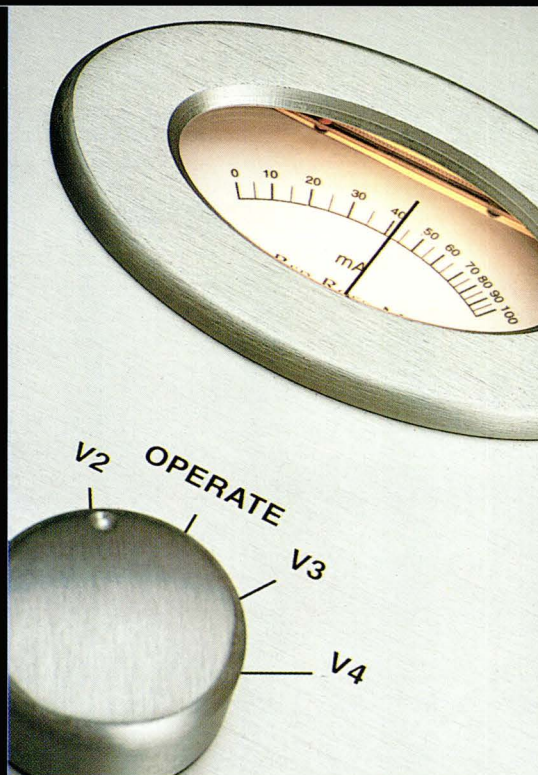
▷ SOUND QUALITY

I fed this system with my SME Model 20A/vdH Grasshopper/The Groove vinyl front end and Sony's SCD-555ES SACD player – sources that proved to be right up Red Rose's street. The company is very keen on the DSD technology that forms the basis of SACD and makes its own recordings using the system. Not surprisingly its first SACD disc was sent to try out on the Baby system. My first encounter with the system was somewhat marred by a desire to play loud rock music, specifically Jeff Buckley in full effect, a task which the system didn't exactly warm to. In fact I reverted to my usual Living Voice speakers and took it from there. Once the correct impedance had been selected this proved to be a very happy pairing, the extra sensitivity of the speakers and their relatively laid back balance proving better suited to Mr Buckley's musical power.

Having encountered a few EL34 amps in my time I wasn't surprised at the superb midband resolution and gorgeous timbre that greeted me, but what did surprise me was the degree of low-end grunt – those FET regulators making their mark in no uncertain terms when it came to bass control. The trade-off, seemed to be a slight limitation dynamically, an area where tube amps are usually strong. Timing was very good and likewise imaging – depth in particular being exceptionally well portrayed. What's more, solidity of image is unusually concrete with the M5.

Bringing the R3 loudspeakers into the picture changed the emphasis a little. Inevitably the ribbon tweeter introduced very persuasive high and upper midrange detail to the picture, the pairing of ribbons and tubes is exceptionally appealing – combining an abundance of detail with depth and richness that transistors struggle to provide. The 'air' and space that turned up on good recordings was quite surprising, though it was never easy to predict which recordings would provide the best results. One outsider was Can's *Ege Bamyasi*, an ancient and previously rather thick-sounding LP that came alive on this system, Jackie Leibovitz's driving rhythms revealing why this band is still so highly regarded.

When first confronted with an eight grand amp sans remote control I was rather bemused, but the nature of the M5 is such that you rarely have to alter the volume unless there's a big difference between source outputs. For the majority of my listening the stepped attenuator pot stayed on the 12 o'clock notch, with maybe a one click change required when switching sources. With solid state amps I get a big difference in level depending on the disc being played, but this



amp seemed to absorb that variation. It's something I've noticed with tube amps in the past but rarely to this degree.

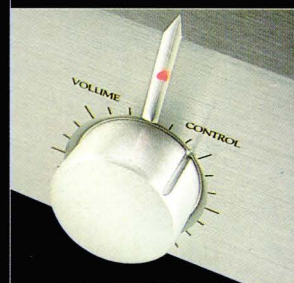
This seems to be a system of hidden depths. During the course of this review I received a sample of Townshend's new cryogenically prepared speaker cables, which I couldn't resist hooking up to the Baby system. Good job, too, as I would have missed out on bass that was almost bone crunching and a depth of image that strayed way beyond the room boundaries. These little speakers clearly do shift some serious air, and have more to give than RRM's basic cables reveal.

CONCLUSION

This is a very engaging system, commanding your attention and holding it even when the musical going gets tough, I think this is the first time I've enjoyed tracks on the Tommy Smith SACD from Linn for instance. If you want an instant and fairly discreet system solution and you've got the money – this is it. However, the issue of value cannot be ignored, this is big money to shell out on compact loudspeakers, an integrated tube amp and some cables – there are alternatives that compete with it sonically, but for less outlay. I guess what you're paying for is a designer brand – beautifully put together and with class in spades. And you certainly miss it when it's gone...

£9,995 MDC ☎ 01992 573030

Above: The speaker's striking design accommodates an unusual ribbon tweeter. Below: A full range of adjustments ensure the amp can be perfectly tailored to your speakers and music.



“THIS IS A VERY ENGAGING SYSTEM, HOLDING YOUR ATTENTION EVEN WHEN THE MUSICAL GOING GETS TOUGH.”

RED ROSE MUSIC



RED ROSE M5 / R3
BABY REFERENCE SYSTEM

"People learned to love music by listening to records on simple, compact systems. Countless hours of pleasurable listening were about the music, not the equipment.

Today, many people have large, expensive systems but find they have somehow become disconnected from their love of music. This happened to me too.

Red Rose uses new technology to retrieve what was lost, a way to reconnect to our love of music, with better sound, lower cost and more compact packaging.

The Red Rose R3 Ribbon speakers and Model 5 Integrated amplifier offer fidelity beyond the most expensive high end monster systems for a fraction of the cost and space.

We also make an ultimate Reference System for those who require a no-holds-barred solution – still at much less than you'd expect to pay.

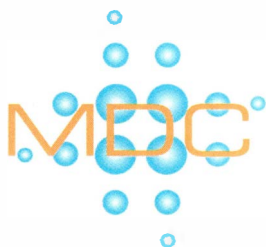
Instead of listening to the sound, please feel the music through the R3's. You will find a path to what you want most, a way to enhance your love of music."

Mark Levinson

RED ROSE MUSIC

Quality and Simplicity
Get the point?

MDC
Tel; 01992 573030
E-mail; mdc.hifi@virgin.net
Web; mdc-hifi.co.uk



Two for one! Save £8!
Two tickets for the price of one – saving £8!
Just call 020 8774 0790 now

Easy listening



CALL THE HI-FI SHOW HOTLINE:
020 8774 0790

**Experience the widest range of hi-fi
and home cinema: the world's most
stylish systems all under one roof**

Hi-Fi SHOW 2001

**Novotel Hotel,
Hammersmith, London W6**

15-16 September 2001

Open to the public 10am-6pm. Admission on the day £8. To
claim your two-for-one discount, call 020 8774 0790.
Offer closes Monday, 7 September.

Two minutes' walk from Hammersmith tube stations.
The Show is also open to Trade visitors only
(NO public admission) on 13 and 14 September.
For exhibitor information, e-mail janet_belton@ipmedia.com



t

ake one Arcam DV88 DVD player, clothe it in a luxurious Full Metal Jacket and, broadly speaking, you've got yourself an FMJ DV27. The two DVD players certainly look similar, though the DV27 is undoubtedly the smarter of the pair, and both are

REVIEW PAUL MILLER

operable from the same combined CD/DVD remote handset. In keeping with its higher £1,600 ticket, the DV27 also features a more up-market title screen for its OSD (on screen display), though the three pages of settings for security, TV system, black level and digital output format are clearly modelled on the DV88.

Within the Jacket, the £600 gulf between the DV27 and the DV88 is more obvious. Primary among the differences is an entirely new circuit board that caters for the DV27's Progressive video output (see boxout). In addition, a separate

transformer now feeds the audio section, instead of the shared video/audio transformer used in the DV88. In keeping with running production changes implemented for the DV88, the DV27's audio stage is equipped with the superior Wolfson WM8740 DAC (in place of the older WM8716). At a stroke, noise, linearity and distortion, particularly at low frequencies, have been improved.

Dolby Digital and MPEG multichannel audio is decoded and downmixed to the stereo audio outputs while dts audio is carried directly to the digital outputs. Progressive video aside, there are rather fewer fancy gizmos on the DV27 than you might find on its Far Eastern competition. Then again, the DV27 is an extension of the 'audiophile' thinking that once separated specialist amplifiers, for example, from the feature-driven boxes of the mass market. User-selectable video noise reduction widgets are eschewed in favour of straightforward, high quality video engineering, for example.

And it works, for the DV27's picture quality is as detailed, vivid and colourful as its sound is both thrilling and articulate. The upgrade in DAC technology certainly delivers a cleaner, more insightful and purposeful sound than that

"IT CONVEYS THE POWER OF VOCALISTS WITH AN ENTHUSIASM LITTLE SHORT OF GLEE."

NATURAL PROGRESSION

ARCAM'S MOST AMBITIOUS DVD-VIDEO PLAYER TO DATE INCORPORATES THE ABILITY TO DELIVER A SERIOUS LEAP FORWARD FOR THE TECHNOLOGY.

achieved by the DV88 (see HFC 213), even if it remains unrealistic to expect the DV27 to top the performance of a dedicated CD player, like the FMJ CD23 (HFC 206). But while the DV27 may lack the last word in smoothness and subtlety, it still conveys the power and passion of favourite vocalists with an enthusiasm little short of glee. Spirit then, without heavy-handedness.

Otherwise the FMJ DV27 cannot, for the moment, output true PAL (625 line) Progressive video because there is no Macrovision standard currently in place for this 'format'. As you might expect, Arcam is supporting the proposal for an appropriate standard to permit the use of PAL-625 Progressive with Macrovision. Once the major (read Japanese) manufacturers get behind the scheme, there is a good chance the system will get the green light within 12 months. So you can buy with confidence, because owners of the Arcam FMJ DV27 are guaranteed to have their players updated by the manufacturer the moment the dust has settled. Then, finally, we might find brilliant sound fused with equally stunning pictures.

£1,600, Arcam ☎ 01223 203200

PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO

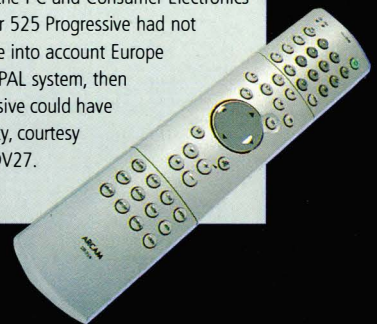
The FMJ DV27 is the first home-grown DVD player to sport a Progressive scan video output, similar to the video signal that passes between PCs and monitors. Most new video projectors, plasma screens and high-end TV systems will accept a Progressive input in both NTSC and PAL standards. It's becoming an important technology in the US and is gaining a foothold here.

The DV27 uses a Silicon Image chip to convert interlaced digital video from DVD to a Progressive (i.e. non-interlaced) video at twice the bandwidth. In practical terms, this means the video is increased from one frame 30 times a second to one frame 60 times a second, yielding a more stable image with less flickering, particularly where there's plenty of movement in a scene. As a result, Progressive video images look rather less like 'video' and more like the seamless flow of action typically associated with real 'film'.

The DV27 outputs Progressive video from three phono sockets labelled Pr/R, Y/G and

Pb/B. But, strictly speaking, PAL Progressive is not available, as this would infringe on Macrovision, a process designed to prevent unauthorised copying from DVD (modified from the existing system used in VCRs). An NTSC (525 line) Progressive Scan output is accommodated by Macrovision and thus, available from the DV27. Region 2 PAL discs are only viewable through the conventional component, S-Type and SCART video outputs, while Region 1 NTSC discs play through both Progressive and interlaced outputs.

This is also why the VGA and sync-based outputs are blanked off on the rear of the DV27. If only the negotiations between Hollywood, the PC and Consumer Electronics industries for 525 Progressive had not failed to take into account Europe and its 625 PAL system, then PAL Progressive could have been a reality, courtesy of Arcam's DV27.





a

REVIEW JASON KENNEDY

Audio Note is a brand with a colourful history. It started out in life as the creation of Japanese craftsman Hiroyasu Kondo, maker of extremely expensive valve amplifiers like the legendary Ongaku – a product which, with the help of Audio Note's then distributor, Peter Qvortrup, was

responsible for the resurgence of single-ended triode amps – the Harley-Davidsons of the amplifier world. Since then Hiroyasu and Peter have gone their separate ways, Peter retaining the Audio Note brand and the Japanese creator now dubbing his components Kondo.

Peter's Audio Note UK makes a broad range of valve-based electronics and variety of loudspeakers that are designed for use with the typically lower power outputs of tube amps. At the end of the last century the company produced its first 1x oversampling, filterless digital-to-analogue

converter, the £18,000 DAC5 (a product that we covered extensively in issue 203). This technology has now filtered down into Audio Note's dearest single-box CD player, the £1,500 CD3. Now you can sample 1x sound without having to resort to two-box players such as those in AN's Zero range. The advantage of abandoning digital filtering is that you remove the pre- and post-signal echoes that are considered to hamper the timing quality of CD. The drawback is that digital filters are designed to remove the reflections of CD's 44.1kHz sampling frequency, which amounts to a large quantity of ultrasonic noise. Audio Note attempts to filter this out in the analogue domain albeit without being able to significantly reduce it. This distortion can affect the operation of some amplifiers and result in a distinctly 'hard' sound.

The AN-CD3.1x is, on the outside, quite a basic box: the front panel is smart enough and features the sort of controls one expects of purist audio design, the rear panel is a little prosaic for the money but supplies the usual digital and analogue RCA phonos with a switch between the two – simultaneous use of both, such as when recording to CD-R, is not an option. Build quality is of a grade that one would expect at half the price, even from a small-ish brand, and the remote is of the kind found on extremely cheap players indeed.

Inside the box lurk a selection of components

RHYTHM KING

AUDIO NOTE'S NEW ONE-BOX CD PLAYER TAKES THE COMPANY VALVE SOUND AND RUNS WITH IT...

and a quality of build that better matches the asking price: a plethora of Audio Note's favourite Black Gate capacitors alongside a pair of monster paper-in-oil, copper-clad caps and separate transformers for digital and analogue sections. Not surprisingly it shares one of its PCBs with the DAC Zero. Being an Audio Note there is, of course, a valve in the output stage – in this instance a tiny Philips 6111WA soldered to the PCB.

SOUND QUALITY

The claimed sonic benefit of 1x DACs is a significant improvement in timing, the musical fundamental that digital audio seems to have the greatest difficulty in getting right. And the AN-CD3.1x does indeed have a good sense of timing; not in an analytical, leading edge definition way, but in that elusive foot tapping musicality fashion that (Linn) LP12 owners can't live without. By comparison with a Sony SCD-555ES SACD player (£1,200), the AN has a less highly resolved sound but one that is – for all its foibles – probably more fun. If you take music where the beat is not the most obvious element, the Sony's ability to reproduce three-dimensional space, deep powerful bass and shimmering high frequencies easily outperforms the Audio Note. However, put on something with a strong rhythmic aspect and the tube-driven beast comes to life with an engaging and fluent sound that you can't help enjoying.

I started out using the AN-CD3.1x with the Red Rose M5 amplifier that's also reviewed this month, and my initial notes could be a textbook description of the valve sound, viz a distinctly 'open' exposed midrange that emphasises lyrics, timbre and presence at the expense of frequency extremes. It drew one into the music but was clearly overdoing some aspects of the performance, albeit in very appealing fashion. But with continued use a 'hard' edge became prevalent and I moved over to a NAD S100 preamp and Gamut D200 solid state pre/power amp. This sounded more evenly balanced albeit without

the midrange transparency; the boogie factor was still there however, and the results most entertaining. It was also apparently not short on image depth or bass power, the latter sounding appealingly 'chewy' and lush when the right notes came along.

Despite the Red Rose experience, the AN-CD3.1x is naturally designed to work with tube amps. I used a Canary CA-608 to very good effect and encountered no harshness, just dynamic, fluent music with plenty of colour.

CONCLUSION

While its idiosyncrasies will preclude it for some, those of a more musical, less hi-fi bent will revel in this Audio Note's ability to draw the listener in and get his or her foot tapping. It's not the highest fidelity available at the price, but it's probably the best musical entertainment if you've got the right ancillaries. If you like valves, you'll undoubtedly enjoy this.

£1,500, Audio Note ☎ 01273 220511

“PUT ON SOMETHING WITH A STRONG RHYTHM, AND THE TUBE-DRIVEN BEAST COMES TO LIFE.”



HEAVY METAL

BRYSTON READIES ITS HEAVYWEIGHT MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER COMBO TO ROCK THE STEREOPHILE WORLD.

S

urround sound may be the next big thing for music, if the corporations and major labels get their way. The market is desperate for new ideas – surround provides the opportunity to re-package and re-sell old product, and to offer fresh material in a form which brings new and tangible ‘benefits’ to the consumer. It’s

REVIEW/TIM BOWERN

being hailed as the biggest thing to hit music since stereo, and while two-channel will remain the norm, surround sound could be just the thing to shake the music industry from its current creative malaise.

But for music/hi-fi fans, buying into the surround sound dream is inevitably costly. You’ve gotta pay for all that processing, and in more ways than one – complex processing environments can ruin your music, and maximising quality doesn’t come cheap. Then you’ve gotta have at least five channels of amplification, and unless you’re willing to downgrade performance that’s a lot more expensive than two. Not to mention all the extra speakers and cables you’ve got to buy...

They may be fine with the audio accompaniment to a film, but basic home cinema systems rarely cut the musical mustard. And that’s where a processor/amp combo like this Bryston comes in. It’s not cheap – £7,100 for the pair, on top of which you’ll need five good quality speakers, whichever source components you choose, supports, cabling and maybe a subwoofer. But man, you get what you pay for. It’s not just a top-notch home cinema rig; it’s also as musical as they come.

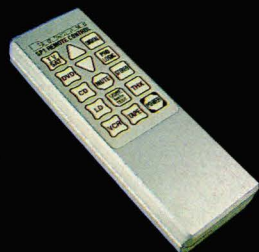
The Canucks at Bryston know a thing or two about sturdy engineering. Run your hands over the 9B THX five-channel power amp and you get the impression it’s hewn from solid metal, try and lift it more than a few feet and you’ll be call-

ing the chiropractor. Its maker has a strong professional heritage and it shows – the equally sturdy SP1 5.1-channel processor looks like it belongs racked up in a studio, all utilitarian buttons, switches and a tiny display, more functional than fashionable.

Indeed, some might say frugal. Those already immersed in surround may consider the SP1’s feature count sparse for a fully-fledged home entertainment processor, especially one at such a regal price. Thing is, it’s actually that very rare thing – a processor with genuine hi-fi preamp credentials. Its basis is said to be Bryston’s BP-25, a serious stereo preamp of some repute. On top of that amp’s analogue circuit path Bryston has laid the digital surround processing essentials; Dolby Digital and original Pro-Logic, along with dts and THX-spec movie features. A bypass switch knocks these out completely for stereo operation.

Unlike the vast majority of modern surround amps and processors, video switching is omitted to prevent sonically detrimental RF interference. Set-up is elementary, conducted with reference to that tiny display on the left side of its fascia. Once you’re hooked up and ready to roll, you pretty much use the SP1 as you would any other preamp – pushing buttons to select source and spinning a knob to set volume. Even its metal slab of a remote sports nothing more than the essentials.

For hi-fi people this is all refreshingly calm and familiar, but paid-up members of the surround fraternity may be concerned about limitations. The latest EX and ES versions of Dolby Digital and dts are not included for those who aspire to more than five speaker surround; there’s no sign of Pro-Logic II and there’s no 5.1-channel input for DVD-Audio or multichannel SACD. Panic not – nothing moves hastily in Bryston world, but upgrade solutions are promised for any formats that establish themselves as serious concerns. After all, the company wouldn’t sup-



Both remote and display are discreet on the SP1 processor.



ply a 20-year guarantee if its products weren't intended as long-term prospects.

As partners go, the 9B THX power amp would seem the SP1's perfect match. Its five channels of amplification are configured as separate monoblocks within a single box, each delivering a conservatively-rated 120 Watts of power. Short signal paths and beautifully sturdy construction contribute to a true 'audiophile' quality multi-channel design. The signs for scintillating sonics are good.

SOUND QUALITY

With eager aplomb, I wired the Bryston combo to a five-speaker PMC set - TB2s at the rear and FB1s at the front, with a TB2 M/C sandwiched in-between. This made sense not simply because this is my reference set for multichannel applications. PMC distributes Bryston in the UK, and vice-versa in North America, and the two have close product development ties. If I couldn't get a match here...

A match? More like a full-blown love affair. The Bryston pair took to the PMCs instantly, a beautifully crisp and neutral character evident from the off. In accordance with hi-fi tradition it seems to promote little of itself, yet delivers a sound so inherently clear and dynamic it cuts to the quick and keeps the music flowing.

Locked into two-channel mode, I rifled through various CDs: a slice of Sparklehorse, a

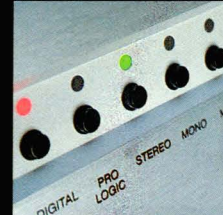
little Mahler, a shot of *Renaissance in Ibiza*. Long after my fingers part from my Macintosh's keyboard, I'll still be spinning discs; this is simply the most musically addictive surround combo ever to grace my equipment rack.

Switching to Dolby Digital/dts surround material proves no less enlightening. With film soundtracks, there is perhaps a sense of neutral understatement that may fail to ignite the pleasure centres of home cinema fans used to a more gung-ho approach, at least on first listen. But there's much to admire: the space and precision with which soundtracks are deployed, the exceptional bass and the dramatic power of sudden peaks - an explosive effect or a musical sting.

CONCLUSION

Purist hi-fi meets surround amplification and decoding with the minimum of musical compromise. Only the current absence of a 5.1-channel input for DVD-Audio/multichannel SACD undermines this Bryston combo's audiophile credentials, but when it turns up I'll be back for more.

£7,100 PMC ☎ 0870 444 1044



A processor and amp combo with balanced connections clearly means business.

FORUM LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A TDK GOODIE BAG



Send us your views of the magazine and the world of hi-fi:

Forum: Letters

Hi-Fi Choice

99 Baker Street

London W1U 6FP

dan.george@futurenet.co.uk

“THE CD-R SPECIFICATION WAS DESIGNED TO AVOID THE SORT OF TROUBLE THAT PLAGUES ANALOGUE RECORDING MEDIA.”

KEVIN PRICHARD - FIRING BLANKS

“WHEN BUYING HI-FI ONE SHOULD GO FOR THE CHEAPEST DEAL THAT FULFILLS YOUR NEEDS.”

SIMON J BISHOP - POUNDSTRETCHER

“IS THERE ANY ADVANTAGE IN HAVING A SUPERIOR REPLAY SYSTEM TO THE SET-UP THE MATERIAL WAS RECORDED ON?”

'MONKEYTENNIS' - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

PEOPLE ARE NOT PCs

In April's blank digital media group test you ask the reader, "Does anyone still believe that choices in blank digital media have no bearing on sound quality?"

Your hypothesis is that the chemical composition — the physical structure of recordable digital media — can affect the accuracy of recordings. You also seem to be implying that playback pick-up signal strength may be affected by greater or lesser reflectivity on a CD-R's surface or from a laser's intensity.

The latter is impossible as digital media is digital. Music is stored on it as 1s and 0s — the strength, colour, reflectivity, or read intensity will affect only whether a given pit will be interpreted by the read circuit as a 1 or 0. After that, a sophisticated decoding system splices all the bits for a given sample back together — in a way that makes a miswritten or misread 1 or 0 highly unlikely to deviate the original sample stream — and certainly not the causal effects you mention.

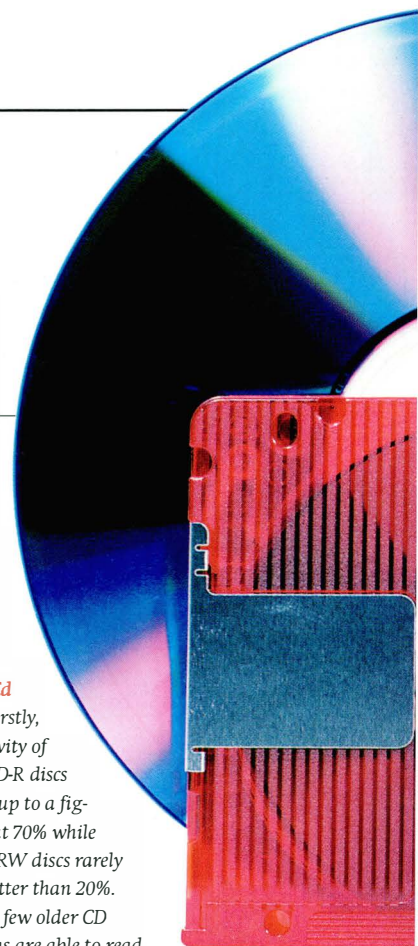
That a given blank CD-R's data may vary from the original disc image from which it was copied is possible, even likely. Scratches and defects happen. However, the Red Book CD Digital Audio recording specification was expressly designed to avoid just the sort of trouble that plagues analogue recording media, i.e. variations in the recording medium would cause deviation from the original recording.

Kevin Prichard, via e-mail

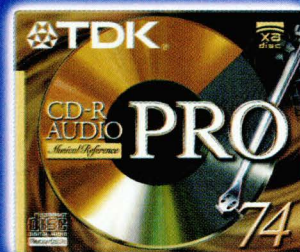
Technical Ed

Replies... Firstly, the reflectivity of different CD-R discs does vary up to a figure of about 70% while that of CD-RW discs rarely achieves better than 20%. This is why few older CD mechanisms are able to read CD-RW media. Only once the sensitivity of the laser playback is adjusted, as it is with the latest crop of CD players, will they respond to the lower 'bit contrast' offered by CD-RW discs.

Otherwise, the comparison between CD-ROM data utilized by PCs and audio data processed by CD-R players extends only so far. Specifically, PC data remains wholly in the digital domain, and so long as it remains intact and in the right order, the PC and program will run faultlessly. Audio data must eventually be converted into the analogue domain so that we can hear it. During this process, any variation in the exact timing of the datastream (which might otherwise be wholly intact) results in additional analogue signals being created during D-to-A conversion. These are just one source of the colorations detected by our listeners under blind conditions. People are not PCs.



Audio CD-R Range





POUND-STRETCHER

Nice to see a review of my CD player (Yamaha CDX-496), in August's HFC. Did it ever cross Richard Black's mind that a fault with the review sample might have caused the 'mechanical noise' he heard?

I believe that when buying hi-fi one should go for the cheapest deal that fulfils your needs. This might sound terribly unsophisticated, but if you do it the other way you might as well go out and buy a recording studio and invite bands to come and play for you because that's the only way you'll ever be satisfied. When auditioning CD players I listened from the

real bargain basement up to £1,000 players. Yes, there was a difference – the cheap stuff didn't have the clarity of more expensive machines.

I firmly believe that it's here that one's own opinion of what sounds good comes into play. To draw an analogy with cars, I drive a Saab – lovely cars – yet I don't really care for Audis. Sure I would love an Aston Martin, but I owned and drove several Citroen 2CVs, one of the best cars ever made. Why? Because it was built to a purpose, mainly replacing the horse for French peasants but exceeded that brief in providing cheap, fun, reliable transport.

My system in present terms cost £420 and I am very pleased with it. Sure, I would like a Primare system at ten times the cost but would it be ten times as good?

Simon J Bishop, via e-mail

The Editor replies... The noise Richard mentioned was not of such an order as to suggest a fault with the Yamaha, it was merely greater than he found with the other players and a distraction for those who sit close to their CD player and listen to quiet music.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

This week I purchased my first 'real' hi-fi, spending around £550. This replaced my previous midi system that cost around £300, five years ago. It has led me to question what the real 'purpose' of hi-fi is? Is there any advantage in spending thousands on a system?

I have gained some experience in the recording of audio in a studio environment. However, one thing I have noticed is that apart from the half dozen or so 'super studios' around the country, many studios spend less on their monitoring equipment than many audiophiles spend on their hi-fi. By far the most popular studio monitors from my personal experience are Yamaha NS10Ms, which cost around £200-250.

Again from experience, the power amps driving such monitors are usually sub-£500 models. So, in these cases, is there any advantage in having a superior replay system to the set-up the material was originally recorded on?

'MonkeyTennis', HFC Forum user

The Editor replies... It does indeed seem to be an anomaly until you remember that producers are dealing with the original sound, we get a facsimile of it that has been through a number of post-production processes before being pressed into a piece of polycarbonate. Even a cassette copy from master tape sounds more convincing than the average commercial release. We need to have as wide a 'window' onto the music as possible in order to get back to the studio sound.

HEAR HEAR, HAMSTA!

I have a few mates who are musicians who make some, or all, of their living from CD royalties. When you copy a mate's CD rather than buying your own, the person who made the CD misses out on the money. Sure a lot of the cash goes to the retailer, distributor, and the record company fat cats, but you can guarantee that the first person to suffer from a downturn in sales is the artist.

Yes, some artists make more money than all of us put together will ever see in a lifetime, but most don't. And should it make a difference? Do you steal from McDonalds but not the local fish & chip shop because McDonalds is an evil multinational that makes millions every year? It is stealing intellectual property, which, while not as obvious as shoplifting, is just as illegal and immoral.

'Hamsta', Forum user

Letters Page Sponsored by



at the heart of it

HIGH STREET VS. THE INTERNET

Besides magazines, of course, the Internet can be a great place to find information on hi-fi, from buying a record deck to learning about room acoustics. With the power of search engines such as Google (www.google.com), you can almost find anything you're after. This is great news for beginners, who can learn more before entering the fray and working out what components to audition.

But Forum users have considered recently the pros and cons of Richer Sounds. For anyone unfamiliar with the chain, it is probably the cheapest place on the high street to buy hi-fi. Whilst everyone has an opinion on the store, it has undoubtedly brought a lot of newcomers into the world of better music reproduction, and that can only be a good thing.

What we can't emphasise enough here at *Hi-Fi Choice*, is that it's essential to listen to your shortlist before buying. The key is not to be afraid to have a go, you don't have to be an expert with a language of critical terms, just a normal pair of ears to judge if you like what you hear. If you have a friend who's thinking of buying some stuff, spare a moment to advise them of the merits of auditioning, better still see if you can pop to your local shop with them to help them through the process. You may even brush up on your listening skills!

URGENT WIRES

GETTING CROSS ABOUT CABLES AT THE HFC FORUM...

Further to the popularity of the Shark interconnect cable last month, as hotly debated on the website, the message boards won't let the topic go. One Forum user, Curtis, asked, "What are your thoughts on interconnects?" Simple enough question and yet the response was huge. One of the first replies got people going: "Expensive interconnects can make a huge difference, used appropriately. High quality hi-fi will usually tend to be very revealing, which is why systems tend to show more of a



difference with expensive interconnects." Clearly this opinion wasn't shared elsewhere in the Forum; one user was quick to respond, "Do you think that preamps, CD players, etc. are wired internally with '£400 wire'. Er, no, they are not. So how come the sound can get through a 50p (if you're lucky!) wire inside the equipment, but magically needs a £400 interconnect to reveal everything between the amp and the CD player?" Interconnects do as we know make a difference, but price is not necessarily the key.



Bienvenue! Willkommen! Hola! Hi!

This is my home site for all home boys and home chicks, giving U a flavor of the Super Greg Concept. If U have a problem with it or think U can do it better, it's your problem (not mine). Sorry if I sound a little upset in the beginning of this site, but I can promise U the rest of the site is a lot nicer. Stay fresh!

- Love, Super Greg

www.supergreg.com

This website has been doing the rounds recently, and it took us a little while to work out if it was serious or not. Perhaps a cross between Ali G and Borat?

WEBSITE HI-FIVE

NEED MORE MUSIC? THEN SURF NO MORE!

www.cd-wow.com

Not the prettiest site around but with the top 20 CDs, amongst a shed-load of others, at £8.99 including free postage and packing, what are you waiting for? You may not find everything here, but if it's popular and/or recent take a look before you part with any cash.

www.play247.com

This is more like it. A much wider catalogue of music, at fantastic prices – it even got me reaching for my plastic. Again this one is post-free. Can we really moan about CD prices with sites like this around?

www.cow.co.uk

Cheapness is a bit of a theme with this site, as the appearance suggests. Claiming to be the oldest cheap CD store on the web (since 1994), it should know a bit about e-commerce by now! Lots of stuff but do check the prices carefully against the competition if you want the very best deal.

www.audiostreet.infront.co.uk

Refreshing and comprehensive site offering cheaper CDs than the high street. You can also download music in MP3 format and check out breaking news on the music scene. Interestingly, you can sell your existing CD collection and exchange albums too!

www.amazon.co.uk

One of the biggest sites out there, chances are you've already visited it. Although it may not be the cheapest, its vast range of stock should mean you can find the more obscure titles that you're after. Whilst you're at it, have a look at the books too...

PUTTING VINYL FIRST

5000 great album titles
one catalogue



firstvinyl.co.uk

classical jazz rock pop reggae soul dance folk world all on vinyl all brand new

Alpha series
A symphony of sight and sound

Unflappable



Our cones look different because they are different.

Infinity CMMD* cones are many times more rigid than others, which means they stay in shape whatever the signal.

It doesn't matter whether you're listening to rock, classical, jazz, garage or your favourite action movie.

Think you've heard it all before? You haven't until you've discovered Infinity Alpha.

 **Infinity**[®]

TECHNOLOGY • PERFORMANCE • DESIGN

H A Harman International Company

Harman Consumer UK Ltd., Unit 2,
Borehamwood Industrial Park,
Rowley Lane, Herts WD6 5PZ.
Tel: 020 8731 4670 Fax: 020 8731 4699
Email: info.uk@harman.com

* C.M.M.D. - Ceramic Metal Matrix Diaphragm

FORUM HELP

WANT TO KNOW HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SOUND SYSTEM? LET TIM BOWERN GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE UPGRADE MAZE...

Write to us with your hi-fi queries:

Forum: Help

Hi-Fi Choice

99 Baker Street

London W1U 6FP

Or e-mail:

tim.bowern@futurenet.co.uk



AMPLIFIER

READY FOR A REGA

Could you tell me how you rate the Rega Elex amp? I'm going to buy one! Also, which speakers up to £500 would you recommend I put with it, considering I listen mostly to dance music? Any info on Rega would be greatly appreciated as I can't find much in Western Australia.

Nic, Australia

Sorry to say we weren't particularly keen on the Elex (pictured) when we group tested it back in HFC 162. We found that its timing was good but it lacked focus and needed careful speaker matching. In fact, personal experience tells me speaker matching really is the key

here. Though not an amplifier we'd recommend to everybody, it does follow Rega's customary route of designing products specifically to work with other 'house' kit. Combine the Elex (or a more recent Rega amp for that matter) with Rega loudspeakers, such as the Jura floorstanders, and what you get may not be the last word in finesse, but boy is it musically involving.

As a brand, Rega is still best known for its turntables, but it also makes some interesting electronics and speakers. Few set-ups at the price can match the free-flowing snap and timing of an all-Rega system.

CD PLAYER

IT'S SACD FOR ME

I've reached that point in my 15 years of hi-fi buffery when I'm looking to take that final leap to long-term satisfaction. Having done plenty of that auditioning stuff I've settled on Sugden amplification, but I'm still in turmoil over the front end. I'm tempted by a Sony SACD player, but which is better - the SCD-555ES or SCD-777ES?

Vincent Handley, via e-mail

We'd go for the SCD-555ES (below), it delivers superb results for the money and is operationally a lot slicker than the 777ES. The latter player is also no longer in production. It's worth bearing in mind that multichannel SACD players of all hues are expected to be launched later in the year. And if you plan to go down the surround route in future there's something to be said for hanging on a bit longer. But given that you want to take the final leap, the SCD-555ES is the best stereo player we know of at the price.



SPEAKERS

ROTEL SEEKS PERFECT PARTNER

Which is the recommended speaker for the Rotel RA931 or RA971 amp?

Surapong, via e-mail

Well, Surapong, one of the fascinating things about hi-fi is that there are no set answers as to what works best with what. Which means that you should do some leg work when you're choosing what to buy, carefully auditioning products to see if they work with your existing components... but when you get it right, the feeling you get when you play your music is absolute magic!

There's no single 'recommended' speaker for those Rotel amps, but if it's a sub-£200 speaker you're after you should certainly give B&W's excellent DM303s (above) a whirl, alongside models from the likes of Tannoy and Mission. If you can stretch your budget to £400, consider Dynaudio's dynamic little Audience 42s.

TUNER

RADIO DAZE

I'm looking for a tuner to go with my Arcam electronics and a pair of Mission speakers. I was thinking of going for a digital one, but now I'm veering towards analogue. I'm willing to spend up to £550.

Ben Verbelen, via e-mail

Digital radio is the future. It has the potential to expand radio broadcasting in the same way that digital TV is changing our viewing options. Whether it offers a wholesale qualitative improvement over FM depends on the reception conditions in your area and the aerial used. If this is your first foray into hi-fi radio, DAB is easiest in terms of aerial requirements (assuming of course that DAB is available in your area - check with your dealer if in doubt). Arcam's DAB receiver is out of your price range, but we would recommend Sony's D777ES (below) which also receives analogue FM.



SYSTEM

GHETTO-BLASTER HAS TO GO

My youngest (age 14) is really into protest music. It sounds a lot like punk (or am I showing my age?). He currently uses a 'ghetto-blaster', which can only be described as awful! I want to buy him a modest separates system that'll do a much better job - a CD player, amp and bookshelf speakers. I was thinking of partnering a Rotel RB-971 power amp with a spare Musical Fidelity preamp I have, then adding one of the small Tannoy speakers and a £200-ish CD player. Any ideas?

Andy, via e-mail

Your Musical Fidelity/Rotel idea should serve well on the amp front - a reasonably energetic foundation for your son's system. On the speaker front, go for a pair that'll keep those riffs rocking. We suggest either B&W's DM303s or Mission's m71s or m72s. A top moshin' CD player option would be Denon's DCD-835 (pictured).



POWER AMP

ALL THE WORLD'S A SOUNDSTAGE

I enjoyed your review of the Naim NAP500 power amp. But can you tell me how you rate its soundstaging. Can it really throw 3D images?

Pete, via e-mail



The NAP500 has better imaging than previous Naims. Soundstaging is firm and yes, 3D, if not quite as holographic as some competitors. Ultimately however, your preamp is likely to have just as great an effect in this respect.

FIRST SEPARATES SYSTEM

KEEP 'EM SEPARATED

I've never bought hi-fi separates before but I'm planning to dive in soon. I've bought various magazines, but I'm not very 'techie' and most of them didn't help very much. I'm writing to you because I've found you to be the best!

I have a choice of the following: a Sony CDP-XE530 CD player with either a Marantz PM6010SE or Denon PMA-255SE amp and Mission 701, Mission m71 or Tannoy mX2 speakers. I listen mainly to hip hop and R&B. Which combination would you suggest?

Sam Mackay, via e-mail



If you've already lined up that Sony CD player we'd suggest you take a tilt at the Denon - it's a punchy little amp that'll suit your music tastes. Your speaker choice is a touch trickier. If you like it loud you might find the Mission 701s suit you, but if you prefer more finesse mixed with a healthy punch then go for m71s (pictured) or the Tannoys. Given your tastes we'd probably edge for the Mission m71s - they're not bass shy.

Presumably these options are part of a package deal. If you're willing to look beyond that you should definitely listen to B&W's DM303 speakers, and one or two other pieces of electronics like NAD's C320 amp and a CD player from Marantz's CD6000 series. And remember to audition before you buy!



CD PLAYER

WINNER SPINNER REQUIRED

Based on your reviews, I recently bought a Rotel RA-971 MkII amp and a pair of HB2 speakers. They sound very lifelike, as your reviews suggested. Now I need a good budget CD player to match them. I'm thinking about a Rotel RCD-951 or RCD-971, or perhaps an Arcam Alpha 7SE or DiVA CD72. Which would you suggest?

Ben Endrigo, Philippines

Both Arcams are big, broad-sounding players, the Alpha 7SE providing a little more zip than the generally more refined DiVA CD72. But given your choice of amp, and the fact that Rotel's CD players tend to be equally good, we'd suggest you take the Rotel route. Of the two we prefer the RCD-971 (pictured) - a bold and detailed sounding player sure to match your amp both sonically and aesthetically.

SPEAKERS

PAMPER MY NAD

I'm looking for some speakers to go with a NAD C350 amp. I've got £400 to spend.

Norman, via e-mail

If you want floorstanders you really should check out Infinity's Alpha series - a stylish and musically coherent range of speakers. On the smaller, stand-mount side of things try Dynaudio's wonderfully involving Audience 42 and the beguiling midband qualities of the Epos M12.



definitive audio

Living Voice · Lowther · Vitavox · Electrofluidics · Art Audio · Border Patrol
Canary · DNM · MF · Sugden · Wavac · Western Electric · Resolution Audio
Wadia · Michell · Nott'm Analogue · SME · Ortofon · Van den Hul

LIVING VOICE



Auditorium Avatar

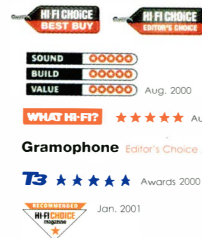
Hi-Fi Plus *Editor's Choice*
Hi-Fi Plus *Product of the Year*
Hi-Fi Choice *Editor's Choice*

"The Avatar is a near perfect balance of size, bandwidth, efficiency and tonal refinement. Its slim lines and small footprint deliver a genuine 94db sensitivity, and excel when it comes to delivering the scale, vibrance and colour of the music. Its unobtrusive quality allows it to cut straight to the heart of a performance, unlocking the music trapped in the recording, whilst its refinement makes it equally at home with both basic and surprisingly expensive amplification."

Part exchanged and ex-dem clearance.

	Sale	New
Digital		
Sugden Masterclass CD - new - boxed	£1990	£2500
Helios Model CD2i - new	£890	£1200
Helios Model CD3i - ex-dem	£690	£900
Micromega Duo BS - DAC	£190	£600
Analogue		
Nottingham Analogue Mentor - with reference platter	£1900	£2900
- Reference power supply for above	£490	£800
Nottingham Analogue 'Foot' - 12" carbon fibre tonearm - new	£700	£1100
Nottingham Analogue Space Deck - with SME arm mount	£650	£850
Helios Cyalene - tonearm	£590	£1350
Hadcock GH228 Super - 9" tonearm - nearly new	£440	£640
Loudspeakers		
Living Voice Auditorium - Hi-Fi Choice 'Best Buy'		
4 pairs - Walnut - ex-dem	£1150	£1500
Living Voice Avatar - Hi-Fi Plus 'Product of the Year'		
2 pairs - Cherry and Rosewood - ex-dem	£1900 / £2100	£2500
Living Voice OBX-R - Hi-Fi Choice 'Editors Choice'		
2 pairs - Cherry and Rosewood - ex-dem	£2900 / £3700	£4000
Cadence DS	£750	£1750
Dali 104 (MS)	£390	£650
Lowther Bi-Core 2000	£500	
B&W CDM1 SE - inc' custom stands - mint - 'give away'	£290	£650
Amplifiers		
Border Patrol 300B SE - with new Western Electric valves.		
Light Oak - the best SE available - ex-dem	£3750	£4500
Canary Audio 301 - 24 watts stereo power amp with		
2 matched pair Western Electric 300B - fabulous	£3900	£5200
Art Audio Concerto - integrated 40 Watts Class A V.good x2	£1500	£2650
Art Audio VPI Special - phono and line pre amp	£850	£1900
Audio Innovations S1000 - 50 watt class A monos	£790	£1550
Joule Electra 2 box phono pre-amp	£800	£2000
Art Audio VPS - valve line pre-amp	£600	£1400
Sugden A21 - integrated ex-dem - mint condition	£750	£900
Musical Fidelity A1000 - 'super pre main' class A	£850	£1800
Tom Evans Micro Groove - phono stage - new	£290	£400
Tom Evans Groove - phono stage - new	£490	£750
DNM PA 3S - 200 hours - ex-dem	£2290	£2900
DNM Pre 3C Primus - inc' phono - 200 hours - ex-dem	£1590	£2100

AMEX VISA MASTERCARD
Tel 0115 973 3222 Fax 0115 973 3666
internet: www.definitiveaudio.co.uk email: shout@definitiveaudio.co.uk



PMC

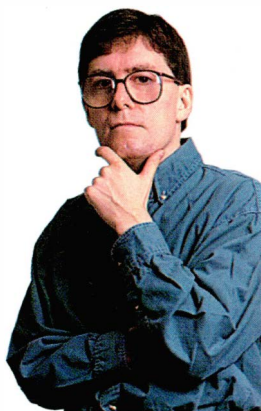
0870 4441044
www.pmc-speakers.com
sales@promonitor.co.uk

Stars

Ashford (Kent)	Soundcraft HiFi	01233 624441
Aylesbury	Northwood Audio	01296 428790
Birmingham	Griffin Audio	0121 622 2230
Bournemouth	Suttons HiFi	01202 555512
Brighton	The Powerplant	01273 775978
Brighton	Jeffries HiFi	01273 609431
Bristol	Radfords	0117 944 1010
Cardiff	Audio Excellence	02920 228565
Cheltenham	Audio T	01242 583960
Chelmsford	Rayleigh HiFi	01245 265245
Chester	Audio Excellence	01244 345576
Colwyn Bay	Electrator	01492 548932
Doncaster	The HiFi Studios	01302 727274
Dundee	Sounds Perfect	01382 226592
Dunstable	Technosound	01582 663297
East Grinstead	Audio Designs	01342 314569
Edinburgh	Loud & Clear	0141 221 0221
Eastbourne	Jeffries HiFi	01323 731336
Enfield	Audio T	020 8367 3132
Epsom	Audio T	01372 748888
Exeter	Audio Excellence	01392 491194
Glasgow	Loud & Clear	0131 226 6500
Glasgow	Stereo Stereo	0141 248 4079
Grimsby	Manders HiFi	01472 351391
Guildford	PJ HiFi	01483 504801
Halifax	Huddersfield HiFi	01442 366832
Hitchin	David Orton	01462 452248
Hull	The Audio Room	01482 891375
High Wycombe	Audio T	01494 558585
Ipswich	Seven Oaks Sound & Vision	01473 286977
Kettering	Classic HiFi	01536 310855
Kingston	Infidelity	020 8943 3530
Lakeside	Rayleigh HiFi	01708 680551
Leamington Spa	Stratford HiFi	01926 888644
Leeds	Image Audio	0113 278 9374
London (W1)	The Cornflake Shop	020 7631 0472
London (NW)	Audio T	020 7794 7848
London (SE)	Billy Vee	020 8318 5755
London (SW)	Auditorium	020 7384 3030
London (SW)	Oranges & Lemons	020 7924 2040
London (W)	Thomas Heinitz	020 7229 2077
Manchester (Greater)	Adventures in HiFi	01942 234202
Manchester	Replay	0161 202 9922
Margate	LMC Audio	01843 220092
Newcastle Upon Tyne	Linton Audio	0191 477 4167
New Malden	Unliet Sound & Vision	020 8942 9567
Milton Keynes	Technosound	01908 604949
Nottingham	Nottingham HiFi	0115 924 8320
Norwich	Basically Sound	01508 570829
Oxford	Audio T	01845 765961
Portsmouth	Jeffries HiFi	0239 266 3604
Rayleigh	Rayleigh HiFi	01268 779762
Sheffield	Moorgate Acoustics	0114 275 6048
Southampton	Audio T	023 8025 2827
Southend	Rayleigh HiFi	01702 435255
St Albans	Radlett Audio	01727 855577
Stafford	Acoustica	01785 259199
Swansea	Audio Excellence	01792 474608
Taunton	Mike Manning	01823 326688
Tunbridge Wells	Audio T	01892 525666
Worthing	Phase 3	01903 245577
Worcester	Worcester HiFi	01905 612929
Yeovil	Mike Manning	01935 479361
York	The Sound Organisation	01904 627108

Spit and polish

A FEW MONTHS LATE, JIMMY GETS INTO THE SPRING CLEANING SPIRIT...



“SOILING OR SCRATCHES MAY CAUSE THE MUSIC TO JUMP. THE ONLY SOLUTION IS TO CLEAN THE DISC. EASIER SAID THAN DONE.”

In retrospect, it was unfortunate that CD was launched amid exaggerated claims regarding its supposed indestructibility. The sight of TV presenters spreading butter and jam on the playing surface of a disc (presumably, *The Best of Bread?*) with no apparent ill effects on sound quality created a false impression that cleanliness didn't matter.

Actually, the opposite's true. Agreed, the effects of contamination are usually less serious than they can be with vinyl LPs. But that doesn't mean you can abuse CDs and not suffer the consequences. Just because there's no surface noise doesn't mean that sound quality isn't being degraded. Dirty CDs sound harsh and fatiguing.

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

Heavy soiling or deep scratches may cause the music to jump, depending on how good your player's error correction is. In extreme cases, the player finds it impossible to read the disc's table of contents. The only solution is to clean the disc. But that's easier said than done.

It's remarkably difficult to clean CDs without creating damage. The playing surface is incredibly soft and easily marked. Just wiping it with a cloth or paper towel is enough to leave fine scratches. Of course, if the surface is badly soiled, cleaning will be beneficial even if a few fine scratches are created in the process. But, where possible, it's better to avoid this.

Keep CDs spotless by careful handling, making sure the playing side isn't touched and the disc is immediately returned to its caddy after playing. But, even with meticulous care, contamination from the air is virtually impossible to eliminate – eventually a fine layer of dust and various pollutants will cover the surface, dulling the original shine.



ROR-1 is designed for cameras and glasses but works very well with CD.

When cleaning is unavoidable, I use an American product called ROR-1. It's a glass and plastics lens cleaner in a spray-mist bottle intended to remove deposits from delicate multi-coated optical surfaces. ROR stands for Residual Oil Remover, and the makers claim using it improves light transmission.

ROR-1 is certainly effective. But what I really like about it is its gentleness. Some fluids leave surfaces squeaky-dry – and this is (or can be) conducive to scratching. However, ROR-1 is as much a polish as a cleaner, leaving a microscopically thin layer on surfaces to increase reflectivity as well as acting as a protective film.

It's possible to create fine scratches when cleaning a CD with ROR-1 and. But only if you use an abrasive cloth or rough tissue paper, and clean without taking due care and attention. Hove Photographic recommends you use a photographic product called Kimwipes on lenses but also suggests that Kleenex is more than adequate. The key thing to remember is that you should polish radially, ie between the centre and the edge of the disc rather than in a circular motion as you do with vinyl.

GOOD AS NEW?

On CDs the result is impressive. ROR-1 polishes out ultra-fine scratches, giving surfaces a brighter shinier appearance. The sound improves too, seeming sharper and more transparent, with increased fine detail and crispness. The difference is particularly noticeable on discs that are soiled or fingermarked. But there's also an improvement with new CDs straight from the cellophane.

I'm not sure why this is. Perhaps things aren't quite as pristine as they look. Lightly breathe on the playing surface of a disc, and condensation sometimes reveals evidence of contamination; for example, what look like rubber plunger marks – presumably from when the disc was lifted from the pressing machine.

ROR-1 can be obtained mail order for the very reasonable price of £5.95 including VAT and postage. It's economical too – a single 2 oz. bottle should last yonks.

Hove Photographic ☎ 01273 777576

Jimmy Hughes repairs professional cameras by day and plays far too many CDs by night, and they're all spotless.



AWARDS 2001/2002

IT'S LIKE HI-FI EUROVISION. ONLY WITH BETTER MUSIC.
 JASON KENNEDY GIVES A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE EISA
 AWARDS AND A RUNDOWN OF WINNERS IN THE OTHER CATEGORIES.

It's been another incredible year for excellent new products, the hi-fi market is being invaded from all sides with new formats and technologies and the integration of audio and video has finally become a reality in the home. All of which means that choosing products to be Europe's best for 2001 is harder than ever. Fortunately there are a few factors that narrow down the choice, most significant being the need for a product to be available across most of Europe before the month is out – in fact EISA awards can actually be withdrawn if a winning product not available to buy after August 15. Inevitably the distribution requirement tends to rule out a lot of specialist UK brands and favours the multinationals, although even some of those are not universally available in the furthest reaches of Europe.

Back in June I got together with Europe's finest magazine Editors to choose the best new components in each of the seven hi-fi awards categories, Alan Sircom (ex of this parish) argued for *Home Entertainment's* selections on the home theatre panel. After much heated discussion we arrived at the products you will see on the following pages, each and everyone of them a very classy piece of kit that I would dearly love to have at home, especially, as you might imagine, the high end component of the year.

This the 20th Anniversary of EISA's awards, an occasion which will be marked by an even more lavish than usual ceremony in Berlin. This is to take place at the start of the International Funkausstellung exhibition, the world's largest consumer electronics fair. EISA is also producing an anniversary book detailing all the titles in the association and the winners of this year's awards. The book will be given out to Europe's premier companies in the audio/video and photographic market – but if you want a copy, I'll see what I can do.

It's worth reiterating that unlike the awards you'll find in other magazines at this time of year, these have been selected on a democratic basis by a large panel of independent experts from across Europe. This means that the winners have a universal appeal and should work well in all manner of rooms and for the full range of musical tastes. This is why *Hi-Fi Choice* feels confident about backing the EISA awards, because the winners are guaranteed to deliver. So, without further ado, I give you the EISA awards 2001/2002.

Jason Kennedy, Editor

WHAT IS EISA?

EISA (the European Imaging and Sound Association) is an organisation based in Geneva that promotes excellence in photography, video, hi-fi and home cinema throughout Europe. The EISA panel is made up of a number of dedicated specialist magazines.

The origins of EISA date back to 1982, when five European photography magazines came together to select a Camera of the Year. This award proved so popular that there were soon awards for many categories of photographic equipment. In 1989, the organisation emerged in its current incarnation, swelling its roster of awards with new gongs for video, hi-fi and home cinema.

There are now three European Awards panels: Photo, Video, and Hi-Fi and Home Theatre. *HFC* and its sister title, *Home Entertainment*, are among 40 participating magazines from 18 European countries. We are the only UK magazines to be members of EISA.

In the Awards citations that follow, please note that any product prices given are a guideline – for exact prices, consult a local dealer.

HOW DO THE JUDGES DECIDE ON THE WINNERS?

In late spring, each member magazine of the Hi-Fi and Home Theatre panel proposed its own favoured products to be short-listed for an Award. In June, the editors of those member magazines came together in Switzerland to debate the selections proposed. This was followed by a vote on the shortlist and, finally, the selection of one winner in each category.

WHICH PRODUCTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

All candidates must have been in commercial production and available for evaluation to a majority of panel members. They must have been available for sale in a majority of European countries by August 15 in the year of the Awards. Each Award is valid from June 15 this year until June 14 next year.

HOW DO I USE THE EISA AWARDS TO BUY HI-FI?

Use these Awards, like our Best Buy and Recommended flags, as a starting point. Then rely on your local specialist hi-fi dealer for system matching. A good dealer will help you find the best partnering components for any winner.



EISA AWARDS IN OTHER CATEGORIES

PHOTO AWARDS

- Camera – Minolta Dynax 7
 - Professional Camera – Bronica RF 645
 - Compact Camera – Yashica Zoomate 105 SE
 - Lens – Sigma EX 1.8/20 mm DG
 - Colour Slide Film – Fujichrome Provia 400F
 - Colour Print Film – Agfa Vista 100, 200, 400 & 800
 - Digital Camera – Sony Cyber-Shot DSC-S85
 - Pro Digital Camera – Nikon D1X
 - Photo Printer – Canon S800 Photo
 - Digital Scanner – Nikon Coolscan 4000 ED
 - Photo Innovation – Print Image Matching P.I.M.
- VIDEO AWARDS**
- Television – Panasonic TX-36PB50F
 - Plasma Television – Philips 32PF9964
 - Projection Television – Sony KP-44PS2
 - Camcorder – JVC GR-DVP3
 - High-End Camcorder – Panasonic NV-MX300
 - Digital Video Recorder – Philips DVDR1000
 - Combi Video Player – Samsung SV-DVD 1
 - Video Editing Product – Pinnacle Systems 'Studio Version 7'
 - Video Design – Loewe Aconda 9581 ZWH

EISA AUDIO & HOME THEATRE PANEL

- *Alta Fidelidad* – Spain ● *Audio* – Poland ● *Audio* – Portugal ● *Audio Review* – Italy ● *Digitalis Hazimozsi* – Hungary ● *Digital Video Home Theatre* – Italy ● *Heimkino* – Germany ● *Hi-Fi Choice* – UK ● *High Fidelity* – Denmark ● *Home Entertainment* – UK ● *ITM Praktiker MHCE* – Austria
- *Ljud & Bild* – Sweden ● *Media Expert* – Switzerland ● *Media Totaal* – Netherlands ● *Prestige Audio Video* – France ● *Sound & Hi-Fi* – Greece
- *Stereo* – Germany ● *Stereo Video* – Czech Republic ● *Stereo Video* – Russia ● *Sztereo* – Hungary

AWARDS



EUROPEAN AUDIO PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002



PHILIPS SACD 1000

This Super Audio CD player is the first to bring multi-channel surround sound to this high resolution format. It reads single or double-layered SACD, DVD-Video (but not DVD-Audio) discs and all audio CD formats, including CD-R and CD-RW. Three different filter settings allow you to tailor its wide frequency response – which extends up to 100kHz – to best suit your playback system. Six high

quality analogue outputs sit alongside a stereo pair, while optical and coaxial digital outputs, S-Video, composite video and two SCARTs for DVD offer versatile home cinema connection options. The SACD 1000 is not a cheap machine, but it does offer superb sound quality as a multichannel SACD, CD, and DVD-Video player. £1,299.99, Philips ☎ 020 8689 2166



EUROPEAN AUDIO RECORDER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002



PIONEER PDR-609

This superb CD-R/RW recorder is well built and has excellent ergonomics. Its comprehensive socketry allows digital and analogue connections and it has input adjustment for both. The PDR-609 records CD text, HDCD and stereo dts discs, making it compatible with all flavours of CD material. Pioneer's Legato Link digital filter gives a clean,

almost analogue sound, but the secret behind its high recording quality is extremely low jitter, the discs it produces conceding only the tiniest amount of space and detail to the original. This recorder combines value for money and sound quality that's extremely hard to beat. £250.00, Pioneer ☎ 01753 789789

AWARDS



EUROPEAN COMPACT SYSTEM OF THE YEAR 2001-2002



JVC FS-SD 1000R

The miniature 'organ pipe' satellite speakers are the most striking feature of the JVC FS-SD1000R system. These stylish speakers feature an unusually small 'racetrack' magnet/diaphragm design that ensures a very wide and homogeneous soundfield for good imaging almost

anywhere in a room. A dedicated powered subwoofer, which can be placed out of sight, adds drama and punch to the clean, uncoloured sound from this compact CD player/RDS tuner audio package. £400.00, JVC ☎ 020 8450 3282



EUROPEAN HIGH END AUDIO OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

**TANNOY DIMENSION TD-12**

With the TD-12 – the top model in the Dimension series – British specialist Tannoy has combined its famous, highly developed 'dual concentric' drive unit with a 'super-tweeter' positioned on the top of the cabinet. The latter delivers the extended upper frequencies available on high-resolution SACD and DVD-Audio recordings, and is

positioned so that all three drivers are time-aligned. Its 'star' configuration of rear connectors provides grounding for the drivers, which can reduce electrical noise, and the design is a luxurious mix of modern and traditional elements with a heavenly high-end sound to match. £6,495.00, Tannoy ☎ 01236 420199

SONUS FABER

look to the past to hear the future



Amati Homage

AMATI HOMAGE

Sonus faber.

Franco Serblin is too much the artist to settle into a routine, too passionate a designer to sit still. After 20 years, he remains driven to discover better methods for reproducing sound. And just as his views change the way we look at loudspeakers, so has his medium - Sonus Faber - evolved alongside his need to further the loudspeaker art.

His loudspeakers have developed into three distinct ranges - all the better to address the needs of an increasingly sophisticated marketplace. After all, with maturity comes a clarity of vision and intent. At the time of Sonus Faber's birth, there was no home theatre to address, and digital audio was in its infancy. In 2001, the world of home entertainment encompasses discrete 5.1 channel surround sound, purist 2-channel analogue audio, emerging digital technologies such as SACD and DVD-A, and more.

Sonus Faber welcomes the future, yet it shows respect for the past, the most vivid example being the Homage series. This luxurious range consists of the stand-mounted two-way Guarneri and the three-way floor-standing Amati, both embodying artisan skills of centuries past: the beauty and warmth of hand-fashioned cabinetry, wrapped around components which deliver sound worthy of the names of the greatest stringed instruments of all time. For more modest installations, the Signum and the Electa Amator II forge a direct link with the speakers which established the Sonus Faber name. And to serve a multitude of channels, the dazzling, ultra-modern Concerto Home series contains everything from satellite speakers and slim floor-standing models, to a centre channel, to the new Gravis subwoofer.

Whatever Sonus Faber speaker you acquire, whether you are reacting to the looks and finish or the sound it produces, there is only one response: "Che bello!"



CONCERTO HOME SERIES

L - R: CONCERTINO, SOLO, GRAVIS



HOME CINEMA CHOICE
AWARD WINNER 2001
BEST SPEAKER PACKAGE £1000+



absolutesounds ltd.

58 Durham Road, London SW20 0TW T: +44 (0)20 89 71 39 09
F: +44 (0)20 88 79 79 62 W: www.absolutesounds.com



EUROPEAN LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

**B&W DM 303**

The DM303 is the entry-level model in B&W's new 300 series. The tweeter features Nautilus technology, and the mid-bass unit is one of B&W's favourite woven glass fibre cones. To fulfil the demand for more aesthetically pleasing audio components, B&W has designed a subtle enclosure with an attractively profiled front baffle.

The DM303s are well balanced in response with good coherence and dynamics, fast, tight bass and very detailed high frequencies. Their easy driveability makes them a fine partner for budget stereo amps and multi-channel receivers.

£180.00, B&W ☎ 01903 750750



The Piano Series successfully brings together striking styling and powerful performance without compromise. It offers a full range of options for the finest in two-channel music reproduction and powerful, yet richly detailed, surround sound.



Piano

Do you have high expectations to the performance as well as the appearance of your loudspeakers - the Piano Series is an excellent choice. The anodised aluminium casing has the shape of the magnificent Grand Piano. A fine solid granite base completes this elegant design. Perfect interior decoration and audio excellence that leaves you with nothing more to wish for.

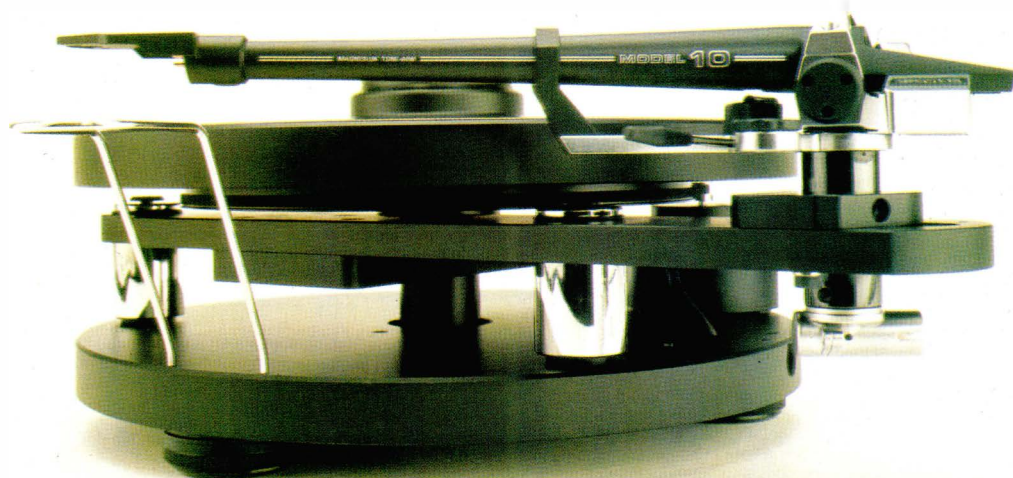
Dali UK: 13 Daly Avenue, Hampton Magna, Warwick, CV35 8SE. Tel: 01926 400944

Dali DK: Dali Allé 1, DK-9610 Noerager, Tel: +45 96721155, E-mail: info@dali.dk

WWW.DALI.DK

Concept Interest

SME MODEL 10



probably the world's most sought after turntable....

Details and reviews on request from:

SME LIMITED • STEYNING • SUSSEX • BN44 3GY • ENGLAND • ☎+44 (0)1903 814321 • ☒+44 (0)1903 814269

www.sme.ltd.uk • e-mail - sales@sme-ltd.demon.co.uk



EUROPEAN PERSONAL AUDIO OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

CREATIVE **EAX**

DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER

D.A.P. JUKEBOX

6GB of Audio

CREATIVE **D.A.P. DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER JUKEBOX**

CREATIVE

*Music. Wherever You Go.
ohne Ende. Egal wo.
votre discothèque. Partout avec vous.*

CREATIVE LABS D.A.P. JUKEBOX

The Creative Labs D.A.P. Jukebox is an impressive solution for music on the move. Its integral six gigabyte hard disk can store about 100 CDs at normal MP3 compression levels. Play Center 2 software is supplied for the PC interface, as well as fully upgradable firmware to support new compression formats such as WMA and AAC, making the

Jukebox a very powerful and flexible digital player, with good future-proofing. Meanwhile, the large 132x64-pixel LCD screen makes navigation between different tracks and musical genres child's play – and, lest we forget, it's also one of the best-sounding MP3 players around. £289.99, Creative Labs ☎ 01189 344322

"Beauty and A Beast"



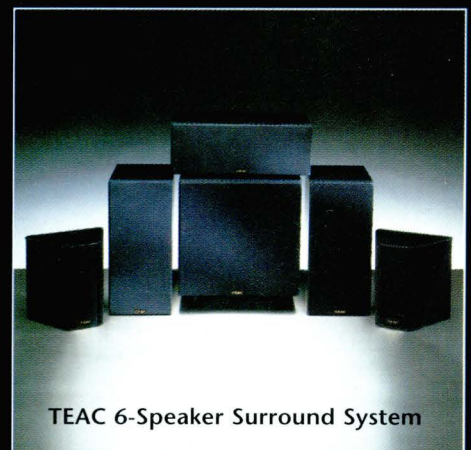
Home Theatre systems used to be big, cumbersome and ugly. And, their performance was pretty ordinary too.

But, all that has now changed. Because TEAC have just introduced a Home Theatre System with stunning looks and a performance way beyond its compact size. It is light years beyond your imagination. It comes complete with a 5 x 50W amplifier, Dolby Digital DVD Player and a 6 Speaker package that includes an active sub with variable crossover and gain,

matched voicing centre, left and right speakers, and bipolar rear speakers. It's all ready to plug in and play, all you need is a television. It will change the way you watch movies and other programmes at home for good. And best of all, the system costs less than £1100.

For once, a movie story with a happy ending.

Visit your TEAC Stockist for a demonstration or call TEAC on 01923 819630 for information on this extraordinary system.



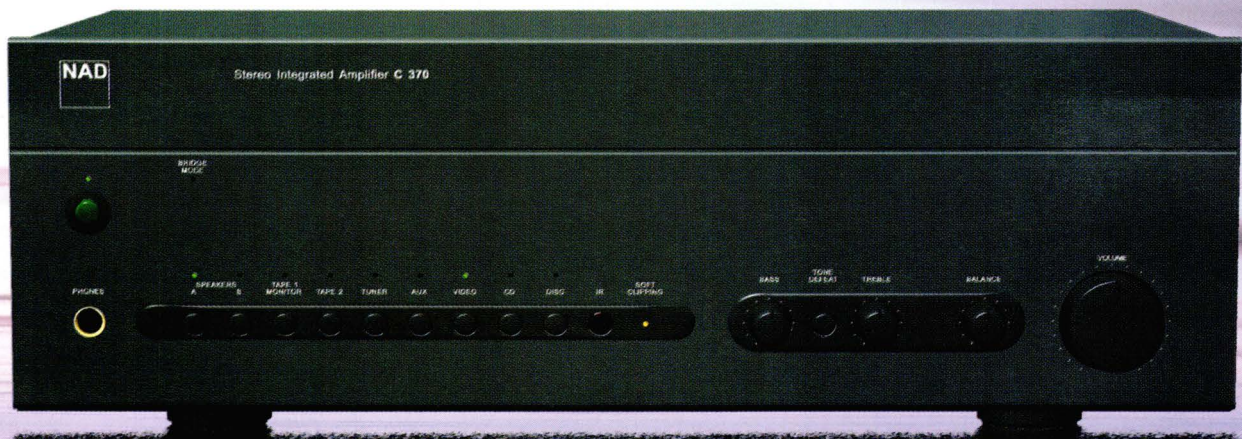
TEAC 6-Speaker Surround System

TEAC

The TEAC DVD Home Theatre System



EUROPEAN STEREO AMPLIFIER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

**NAD C 370**

Continuing the glorious NAD tradition of great sound at affordable prices, the C370 belongs to an advanced generation of integrated stereo amplifiers that excel in sound, technology and flexibility. The C370 has impressive bass, crystal clear treble, gorgeous punch and a rare

openness for a product of both its class and price. It's also extremely powerful, being capable of driving 185 Watts into 8 ohms. A remarkable achievement, and another great amp from a legendary name in British hi-fi. £449.95, Lenbrook UK ☎ 01908 319360

AWARDS



EUROPEAN CAR AUDIO OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

ALPINE F#1 STATUS

The Alpine F#1 Status system has the CDA-7990 CD-Tuner at its heart and allies it with a highly sophisticated signal processor, the PXA-H900, which represents the state-of-the-art for in-car entertainment. Its extraordinary capabilities with surround sound formats (Dolby Digital, dts, Pro-Logic, HDCD), equalization, time alignment control and versatility are as outstanding as its unsurpassed sound quality and – unfortunately – price. This system offers high-end performance for the audiophile motorist. £6,000.00, Alpine ☎ 01908 619 558



DVD PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

PANASONIC DVD-RA71

By incorporating the latest digital technologies from the video and audio fields, this new Panasonic DVD Audio/Video player raises the bar for sound and picture quality at its price point. It is also an excellent CD player in its own right, complete with the ability to playback both CD-R and CD-RW discs. For home cinema use, there are internal Dolby Digital and dts decoders. While digital features like 54MHz video processing and MPEG DNR make picture quality better than earlier machines. Progressive scan would be useful if you have a projector, but its RGB Scart is best for CRT TVs. £449.95, Panasonic ☎ 0990 357357



Dealers

Audio Excellence
Bristol
0117 926 4975

Audio Excellence
Cardiff
02920 228563

Audio Excellence
Swansea
01792 474608

Audio T
Brentwood
01277 264730

Audio T
Cambelley
01276 685597

Audio T
Cheltenham
01242 583960

Audio T
Epsom
01372 748888

Audio T
Reading
0118 958 5463

Audio T
Southampton
02380 252827

Audio T
Swindon
01793 538222

Audio T
Tunbridge Wells
01892 525666

Audio T
West Hampstead
0207 794 7848

Audio Illusions
Langley
01753 542761

Audio Venue
Maidenhead
01628 633995

Doug Brady Hi-Fi
Warrington
01925 828009

Leicester Hi-Fi
Leicester
0116 2539753

Moore's Hi-Fi
N Ireland
02891 812417

Music Matters
Edgbaston
0121 429 2811

Music Matters
Solihull
0121 742 0254

Northwood Audio
Aylesbury
01296 428790

Phase 3 Hi-Fi
Worthing
01903 245577

Prestige Audio
Middlesex
0208 868 3300

River Crossing Audio
Norfolk
01263 741230

Robert Ritchie Hi-Fi
Scotland
01674 673765

Sound Academy
Bloxwich
01922 473499

Sound Craft
Ashford
01233 624441

Unitel Sound ze Vision
New Malden
0208 942 9567

*Designed with
passion,
engineered to
perfection...*



Created for music.

Chord products have captured the hearts and minds of listeners and reviewers throughout the world.

It's no wonder. Each unit is hand built to individual order by British craftsmen, and designed to give the effortless musical performance you have always desired.

To learn more about our exclusive range of products, including the exquisite CPA4000E & SPM1200E pre/power combination, please contact us on 01622 721444, email sales@chord.softnet.co.uk, or visit www.chordelectronics.co.uk



Chord Electronics Limited



New Technology. Timeless Design. Exceptional Value.

Your new Response One Point Fives will place you firmly in the audiophile arena for well under £2000. This is the first Response floorstander at such an affordable price.

These stunning new two-way models incorporate cutting edge technology to provide a performance capability which will extract the maximum from the rest of your system.

Slim and elegant, these beautifully crafted designs produce music with a weight and authority out of all proportion to their size. The sound is smooth, sweet and detailed, yet with the dynamism to give full scale and presence to any recording.

As with all ProAc models, the cabinets are finished in fine real wood veneer and set on plinths with spikes for optimum stability and coupling. These exceptional speakers will look as good as they sound for years to come.



Highpoint House, Riding Road, Buckingham Road Industrial Estate, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 7BE

Tel: 01280 700147 Fax: 01280 700148 Website: www.proac-loudspeakers.com

HFC8/01



VIDEO PROJECTOR OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

YAMAHA DPX-1

With the DPX-1, surround sound specialist Yamaha has made its first foray into the video projector sector. Specially designed for home cinema use, this Digital Light Processing projector ideally suits the living room, thanks to a remarkably silent fan. The very high picture quality is achieved by using a 1024x768 pixel display and the patented pure RGB colour wheel that simultaneously improves the appearance of black and enhances the contrast ratio. A wide range of inputs ensures compatibility with all formats of media, including HDTV and DVD component progressive scan feeds. The price is high, but the single lens DPX-1 is the best in its class.

£6,500.00, Yamaha ☎ 01923 233166



EUROPEAN MULTIMEDIA OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

SAMSUNG PHOTO
YEPP YVP-P300

This small and light digital audio/video player allows you to listen MP3 or WMA music files, view photos in the JPEG format, read the lyrics of a song or other texts and record voices. The P300 even allows you to view SMIL files – a 'slideshow' of images synchronised with music and text that can be created then downloaded from a PC. Firmware updates can be downloaded from the Yepp Internet site and the SmartMedia slot means you can expand the internal 64Mb memory. The Samsung Photo Yepp VP-P300 is not just another MP3 personal, rather it heralds a new generation of portable multimedia players.

£399.99, Samsung ☎ 020 8391 0168



AWARDS



EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE SYSTEM OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

JVC CINEMA 100

The JVC Cinema 100 system is ideally equipped for the European home cinema enthusiast by incorporating four Scart terminals – all RGB-compatible for the highest picture resolution – in its stylish 'control centre' unit. This excellent array of socketry allows not only a second DVD player to be connected, but also a VCR, a set-top box and, of course, your TV. The system incorporates a high quality DVD-Video player, a five channel satellite speaker system and a powered subwoofer. There's also a matching widescreen television with the same stunning styling for those looking for a complete lifestyle solution.

£700.00, JVC ☎ 020 8450 3282



EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE AMPLIFIER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

ONKYO TX-DS494

With this new and extremely elegant receiver boasting one of the first Pro-Logic II decoders on the market, Onkyo has once more succeeded in providing a complete home cinema amplifier that combines superb flexibility with the latest multichannel audio technologies. Power output is moderate, but more than sufficient at this bargain price, and the sound quality provided by this fine receiver retains the feeling of excellence that distinguishes top level home cinema designs.

£399.99, Jamo UK ☎ 01788 556777





EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

KEF KHT 2005

The KEF KHT2005 system comprises five striking HTS 2001 satellite speakers allied to a PSW 2000 active subwoofer with a built-in 150 Watt power amplifier and a single downward-firing bass driver in a rigid cabinet. Each of the five satellites uses a single Uni-Q loudspeaker driver with its tweeter mounted at the acoustical centre of the mid-bass cone. KEF's KHT 2005 is as tuneful with music as it is detailed and atmospheric with cinema sound. It shows just what can be achieved from a small system using innovative design and unconventional speaker materials.

£799.99, KEF ☎ 01622 672261

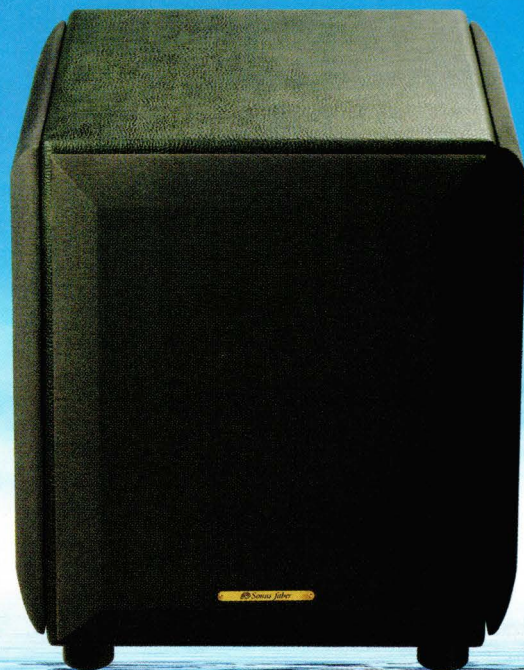


EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE SUBWOOFER OF THE YEAR 2001-2002

SONUS FABER GRAVIS B1

The elegant Sonus Faber Gravis B1 subwoofer features a 200 Watt amplifier powering a 250mm, long-throw bass driver, which is aided in its low-end duties by two passive cones located on either side of the cabinet. This 'high density', elegant Italian design delivers remarkably deep bass with serious reserves of power. It can also be adjusted to reproduce only the deepest bass, which allows the Gravis to be integrated with a wide range of loud speaker systems.

£999, Absolute Sounds ☎ 020 8971 3909



SAVE

WITH

DIGITAL DIRECT

When it comes to saving money, choose Digital Direct. We use our huge purchasing power and low overheads to keep our prices low, saving you up to **30% OFF HIGH STREET PRICES.**

WIDESCREEN TV'S

TOSHIBA 28WD98B

- WIDESCREEN
- 28" Television
- 100hz
- Dolby Digital



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

WAS £1100
NOW £700

TOSHIBA 32ZPI8B
36ZPI8B

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Dolby Digital



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KV32FX65

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Pure Flat
- 100hz Flicker Free
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

JVC AV-32WFP1EK

- Pure Flat 32"
- Digital Comb Filter
- Dolby Prologic
- NTSC Video Input
- 100hz Flicker Free Natural Motion
- Picture in Picture with Twin Tuners



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PANASONIC TX32PG50
TX36PG50

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Dolby Digital/DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KV32DX30
KV28DX30

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- On Digital Tuner
- Dolby Prologic



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA 32ZD09B

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Pure Flat
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Dolby Digital Surround
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

HITACHI C32WF810

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- 100hz with Progressive Scan
- Dolby Digital/DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

WAS £1500
NOW £950

PHILIPS 32PW9536

- WIDESCREEN
- Crystal Green
- 32" Pure Flat
- 100hz Flicker Free
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PHILIPS 36PW9525
32PW9525
28PW9525

- WIDESCREEN
- 36" Television
- Pure Flat
- 100hz Flicker Free
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KV32FQ75
KV28FQ75

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- Pure Flat
- 100hz Flicker Free
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PHILIPS 32PW9534 - Ice Blue
32PW9544 - Silver Shadow
32PW9523 - Cool Green

- WIDESCREEN
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Crystal Clear III
- Digital Scan
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PANASONIC KV32DX30
KV28DX30

- WIDESCREEN
- 32" Television
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Nicam



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KV36FS70

- WIDESCREEN
- 36" Television
- Pure Flat
- 100hz
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

REAR PROJECTOR TV'S

TOSHIBA 40PW13B

- 40" Widescreen
- Nicam
- 3x Scart



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA 56WH08B

- 56" Widescreen
- 100hz
- Dolby Digital



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KF-50SX100

- 50" Widescreen
- LCD Rear Projector
- D.R.C.



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY KP41DS1 41"
KP51DS1 51"

- Widescreen
- On Digital Tuner
- Nicam



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

HITACHI C43WP910TN

- 43" Rear Projector
- 100hz Flicker Free
- Dolby Digital/DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PANASONIC TX-42PT10
TX-47PT1

- 42"/47" Widescreen
- 100hz Flicker Free



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA 43PJ93B

- 43" Rear Projector
- NTSC Video Input



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA 40WH08
46WH08

- 40"/46" Rear Projector
- Widescreen
- 100hz
- Dolby Digital



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

AV AMPLIFIERS / RECEIVERS

SONY STRDB1070

- 6.1 Receiver
- 6 x 100w
- Learning Remote



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

YAMAHA DSP-AX620
RXV620

- 5 x 90W
- Dolby Digital/DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

DENON AVC-A10SE

- Dolby Digital/DTS
- 7.1 Sound
- 5 x 125W
- THX Ultra



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TO CONTACT THE MAIL ORDER SPECIALISTS, JUST CALL DIGITAL DIRECT ON

0845 345 3747

Lines open 9am-6pm Monday-Saturday (late Thursdays till 8pm) • Fax: 0845 345 3748
Calls may be monitored • All products sold subject to our Terms and Conditions - copy available on request

DVD PLAYERS

PANASONIC DVDRV31 / DVDRV41
DVDRV61 / DVDRV71



- Dolby Digital/DTS
- 24 BIT D.A.C.

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY DVP CX860
DVP S9000ES



- Dolby Digital/DTS
- 24 BIT D.A.C.

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA SD3109



- Dolby Digital Decoder
- DTS Output
- Twin Tray

SAVE £200

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
WAS £499
NOW £299

PIONEER DV 737



- Dolby Digital/DTS
- Progress Scan
- Component Video Out

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PHILIPS DVD 622 / DVD712
DVD 762



- Dual Laser
- Dolby Digital/DTS
- CDR/CDRW P.B.

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

SONY DVP-NS300
DVP-NS400



- Dolby Digital/DTS

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PANASONIC DVD LV60
DVD LV70



- LCD Screen
- Dolby Digital/DTS

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PIONEER DV 340 / DV343
DV545 / DV646



- Dolby Digital/DTS

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

TOSHIBA SD110 / SD210
SD510 / SD900



- Dolby Digital/DTS

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

DVD SYSTEMS

PIONEER NSDV55



- DVD Receiver
- 5 Speaker & Subwoofer

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

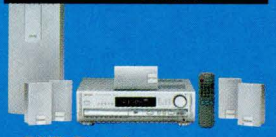
SONY DAVS 300
DAVS 500



- DVD Receiver
- 5 Speaker & Subwoofer

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PANASONIC SCHAT70
SCHAT80



- DVD Receiver
- 5 Speaker & Subwoofer

REGION 1 MODIFIABLE
LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

AV AMPLIFIERS / RECEIVERS

DENON AVR 3801

- Dolby Digital/DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

YAMAHA DSPAX1

- Dolby Digital/DTS
- 6.1 Sound
- 6 x 110W
- + 2 x 35W



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

KENWOOD KRFV5030 D

- Dolby Digital
- 6 Channel Input
- 5 x 80W



WAS £250 **SAVE £100** **LOCAL RATE**
NOW £150 0845 345 3747

PIONEER VSX909

- 5 x 110W
- THX ULTRA
- Dolby Digital /DTS



LOCAL RATE
0845 345 3747

PRICE TOO HIGH!

A Region 1 Modifiable - Only on suitable televisions with NTSC Playback Capability available at an additional cost

LOW PRICE ZONE!

CHECK OUR PRICES BEFORE YOU BUY!!!

PAYMENT



Digital Direct accepts all major credit cards

S-VHS VIDEO RECORDERS

- JVC HRS6700
- JVC HRS6851
- JVC HRS6853
- JVC HRS6855
- JVC HRS7860
- JVC HRS8850
- JVC HRS9850
- JVC HRDVS1
- JVC HM-HDS1
- PANASONIC NVHS820
- PANASONIC NVHS860
- PANASONIC NVHS870
- PANASONIC NVHS960
- PHILIPS VR1100
- SHARP VCS 2000

VIDEO RECORDERS

- HITACHI VTFX980
- JVC HR-J680
- JVC HR-J682
- JVC HR-J870
- PANASONIC NV-FJ620
- PANASONIC NV-FJ625
- PANASONIC NV-FJ710
- PANASONIC NV-FJ760
- PHILIPS VR520
- PHILIPS VR620
- PHILIPS VR720
- PHILIPS VR766
- PHILIPS VR870
- SONY SLV-SE710
- SONY SLV-SE810
- SONY SLV-SE850
- SONY SLV-X9
- TOSHIBA V631
- TOSHIBA V701
- TOSHIBA V711
- TOSHIBA V851

PLASMA SCREENS

- PANASONIC TH42PW3B
- PANASONIC TH50PW3B
- PIONEER PDP502 (50")
- PHILIPS 42PF9952 (42")
- FUJITSU PDS4211 (42")
- FUJITSU PDS4212 (42")
- FUJITSU PDS4214 (42")
- FUJITSU PDS4221 (42")
- FUJITSU PDS4222 (42")

NOTE: Please ensure that you specify the colour that you require when placing the order.

TO CONTACT THE MAIL ORDER SPECIALISTS, JUST CALL DIGITAL DIRECT ON

0845 345 3747

YOU MAY CANCEL AN ORDER WITHIN SEVEN WORKING DAYS OF DELIVERY (IN WRITING) AS LONG AS YOU HAVE TAKEN REASONABLE CARE OF THE GOODS. WE EXPECT SUCH GOODS TO BE UNUSED, BRAND NEW AND UNOPENED.



LOUDSPEAKERS

FEEL LIKE SPLASHING OUT? PAULS MESSENGER AND MILLER COMPREHENSIVELY TEST A DOZEN AWESOME LOUDSPEAKERS.

The speakers on test here reside in a sector of the market you wouldn't exactly call price-sensitive. Luxury finish, classy styling and superior sound quality are the key elements needed to justify the very existence of a group of speakers, all of which cost twice or three times their mass-market equivalents. The group very neatly divides itself 50/50 between stand-mounts and floorstanders, perhaps highlighting the most significant debate in speakers today, that of the relative merits of the two types.

The floorstander is preferred by many on aesthetic grounds, largely because it looks much more 'all of a piece', and few people have kind words for the appearance of speaker stands. However, the extra woodwork involved tends to be something of a mixed blessing, considerably increasing the potential for cabinet coloration, and the tall slim shape isn't a lot of help either. Indeed, some floorstanders 'blank off' the bottom section of the enclosure where it's not needed acoustically, allowing for some mass loading instead.

Stand-mounts are almost invariably two-ways, which does have the virtue of simplicity, whereas floorstanders often have an extra drive unit to provide more bass oomph and power handling, in either 'two-and-a-half' or 'three-way' configuration. Note in particular that these luxury stand-mounts deserve to be used with a top quality stand. Allocate at least £200 (and preferably rather more) towards the stands, so as not to compromise the seriously high performance these speakers are able to achieve.

As ever it's impossible to state that any one approach is superior to another. It's true, however, that the models of a particular type are likely to have a certain degree of common character.

Equally true is that at this level there is no such thing as a bad loudspeaker. But, as the following results reveal, some speakers are clearly a little better than others.

ON TEST

ATC SCM20	£2,051.00
Audio Note AN-J/SpE	£1,675.00
B&W CM4	£900.00
Castle Harlech S2	£1,000.00
Chario Academie Millennium 1	£1,399.00
Dali Grand Coupe	£1,333.00
Dynaudio Contour 1.3 MkII	£1,200.00
JMLab Cobalt 826	£1,229.00
ProAc Reponse 1.5	£1,790.00
Ruark CL20	£1,500.00
Spendor SP2/3e	£1,295.00
Triangle Antal XS	£875.00

EQUIPMENT USED

Linn LP12 turntable
 Naim ARO tonearm
 Linn Arkiv B, Dynavector XV-1 cartridges
 Naim CDS II CD player
 Naim NAT01 tuner
 Naim NAC52 pre-amp
 Naim NAP500 power amp
 Naim NACA5 speaker cables
 Kudos S100 speaker stands

THE LISTENING PANEL

Russell Kauffman (B&W/Classé)
 Dan George (*Hi-Fi Choice*)
 Guy Sergeant (AGI)
 David Inman
 Jim Kempton
 Lawrence Jenkins

MUSIC USED

Tool - *Enima*
 Eva Cassidy - *Time After Time*
 Little Feat - *The Last Record Album*
 Strauss/LSO/Georgiadis - *SangerLust*
 Tom Waits - *Rain Dogs*
 Wyclef Jean - *Carnival*
 Mari Boine - *Eallin*
 Grateful Dead - *Reckoning*
 Cambridge Singers/Rutter - *There is Sweet Music*
 Basement Jaxx - *Remedy*
 BBC Radios 3 and 4

ATC SCM20SL

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£2,051.00

CONTACT 01285 760561

www.atc.gb.net

GUARANTEE 2 years

This long established loudspeaker first came under *Choice* scrutiny at least a decade ago – before, indeed, the arrival of Macintosh computers and desk-top publishing at *HFC Towers*, so there's no record of it on my hard drive! But although the outline configuration remains the same, the design has been subject to numerous refinements over the years, most notably ATC's relatively recent introduction of its 'Super Linear' magnet technology, which coats pole-pieces in a magnetically permeable insulator to inhibit the generation of eddy currents within the motor.

A simple two-way medium size stand-mount, with a nominal 20 litre box volume, the SCM20SL is the most expensive model in our test group, and is also the only one to use sealed-box loading. It's built to order and available in a wide variety of real wood finishes. (A floorstanding 'tower' SCM20TSL is also available.)

ATC is a very pro-oriented brand, and its massively over-engineered drivers are accorded considerable

respect on both sides of the audio divide. The enclosure here is pretty substantial, combining 18mm and 36mm MDF, but that doesn't explain a weight of 23kg – as much as most of the floorstanders in this group.

It's all down to the 7-inch main driver and its massive motor assembly, noteworthy in adopting a 'long-gap/short-coil' approach (so linearity is retained even under large excursion). A large 75mm voice coil has massive thermal power handling and drives the 130mm damped woven polyester diaphragm at its cone/dome junction.

ATC makes no apology for producing a 4 Ohm loudspeaker with a low 83dB sensitivity – a powerful amplifier will be an essential companion. In-room traces show an essentially dry bass alignment, so some wall reinforcement is well worth trying.

SOUND QUALITY

This speaker drew very varied reactions from different members of the listening panel, due I suspect to a set of compromises that's quite distinct from the hi-fi norm. It's neither particularly neutral, nor transparent. But it has bass to die for.

The opening track of our tests was a heavy little number from Tool, and as soon as the ATC started up, it was clearly on a different plane from the rest, simply in the explicit way it gripped the bottom end and drove through the musical message.

It would be very easy to fall in love with this main driver. It's extraordinarily clean, with a tight dynamic grip that seems to enhance voice articulation substantially. I swear I picked up on more lyrics on Tom Waits' *Rain Dogs* than I've ever figured out before, and that's something which is hard to argue with.

CONCLUSION

ATC has a very individual approach to hi-fi reproduction, with its own distinct priorities. It won't suit everyone but undoubtedly has its own validity that demands due recognition. A powerful amplifier is mandatory.



The most expensive on test, but also the most solidly built speaker in the group.

“IT’S NEITHER PARTICULARLY NEUTRAL, NOR TRANSPARENT. BUT IT HAS BASS TO DIE FOR.”



THE LAB REPORT

ATC MAKES NO BONES about its speakers' insensitivity, but it's also very conservative in its specification for the SCM20SL which achieves a full 84.1dB (2.83V/1m) rather than a mere 83dB. With a 300W amplifier, a pair of these heavy boxes will still sustain peaks of 109dBA, which is on a par with the largest floorstanders in this group (albeit partnered with lower-powered amplifiers). Bass is tautly engineered, peaking at 85Hz before rolling smoothly away at

12dB/octave and enjoying a moderate 0.4-0.5% distortion even at levels 12dB above its nominal sensitivity. There is a big -40/+50 degree swing in phase through this region, however, along with a very sharp 5-42 Ohm peak in impedance. The remainder of the response shows a gently downtilted trend, falling some 3dB from 400Hz-8kHz. This treble-shy balance is exaggerated off-axis, falling over 6dB over this same span at 30 degrees to the right or left.

AUDIO NOTE AN-J/SPE

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,675.00
CONTACT 01273 220511

www.audionote.co.uk
GUARANTEE 5 years

O riginally reviewed in a rather more basic form way back in 1992, the origins of this design go back many years, to plans originally drawn up by the late Peter Snell. This goes a long way towards explaining the decidedly retro look that flies defiantly in the face of the past 20 years' styling trends. That said, fashion and performance rarely go hand in hand, and this design has certain characteristics which are uncommon amongst today's loudspeakers, and which are well suited to valve amplification, which is of course Audio Note's main stock in trade.

This SPe version of this speaker is wired internally with silver speaker cable, and comes in a very nice real wood veneer – Danish oak on our samples, with walnut, rosewood and black ash as further options. But more important from a performance perspective, the front and back panels use a high quality/density Russian birch ply.

It's a 'large bookshelf' sized box, quite wide and shallow and ported at

the rear, and it needs to be used on high quality stands. Audio Note favours high mass stands, and supplies examples of appropriate height to match its various speakers. Intended to partner low-power valve amps, high sensitivity is a key design criterion, to which end the cabinet uses little damping and is carefully structured to aid and augment the driver output, rather in the manner of the soundbox of an acoustic guitar. The unusually wide baffle also has an important function in controlling high frequency distribution.

The main driver uses a 150mm paper cone with a foam surround and cast chassis, while the tweeter is a 25mm soft fabric dome. Twin (silver) terminal pairs permit bi-wiring or bi-amping, and in-room measurement clearly indicates siting well clear of walls.

SOUND QUALITY

Lively and very involving, this isn't the least coloured loudspeaker in this test group. This latter factor clearly upset a number of our panelists, while others were impressed by the speaker's generous bass extension and fine dynamic tension, placing the AN-J at the top of their lists.

In truth and comparison the sound is a little shut in, and this is quite audible especially on speech. But the ear does adjust quite quickly, the voice-band as a whole is unquestionably highly expressive, and the complete audio spectrum sounds very of-a-piece and coherent, with tight timing. There's also the bonus that this speaker has little tendency to sound aggressive, and is easy to live with in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This fine speaker is proof positive that old formulae still have considerable relevance today, especially when evolved through careful development and refinement. The AN-J speaker is particularly well suited to partnering low-powered valve amplifiers, but will be equally appropriate on the end of any system.



The front and back panels of the AN-J/SPe use sturdy high-density Russian birch ply.

“THE VOICE-BAND IS EXPRESSIVE, AND THE COMPLETE AUDIO SPECTRUM SOUNDS VERY COHERENT.”



THE LAB REPORT

NOT AS SENSITIVE AS THE bigger floorstanders in this test, the AN-J/SPe still musters a full 89.5dB (re. 2.83V/1m) from its essentially undamped, reflex-loaded cabinet. Neither is the load especially tough with a minimum 5 Ohm at 150Hz and an *average* of 12.3 Ohm to keep any valve amps from wheezing. The port resonance looks very broad indeed, providing a deal of reinforcement from 20Hz-90Hz (-3dB points) while the driver itself rolls off to 60Hz (-6dB). Bass distor-

tion remains very low indeed at ~0.15-0.2% but climbs closer to 0.6% through the midrange where the pulp-coned bass/mid driver is obviously working a little harder. Indeed, an averaged 3rd-octave trace shows the axial response of the AN-J/SPe to be divided into two 'halves' – above and below 800Hz where there's a step in the response due to a driver/baffle cancellation. Off axis, the step is less apparent, but there's an increase in bass heaviness and loss of presence.

Question: Is this the best amplifier ever built?

Answer: oui, si, ya, nai,
ja, igen, yes,
haan, ken, evet,
chai khan, ano,
da, hai, ia.....

In any language the answer is the same



The Veritas P400 Digital Power Amplifier.

400 watts of pure power.

Made in England without compromise.

V E R I T A S

Veritas Horn Systems Ltd

Manor Farm Barns
Glandford, Holt
Norfolk NR25 7JP
Tel: 01263 741417 Fax: 01263 740937
e-mail: p400@veritashifi.co.uk
web: www.veritashifi.co.uk

*"the most musically complete
power amplifier I have used"*

Ivor Humphreys, HiFi News

B&W CM4 £900

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£900.00
CONTACT 01903 750750

www.bwspeakers.com
GUARANTEE 5 years

"Not so much a speaker as a piece of furniture", runs the press release, and that says a lot about where this strikingly attractive CM4 floorstander is coming from. Worthing-based B&W is the biggest name in hi-fi loudspeakers worldwide, and has been consolidating its position by cleverly introducing niche products and ranges to fill in any gaps.

This £900/pr CM4 slots neatly into the gap between the £550/pr 603 S2 and £1,250/pr CDM7NT. All three have broadly similar configurations – floorstanding port-loaded two-and-a-half-ways, where a second 6.5-inch bass driver provides extra bass output to augment the core main driver (also a 6.5-incher). Where the 603 is vinyl, this CM4 comes clothed in a very nice real wood veneer (rosenut or maple). Although it lacks the radiused edges and external tweeter of the CDM7NT, the tweeter fitted has internal 'tapered tube' loading.

The cosmetic design by Morten Warren is particularly effective: a

"THE BASS IS BOTH POWERFUL AND DEEP, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM AGILE WITH SYNTHETIC DANCE BEATS."



brushed alloy panel covers the driver mounting hardware, and pale grey coloured cone surrounds dramatically lightens the overall effect, helped by the anodised metal cone of the bass-only unit, and the yellow Kevlar of the bass/mid driver. Both cones are 120mm in diameter, and both drivers work into their own sub-enclosures, each loaded by one of B&W's low-turbulence Flowports.

Foam bungs are supplied to block these ports if preferred, and these might well be useful, as the in-room measurements showed very healthy bass output and extension, even when mounted well clear of walls. Twin terminal pairs are fitted, and 6mm spikes are supplied, though there's no plinth, so stability isn't that wonderful.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel didn't really take to this speaker, the word 'dull' cropping up repeatedly in the notes. It has loads of bass in quantitative terms, and this tends to overwhelm the detail in the rather too laid-back upper midband and presence. One listener referred to it as "the acoustic equivalent of frosted glass".

This tonal balance is conservative to a fault. It might be rather shy when it comes to projecting detail, but on the other hand it's most unlikely to sound aggressive even when played at high levels and driven from modest quality amplification.

The bass is both powerful and deep, bringing impressive weight to full scale orchestral music, for example, but it doesn't seem particularly agile or controlled when confronted with synthetic dance beats.

CONCLUSION

The CM4 proved rather too laid back for our listeners and conditions, though some listeners might find it a reassuringly safe pair of hands, as was the case with its *First Impressions* debut. For others it will probably be a price well worth paying for such a stunning styling package at a very competitive price.



The B&Ws come complete with 6mm spikes, but no plinth to aid stability.

THE LAB REPORT

LISTENED TO STRAIGHT-ON, despite a strong bass output, the speaker's midrange and presence regions are very uniform indeed. A little off axis, however, the vitality of the speaker is diminished by up to 5dB from 2-6kHz compared with the upper bass/lower midrange. The CM4 is tuned to 32Hz via a rear-mounted port whose output is fairly broad, extending up to the driver's bass peak at 90Hz before falling away. There is no mid/HF 'rubbish'

escaping the port while the sensitivity of the system as a whole is nearly 1dB higher than specified at a generous 90.9dB. Bass distortion is low, too, at typically 0.4% (re. 96dBA), increasing slightly through the midrange before falling to a very low 0.2% once the alloy treble dome takes over. Nevertheless, ease of drive is complicated by the big +60 degree swing in phase at the treble crossover and a dip to 2.5 Ohm at 15kHz.



WHY LISTEN TO RUBBISH?

ARCAM

DiVA

2 CD players, 3 amps, 2 power amps, digital radio, AM/FM tuner, DVD player, AV receiver. Tel: 01223 203203 www.arcam.co.uk



PIEGA
OF SWITZERLAND

AUDIO ILLUSION

23 Langley Broom, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8NB
Tel: 01753 542761 Fax: 01753 772532
Finance Available – Subject to Status

P I E G A
Of Switzerland
Precision Audio
From Switzerland

Now Also available from:
Sevenoaks Sound & Vision
Epsom, Surrey
01372 720720
Rectory Audio
Tenbury Wells, Worcs
01885 410564

Audio Illusion for the finest Audio / Visual Systems
Opening Hours 10.00am-8.00pm Mon-Sat (By Appt.)

CASTLE HARLECH S2

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,000.00

CONTACT 01756 795333

www.castleacoustics.co.uk

GUARANTEE 5 years

The fact that our Best Buy review of the original Harlech dates back to 1996 is testament to the success of this highly unorthodox loudspeaker. This S2 version reflects Castle's transition to carbon-fibre matrix main driver cones and a change in tweeter, but in nearly every other respect the S2 Harlech looks remarkably similar to its predecessor.

Castle is well known for producing high quality real wood finished speakers at very realistic prices, and while the Harlech S2 now costs £1,000 (against £800 in 1996), it still looks very good value in the test group context. (Our samples actually came in yew, which carries a £200 premium.)

The enclosure is attractively slim with radiused edges all round, plus a separate veneered plinth which ensures a very stable spike footprint. Technically speaking the Harlech S2 is very different from the competition, both in the bass loading technique, and also in the disposition of the two main drivers.

“EXCEPTIONALLY AGILE AND INFORMATIVE, THE HARLECH DEVELOPS GENUINE DYNAMIC TENSION AND GOOD GRIP.”



Said drivers are small but classy affairs, with 5.25-inch cast frames and the aforementioned carbon-fibre cones, 100mm in diameter. One is placed conventionally on the front of the speaker, while other is fitted into the top surface, pointing upwards, and both are 'quarter-wave' loaded, a technique with some similarities to horn loading. The in-room measurements looked very strange, checks revealing that Castle had managed to wire one of our pair out of phase – a most regrettable QC lapse. That rectified, free-space siting is indicated, though the bass is a little dry overall.

SOUND QUALITY

Not surprisingly in view of its 'differentness', the S2 drew a mixed response from the panel, strongly favoured by some but much less so by others. The effect of the upward-facing extra main driver is immediately obvious in the way it radiates sound into the room, increasing the reflected/direct sound ratio compared to forward facing drivers, and so adding spaciousness at some expense in stereo focus.

Where one panellist complained of some hardness and forwardness, another praised its natural bass, good timing and the impressive way it communicated the fine detail of guitar playing, for example. Both were correct. The S2 is a little forward and can become hard and aggressive when pushed, or on the wrong material. Voices are a little cold, pinched and nasal, partly because the bass is both lightweight and a little uneven – but it's also exceptionally agile and informative, developing genuine dynamic tension and grip rarely found elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

A worthwhile overall improvement on the original Castle Harlech, the S2 is also a little less forgiving of aggressive programming or ancillaries. It won't therefore suit every taste or system, but it remains a very interesting loudspeaker, that's also solid value for money.



BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

The Harlech features an attractively rounded, slim enclosure, and a very stable footprint.

THE LAB REPORT

I LAST MEASURED THE Harlech five years ago in *HFC* 160 and the intervening period has witnessed a raft of changes. My comments regarding Castle's distributed, quarter-wave port arrangement have been addressed by adding a plinth with a pre-defined gap between the port output and speaker base. This 'slot' is now reliably tuned to a very sharp 73Hz though there are other modes breaking through at 250Hz and 460Hz, coinciding with notches in the nearfield output of the bass driver itself. If this is untidy then

bass distortion has also increased to some 2.2%. On the other hand, sensitivity is improved to 88.9dB on-axis (closer to 90.5dB with the top-mounted driver taken into account) and while there's still a slight dip in the speaker's response from 400Hz-1kHz, the upper midrange and treble look very smooth indeed provided you remain very close to the speaker's principle axis. Phase angles are kept within +/-30 degrees and the impedance an acceptable minimum of 6 Ohm at 270Hz.

HOME CINEMA

PANASONIC DVD HOME CINEMA SOUND SYSTEM

Panasonic
SC-HT70



This incredible 'Home Cinema in a Box' includes:

- 5 Disc DVD / CD Player
 - 300 W A/V Receiver with Dolby Digital Decoder and Dolby Pro-Logic
 - 5 Speaker System and a Subwoofer
- Stock Code PAN189

£524 INC. VAT



DIGITAL TV

JVC 24" NICAM WIDESCREEN TV

- Visible screen size 56cm
 - 2 x 10W full-range speakers
 - NICAM Stereo
 - Hyper Sound
 - T-V Link
 - Fastext
 - Eco Mode
 - Auto WSS (Wide Screen Signalling)
 - Colour Temperature Adjustment (TINT)
- Stock Code JVC035



JVC
AV-24WT5KSC



£369 INC. VAT

DVD

Top DVD's from

£5.99

Top Video's from

£2.99

SANYO HOME THEATRE DVD SYSTEM

- 2.1 Channel Virtual 3D Surround System
 - Built in Sub Woofer Speaker
 - Output Power 20W x 2 + 30W x 1
 - Compatible with: DVD Video / Video CD/CD/CD-R
 - Screen Saver • Picture Mode Select
 - Back Slow • Angle Replay • Bookmark
 - Last Memo • Zoom
- Stock Code SAN108



SANYO
HTD-5201

£398 INC. VAT

SANYO 28" NICAM WIDESCREEN TV

This 28" model uses the full width of the screen and benefits from the Super Active 3D Surround Sound feature enabling a surround sound effect without the need for additional speakers and cabling.

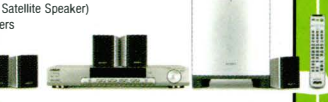
- Visible screen size 66cm
 - Super Active 3D Surround Sound
 - Auto Wide Expansion (16:9/14:9/4:3)
 - Plug & Play
 - Multi Colour On-Screen Display
 - Nicam Stereo
 - 2x 10 Watts RMS
 - Automatic Volume Control
 - Fastext (7 page memory)
 - 4 Picture Level Selection
 - H Stand supplied
- Stock Code SAN111



SANYO
28WN5H
£449 INC. VAT

SONY HOME THEATRE KIT

- Slim 5.1 Channel Amplifier and Micro Satellite Speakers.
 - Ideal to convert NICAM TV/VCR to Full Pro Logic
 - 50W Max Power Output (subwoofer)
 - 60W Power Handling (each Satellite Speaker)
 - Bass Reflex Satellite Speakers
 - Cinema Studio Sound Field
 - Dolby Pro Logic
- Stock Code SON772



HTK-170
SONY

£269 INC. VAT

SONY HOME CINEMA DVD HI-FI SYSTEM

- Integrated DVD / Hi-Fi System
 - 20W x 5 + 30W Subwoofer RMS
 - Dolby Digital 5.1 Channel Amplifier
 - Digital Theatre Sound Decoder
 - Digital Cinema Sound Studios A/B/C
- Stock Code SON771



DAV-5300
SONY

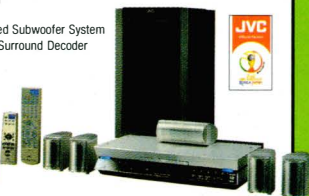
£499 INC. VAT

JVC DVD DIGITAL CINEMA SYSTEM

- DVD Video / VCD / CD Player
 - RDS FM/AM Tuner
 - 5 Satellite Speaker / powered Subwoofer System
 - Dolby Digital / DTS / MPEG Surround Decoder
- Stock Code JVC026

JVC
TH-A10R

£898 INC. VAT



SONY 28" WIDESCREEN FD TRINITON WEGA TV

- Visible screen size 66cm
 - FD Triniton WEGA screen
 - Analogue and digital tuners
 - Electronic Programme Guide
 - SmartLink
 - Digital text
 - Fastext
 - Digital Stereo Sound
 - Auto labelling/auto sorting
 - Auto tuning/auto start up/one button tuning
 - Smart/Zoom/4:3 wide mode
- Stock Code STW001



SONY
KV-28DK30
£868 INC. VAT

PANASONIC 32" WIDESCREEN TV 100Hz

The ideal television to give you that home cinema feel, it has 100Hz super digital scan to give you top class picture quality, along with nicam stereo to give you dynamic sound

- Visible screen size 76cm
 - Flat Screen 16:9 Television
 - Fastext 100 pages
 - Nicam Stereo Sound
 - Automatic Aspect Ratio Change
 - Zoom and Super Zoom
 - Vertical Position Shift
 - Still Picture Mode
 - 100Hz Super Digital Scan
- Stock Code PAN185



Panasonic
TX32PK25
£1099 INC. VAT

YELO 800DVD AUTO SENSING MULTI REGION PLAYER



This feature packed unit not only plays DVDs and CDs, but also MP3 CD's, Video CDs, Super Video CDs and CD-/CD-RW media. It also incorporates an AC3 decoder and digital audio output. The player has 4x zoom, and Pan functions controlled from the remote handset. Ready to use straight from the box.

£199 INC. VAT

Stock Code YEL001

ENTRY DVD PLAYER

DVP-NS300SIL

- Precision Drive 2 with Dynamic Tilt Compensation
 - Block Noise Reduction
 - TV Virtual Sound
 - Quick Step - up
 - Simplified Magic Pad on screen menu
- Stock Code SON718



£229 INC. VAT

DVD PLAYER WITH DOLBY DIGITAL DECODER BUILT-IN

DVDRV41EBS

- Digital output for dts / Dolby Digital and MPEG2
 - One touch cinema effect
 - Picture control
 - Shuttle and Joy Stick Dial
 - RGB Output
 - Advanced Virtual Sound
- Stock Code PAN174



£269 INC. VAT

5 DISC DVD PLAYER

SONY DVPNC600

Holding 5 discs at a time, this DVD player looks good in any front room. The TV Virtual Surround will enhance the sound of a standard TV and the Magic Pad on-screen menu makes setting hassle-free.



Stock Code SON717

JUNGLE BARGAIN

£289 INC. VAT

CHARIO ACADEMY MILLENNIUM 1

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,399.00
CONTACT 01992 573030

www.chario.it
GUARANTEE 5 years

Italian brand Chario epitomises the striking way in which the Italians blend top quality hardwood cabinet making with hi-fi loudspeakers. The main wrap of this enclosure consists of staves of one-inch thick solid walnut, joined together rather the way a barrel is made, with neat precision dove-tail jointing, which undoubtedly contributes to the considerable 13kg weight – and the similarly hefty price-tag. It all adds up to a beauty which is very obviously rather more than skin deep, and which is also claimed to offer significant sonic benefits.

This Academy Millennium 1 looks very like a scaled down version of the Academie which we reviewed in *HFC* 180. It has very similar proportions, including a beautifully sculpted front baffle that narrows up around the tweeter, and softened, rounded edges all round. But whereas that model was decidedly large by today's stand-mount norm, this Academy Millennium 1 is a more compact affair, reflecting its use of a

“THE BALANCE IS SMOOTH AND EVEN... BUT THE SPEAKER SOUNDS RATHER SMALL AND A LITTLE PINCHED.”



5.25-inch rather than a 6.5-inch main driver.

A simple rear-port-loaded two-way, the main driver has a cast frame and small 90mm cone. The classy Scanspeak Revelator tweeter has a 29mm fabric dome. Chario also supplies attractive matching real-wood stands (£399, but £1,649 as a package), which certainly makes sense if aesthetics are the main priority. Twin bi-wire/-amp gilt terminal pairs fit through a panel inset into the rear.

Despite the modest dimensions of both main driver and enclosure, the far-field in-room response shows plenty of midbass output – indeed arguably rather too much – even with the speakers sited well out from walls.

SOUND QUALITY

One of our panellists was impressed by the Academy Millennium 1, but the others were less convinced. The overall balance is unusually smooth and even, which is definitely a very worthwhile plus. The top end is open and detailed, verging on the bright, but getting away with it due to the very sweet-sounding tweeter, though a lack of deep bass is obvious enough in comparison to the others in the test group.

More seriously, this speaker sounds rather 'small', a little pinched, and rather lacking in dynamic expression and range. The Millennium 1 clearly didn't have the easy headroom of larger models, and sounded as if it was having to work rather hard when the going got tough.

CONCLUSION

I suspect that the Academy Millennium 1 suffered somewhat through being the only speaker in the group using a single 5.25-inch main driver. It's beautiful to look at, has a beautifully even tonal balance too, and could well be the answer if 'small' and 'walnut' are top of your list of priorities – though the price is also undoubtedly high.



The sculpted look of the Millennium 1 is achieved by using inch thick solid walnut for the cabinets.

THE LAB REPORT

THIS IS YET ANOTHER small-ish speaker with a well-endowed bass and moderate sensitivity but it does enjoy just about the lowest and – importantly – most consistent level of distortion at typically 0.25% right through from bass, mid to treble. A 3rd-octave in-room trace reveals a slight droop through the presence band till ~6kHz after which the soft-dome tweeter rallies with a +5dB peak above the mean midband output. Measured from 500Hz-8kHz, the sensitivity of

86.9dB is very close to Chario's 87dB specification, but with the strong upper bass and treble taken into account this figure increases to 88.2dB (200Hz-20kHz). The port tuning is accurately aligned but very sharp at 55Hz while a cabinet/tube resonance also escapes into the midrange at 845Hz. All achieved, however, with a minimum phase but very low impedance load – an average of just 5.4 Ohm with a minimum of 3.7 Ohm at 1.3kHz. Ouch!



Tel: 01892 547003 • Fax: 01892 547004

Mid Summer Sale

An Amazing Selection of Ex. Dem and S/H Products

All Fully Guaranteed

Ex. Dem 3 years. S/H 1 year.

and

All available on our usual 1 month trial exchange system.

Integrated Amplifiers			Phono Pre-Amplifiers		
Marantz PM 7000	£299	£215	VTL TL2.5	£1850	£995
Talk Storm 1	£560	£295	Audio Note M5	£5950	£1,995
Thule IA 100	£399	£395	Power Amplifiers		
Woodside ISA 230	£1295	£395	Talk tornado 4	£1099	£595
Thule IA 60B	£669	£445	VTL ST85	£1550	£795
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	£635	£445	Advantage A300	£2600	£1,295
Audio Refinement	£895	£595			
T Plus A PA 1500R	£1450	£600	STAR BARGAINS		
Sony VA777 ES (AV)	£1590	£995	Audion Golden Dream 300B Monoblocks	£7500	£1,995
Thule IA 250B (5 channel)	£1649	£995			
Copland CSA 28	£1440	£995	Anthem Pre 1 plus Amp 1	£2900	£1,495
Pre Amplifiers			CAT SL1 Ultimate Pre-Amp	Bargain of the Sale	
Lumley Passive	£345	£145	CAT JL1 Monoblocks	£1550	£8,995
Lumley LV 1.5	£1500	£595	Advantage P1 Pre-Amp	plus	
AVI 52000 MP	£999	£595	Advantage M300 Monoblocks	£6195	£2,450
Talk Hurricane 4	£1549	£725	BAT VK40 Pre-Amp	plus	
Lumley PV 1	£1750	£895	BAT VK 75 Stereo Amplifier	£10350	£4,495
Hovland HP 100	£3750	£2,995			
Loudspeakers			Martin Logan Aerius i (new & boxed)	£2098	£1,595
Promenade SP2	£455	£95	Zingali Overture 2	£2700	£1,195
Base 201	£200	£139	Piega P2 LTD with Stands	£2095	£1,295
Promenade SP4	£650	£175	Lumley LM 2	£3000	£1,295
Kef 65 DS	£399	£195	Zingali Overture 3	£3195	£1,550
Isophon Spirit	£1700	£550	Living Voice Avatar	£4000	£1,950
Opera Terza	£995	£595	Orchid Monitors	£5950	£1,995
Pro-Ac Studio 125	£1200	£695	Quad ELS 969	£4600	£3,195
ATC SCM 10	£1299	£750	Wilson Benesch Act 1	£6999	£3,999
Robertson DX7	£1405	£795	Tannoy TD 12	£6900	£4,995
Pro-Ac Response 1SC Cherry	£1200	£875	Carfrae Little Big Horn	£7950	£4,995
Meadowlark Kestrel	£1225	£895	Wilson Benesch Act 2	£8999	£5,950
Pro-Ac Response 1SC Ebony	£1400	£950	Martin Logan Prodigy	£9499	£5,995
Lumley LM 2.5	£1750	£950	Pro-Ac Future 2	£10575	£6,950
Aliante Zeta + Stands	£2275	£950	Sonus Faber Amati Homage	£11900	£7,995
Hales Revelation 3 (new & boxed)	£2295	£995	Meadowlark Heron (new & boxed)	£4495	£1,995
CD Players			Turtables		
Pink Triangle Numeral	£1098	£495	Clearaudio Champion with RB 250 Arm	£945	£695
T Plus A	£1200	£450	Clearaudio Solution with RB 250 Arm	£1180	£795
Anthem CD1	£1700	£995	Clearaudio Reference	£1210	£2,950
Marantz DR17 CD Recorder	£1499	£1,099	Clearaudio Master Reference with Souther TQ-1 Tone Arm	Absolutely Immaculate - Unmissable £13175 £9,250	
Sony SACD 777	£1700	£1,195			
Advantage CD1	£1195	£950	Cartridges		
Advantage CD1 S	£3999	£1,895	Clearaudio Signature	£1685	£1,045
Sony SACD 1	£4000	£2,750	Clearaudio Insider	£5845	£2,999
BAT VK-D5	£1475	£1,695			
Pass D1 DAC	£5250	£1,995			
Audio Analogue Paganini	£795	£495			
Audio Refinement CD Complete	£875	£595	Speaker Cables and Interconnects		
Hi-Fi Stands	Various - call 01892 547003		Large Selection - call 01892 547003		

TURNTABLE BARGAIN OF THE SALE

CLEAR AUDIO MASTER REFERENCE / SUMNER TQ-1 ARM

ALMOST NEW ~~£13175~~
1 ONLY £8995

COMPLETE SYSTEM BARGAIN OF THE SALE

Burmester 979 CD Transport £6,350
Boulder 1012 Pre / DAC / Phono £12,950
Boulder 1060 Power Amp £16,500
Kharma Ceramique 1 LTD
or Lumley Monarch 1000 Loudspeakers £12,500
Sale Special ~~£48,300~~

PRICE £34995 INCLUDING £3000 WORTH OF CABLES. THIS IS A SUPERB SOUNDING SYSTEM AND IS WORTH EVERYPENNY. A SYSTEM FOR A LIFETIME.

Sale items changing each day - check out our web or call for a list.

[HTTP www.soundsformusic.co.uk](http://www.soundsformusic.co.uk)

Telephone 01892 547005 Fax 547004

10-12 Chapel Place, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1YQ

Agencies include:

ARCAM
LINN
NAIM
MERIDIAN
REGA
B&W NAUTILUS
PROCEED
M+K
NEAT
PMC
LOEWE
SONY PRO
FUJITSU
STAX
GRADO
ORTOFON
DYNAVECTOR
SHAHINIAN
XLO

EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

If choosing your new hi-fi or home cinema in a civilised and relaxed atmosphere from a well-chosen selection of genuine performance equipment appeals, then we are for you.

See and hear the very best with us.

Infidelity

INDECENTLY GOOD HI-FI

9 High Street, Hampton Wick,
Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 4DA

020 8943 3530

Full custom installation of home cinema, distributed audio/video and home automation products

Email: infidelity@compuserve.com

www.infidelity.co.uk

Open: Tues - Fri 10.30am - 7pm, Saturday 10am - 6pm



POWER MANAGEMENT PSF1 THE LINK IN POWER DISTRIBUTION



RFI Filtered Distribution unit
Now available with voltage suppression clamp.

32 Derwent Business Centre, Clarke Street, Derby DE1 2BU
soniclink@audiocables.co.uk www.audiocables.co.uk
 Tel: 01332 361390 Fax: 01332 200698

DALI GRAND COUPÉ

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,333.00
CONTACT 00 45 96 72 11 55

www.dali.dk
GUARANTEE 5 years

The Dali name is an acronym that has something to do with Danish audiophile loudspeakers, and the brand also has close links to that country's leading specialist hi-fi retail chain. It makes a wide range of speakers, and this Grand Coupé is clearly from the upmarket prestige end of the scale.

It's a simple enough two-way stand-mount affair with a 6.5-inch main driver, and yet it costs a considerable £1,333 – but the devil here is very much in the fine detail. What might look like a simple black box sitting in the carton, soon reveals a wealth of hidden subtleties.

It weighs a hefty 10kg, and the box is cunningly shaped, with deep chamfers slicing off the front edges and effectively narrowing the front panel either side of the tweeter. There's more chamfering on the rear edges, and the top surface is slightly domed, both of which add something to the styling, though probably not the performance. Our samples came in a sort of eggshell black fin-

ish, though the website lists cherry and rosewood as the two available options.

Both drivers incorporate proprietary Stray Field Control Technology (SFCT), which Dali claims "drastically reduces distortion [and results in a] sound much larger than its compact dimensions would suggest", though I searched the website in vain for further explanation.

The loudspeaker's main driver has a cast frame and a coated paper cone 120mm in diameter, while the tweeter uses a 28mm soft fabric dome. Twin terminal pairs are fitted as 4mm sockets through the back panel: multi-way plugs are supplied to add flexibility (make up your own links!). In-room measurement indicates free-space siting for the speaker, and shows a warm and laid-back overall balance.

SOUND QUALITY

This is an interesting loudspeaker, no question, and one that chooses a rather different set of compromises to the norm, eliciting a rather uneven response from our panellists. Dali's claim that this speaker sounds much bigger than it looks is at least partly justified, but it's also partly a consequence of combining a full midbass region with a rather under-nourished upper midband.

Behind this speaker's rather relaxed presentation lies a sound which is impressively clean and dynamically literate, and also unusually smooth. Beyond the slightly 'hooded' effect created by the balance, coloration is very well controlled, and dynamics are handled with a wide range and good expression.

CONCLUSION

This Grand Coupé is a high class loudspeaker, no question, but it is also an expensive one. Smooth and dynamically literate, its laid-back balance does indeed help create a big sound which very deftly avoids any aggressive tendencies, but also rather underplays the projection of presence detail.



The distinctive chamfering of this speaker might improve its looks – but what about its performance?

“BEHIND THE RATHER RELAXED PRESENTATION LIES A CLEAN AND DYNAMICALLY LITERATE SOUND.”



THE LAB REPORT

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR A relatively compact, sealed-box speaker to suffer a relatively low sensitivity, particularly if response has been engineered for good on and off-axis uniformity. But the Grand Coupé is neither a sealed box nor especially uniform in its response and yet its sensitivity remains a surprisingly low 84.5dB. To achieve peaks as high as 108dB, you'll need something like a 250W amp. Here, the low sensitivity and bass-heavy response go hand-in-hand, for an averaged 3rd-

octave response plot shows the Grand Coupé drooping from 200Hz-2.5kHz by about 7dB. There's a mild recovery after the 3kHz crossover where distortion falls to an impressive 0.25%. Off axis, the mid, presence and treble all fall more sharply away, creating the "hooded" sound described by Paul's listeners. Bass tuning is higher at 50Hz than specified while the driver cut-off is very sharp indeed. Phase angles are minimal but the average load of 6.4 Ohm is tough, remaining <6 Ohm between 100Hz-2kHz.

▼ WHERE TO FIND US

BASINGSTOKE 01256 324311
2 Feathers Lane
E-mail: basingstoke@audio-t.co.uk

BRENTWOOD 01277 264730
30 Crown Street
E-mail: brentwood@audio-t.co.uk

BRISTOL 0117 926 4975
65 Park Street
E-mail: bristol@audio-excellence.co.uk

CAMBERLEY 01276 685597
173-175 London Road
E-mail: camberley@audio-t.co.uk

CARDIFF 029 2022 8565
134/136 Crwys Road
E-mail: cardiff@audio-excellence.co.uk

CHELTENHAM 01242 583960
38 Winchcombe Street
E-mail: cheltenham@audio-t.co.uk

CHESTER 01244 345576
88/90 Boughton
E-mail: chester@audio-excellence.co.uk

ENFIELD 020 8367 3132
159a Chase Side
E-mail: enfield@audio-t.co.uk

EPSOM 01372 748888
15 Upper High Street
E-mail: epsom@audio-t.co.uk

EXETER 01392 491194
156 Sidwell Street
E-mail: exeter@audio-excellence.co.uk

GLOUCESTER 01452 300046
58 Bristol Road
E-mail: gloucester@audio-excellence.co.uk

HIGH WYCOMBE 01494 558585
30-32 Castle Street
E-mail: wycombe@audio-t.co.uk

LONDON: W. HAMPSTEAD
020 7794 7848
190 West End Lane
E-mail: hampstead@audio-t.co.uk

OXFORD 01865 765961
19 Old High Street, Headington
E-mail: oxford@audio-t.co.uk

READING 0118 958 5463
4 Queens Walk
Broad Street Mall
E-mail: reading@audio-t.co.uk

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8025 2827
10-12 Hursley Road
Chandlers Ford
E-mail: southampton@audio-t.co.uk

SWANSEA 01792 474608
9 High Street
E-mail: swansea@audio-excellence.co.uk

SWINDON 01793 538222
60 Fleet Street
E-mail: swindon@audio-t.co.uk

TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 525666
6 High Street
E-mail: tunbridge@audio-t.co.uk

WORCESTER 01905 619059
Independence House
The Trinity
E-mail: worcester@audio-excellence.co.uk

All shops are closed on Mondays



For the very latest information
please check our web sites:

www.audio-t.co.uk

www.audio-excellence.co.uk

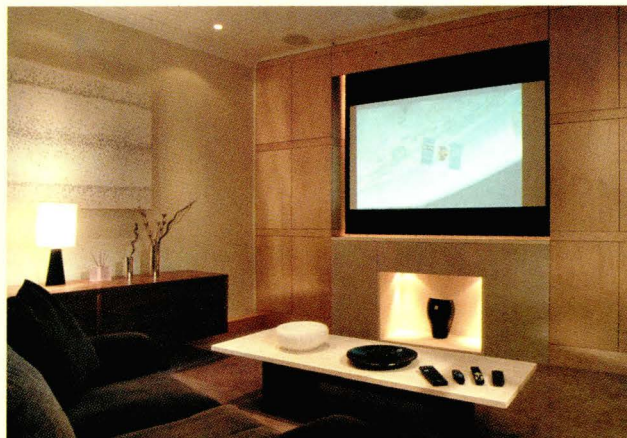
[www.audio-t.co.uk]
[www.audio-excellence.co.uk]

audio

E X C E L L E N C E

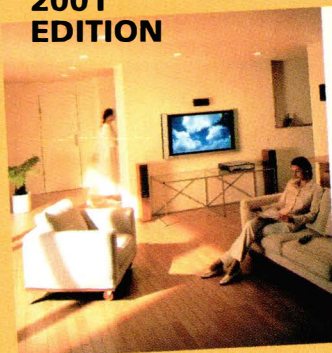
audio-T

We believe that watching and listening to your home system should be as much fun as a visit to your local cinema (if not more!). That's why our staff are experts in the design and installation of such systems. From the basic pro-logic amplifier to the more advanced motorised projectors and screens we can demonstrate them all in our dedicated home cinema demonstration rooms.



- 55 YEARS JOINT EXPERIENCE
- 3 YEAR GUARANTEE ON HI-FI SEPARATES
- FULL DEMONSTRATION FACILITIES
- PRICE PROMISE
- 10 DAY EXCHANGES
- 30 DAY NO COST PENALTY UPGRADES
- PART EXCHANGES
- INTEREST FREE OPTION ON SALES OVER £250*
- HOME LOANS AND HOME DEMONSTRATIONS
- EVENING DEMONSTRATIONS BY APPOINTMENT

2001 EDITION



For your
FREE copy of
**MUSIC
AT HOME,**
The Ultimate
Guide 2001

**FREEPHONE
0500 101501**

(quote ref HEB)

or visit our web site at
www.music-at-home.co.uk

Home Cinema
products we
sell include:

ACOUSTIC
ENERGY
ARCAM
B&W
CYRUS
DAVIS
DENON
DYNAUDIO
JAMO
KEF
LEXICON
LOEWE
MARANTZ
MERIDIAN
METZ
MILLER &
KREISELL
MISSION
NAD
NAKAMICHI
ONKYO
PANASONIC
PARASOUND
PIONEER
REL
RUARK
SELECO
SONY
TAG
McLAREN
TANNOY
YAMAHA

Not all
products are
stocked by
every shop so
please check
with your
local branch
before
travelling

*Subject to
status. Written
details on
request

PRICE PROMISE

✓ WE KNOW
YOU WON'T
FIND BETTER
SERVICE.

✓ WE KNOW
YOU WON'T
FIND BETTER
SOUND.

✓ BUT IF YOU
FIND A
BETTER DEAL
FROM
ANOTHER
AUTHORISED
SHOP, LET US
KNOW AND
AS LONG AS
WE CAN
VERIFY IT
WE'LL BE
HAPPY TO
MATCH IT.

DYNAUDIO CONTOUR 1.3 MKII

SOUND ★★★★★ **VALUE** ★★★★★ **£1,200.00** **CONTACT** 01732 451938 www.dynaudio.com **GUARANTEE** 5 years

A well-respected Danish brand, Dynaudio is historically best known for its very classy drive units, but the company is now equally established as a complete speaker system builder, both the vinyl-covered Audience series, and the real-wood Contours commanding significant price premiums.

Hi-Fi Choice reviewed the original Contour 1.3 way back in 1993, finding the speaker pretty good, if rather expensive at £1,200. Eight years on, the Contour 1.3 has matured into a MkII, but still costs the same £1,200. That's inflation busting for you, though it's still a lot to pay for a small two-way stand-mount. The MkII changes include extra enclosure stiffening and improved ventilation and cooling for a new double-magnet main driver motor.

This is undoubtedly a very pretty little speaker, finished in a quality real wood veneer – our samples came in beech, which is just one of eight options. A neat picture-frame effect decorates the edge of the front panel.

“MOST LISTENERS FOUND THE BASS END IMPRESSIVELY POWERFUL - PERHAPS JUST A TAD TOO POWERFUL.”



The 28mm soft dome tweeter is flush mounted, while the 6.5-inch main driver is mounted against the surface (presumably improving their relative time-alignment). Like most Dynaudio main drivers, it has a cast frame, a plastic cone/dome diaphragm (115mm diameter here), and a large (75mm) voice-coil (conferring ample power handling).

To augment the bass output, a large reflex port is fitted to the back panel of the speaker. However, in-room measurements show plenty of midbass output even when the speakers are kept well clear of walls. Dynaudio supplies foam bungs to block the ports if preferred.

SOUND QUALITY

The Contour 1.3 loudspeaker attracted much more praise than criticism in the blind listening tests. One of its major strengths is that it gets much closer than most to true neutrality, and this is combined with a fine dynamic range and a good measure of transparency.

Most listeners found the bass end impressively powerful, perhaps just a tad too powerful according to one (the tests were done with ports open). There did seem to be a slight extra thickening to male voices, a touch of nasality, and a slight loss of agility here too. It could be smoother and subtler, and also perhaps have a little more presence energy, a couple of panellists commenting that it needed a bit of power to really get going properly.

But these criticisms are minor indeed, especially given the modest dimensions, one panellist summing it up as: “An enjoyable speaker which makes the best of all types of music, staying tidy even when the going gets busy”.

CONCLUSION

As compact speakers go, this is undoubtedly one of the very best, combining a high standard of neutrality with surprising power weight and drive. A reasonably powerful amplifier is advised.



The real beech veneer shown here is just one of eight options for this pretty little speaker.

THE LAB REPORT

THE 3RD-OCTAVE IN-ROOM

trace suggests a slightly dominant bass (even when clear of walls) with a very even-handed mid and lower treble right up to 8kHz or so where there's a slight sting in its tail. Off-axis, the response is less fierce and also less 'immediate', with dips through the mid and presence bands. The bass punch comes from the substantial port output at 50Hz, higher than the 41Hz indicated by Dynaudio and slightly mis-

aligned with the 45Hz driver null and dip in the impedance spectrum. Talking of which, the Contour 1.3mkII continues Dynaudio's tradition for delivering a fairly tough speaker load. In this case, the load is less than 7 Ohm from 90Hz-20kHz and with an average of just 5.7 Ohm. And yet, despite its hunger for amplifier current, the Contour 1.3mkII is not especially sensitive even if its 87.8dB (re. 1m/2.83V) is better than the

JM LAB COBALT 826

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,229.00

CONTACT 0121 616 5126

www.focal-jmlab.fr

GUARANTEE 3 years

This French brand has been growing rapidly, and recently set up its own company to handle the UK distribution of its complete JMLab speakers, as well as the company's Focal drivers which are aimed at the in-car hi-fi scene. The company is very much a drive unit specialist, with unique proprietary technologies like its inverted dome tweeters and 'W-Sandwich' cones. Two steps down the ladder from the 'high end' Utopias, the Cobalts are the least expensive models to use these stiff, light and critically damped cones which consist of a structural foam sandwiched between woven glass fibre sheets.

You get three of them in this three-way £1,229 Cobalt 826. Two are used in tandem to supply the bass, while the third, with a carefully shaped central 'bullet', does the midrange thing. All have cast alloy frames, and are mounted in an appropriately hefty port-loaded enclosure. The tweeter uses a treated titanium inverted dome with pleated surround.

"A STRONG RESULT IN THE LISTENING TESTS, THE COBALT WAS CLOSE TO THE TOP OF EVERYONE'S LISTS."



The styling – whichever of the three options you choose – is smart and contemporary, if perhaps a little austere for British tastes. Veneer is restricted to the side panels here, and has little figuring or grain, while the front, back, top and base are finished in a textured silver-grey laminate. A very attractive grey, perforated metal grille is supplied, while the truly sad can sit around the back and watch the crossover doing its thing, through a little inspection window. Twin terminal pairs show that JMLab has joined the bi-wire advocates. In-room measurements tend to confirm the intended free-space alignment, though a little wall reinforcement is worth trying, and foam port-bungs are supplied for further flexibility.

SOUND QUALITY

A strong result in the listening tests, the Cobalt 826 was close to the top of everyone's list, praised for its weight, control, agility and dynamic integrity. For such a large and complex speaker it shows surprising delicacy and transparency, has relatively low coloration levels, adding just a modest amount of nasality to speech, and has a good measure of dynamic grip and expression too boot.

The most obvious criticism of the speaker is that the top end is perhaps just a little too bright here. It's a very clean top end, to be sure, adding its own slight sizzle of excitement to the proceedings, but it could perhaps be less welcome in the wrong system or programme context.

CONCLUSION

The good power handling and sensitivity of this three-way should ensure massive loudness potential here, though in practice this loudness might be compromised by the rather severe amplifier load.

All told this is a most impressive package, with fine bass extension and overall neutrality plus a good measure of dynamic expression. A tad too bright maybe? That seems to be the French way, but maybe you should decide that for yourself.



The three drivers on the Cobalt have cast alloy frames and are mounted in a sturdy enclosure.

THE LAB REPORT

THOUGH NOT AS sensitive as JMLab suggests (91.0dB instead of 92dB), the Cobalt 826 still looks to be a lively performer. A multi-driver array and complex crossover yields no less than 12 swings in phase angle (max +35/-40 degrees) and a sub-6 Ohm load from 25Hz-490Hz, so I'd expect some variation in sound, amp to amp. Otherwise, maximum loudness is high at ~108dBA and includes a fulsome bass thanks to the paralleled drivers and broad port output that extends from 25Hz-88Hz (-3dB). The output

of the drivers themselves is of a higher Q and also peaks at 88Hz. Bass distortion is impressively low at ~0.25%, but the extra control wrought by JM's damping plugs will be worth the experiment. Its averaged, 3rd-octave response shows a respectably even-looking upper bass and midrange with some slight increase in treble energy beyond 6kHz or so. Toe the speakers inwards slightly to tame the treble, but not too far, else some non-uniformity just beyond the mid/treble crossover (at 3kHz) becomes apparent.

PROAC RESPONSE 1.5

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,790.00
CONTACT 01280 700147

www.proac-loudspeakers.com
GUARANTEE 5 years

Highly successful on export markets over the past twenty-something years, this long-established British brand has recently been paying much closer attention to the UK scene, and its models are therefore now available from a much wider range of dealers.

ProAc is very much a luxury finish brand, and that is particularly true of the more upmarket Response series, such as this £1,790 Response 1.5. It's expensive for a compact two-way floorstanding loudspeaker to be sure, but it's undeniably a very pretty one. Our samples came decorated in a quite delightful and beautifully patterned cherry wood veneer over four faces, with a matching plinth to complete the aesthetic effect. Edges and corners are all sharp, but so too is the overall effect here, with nicely rebated drivers and offset, mirror-imaged tweeters.

It also has a very pretty and expensive main driver, one of the best 6.5-inchers available anywhere, with a cast frame, large magnet and

“THIS ONE MAKES YOU WANT TO LISTEN. FAULTS ARE MINIMISED BY THE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSIC.”



copper 'bullet' phase compensator coming out from the centre of the 120mm cone. The tweeter has a small 19mm soft dome. The enclosure is loaded by a generous port on the rear panel, and has twin terminal pairs for bi-wiring/amping. Although this loudspeaker is attractively slim, chunky 8mm spikes give it fine stability via the impressive plinth footprint.

In-room measurements show a very enthusiastic port output which indicates that this speaker should be kept well clear of walls. In this respect it resembles our findings for its bigger Response 3.8 brother (HFC 182), but this 1.5 doesn't have the same 'textbook' mid-to-treble evenness and openness.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel was pretty happy with the Response 1.5. One panellist summed up: "This one makes you want to listen. Any faults are minimised by the engagement with the music". Another put it: "A classy little bugger, for all its 'character', it's easy to live with and coherent too".

Its innate good timing was mentioned several times, but so was the observation that the sound is a little 'small', tending to emphasise and project the broad midband somewhat at the expense of the bottom and top end of things. One might therefore fairly accuse it of lacking a little ambition, but by the same token it's a pretty safe pair of hands, staying under control and avoiding aggression even when working hard. There's little evidence of boxy colorations, bar a mild nasality on speech.

CONCLUSION

Arguably the best looking speaker in the entire test group, the ProAc Response 1.5 sounds both even and substantially uncoloured, if a tad small in scale. The main driver here is definitely a class act, and the overall mix of compromises seems very well chosen, though the price also seems a little high.



The prettiest speakers in the group, but good looks come at a price.

THE LAB REPORT

IF THE RESPONSE 1.5 LACKS some vividness, then this probably stems from 800Hz to 6kHz where a gentle loss in output amounts to some -3dB, a trend that tends to be exaggerated the further off the listening axis you sit. The overall 86.3dB sensitivity is also a little shy of ProAc's 88dB specification and though it's one of the 'quieter' boxes of the test group, it still makes better use of available amp power than the ATC or Dali, for example. Neither will the minimum 6.7 Ohm loading prove especially

taxing. Despite the lowish sensitivity, distortion is impressively low at ~0.5% through the bass and as low as 0.1% once the soft-dome tweeter gets into its stride. Nevertheless, the speaker's bass looks messy, for despite the high-Q port resonance matching the driver null and impedance dip at 48Hz, a nearfield analysis shows a 'notchy' response with the port allowing substantial peaks at 165Hz and 860Hz to escape (the former is also reflected onto the phase and impedance curves).



Ultimate Sonics

DISTRIBUTORS OF AFFORDABLE HIGH END HI-FI

301-303 Channel Sea House, Canning Road,
London, SE15 3ND

Email: info@ultimate-sonics.com

Web: www.ultimate-sonics.com

Tel: 020 8534 0134

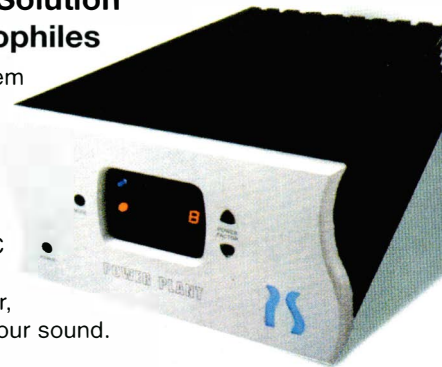
Fax: 020 8534 0234

Check out our pre-owned pages on the web for special bargains: www.ultimate-sonics.com

The Best Mains Solution For Audiophiles

Why bandage the problem with power conditioners when you could be generating clean power?

The Power Plant takes the AC from your wall socket, converts it to DC then back to AC. The result is pure mains power, and a major upgrade to your sound.



For more details please check our website:

www.ultimate-sonics.com

P300 with 4 outlets – £1650

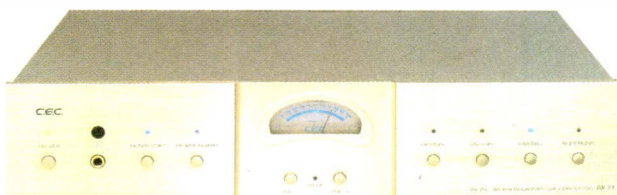
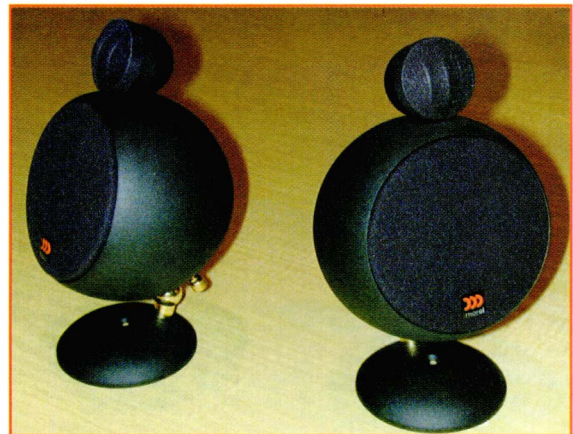
P600 with 8 outlets, with Multiwave factory installed – £2700

The Award Winning Morel Stereo & Home Theatre Loudspeakers

"Born out of a coupling of the love of music with technology"

Morel designed and built drivers are at the heart of many award-winning loudspeakers. Ask your dealer for the full Morel range including active & passive sub-woofers.

Price range: £340 - £1200



CEC DX71 24/96k

Superb DAC with Built-in Upsampler & Preamp.



HMS Cables

This range of cables are a revelation.



The Lab Cable from PS Audio

Your system sounds its best with this state-of-the-art power cord and speaker cable.

5ft: £320.00



Solid Tech Support Racks

Vibrations & resonances are minimised by the extremely well-dampened and rigid multi-layered shelf design consisting of Corian visco-elastic glue and MDF. The effect is a cleaner, crisper music reproduction with greater resolution and separation.

Other brands: Forsell, Synergistic Research, Alon Loudspeakers, CEC, Jolida Valve Equipment, Silverline Audio Loudspeakers, Z Systems.

RUARK CL20

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,500.00
CONTACT 01702 601410

www.ruark.net
GUARANTEE 5 years

Ruark is well known for its top quality cabinet work, and has recently been making big efforts on the styling side too – witness the Vita sub/sat system reviewed in our last edition. Similar design creativity is seen in the company's new Classic series, which includes this £1,500/pr CL20 two-way floorstander.

The appearance is probably better described as contemporary rather than classic. Aimed somewhat towards European export customers, the styling certainly has considerable individuality, and makes a very welcome change from the regular boxes. Although both the front and back panels and the top and base remain parallel, the whole thing tilts back, the profile forming a parallelogram rather than a rectangle.

The top section of the enclosure has extra thickness and reinforcement, with shaped extra panels of black MDF added to the baffle and sides, the latter clamped firmly together by metal rods that pass right through the enclosure. Mass damping

“THERE WAS PLENTY OF PRAISE FOR THE CL20'S OPEN DELIVERY AND THE WAY DETAIL WAS PROJECTED.”



may be added to a compartment near the base, and it comes equipped with a proper plinth (as should all floorstanders at this sort of price, in my opinion), veneered to match and fitted with chunky 8mm spikes.

This is a simple two-way design, with a 6.5-inch main driver loaded by the rear-ported top part of the enclosure. The main driver has a cast frame and a 115mm doped paper cone, the tweeter has a 28mm soft dome, and twin terminals permit bi-wire connection or bi-amp operation. The in-room far-field traces indicate the CL20 should be free-space sited, and also confirm the distinctly brighter-than-average presentation identified in the listening tests.

SOUND QUALITY

The CL20 highlighted one of the difficulties of blind listening tests. On Day one it followed two duller, more restrained designs, and its brighter-than-average presentation was criticised by the whole panel. On Day two it followed another bright speaker, and because their ears had been pre-conditioned, no one even noticed!

One man's brightness is another's openness, and there was plenty of praise for the CL20's open delivery, and the way detail was confidently projected. Arguably a more serious criticism is that the balance is rather short of warmth, and so doesn't really develop full richness and dynamic shading with human voices, which have a slightly thin and pinched character, and a hint of nasality.

The bass end of things is handled very well here, with firmness, authority and plenty of propulsive drive and gusto, though it isn't the last word in weight and scale.

CONCLUSION

Idiosyncratic in both visual and sonic presentation, Ruark's CL20 is nevertheless a thoroughly engaging and entertaining speaker, with fine communication skills. The brightness and lack of warmth won't suit every taste and system, however, so try before you buy.



The CL20 comes complete with a sturdy plinth with chunky 8mm spikes.

THE LAB REPORT

FROM THE TECHNICAL perspective, the CL20 is a very clean-looking speaker. Distortion is both low and remarkably consistent at just 0.4-0.25% through bass, midrange and treble (re. 96dBA) while the speaker enjoys an excellent off-axis uniformity. For example, the axial sensitivity is already substantially higher (louder) than Ruark's 87dB specification at 90.4dB/2.83V/1m (500Hz-8kHz) but this is held to 90.6dB (200Hz-20kHz) and 89.9dB <30 degrees off axis. The cancellation notches in its forward response

at 1.3kHz and at 3kHz, immediately after the 2.8kHz crossover point, tend to be 'ironed out' in practice. So the response is strong but uniform through midrange and treble rather than exhibiting the peaky HF seen elsewhere. Bass tuning is clean but underdamped at 41Hz and not all amplifiers will appreciate the +60/-40 degree phase angles up to 100Hz or so, especially combined with 5-50 Ohm swings in impedance. The subjective bass quality will probably vary from system to system.

SPENDOR SP2/3E

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

£1,295.00

CONTACT 01323 843474

www.spendoraudio.com

GUARANTEE 5 years

A famous name in the history of British speaker design, Spendor was founded 30 years ago by an ex-member of the BBC Research Department, primarily to make broadcast monitor loudspeakers. Owned for the past decade by a ProAudio operation, the company has had a low hi-fi profile in Britain, but was recently purchased by Philip Swift (ex-Audiolab), who plans to rectify that situation, while keeping the faith with the Spendor tradition.

That is certainly the case with the SP2/3e, a large and long-established stand-mount which bears a striking resemblance to the 25-year-old BC1s I keep as a long term reference. The cosmetic treatment with 'picture-framed' grille is much the same, and while the speaker is actually smaller, the margin is not great, so it looks decidedly bulky by today's standards.

The shape and bulk might not fall in line with current fashions, but it makes perfect sense in the context that this speaker is one of very few these days using an 8-inch (frame)

main driver – one of Spendor's own, with cast frame and transparent 145mm polypropylene cone. Back in the 1970s the 8-incher was king, but nowadays the 6.5-incher has largely taken over, at least partly so that designs can be slimmer, which might improve the aesthetics but is often less good news from an acoustic point of view.

The finish finds top quality real wood veneer on all six faces, a very pretty cherry comes as standard, and rosewood is available for 15% extra on the price. The 'thinwall' MDF substrate is heavily damped by carefully placed bituminous pads. The drivers are flush-mounted into the front panel, alongside a generous port, while each of four (bi-wire) terminals is individually mounted through the back panel. Free space siting requirements were confirmed by the in-room responses.

SOUND QUALITY

A firm favourite with two panellists but less popular with others, this SP2/3e delivers a beautiful neutrality through the broad midband, alongside a slight tendency to soften transients through the presence zone. Voices sound delightfully even, smooth and transparent, with good dynamic expression and a notable freedom from chestiness on male speech, for example.

Boxiness too is effectively banished, but without over-damping the expression through the upper bass. But the leading edges of picked guitar strings, for example, seemed less well defined, and slightly soft and vague. The end result is very natural and easy to live with in the long term, if a shade too polite for some tastes.

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, this SP2/3e continues the Spendor tradition for accurate monitoring. The even and natural balance with fine transparency and good dynamic expression is very rewarding, although some might find the sound a little too polite and restrained.



Although it's bulkier than most of today's stand-mounts, its 8-inch driver makes a surprising difference to the sound...

“VOICES SOUND DELIGHTFULLY EVEN, SMOOTH AND TRANSPARENT, WITH GOOD DYNAMIC EXPRESSION.”



THE LAB REPORT

However old-fashioned the SP2/3 may appear, there's no mistaking the lengths Spendor has gone to engineer a very neutral speaker design. The 88.4dB sensitivity is pretty generous bearing in mind the easy (average) 18.5 Ohm load it presents the amplifier and, especially, in the light of the uncommonly flat upper bass, midrange and treble response. Compared to its Continental cousins, the SP2/3 may well sound a little less bright and spontaneous but, provided you

listen on-axis, its response is undoubtedly more uniform. Of course, a flat response does not necessarily mean 'low coloration' for the SP2/3 does suffer a slight increase in distortion to ~1% near the 3kHz crossover region (re. 96dBA). Distortion through bass and treble are typically lower at ~0.5%, the former assisted by the generous port tuned to a sharp 43Hz but slightly misaligned from the 33Hz driver null and impedance minima. An updated classic.

TRIANGLE ANTAL XS

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

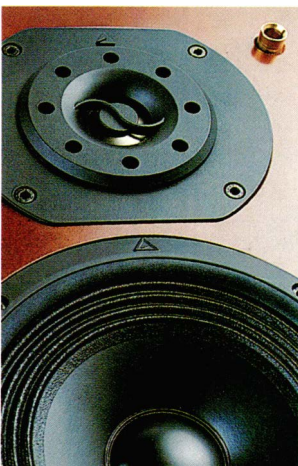
£875.00
CONTACT 01753 652669

www.ukd.co.uk
GUARANTEE 2 years

Idiosyncratic in a number of ways, not least styling and presentation that will look decidedly strange to British eyes, J nevertheless developed a very soft spot for this French speaker manufacturer when testing the two-way floorstanding Zephyr II a couple of years back. This £875 per pair Antal XS sits a couple of steps above the Zephyr, at the top of the Ecran series hierarchy, and is a full three-way design, combining a pair of port-loaded 6.5-inch bass drivers with a 5-inch midrange and the tweeter.

These four drive units are all mounted on a dark brown (Sienne) stained, curved MDF front panel, decorated by gilt lugs for attaching the full-height grille. The other five faces of the enclosure have a very nondescript textured black vinyl finish. It's not very pretty, nor does it have the luxury veneers which are virtually ubiquitous in this test group, but it is the least expensive and one of the largest, so the value for money is good. If you want real wood

“THE ANTAL XS HAS A SOUND THAT’S BOTH INFORMATIVE AND EASY ON THE EARS.”



Triangles, you'll have to move up to the Grand Angle series (from £1,195).

Triangle uses cast chassis and paper cone diaphragms throughout, and while the two bass drivers here use regular synthetic rubber surrounds, the midrange driver is unusual in having a pleated surround – an old fashioned technique which Triangle has long favoured, presumably because it has lower hysteresis than rubber.

Underneath, four little brass domes are threaded for 6mm spikes (no lock-nuts here), the rear panel carries twin terminal pairs, and a front port reflex-loads the bass enclosure. In-room measurements suggest that some wall reinforcement might be helpful, although the upper bass looks a little strong.

SOUND QUALITY

Despite its modest price, the Antal XS came through strongly in the listening tests, with only one dissenting voice. One listener described it as his “best of the day”, praising its “detail, delicacy and timing” while adding that it was “a little bright”.

The bass is a little suspect here, and can sound a trifle thick and hollow. Coloration isn't as low as some of the competition either, but the overall balance is pretty neutral (if a tad bright), there's a fair measure of transparency, and real dynamic literacy here, with the ability to create the sort of performance tension that keeps the attention firmly on the music. The natural dynamics aid communication, and make for a sound that's both informative and easy on the ears, the more so because of the generous headroom.

CONCLUSION

Like the Zephyr before it, the Antal XS is a fine sounding loudspeaker at a surprisingly affordable price. It's not the sweetest, smoothest or prettiest contender around, but it has bags of headroom and an involving dynamic expressiveness that's rare in a loudspeaker at any price.



THE LAB REPORT

WHERE SPEAKERS LIKE B&W's CM4 demand an axial listening position, the Antal XS is far better behaved when toed inwards by roughly 20 degrees to avoid the stinging treble once its metal domed tweeter takes over above 5kHz or so. Axially, the increase in output from 4kHz to 16kHz amounts to some +9dB thanks to a particularly sharp resonance at 16.45kHz and increases the 91.7dB (500Hz-8kHz) sensitivity to a full 93.0dB (200Hz-20kHz). Bass is also

strong, thanks to the broad output of the port tuned some 15Hz or so up from where it was anticipated. Otherwise we are left with a very sensitive speaker, capable of ear-splitting levels (~111dBA), enjoying low (<0.5%) distortion through bass and treble but disappointingly high (5-6%) distortion from the pleated midrange unit. This peak in distortion will certainly bring some character to the speaker's sound as might the additional swing in phase angle and tough 6.4 Ohm average

CONCLUSIONS

PAUL MESSENGER ROUNDS UP THE SPEAKERS.

Our annual visit to the more upmarket strata of hi-fi loudspeakers usually places maximum strain on a reviewer required to separate wheat from chaff. A price band that starts at £850 and extends to just above £2,000 pretty well guarantees that all the speakers will achieve a very decent standard of performance in most important respects.

Loudspeaker design is all about compromise, trading parameters off against each another. The further upmarket you go, the more extreme the choices tend to be. The main task of these reviews is to try and highlight these compromises, so the customer can find the right package to match their personal preferences.

Despite huge disparities in size, the differences in bass extension are comparatively minor. Rather, there

SPEAKERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	ATC SCM20	AUDIO NOTE AN-J/SPE	B&W CM4	CASTLE HARLECH S2	CHARIO ACADEMIE MILLENNIUM 1	DALI GRAND COUPE
PRICE	£2,051.00	£1675.00	£900.00	£1,000.00	£1,399.00	£1,333.00
SOUND VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
CONCLUSION	Not too transparent but has great dynamic grip and bass to die for. Needs a powerful amp.	A retro-styled vigorous and dynamic performer that creates fine musical tension.	Beautifully styled trend-setting floorstander has a big but slightly too relaxed sound.	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and good-looking too.	Pretty but pricey, with a smooth even balance but limited dynamic expression.	Big sounding stand-mount with laid back but clean and informative sound.
GUARANTEE	2 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS

THE LAB REPORT

	ATC	AUDIO NOTE	B&W	CASTLE	CHARIO	DALI
SENSITIVITY RATING	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■
EASE OF DRIVE	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■
BASS EXTENSION	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■
LOW DISTORTION RATING	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■
OVERALL RATING	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■	■■■■■■■■■■

MEASUREMENTS

	ATC	AUDIO NOTE	B&W	CASTLE	CHARIO	DALI
SENSITIVITY (2.83V @ 1M)	84.1DB	89.5DB	90.9DB	88.9DB	86.9DB	84.5DB
TYPICAL MAX SPL, 2M	109DBA @ 300W	107.5DBA @ 200W	108DBA @ 150W	106.5DBA @ 150W	103DBA @ 120W	108.5DBA @ 250W
IMPEDANCE, NOMINAL/AVERAGE	6 OHM/7.7 OHM	8 OHM/12.3 OHM	6 OHM/9.05 OHM	8 OHM/10.3 OHM	4 OHM/5.44 OHM	6.0 OHM/6.4 OHM
IMPEDANCE, MINIMUM	5.0 OHM @ 175HZ & 2.3KHZ	4.96 OHM @ 150HZ	2.5 OHM @ 15.6KHZ	6.0 OHM @ 270HZ	3.65 OHM @ 1.3KHZ	4.6 OHM @ 240HZ
MAXIMUM PHASE ANGLE	+52 DEGREES @ 76HZ -42 DEGREES @ 54HZ	+37 DEGREES @ 3.2KHZ -41 DEGREES @ 520HZ	+62 DEGREES @ 3.6KHZ -46 DEGREES @ 55HZ	+33 DEGREES @ 145HZ -26 DEGREES @ 645HZ	+32 DEGREES @ 41HZ -15 DEGREES @ 1.6KHZ	+38 DEGREES @ 80HZ -15 DEGREES @ 55HZ
PROJECTED IN-ROOM EXTENSION (-60DB)	65HZ	38HZ	35HZ	50HZ	42HZ	45HZ

are major differences in sensitivity and/or loudness capability, broadly related to size and driver complement. Equally, there are major contrasts in the 'flavour' of sound produced by these models, and one man's meat... Well, you know the rest.

Style is the other ingredient that will play a major part in any purchasing decision, and the variety here is enormous too. From the small Chario with its solid walnut enclosure, via the decidedly 'retro' Audio Note and Sendor stand-mounts, to a whole clutch of good-looking (and not so good-looking) floorstanding speakers – choose your style, then check whether you can afford it!

Reflecting the sheer diversity of the models gathered here, and the consequent difficulty of comparing one with another, three loudspeakers receive Best Buy status. The Triangle Antal XS might not be pretty, but at £875 it's a lot of speaker for your money, with a sound that's dynamically exciting if slightly unruly. The other French three-way, the JM Lab Cobalt 826, has some similarities: it's smoother in sound and more svelte in appearance, but costs a rather less friendly £1,229. Castle's Harlech S2 is simply a lot of classy real-wood finished speaker for £1,000, with a sound that's very entertaining, if rather different from the norm.

“THERE ARE MAJOR CONTRASTS IN THE ‘FLAVOUR’ OF SOUND.”

SPEAKERS AT A GLANCE

SPEAKERS AT A GLANCE						
DYNAUDIO CONTOUR 1.3 MKII	JMLAB COBALT 826	PROAC REPOSE 1.5	RUARK CL20	SPENDOR SP2/3E	TRIANGLE ANTAL XS	MAKE MODEL
£1,200.00	£1,229.00	£1,790.00	£1,500.00	£1,295.00	£875.00	PRICE
★★★★★ ★★★★☆	★★★★★ ★★★★★	★★★★★ ★★★★★	★★★★★ ★★★★☆	★★★★★ ★★★★☆	★★★★★ ★★★★★	SOUND VALUE
Stand-out performer amongst stand-mounts; neutral, with fine punch and dynamic range.	Big three-way French floorstander is lively, informative and mostly neutral, if a tad bright.	Gorgeous but pricey; lovely midband voicing but limited bandwidth resolution.	This punchy rock 'n' roller has plenty of drive and enthusiasm, but can sound aggressive.	Polite to a fault, but has beautiful 'hear-through' transparency – a genuine classic.	Ugly duckling has a rather tasty sound, with plenty of vigour and excitement.	CONCLUSION
5 YEARS	3 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS	5 YEARS	2 YEARS	GUARANTEE
THE LAB REPORT						
						SENSITIVITY RATING
						EASE OF DRIVE
						BASS EXTENSION
						LOW DISTORTION RATING
						OVERALL RATING
MEASUREMENTS						
87.8DB	91.0DB	86.3DB	90.4DB	88.4DB	91.7DB	SENSITIVITY (2.83V @ 1M)
104.5DBA @ 150W	108DBA @ 150W	104DBA @ 180W	107DBA @ 150W	103.5DBA @ 100W	111DBA @ 250W	TYPICAL MAX SPL, 2M
4 OHM/5.66 OHM	4 OHM/8.1 OHM	8 OHM/14.5 OHM	6 OHM/8.75 OHM	8 OHM/18.5 OHM	4 OHM/6.4 OHM	IMPEDANCE, NOMINAL/AVERAGE
3.5 OHM @ 200HZ	2.85 OHM @ 100HZ	6.7 OHM @ 230HZ	4.6 OHM @ 4.3KHZ	7.95 OHM @ 200HZ	3.1 OHM @ 1KHZ	IMPEDANCE, MINIMUM
+41 DEGREES @ 85HZ -24 DEGREES @ 60HZ	+33 DEGREES @ 2.4HZ -38 DEGREES @ 655HZ	+43 DEGREES @ 42HZ -34 DEGREES @ 695HZ	+58 DEGREES @ 69HZ -43 DEGREES @ 51HZ	+51 DEGREES @ 79HZ -41 DEGREES @ 950HZ	+46 DEGREES @ 81HZ -37 DEGREES @ 2.3KHZ	MAXIMUM PHASE ANGLE
45HZ	35HZ	35HZ	38HZ	50HZ	40HZ	PROJECTED IN-ROOM EXTENSION (EDB)



HEADPHONES

WANT TO REALLY GET TO KNOW YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC?
RICHARD BLACK LENDS HIS LOBES TO 'PHONES UNDER £100.

Every music fan has those 'headphone moments' when, for one reason or another, the personal appreciation factor wins out over loudspeaker listening. But with such a bewildering choice of headphones available carrying such a multitude of price tags, how do you decide which ones will treat your music with the respect it deserves?

Once you've set your budget, there are two basic factors to consider: comfort and sound quality. Ignore either at your peril. The best-sounding cans in the world are worthless if you feel like your head's being crushed in a vice. But the most comfortable 'phones might as well be consigned to the bin if they're spitting fiery shards of treble at your cochleas. But if they're comfortable, don't have any gross sonic flaws and aren't turned up too loud, they can give many hours of considerable solo pleasure.

As for auditioning, headphones are one of the few hi-fi products where it's perhaps best to just take a quick listen. Many of their tricky sonic characteristics will be most obvious at once and if you take a dislike to a pair of headphones the moment you slip them on, it's probably not a relationship worth pursuing. Beyond that, listen for details in a few excerpts from recordings you know well – human voice, cymbals and solo piano are often acid tests. Chances are, if you're faced with half a dozen sets of cans you'll soon narrow your choice down to one or two, and then it's just a question of a longer listen to check for physical and auditory compatibility.

A word of caution: do resist the temptation to play music too loud through headphones – it's easily done, but it can cause long-term hearing problems. All too many modern recordings and headphones are a bit bright and it's the high frequencies that can do serious damage to your hearing before you realise. With open-backed headphones (as many hi-fi models are) it's easy to gauge loudness by having someone talk to you from nearby while you listen – if you can't hear a word they say you're probably playing the music too loud. Pardon?

Taking all these factors into account, we've gathered a test octet of cans from some of the biggest names in the business – all priced at under £100; a few for no more than beer money. Of course it is possible to spend a lot more than this, but is it really necessary? Listen up....

ON TEST

AKG K-44	£19.95
JVC HA-G77	£39.95
Koss R/200	£79.99
Philips HP890	£64.99
Sennheiser HD570 Symphony	£89.95
Sony MDR-CD480	£40.00
Technics RP-F500	£39.99
Vivanco SR222S	£29.99

OTHER EQUIPMENT USED

Philips CDR880 CD recorder/player
Rotel RCD-971 CD player
EAR/Yoshino HP4 headphone amplifier

MUSIC USED DURING TESTS

The Mavericks - *Trampoline*
Penguin Cafe Orchestra - *Concert Program*
Ronald Stevenson - *Songs*
Ian Dury - *The Bus Driver's Prayer and Other Stories*



AKG K-44

CONTACT: 020 8202 1199 www.akg-acoustics.com G'TEE: 1 YEAR

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £19.95

Twenty quid is not a lot of money: you'll spend that on a round of drinks for eight people in London (if you're lucky – Ed). And yet for that modest sum AKG offers its 'professional know-how' in this smart, if unglamorous, pair of cans. They're all plastic, but feature a self-adjusting headband and cushioned circumaural earpads – admittedly a little sweaty in hot weather. Don't buy them untested, though, because comfort will depend greatly on the shape of your ears. I'm not especially jug-eared, but even so the hard grilles were in contact with my ears, and although at first it's hardly noticeable, it can become agonising after an hour or less. Flat-eared folks will be fine. The K-44s are a closed-back design, but in practice there is little exclusion of outside sounds.

SOUND QUALITY

If the worst one can say about such an affordable product is that it's a bit bright, things can't be too bad. Granted, detail and tonal neutrality are not the best you'll ever find, but in no area is the sound anywhere near the bottom of the group. In fact the AKG's portrayal of acoustic space and ambience was among the best two or three, and they scored particularly well with a tricky voice and piano recording, which also demonstrated their pleasing quality with vocals and a general freedom from 'spit'. The brightness becomes more apparent with close-miked trumpet and sax, which becomes a little aggressive at high volumes. As for the low-end, bass is decent rather than awe-inspiring.

CONCLUSION

The overall impression here is of a well integrated audio bandwidth, a lively get-up-and-go character and, frankly, better detail than one has any right to expect for 20 quid. Of the group, the K-44s are the obvious Best Buy.



JVC HA-G77

CONTACT: 020 8450 3282 www.jvc.co.jp GUARANTEE: 2 YEARS

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £39.95

These JVCs are good-looking, distinctive 'phones with a self-adjusting headband and a decent level of comfort. That said, the cushions don't quite clear your ears, so if you don't get them perfectly positioned when you start listening you may find yourself suffering after a few minutes - they got my left ear on a couple of occasions! Otherwise, the specifications are pretty typical, and the extra-long 3.5 metre lead offers welcome freedom of movement.

SOUND QUALITY

I struggled for some time to find a style of music or at least one CD to which these cans were perfectly suited, but had to admit defeat. They play something that's clearly recognisable as music, yet they seem to have such a multitude of little flaws that there is always a 'but' to any positive attribute you might find. Some of the flaws would appear to be mutually exclusive, and it is indeed strange to report that sibilants and high-frequency background noise can be significantly emphasised while trumpets and cymbals often sound muted and dull: strange, but true.

In fact it soon becomes obvious that the 'G77s are plagued by a host of resonances that make their own unwelcome contribution to the music according to what instruments are playing. Best flattered seemed to be Ian Dury's gravelly voice, but his band are treated much less kindly, with synthetic-sounding drums and wooden, coloured instruments. Solo piano was similarly unconvincing and guitar lost a good deal of its precision and bite.

CONCLUSION

It might be true that it's possible to live with many aspects of sound coloration, and these headphones are at least quite lively performers, but you can have that, and far better tonal neutrality, for the same money. Not JVC's finest hour.



KOSS R/200

CONTACT: 020 8543 3633 www.koss.com **GUARANTEE:** LIFE

SOUND ★★☆☆☆☆ **VALUE** ★★☆☆☆☆ **£79.95**

The feature that marks these US 'phones out from the rest in this group is the in-chord control, which bears two switches ('in/out' and '0/180 degrees') and two slider controls ('cross feed' L and R). Bizarrely, this feature is not mentioned on the packaging or Koss' website, but is clearly intended to add some extra spaciousness to headphone listening. Because it's part of the lead, and the lead is detachable from the headset, one might think that it's an optional extra but it's shown in all the publicity photos and is clearly standard fare. That apart, construction is conventional enough. The thick foam cushions are comfortable, though the earpieces don't sit quite flush to the head.

SOUND QUALITY

There's a bit of a problem with that spaciousness control. With it switched in there is indeed slightly more impression of image width, though I'm not convinced it's always a benefit. With it switched out, however, these headphones are so insensitive that the output plunges to an almost inaudible level, especially when using them via a fixed-level headphone socket on a CD player. Using a dedicated headphone amp with a gain control brought the level almost up to what could be considered normal, but you certainly can't crank these Yanks. And that's a shame, because the basic sound seems to be very decent. There's a reasonably extended bass, a largely uncoloured midband and an extended treble, though the latter can tend toward over-brightness at times.

CONCLUSION

Even with the spaciousness effect switched on these cans only just overcome their shyness, and I can't imagine many people will want the effect full-time anyway. So the only possible conclusion is to suggest replacing the lead with a standard type.



PHILIPS HP890

CONTACT: 020 8665 6350 www.philips.co.uk **GUARANTEE:** 1 YEAR

SOUND ★★★★★★ **VALUE** ★★★★★★ **£64.99**

Physically, these Philips 'phones make an excellent first impression, matching an impressive appearance with a truly luxurious build. The detachable (but near-impossible to replace) cushions are fashioned in soft, ear-pampering velvet, and apart from the possible issue of the HP860s' considerable weight, most people should find them extremely comfortable. Philips quotes a very ambitious specification, including a frequency response of 5Hz to 30kHz (that may be true, though it ignores the fact that real subsonic frequencies are felt rather than heard), and a maximum sound pressure level of 138dB, which I'll certainly take on trust as it would be highly dangerous to 'audition'.

SOUND QUALITY

Although there is a trace of excess sibilance in evidence the HP860s probably qualify as the most capable all-rounders in this group. There's a nice balance between the frequency extremes and the midband, and although detail is not quite up to the standards you might find with a higher price tag, it's really rather fine. In the voice and piano recording used, for instance, there was a real sense of the space around the performers, and at the same time the singer's expressive nuances were well conveyed and the piano sounded solid and unconstrained. At an opposite extreme, The Mavericks' busy textures were all clear and easy to follow, with a generally natural sound to the many diverse instruments captured so well on the recording. There's still a little coloration here, but thankfully it's seldom enough to intrude noticeably, and the overall result is convincing and involving.

CONCLUSION

These fine Philips cans succeed in combining an excellent comfort factor with a very pleasing listening experience for the price, meaning we have no hesitation in recommending them with confidence.

Do you want to choose your hifi in a comfortable and relaxing environment . . . ?

Do you want friendly and helpful advice (and a cup of tea) . . . ?

Do you want to buy your system based on what you hear (and not what somebody tells you) . . . ?

Do you live in GUILDFORD . . . ?

. . . or Addlestone, Aldershot, Ashford (Middx), Ashstead, Bagshot, Basingstoke, Bracknell, Camberley, Chertsey, Crowthorne, Cranleigh, Dorking, Epsom, Esher, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Frimley, Godalming, Hartley Wintney, Haslemere, Hook, Horsham, Kingston, Liphook, Leatherhead, Molesey (East & West), New Malden, Odiham, Petersfield, Reading, Reigate, Redhill, Richmond, Shepperton, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, West Byfleet, Weybridge, Windsor, Woking, Wokingham, Yateley?

Nobody else in these areas stocks all the following major brands: Acoustic Energy, Arcam, B&W, Castle, Cyrus, Denon, Epos, Harman Kardon, Infinity, KEF (Reference), Linn Products (including records), Marantz, Meridian, Mission, NAD, Nakamichi, Pioneer, Primare, PROAC, QED (Systemline), Quad, Rega, Revox, Rotel, Tag McLaren, Target, T.D.L., Yamaha (including Home Cinema Systems) & Top Tape.

Visit us first and you won't need to go anywhere else, we have superb demonstration rooms where you can decide in comfort, and we will deliver and install free of charge (and part exchange is possible).

Complete service – We are the only outlet in the area to offer the complete service. As well as stocking selected items from the above manufacturers we are able to service and/or repair on the premises all the above brands (and others also).

PJ HIFI

Guildford's only REAL Hi-Fi shop

“Complete range of TAG McLaren Audio available for demonstration”

NEW LINN
CD PLAYERS
CD12 and IKEMI
on Permanent demonstration

LINN
AV51 SYSTEM
MERIDIAN
DIGITAL THEATRE
&
Arcam/Yamaha/
Denon AV
all on permanent demonstration

We are at
3 BRIDGE STREET, GUILDFORD
(by the traffic lights - adjacent to Yates Wine Lodge)
01483 504801 • 01483 304756

Access • Visa • Switch • American Express • Diners Club • Open Monday – Saturday 9am-6pm (later by appointment)



SENNHEISER HD570 SYMPHONY

CONTACT: 01494 551551 www.sennheiser.de GUARANTEE: 2 YEARS

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £89.95

A mid-range model from the biggest headphone specialist in Europe, this one was reviewed in *HFC* 194, since when it has undergone a few tweaks. An open-backed design, the HD570s have been voiced to work best with classical, jazz and acoustic music rather than thumping beats. Comfort rates very highly, something that will certainly benefit long term listening. In the Sennheiser tradition, components parts are individually replaceable.

SOUND QUALITY

These headphones proved frustratingly mixed on audition. Some things they do well, including separating different instruments from each other and resolving details. But they are undeniably over-eager with high frequencies, which leads to such undesirable side effects as rather prominent hiss on many recordings.

Midrange is more neutral, which certainly makes for a good balance with recordings made at a respectful distance from the performers. Bass is just a little light, and under some conditions seemed to break up rather disconcertingly. Granted, this was mostly with pop recordings, which are more bass heavy than most classical stuff, but I wasn't exactly playing at brain-damaging levels. Stereo image placement was good, although how it compares to speaker listening depends strongly on the microphone technique used. On the whole, Sennheiser's claim that this is best suited to classical music seems fair, though our Ian Dury disc worked even better, if anything – not too bassy, not too bright, it benefitted from the '570's midrange clarity and detail.

CONCLUSION

The dearest in the group, these Sennheisers are not, however, the best. Give them a try, though – if the sound suits, the high comfort factor may well seal the deal.



SONY MDR-CD480

CONTACT: 01990 111999 www.sony.co.uk GUARANTEE: 1 YEAR

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £40.00

Sony covers possibly the widest range of headphone aspirations, from in-ear jobs for personal stereos to some of the finest dynamic cans. These are from the serious-but-sensible part of the range, and at first glance could be mistaken for several of the other models in this group – you get the same type of self-adjusting headband, the obligatory mini-jack plus quarter-inch adapter, open-backed earpieces and comfortable foam cushions (if your ears are of a more lateral persuasion, do check that the grilles don't touch them).

SOUND QUALITY

If I say that these are probably the duller-sounding headphones in the group, that isn't necessarily a criticism: several of the others are well on the bright side of neutral and these are barely, if at all, treble-shy. But they are delightfully untroubled by background hiss, which you'll welcome if, like me, you have a lot of elderly recordings mastered on noisy tape. What's more, they don't make vocal consonants sound like a bacon slicer. There's enough treble to make trumpets and hi-hats lifelike, and surely that's all most will want.

In the midrange, however, there is the occasional giveaway of coloration. This was most obvious on guitar, which became really rather quacky and also muffled in terms of detail if not tonality. Solo piano sounded a little hard and unyielding, and on occasion appeared to suffer from something like modulation noise, reducing its impact. Bass is not quite perfect, either, being full enough in the upper reaches, but a little more elusive at the low-end depths.

CONCLUSION

Despite a few sonic irregularities, the 'CD480s have a consistently listenable quality and the lack of brightness and good comfort made for very pleasant long-term listening. Take on board the modest price and this is an eminently recommendable product.

**FREE SUPPLEMENT! 16 PAGES
OF SEXY SCREEN SIRENS**

JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT **NATURAL BORN KILLERS** HUGH JACKMAN

Total Film THE BEST FILMS FIRST

September 2001 ■ Issue 56 ■ £3.00

GIANT 50-PAGE REVIEW SECTION

"It's apes going crazy!"

PLANET Of The APES

The making of Tim Burton's gorilla thriller

SNEAK PREVIEW

HARRY POTTER
New pics and insider buzz

Star Wars 2
RUMOUR CONTROL

PLUS!

Lord Of The Rings
Spider-Man
Monsters Inc.

ON THE SET

A KNIFE
Why H...
jou...

film PRESENTS
DIAL M FOR MODEL

The magazine cover features a large, detailed image of a gorilla's face, looking intensely at the viewer. The gorilla has a white beard and is wearing a dark, textured garment. In the bottom right corner, there is a close-up of a woman's face, showing her nose and lips, with a hand holding a silver hairbrush near her hair. The overall background is a dark, textured red.

ON SALE NOW!



TECHNICS RP-F500

CONTACT: 01344 862444 www.technics.co.uk GUARANTEE: 1 YEAR

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £39.99

The arrangement of the headband and earpieces on these Technics cans is subtly different on this model, so that the headband sits further forward than usual, and very comfortable it is too. The earpieces are of the open-backed variety with soft cushions that sit well clear of the ears. Specifications are typical for the group, but Technics also reminds users not to listen too loud for too long, or, er, when driving!

SOUND QUALITY

While treble is not overtly coloured, there's just too much of it! Only with the duller recordings could I bear to turn up the wick significantly, and recordings which are bright in the first place can be wince-inducing. Of course brightness can add excitement, but this is simply overkill. Even a phenomenally bass-heavy dance track which I keep as an oddball point of reference seemed dominated by higher frequencies as soon as there was more than just a bassline going. And the bass isn't that terrific either, a bit leaden and not very detailed. Midrange is actually not too bad, natural enough and quite precise in its imaging, but the moment the treble gets going it dominates the whole soundscape.

Just to make things even worse, many recordings that are generally a bit gentler in the treble – basically recordings mastered in the days of vinyl dominance – when engineers had to take account of things like the limited HF levels achievable on disc – have relatively high levels of hiss which is brought out by the brightness and spoils what could otherwise be a good sound.

CONCLUSION

They may be comfortable cans, from a brand with a huge following among the dance DJ community where good 'phones are an essential item, but Technics has done better.



VIVANCO SR222S

CONTACT: 01442 403020 www.vivanco.com GUARANTEE: 1 YEAR

SOUND ★★★★★ VALUE ★★★★★ £29.99

Budget headphone specialist Vivanco has a new design to trumpet with these cans, it's dubbed 'Airspace' and refers to the empty space that surrounds the central drive unit in the earcups of the SR222s. Well, there's certainly some airspace in there, though the basic recipe seems much the same as everyone else's at the price. The earpieces are supra-aural, meaning that they sit on the ears rather than around them, that, coupled with the rather strong spring in the headband, makes them a little less comfortable than some, but perfectly bearable if positioned with care. There's the added bonus of an in-chord volume control, but if quality is an issue leave that at maximum and make adjustments elsewhere.

SOUND QUALITY

We're not dealing with ultimate hi-fi subtlety here, but there's a lively quality to the sound which makes these headphones involving and enjoyable. They have their flaws, a variety of midband colorations chief among them, and they can sound rather hard at high levels, but they are bouncy and fun and despite everything, they manage a level of detail which is certainly creditable at the price.

Bass is quite well done, with decent extension and clarity and a fair degree of kick when it's needed. What's probably the weakness here is moderately bright instruments like guitar and sax, which can develop a touch of honk, while orchestral violins are apt to sound a little synthetic, too. High frequencies fare better, with little added treble brightness, while voices are only occasionally a little nasal.

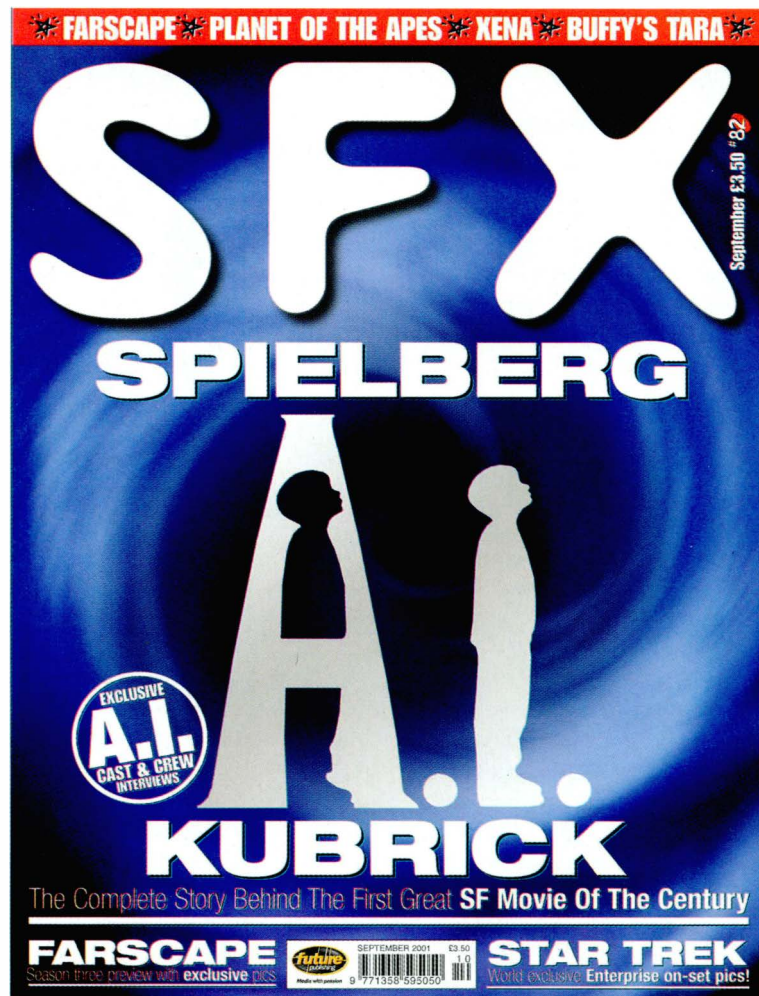
CONCLUSION

Even when the music proves a little too challenging for these cans, it's still clear what's going on, and there's nothing in the sound to bring on headaches or fatigue. If tempted, do check for comfort, but otherwise the SR222S represent good value.



ARTIFICIAL RESTORATION

Discover how **Steven Spielberg** completed the SF masterpiece **Stanley Kubrick** was planning before his death...



PLUS!

✦ **Farscape:** exclusive season three preview ✦ **Buffy's Tara:** Amber Benson talks dirty
✦ **Planet Of The Apes:** Helena Bonham Carter reveals all ✦

The Best-Selling SF Magazine In The World

Get SIX trial issues for just £14! Completely free of cover lines, subscriber copies are a real collector's item!

To order ☎ 01458 271192 and quote order code SF/H01

CONCLUSIONS

RICHARD BLACK PICKS HIS CAN-DO CANS

Let's start by addressing the question I asked in the introduction: whether it's necessary to spend more than a ton or so on headphones. I'd certainly argue that you can get better detail, neutrality and delicacy – all the basic hi-fi desirables – from more expensive models, but I have to admit that my former tendency to snobbishness on the subject has taken a bit of a pasting at the hands of some of these sub-£100 ear-huggers. They're not as good as it gets, but they come a lot closer than you might expect.

Some seemed to have more character than one would really want to live with – I'm thinking of the JVC and Technics models, which throw themselves into their duties with irrepressible gusto, but significantly alter the tonality of pretty

much anything you play through them. Koss's offering is tonally well balanced, but in 'straight' mode suffers a baffling loss of volume, while in 'spacious' mode becomes just too artificial for regular listening. Sennheiser's HD570s only just missed a formal accolade, having achieved one the last time they appeared in these pages, principally because they seem less of an all-round achiever than cheaper rivals from Philips and Sony.


Then we have three Recommendations. The choice between the Vivanco and AKG models, price apart, is largely one of taste, while the Sony definitely adds a greater degree of sophistication and all-round achievement. Meanwhile, the Philips

HP890s, hardly a bank-breaking £70, top the group with a fine combination of sound and comfort. They have a degree of resolution that is surprising and welcome in sub-£100 headphones, with good frequency extension and neutrality. If I needed another pair of cans, I'd buy them!

But it's the most affordable pair of cans here that takes the Best Buy badge. They may not be the best sounding headphones here, but AKG's K-44s really do achieve more than one could reasonably ask at their £20 price-tag. And as well as their potential in a domestic hi-fi system, they'd make a smashing upgrade to any half-decent portable player. A terrific little bargain.

"I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT MY FORMER TENDENCY TO SNOBBISHNESS ON THE SUBJECT HAS TAKEN A BIT OF A PASTING."

HEADPHONES AT A GLANCE

				
MAKE MODEL	AKG K-44	JVC HA-G77	KOSS R/200	PHILIPS HP890
PRICE	£19.95	£39.95	£79.99	£64.99
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
COMFORT	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
CONCLUSIONS	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed. A bargain.	Too coloured for general recommendation, and lacking detail.	Basic sound is fine, but sensitivity is far too low to be useful.	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable pair of phones.
GUARANTEE	1 YEAR	2 YEARS	LIFE	1 YEAR
				
MAKE MODEL	SENNHEISER HD570 SYMPHONY	SONY MDR-CD480	TECHNICS RP-F500	VIVANCO SR222S
PRICE	£89.95	£40.00	£39.99	£29.99
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
COMFORT	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
CONCLUSIONS	Very comfortable, but a little lightweight and sibilant in sound.	Tonally neutral and nicely detailed sound. Comfortable too.	Just too brash and exuberant for general recommendation.	Not that subtle, but a high fun factor and low price compensates.
GUARANTEE	2 YEARS	1 YEAR	1 YEAR	1 YEAR

A DAB HAND

AS DIGITAL RADIO ACHIEVES 80 PER CENT COVERAGE IN THE UK, RICHARD BLACK TAKES A LOOK AT ONE WAY OF ADDRESSING ITS SHORTCOMINGS.

O f all the new audio formats around at the moment (DVD-A, MP3, etc.), DAB is the one which is most likely – almost 100% certain, in fact – to succeed. Why? Simply because it has the unanimous might of the broadcasters behind it and if we want to be able to receive radio in the coming years, we're likely to have to adopt it full stop. In the circumstances, then, it's in everyone's interests to ensure that it works as well as it can in every way.

The trouble is that DAB is a data-reduced format, like MP3, which dramatically cuts the amount of data it uses to represent the audio compared with full-bandwidth PCM systems like CD. In practice, the typical DAB data rates used for stereo music programme vary between 128kbits per second and 192kbits per second, corresponding to reduction ratios of between 12:1 and 8:1. In other words, the audio is squeezed into about one-tenth of the usual space.

All data reduction systems ultimately rely on a combination of two tricks to do this. Firstly, they look for a more efficient way to represent the audio – to take a simple analogy, if your phone number was 2222 2222 you might simply give it as 'eight twos', rather than two, two, two... Secondly, they find a more efficient way to get very close to the original, with the additional criterion that the difference between original and 'close to' *should* be effectively inaudible. In practice, most systems get within a few per cent of the original so when we talk about the 'sound quality' of a data reduction system we're really looking at the audibility of that few per cent of error.

For anyone developing a data reduction 'codec' (COder/DECoder), it's easy to see how big that error is – just subtract 'before' from 'after' digitally. But that doesn't really give any information about how *audible* the error will be. To

determine that, developers have recourse to graphs of typical hearing acuity in terms of 'masking' of one sound by another – and of course listening tests of the final codec.

BEHIND THE MASK

Masking is a fairly well-understood subject area and research is continuing apace to gain yet more data. Meanwhile computing power is advancing, making possible more complex codecs, so all in all we can expect data reduction systems to improve in terms of perceived quality for a given bit rate. But one problem is that once a particular standard has been defined and adopted, there is only a certain amount that can be done to improve its performance without sacrificing compatibility. DAB is an example of this: as implemented in

retical bandwidth of just under 22kHz, while DAB, with a sampling rate of 48kHz, should give a bandwidth of just under 24kHz. In practice, though, it's extremely rare to find any audio at all above about 17kHz in a DAB broadcast. In fact, jettisoning a few kHz of extreme treble is very common in data reduction systems, since most people won't hear it – it's quite effectively masked in practice.

What's more of a problem, though, is that the precise upper band limit of DAB audio varies rather rapidly from time to time, as the coding algorithm decides to allocate more or less bits to the extreme treble. So while at a given moment the system might cut off at 16kHz, a few milliseconds later the bandwidth will be perhaps 16.4kHz, and milliseconds later still only 14.9kHz. And unfortunately, although the ear is

"INVESTIGATING THE 'DAB SOUND' A FEW MONTHS AGO, I WAS STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT THE BANDWIDTH IS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN THAT OF CD."

Europe, it uses MPEG II Layer 2 coding, a specific scheme which by current standards is not that advanced. It would be nice to use, say, the more modern MPEG AAC, but that's not possible without wholesale replacement of transmitting and receiving equipment – which is not really an option.

The sound of DAB – that is, the sound of MPEG II Layer 2 – has been described before in these pages. It's generally clear and detailed but apt to suffer from a very high frequency 'twittering' effect which once noticed becomes ever more irritating. Can anything be done about it?

NARROW MINDED

Investigating the 'DAB sound' a few months ago, I was struck by the fact that the bandwidth of the received audio is significantly reduced compared to that of CD. CD in fact works at a sampling rate of 44.1kHz, allowing a theo-

not all that sensitive to such frequencies it does react, quite badly, to such varying degrees of treble extension.

There is a cure, and as far as we know this is the first time it has been proposed. If the audio is filtered to a lower frequency cut-off, so that the variable treble extension is replaced by a lower, constant limit, twittering is eliminated and even though side-by-side comparisons may show a slight change in tonality, the overall perception for most listeners is of a considerable improvement. The value of the cut-off frequency will depend on many factors, but by trial and error I found that 14.2kHz is optimum for Radio 3. I did my tests using 'offline' processing, using Cool Edit on a PC to process a bit of audio which I could then listen to, but it's possible to make a suitable filter which could operate in real time in a DAB receiver, or indeed in an external DAC.

לאו נאונסטון



STEADY ON!

Many readers will already have noticed the bitter irony of this, that the bandwidth of the system is somewhat less than that of FM (15kHz), and one can see why broadcasters and manufacturers would not want to compromise their offerings by claiming such a limited bandwidth. But there is a refinement which I would like to see introduced into the coders at the transmit end. The real problem is not the bandwidth of the audio as such, but the *rate of change* of bandwidth – it changes too fast and that's the cause of the twittering effect.

Image: Arina Hughes

So what's needed is a tweak to the algorithm to prevent it altering the bandwidth too quickly. If at a given moment the bandwidth is, say, 16kHz, it must not be allowed to increase to 17kHz a split second later. What's harder is to prevent it decreasing rapidly, but I'm sure it can be done with a little thought. This trick would allow a bandwidth in excess of 20kHz and a bandwidth good enough to ensure clear, bright treble, while preventing the undesirable side effects of rapid variation – and importantly it would have no effect on compatibility with existing DAB receivers.

“WHAT'S NEEDED IS A TWEAK TO STOP THE BANDWIDTH ALTERING TOO QUICKLY.”

The same trick may have a beneficial effect on other coding algorithms. But perhaps I'll leave the last word to a source inside the Fraunhofer Institute (a major developer of coding algorithms): “They chose not to use a strong (restrictive) algorithm for DAB”. So there's always hope. Further reading can be found at www.musaeus.co.uk/dab



I would like to subscribe to **HI-FI CHOICE** for 13 issues

YOUR DETAILS

Title _____ Initials _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Country _____

Tel no. (inc. code) _____



E-mail address _____

PLEASE CHOOSE YOUR METHOD OF PAYMENT: 1 OR 2

1. DIRECT DEBIT

UK only £7.49 every 3 months – save £15.53 *Complete form below.*

I understand that I will receive 13 issues during the next 12 months.

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay Direct Debits.	
 <small>Media with passion</small> Future Publishing Ltd. Cary Court, Somerton, Somerset. TA11 6BR	 Originator's Identification Number 7 6 8 1 9 5 Please send this form to address shown

1. Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society branch	
To: The Manager _____	Bank/Building Society _____
Address _____	
Postcode _____	
2. Name(s) of account holder(s) _____	
3. Branch sort code (from the top right hand corner of your cheque)	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
4. Bank or Building Society account number	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
5. Instruction to your Bank or Building Society	
<small>Please pay Future Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed on this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.</small>	
Signature(s) _____	Date _____
Ref No (Office use only) _____	
<small>Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.</small>	
You may photocopy this blank form and then complete it.	
You cannot fax or e-mail Direct Debit forms.	

2. CHEQUE/CREDIT CARD

UK £29.97 – save £15.53 Europe (including Eire) £43.00
 North America £49.99 Rest of the world £62.00

Cheque (*£'s sterling drawn on a UK bank account payable to Hi Fi Choice*)

Mastercard Visa American Express

Switch Issue no./valid date _____

Card no.

Expiry date / Tick if you don't wish to receive mail from other companies

Signature _____ Date _____

SEND TO: HI FI CHOICE Subscriptions ,

UK: Future Publishing, FREEPOST BS4900, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6BR.

Overseas: Future Publishing, Cary Court, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6TB, UK.

Order code: **HFPC219**

Offer ends: 07.09.01

HI-FI CHOICE

Why subscribe?

- ✓ YOU get every issue delivered to your door FREE. (UK only)
- ✓ YOU save money - over 30% on the cover price.
- ✓ YOU will never miss an issue of your favourite magazine.

How to subscribe

- ✉ Complete and return the form on this page.
- ☎ Call our credit card hotline on: **0870 444 8475**
overseas readers call: +44 870 444 8475
- @ Subscribe online:
www.futurenet.com/promotion/pg218/89



ONLY

~~£45.50~~ £29.97

for 13 issues of HI-FI CHOICE
delivered direct to your door

- hassle free!



4
ISSUES
FREE*

*UK subscription price is equivalent to 4 issues free

0870 444 8475

website: www.futurenet.com/promotion/pg219/89

Dealer Guide

BIRMINGHAM

Naim...Meridian...Arcam...Tag McLaren...
Teac...Mission...Stands Unique...
and much, much more.

152a High Street, (Sharing ASDA Car Park) Bloxwich, Walsall

01922 493499

0121 321 2445

QUALITY HI-FI for the midlands

• 3 Hi-Fi Studios • Home Trials • Home Cinema Theatre •
• In House Service Department • Mail order available •
• Interest Free Credit available

and NOW AT 111 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham

(On Selected Items, subject to 20% deposit. Written details on request)

MUSIC MATTERS
THE AUDIO SPECIALISTS

Our extensive range of products includes the very finest hi-fi and home cinema from Arcam, Audioquest, Audio Research, B&W, Castle, Celestion, Chord, Cyrus, Denon, DPA, Dynaudio, Jamo, KEF, Kenwood, Krell, Marantz, Martin Logan, Meridian, Michell, Mission, Monitor Audio, Musical Fidelity, Panasonic, Pioneer, Polk, Pro-Ac, Project, Quad, REL, Rogers, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, SME, Sonus Faber, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, TEAC, Technics, Theta, Thorens and Yamaha.

A wide range of classical CD's is available at our Birmingham branch.

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 - 5.30. late night (not Stourbridge) Thursday till 7.00

INTEREST FREE CREDIT ON SELECTED ITEMS
APR 0%. Written details on request.
Licensed Credit Broker.

363 HAGLEY ROAD, EDGBASTON, BIRMINGHAM B17 8DL.
TEL: 0121-429 2811 FAX: 0121-434 3296

93-95 HOBBS MOAT ROAD, SOLIHULL, WEST MIDLANDS B92 8JL
TEL: 0121-742 0254 FAX: 0121-742 0248

9 Market Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 1AB
Tel: 01384 444184 Fax: 01384 444968

BRANCH NOW OPEN
10 Boldmere Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 5TD
Tel: 0121 354 2311 Fax: 0121 354 1933

BADA BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION the symbol of security

CEDIA

BERKSHIRE

Fraser's

Independent Audio Visual Specialists for over 16 years
Demo Room Available

Brands include:

- ARCAM • ATACAMA • B & W • CASTLE • DENON • (DENON GOLD) • KEF • LOEWE • MARANTZ • MISSION • MUSICAL FIDELITY • NAD • NAKAMICHI • PIONEER • REL • ROTEL • SONY • TALK ELECTRONICS • TANNOY • TEAC • YAMAHA

Unit 35, Observatory Centre, High Street, Slough, Berkshire SL1 1LE
Tel: (01753) 531785

BRISTOL

V'audio
Hi-Fi Consultants

Home demonstrations and honest advice a speciality, using specially selected equipment from AVI, ATC, AUDIO ANALOGUE, ALR, JORDAN, ALON, ELECTROCOMPANET, HEYBROOK, RUARK, SHEARNE, OPERA, ORACLE, MICHELL, MARK LEVINSON etc.

Home cinema on demonstration using: SONY, NAKAMICHI, HARMAN-KARDON, DAVIS, SIM2, STEWART SCREENS, JAMBO, TRIANGLE etc.

Please ring for an appointment

36 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1EJ.
Tel: 0117 968 6005
www.vaudio.co.uk

SUFFOLK

atc
audio physic
bow
densen
harbeth
lyra
michell
primare
stax
sme + many more

signals

hi-fi for grown-ups

tel ipswich 01473 655171 fax 01473 655172
www.signals.uk.com

HI-FI CHOICE

SOMERSET

a simple way to advertise for free your hifi on the internet.

www.hifi for sale .com

an easy way to find hifi, buy accessories and find answers

SOUTHWEST ANALOGUE
SME - NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE - MICHELL
GARRARD - PROJECT - ORTOFON
TUBE TECHNOLOGY 64 Bit valve CD Player,
Remote control hybrid valve amplifier,
VOODOO Isolation Platforms/Speakers
Equipment Stands and T/Table lift off Perspex Covers
Record Cleaning Service - Secondhand equipment
01643 851351
graham@southwestanalogue.fsnet.co.uk

The Old School
School Road
Bracon Ash
Norfolk NR14 8HG
Tel: (01508) 570829
www.basicallysound.co.uk

Basically Sound of Norfolk
STOCKISTS OF LEADING HI-FI

Audio Analogue, Beyer, Dynavector, Final, PMC, Briston, Sound Organisation, Teac, Naim Audio, Chario, Chord Co, Opera Speakers, Demon, Epos, Grado, ProAc, QED, Rega, Soundstyle, Stax and others.

0% FINANCE AVAILABLE

SCOTLAND

Loud & Clear
HI-FI & HOME CINEMA

freedom of choice

520 ST. VINCENT STREET FINNIESTON GLASGOW 0141 221 0221
26 HAMILTON PLACE STOCKBRIDGE EDINBURGH 0131 226 6500
www.loud-clear.co.uk

SALES & SERVICES

HI-FI CHOICE

REVOX SERVICE THE MANUFACTURERS' APPOINTED SERVICE COMPANY **REVOX SERVICE**

Correct Revox Spare Parts Pricing
24 Hour Estimation procedure
Manufacturer Upgrades and Advice
Delivery and Collection Service
Comprehensive Guarantees

Factory Trained Engineers
Rapid Response Turnaround
Full Revox range serviced
Written Technical Reports
Late Evening Opening

THE AR TECHNOLOGY LIMITED
TTL House, Sheeptick End, Near Lidlington, Bedfordshire, MK43 0SF
Telephone 01525 841999
Facsimile 01525 841009

Classified

Dealer Guide

EAST SUSSEX

ADAMS & JARRETT

0800 146569

REL • KEF • RUARK

CABLETALK • ROTEL

NAD • TANNOY

NORMAN ROAD, ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA, EAST SUSSEX

Tel: 01424 437165 Fax: 01424 444148

www.audio-shed.co.uk

MERIDIAN • YAMAHA

MARANTZ • TACT

TALK ELECTRONICS

DYNAUDIO

WEST SUSSEX

WORTHING AUDIO

20 Teville Gate, W. Sussex BN11 1UA
Tel: (01903) 212133

The friendly shop with the best sound systems in the South.

Friendly advice • 3 yr guarantees • easy parking
Open Mon-Sat 10am-6pm Late night Wed 7:30pm
Agencies include: Dynaudio, Exposure, Marantz, Orelle, Origin Live, Restek, Ruark, Audio Technica, Talk Electronics, Target, TDL, Tripod, Sphinx Laboratories and many more.

IRELAND

Hearing is Believing

CLONEY Audio

30 years of Excellence

55 Main Street, Blackrock, Dublin.

Tel: (01) 2889449/2888477

www.cloneyaudio.com

Email: info@cloneyaudio.com

Open: Tues - Sat 10am to 6pm. Thurs - Fri 10am to 7pm.

LONDON

CHOICE HI-FI

STOCKISTS OF:

Acoustic Energy, Advantage, Alon, ATC, Audible Illusions, Audio Physics, Boulder, Bryston, C.A.T., Cary, Chord, Clear Audio, Denon, DNH, Dynavector, Egglaston Works, Graham, Helios, Meracus, Michell, Musical Fidelity, Nordost, Oracle analogue and digital, P.M.C., Plinius, Quadraspire, Rockport, Shahinian, SME, Tara Labs, Target, Teac, Totem, Transfiguration, Trichord, Trilogy, Van den Hul, VPI, Wilson Benesch, Zingali. Players now available from Sony, Panasonic, Pioneer and many more.

- Best prices paid for top quality equipment
- Generous part exchange
- Show room/demo room
- Long term trade-in policy, to allow continual upgrading
- All credit cards inc. Amex
- Mail order • Export service
- Finance arranged subject to status
- Widest range available
- In-depth experience on high-end used equipment
- Unbiased advice
- Unique 'Hi-Fi Exchange' - a computerised database of sales and wants - will put you in touch

tel 020 8392 1959 & 020 8392 1963

fax 020 8392 1994 e-mail choice_hifiman.com open from 10am to 6pm by appointment

All previously cherished items in mint, second hand or as new condition - guaranteed

AUDIO CONCEPT

27 BOND STREET, EALING W5 3T 020 8567 8703

AAWK, APOLLO, ASH DESIGN, AUDIO ANALOGUE, BANG & OLUFSEN, BOSE, BOSTON, B&W, CABLE TALK, CHORD COMPANY, COSMIC, DENON, ELAC, EPOS, HARMON KARDON, JBL, KEF, MARANTZ, MISSION, MUSICAL FIDELITY, NAKAMICHI, NORDOST, ONKYO, OPERA, ORELLE, PRIMARE, QUAD, REL, ROKSAN, ROTEL, RUARK, SONICLINK, SOUND STYLE, STANDS UNIQUE, STRAIGHTWIRE, SUPRA, TAG MCCLAREN, TALK ELECTRONICS, TARGET, TEAC, THORENS, VAN DEN HUL

Two demonstration rooms.

Repairs & Service. Closed Wednesday

HERTS

the audio file

COME AND EXPERIENCE HI FI AND HOME CINEMA AT ITS BEST

THE AUDIO FILE,
27 HOCKERILL STREET,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD,
HERTFORDSHIRE CM23 2DH
TEL: 01279 506576
FAX: 01279 506638
WEBSITE: www.audiofile.co.uk

ABSOLUTE SOUNDS
NAUTILUS ■ B&W ■
ONKYO ■
BOSE ■ MILLER &
KREISEL
BOSTON ■ ARCAM
DENON ■ SONY
CYRUS ■ REGA
LINN ■ NAIM
TAG MCCLAREN
SONY ■ PIONEER
LOEWE ■ TEAC
YAMAHA
KEF ■ CASTLE
MARANTZ
PROAC ■ QED
SYSTEMLINE
INTEGRA RESEARCH
IMERGE

Radlett Audio

EST. 1978

THE HIGH-END SPECIALIST SINCE 1978

ATC, Audio Analogue, Avantgarde, Bow, Bryston Copland, EAR, Lyra, Mark Levinson, Naim Audio, Notts Analogue, PMC, ProAc, Proceed, Rega, Roksan, Ruark, Sonus Faber, Spendor, Stax, Sumiko, Teac, Wadia and lots more.

9 Holywell Hill, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 1EU
Tel: 01727 855577 • Fax: 01727 858727

SYSTEMS

SPECIALISTS IN SOUND

Please refer to dealer directory for further details

28/30 Burleigh Street Cambridge CB1 1DG
Phone: 01223 461518 Fax: 01223 576743

LONDON



THE INNOVATIVE AUDIO/VISUAL HIFI RETAILER

SERVING LONDON FROM BATTERSEA

ORANGES & LEMONS

020 7924 2040

61/63 WEBBS ROAD, SW11

Our sixth succulent year

0% Credit Finance available

ARCAM. B&W. CABLETALK. CASTLE. CHORD CO. DENON. EPOS. JAMO. KEF. MARANTZ. LINN. NAD. NAIM. NEAT. PMC. REGA. ROTEL. RUARK. SOUNDSTYLE. STANDS UNIQUE. YAMAHA.

Visit www.orangesandlemonshifi.com

HAMPSHIRE



KESTREL FURNITURE

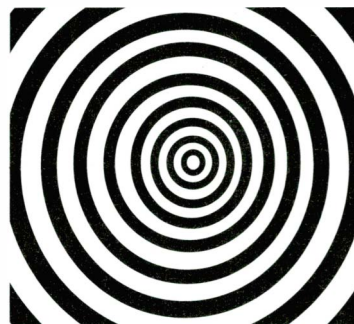
Specialist CD/DVD/Video/Cassette storage chests and hi-fi cabinets with our new sound enhancing acoustic shelves, in choice of finish. Standard designs or made to your own specification. Acoustic shelves available separately.



Kestrel Furniture, 2-4 Elms Road, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 1LJ.

Tel: 01252 343959 Fax: 01252 342686
www.kestreljoinery.co.uk

LONDON



020 7384 3030

think audio think...

Auditorium

THE HI-FI SHOP 112 NEW KINGS ROAD LONDON SW6



MARTIN LOGAN

O'Brien Hi-Fi

ARCAM • AUDIO NOTE • AUDIO RESEARCH • AUDIO TECHNICA • BEYER • CABLETALK • CHORD • CREEK • DIAPASON • EPOS • JADIS • JEKLIN • MICHELL • MUSICAL FIDELITY • NAD • NAIM • ONKYO • OPERA • PROJECT • QED • REGA • RESON • SENNHEISER • SME • SONNHEISER • SONUS FABER • SUIGDEN • TEAC • THORENS • TRANSPARENT CABLES • UNISON RESEARCH • VIENNA • WILSON



CLEARANCE / Second Hand / Ex-Dam Equipment • Details on request

0% Instant Finance Available

Written details on request

Demonstration Room • Free car parking • Major Credit Cards

Personal Export • Mail Order • Installation Service • Repair facilities

5 mins walk Raynes Park BR • 20 mins Waterloo

5 mins from A3 (Raynes Park B282exit) • 25 mins M25 Junc 10

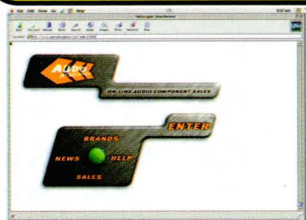
80 Durham Rd, West Wimbledon, London SW20 0TW
Tel: (020) 8946 1528 Fax: (020) 8946 0331
Email: obrienhi-fi@iname.com

Classified

Dealer Guide

WHATS ON THE WEB

www.audioatmosphere.com



www.electric-warehouse.co.uk



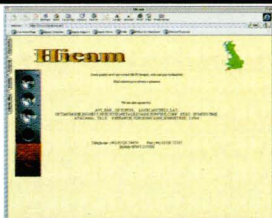
www.empiredirect.co.uk



www.hifibitz.co.uk



www.hicam.co.uk



www.hifijunkies.co.uk



www.hiwayhifi.com



www.hififorsale.com



www.platform7.net



www.HiFiBitz.co.uk



ALL your HiFi needs

Power

Play

Stop/Clear

Pause

Search

The best buys are just a **CLICK** away

SCOTLAND

CHESHIRE

Sounds
Perfect
at J D Brown
Where Music Matters

Hi-fi at its best
B&W, Acram, Mission, Marantz, Music Fidelity
Sales, Service and Installation
Open Mon - Thurs 10-7
Fri 10-6 Sat 9-5
26 St Andrews Street, Dundee
Tel: 01382 226591
Fax: 01382 229994

BADA
BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION
the symbol of security

Doug Brady Hi-Fi
Family business est. 1960. Home trials.
Systems £500-£60,000:
CD/DVD/VINYL/AV
Kingsway North, Warrington
Tel: 01925 828009 Fax: 825773
2.3 miles J21-M6. Private Parking
Map FAXED & on website
www.dougbradyhifi.com
Email:
doug.brady@dougbradyhifi.com

Dealer Guide

SALES & SERVICE SPECIALIST

Our readers intend to spend £992
on speakers and amplification in
the next 12 months.

To target a market worth
£17,269,728, contact Tom on
020 7317 2683

or email

tom.denning@futurenet.co.uk

MAX

Midland Audio X-change



Ex- demo & Secondhand items

	Was	Now
CD Players & DAC'S		
Accuphase DG28 Digital Equaliser S/H	5690	3750
Einstein Valve CD Player Ex-demo	2999	1799
Micromega Data/Dialog 2 Box CD Player S/H	4250	1799
Quad 77CD+77 Integrated I-bus system S/H	1200	599
Roksan DA2 DAC S/H	599	299
Roksan DP2T Transport S/H	1295	599
Theta Carmen CD/DVD Transport S/H	3800	2999
Theta Chroma 396 HDCD DAC S/H	950	599
Theta Progeny Rev A DAC S/H	1199	695

	Was	Now
Turntables Tonearms & Cartridges		
Audio Note ANS-2 MC Transformer Ex-demo	450	299
Basis 1400/RB250 (New & Boxed)	1200	899
Basis 2000/RB300 (New & Boxed)	2000	1599
Garrard 401/Aphelion/RB300 Ex-Demo	N/A	599
Kuzma Stogi/Stabi S Turntable (New & Boxed)	1299	1099
Rega Planar 3 Green Turntable S/H	298	175
Roksan Radius 3/Tabrizi/Corus Blk Ex-Demo	1125	599
Roksan Xerxes Piano Lacquer XPS 1 (SME Cut) S/H	1295	399
Vdh MC10 MC Cartridge S/H	995	299

	Was	Now
Preamplifiers		
Alchemist Forsetti Signature Preamplifier S/H	1500	749
Densen DM20 Preamplifier Ex-Demo	1380	899
Graaf WFB 2 Hybrid Preamplifier Ex-demo	1395	950
Naim Audio NAC72/N Preamplifier S/H	870	399

	Was	Now
Amplifiers		
Conrad Johnson MV55 Power Amplifier Ex-demo	1999	1399
Conrad Johnson Premier 11 Power Amplifier (New&Boxed)	3695	2799
DNM PA3S Stereo Power Amplifier 6 months old S/H	2999	2495
Electrocompaniet ECI-1 Integrated 80 Amps S/H	3295	1599
Graaf GM100 Power Amplifier (New&Boxed)	4450	3299
Graaf GM20 OTL Power Amplifier Ex-Demo	2995	2195
Graaf 5050 Power Amplifier (New & Boxed)	2195	1695
Graaf Venticouque 25 Watt Integrated S/H	1795	995
Michell Engineering Alecra Stereo Ex-Demo	1150	899
Naim Audio NAP140 Power Amplifier S/H	N/A	379
Pass Labs Aleph 4 100W Class A Stereo S/H	5100	2149

	Was	Now
Loudspeakers		
Audio Note AN-Z Two Floorstanding Black S/H	649	399
Boston Acoustics VR 10 Centre Channel (New&Boxed)	250	175
Diapason Adamantes III Inc Stands Ex-Demo	2450	1895
Infinity Outrigger Jr Outdoor Speakers (New&Boxed)	249	129
JM Lab Colbat 815 Dark Cherry Floor standers Ex-Demo	950	749
Martin Logan SL3 Hybrid Electrostatics S/H	3400	2199
Opera Callas Gold Mahogany Speakers Ex Demo	1095	699
Opera Duetto Mahogany Speakers Ex-Demo	395	289
Velodyne TX810MK2 Subwoofer S/H	695	379

	Was	Now
Cables & Accessories		
Audio Note ANS 1M RCA-RCA Interconnect	139	69
Audio Note ANV 1M RCA-RCA Interconnect	219	125
Audio Sculpture 2m RCA Interconnect Ex-Demo	380	149
Black Diamond Racing "The Pits" (New&Boxed)	180	99
Bow Technologies Wand Remote S/H	349	199
Deskadel 1M Interconnects WBT/RCA S/H	300	150
Einstein Octopus 8 Way Mains Block (Ex-Demo)	199	149
Golden Sounds Ceramic Cones (New & Boxed)	85	49
G-Flex Isolators (New & Boxed)	199	75
MIT MH300 MkII RCA-RCA 1M Interconnects S/H	300	150
Rega 6 Tier Modular Stand Ex Demo	375	175
Roksan HA01 1M Interconnect S/H	99	49
Shakti On Lines (New&Boxed)	85	45
Sound Org Record Racks Double with CD Inserts S/H	199	75
Tara Labs 2x2m Bi-Wired Nexa Terminated S/H	150	75

	Was	Now
Tuners & Tape Decks		
Nakamichi DR8 2 Head Cassette Deck (New & Boxed)	599	449
Ferograph Logic 7 4 Track 1/2 inch Reel to Reel S/H	N/A	399
Naim 101/Snaps Analogue Tuner S/H	N/A	499

	Was	Now
Clearance Items Under £100		
Sony Playstation With 2 controllers S/H	N/A	59
Trio K500 SME Cut S/H	N/A	99

Midland Audio X-change are looking for Audio Research, Krell, Mark Levinson, Naim Audio, Theta, cash paid call John Roberts on 01562 822236 now!

Midland Audio X-change is looking for good used British & American Hi-fi

www.midlandaudiox-change.co.uk

call John Roberts Tel / Fax 01562 822236

181 Franche Rd • Kidderminster • Worcs • DY11 5AD

e-mail sales@midlandaudiox-change.co.uk

Mobile 07721 605966

MAX Midland Audio X-change

Front End Problems?
contact:
The Cartridge Man
It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg to get the best - listen to my Koetsu - and - Decca - eater.
Also agents for Croft, Moth, Hadcock & Michell & E.A.R.
Valve equipment re-build service available, also Cartridge Man Electronic stylus gauge.
- Plus cartridge re-tipping service
020 8688 6565
Website: www.thecartridgeman.com



Mr. Andrew Everard in Gramophone Magazine "delivers a sound that's both smooth and refined ... allied to a good degree of clarity and finesse" Hi-Fi Choice "it's a 'classic valve sound'... warm and cuddly...vocals are generally lifelike and involving" FREE colour literature. £600 with free delivery Phone 01634 373410 anytime. 1 month home trial www.affordablevalvecompany.com 40 watts

SUSSEX

BADA
BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION
the symbol of security

PHASE 3 HIFI

LEADING HI-FI & 'HOME CINEMA' SPECIALISTS
FOUR LISTENING AND VIEWING STUDIOS
*EXPERIENCED AND FRIENDLY SALES STAFF
*INSTALLATION SERVICE *CREDIT FACILITIES
*HOME DEMONSTRATIONS *PART EXCHANGE
ARCAM • B&W • NAUTILUS 800 • CASTLE
CHORD ELECTRONICS • DENON • KEF
LINN • LOEWE • MARANTZ • MERIDIAN
NAIM • PIONEER • ROTEL • YAMAHA
213-215 TARRING ROAD, WORTHING,
WEST SUSSEX BN11 4HW
TEL: (01903) 245577 FAX: (01903) 505824

LEISTER

WILMSLOW AUDIO
Loudspeaker specialists for almost 40 years

• Range of replacement drive units from Vita-Soundpeak, Peerless, Morelos etc. for use in AR, Gale, Heybrook, IWE, KEF, Mission, ProAc, Rogers, TDL, plus many others.
• Comprehensive stock of components: capacitors (Aesler, SCR & Hiwatt), ORC cables, clamping and grille materials.
• UK's largest supplier of all loudspeakers - all on demonstration

Phone today for your FREE catalogue or check out our Website.

WILMSLOW AUDIO
50 Main Street, Broughton Astley, Leicester
Tel: 01455 296001 Fax: 01455 296005
Website: www.wilmslow-audio.co.uk



MAIL ORDER

Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd
15th Anniversary

- Mains Cables
- Interconnects
- Speaker Cables
- Equipment Supports
- Accessories & CDs
- Expert Advice

UK FREEPHONE
0800 373467
quote code AC91
for a free catalogue

Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd.,
FREEPOST NWW881A, KENDAL LA8 9ZA
Tel: +44 (0)1539 825500
Fax: +44 (0)1539 825540
E-mail: AC91@russandrews.com
www.russandrews.com

Cable shown is
V21 Aerial Cable
£9.95 for 2ft (0.6m)

ACCESSORIES

Does your rack sing along?
Create a quiet space with cd-str5



"I do like the cd-str5 feet. Bass stays firm and nimble while the midband gains warmth and fluidity."
Jimmy Hughes writing in Hi-Fi Choice, issue 210, January 2001.

Damping resonance for better sound.
www.hi-fi-accessories.com

cd-str5, liked by Jimmy Hughes & highly rated by Stereo and Audio, Germany's leading HiFi magazines. £59 set of four isolating feet. No-risk money-back guarantee.

Information and orders:
cd-str5, 1 Mortimer Cottages, Leominster, Hfds, HR6 9TG
Tel: 01 568 708 739 cd-str5@talk21.com

DVC-1

Low Jitter Master Clock

DVC-1 improves the resolution, sound stage and musicality of your CD/DVD player whilst removing digital irritations such as tonal glare and harshness.

Audiocom
01646 685601
audiocom-uk.com

MAIL ORDER

CARTRIDGES

Trade in your old moving coil and save up to 45% off a new one!!

I CAN ALSO SUPPLY: TURNTABLES, TONEARMS, CASSETTE DECKS, CD PLAYERS, DAT, MINIDISC, CDR, LOUDSPEAKERS, HI FI FURNITURE, AMPLIFIERS, TUNERS, ACCESSORIES, BLANK TAPES & DISCS, TEST CD'S, TEST RECORDS, TEST CASSETTES, CABLES, AERIALS, TRACKING FORCE GAUGES, ALIGNMENT PROTRACTORS. All goods are brand new & boxed with full U.K. guarantees. No ex-dem or ex-display equipment. No grey imports. Delivery is free. Sorry, no general catalogue. Please phone or write for specific details.

IAN HARRISON HI FI (MAIL ORDER ONLY)
From: 7 MILL HILL, REPTON, DERBY, DE65 6GQ.
TEL: 01283 702875 9am-9pm including Sundays

Classified

Dealer Guide

YORKSHIRE

UP TO... 3 YEARS INTEREST FREE CREDIT* from...

Vickers Hi-Fi

The North of England Hi-Fi Specialists

- ▶ Quality Hi-Fi separates from £100 to £10,000
- ▶ Widest choice in the area ▶ Independent advice
- ▶ Consumers Choice Gold Award Winners
- ▶ Over 30yrs experience ▶ Qualified staff
- ▶ Comfortable dem rooms ▶ Superb showrooms
- ▶ Main road location ▶ Major car parks nearby
- ▶ Insurance estimates ▶ Service Dept.
- ▶ Up to 3 years Interest Free Credit* only 20% deposit
- ▶ Carriage Free Mail Order (inc. credit) * subject to status
- ▶ Delivery & installation
- ▶ Part Exchange
- ▶ Open 10:30am - 5:30pm 6 days: Mon. to Sat.
- ▶ Visa, Mastercard, Switch etc.

24 Gillygate, York YO31 7EQ

Tel: 01904 629659

www.Vickers-HiFi.co.uk

Specialists in high fidelity sound reproduction - since 1967

Classified

Coda
 Giga
 Harman
 JBL
 KEF
 Krell
 Linn
 Marantz
 Martin-Logan
 Meridian
 Michell
 Mission
 Monitor Audio
 Musical-Fidelity
 Myryad
 NAD
 Ortofon
 Pickering
 Primare
 Pro-Ac
 Project
 REL
 SME
 Sonus-Faber
 Stax
 TAG McLaren
 Tannoy
 TEAC
 Thorens
 Yamaha
 & lots more...



CHESHIRE

K E F
J B L • G E M I N I

• TECHNICS • PIONEER • MARANTZ • TANNOY • SENNHEISER •

AUDIO-VISUAL CENTRES

WARRINGTON CHESTER

WIDESCREEN
DVD, VIDEO
AC-3 SOUND

HI-FI SEPARATES
MINI-DISC SYSTEMS
DOLBY PRO-LOGIC

WARRINGTON STORE 01925 636215
CHESTER STORE 01244 320414
OPEN SUNDAYS 12am-3pm
Email: wav@freenetname.co.uk

• AKG • HARMAN-KARDON • PANASONIC • ROTEL • TEAC • JAMO •

SURREY

LANCASHIRE

FULL RANGE ON DEMONSTRATION

HOME CINEMA
WIDESCREEN
PLASMA & DVD

OTHER BRANDS INCLUDE ARCAM, CABLE TALK, DENON, DUAL, JAMO, KENWOOD, MARANTZ, NAD, PIONEER, QED, QUAD, SENNHEISER, SONY, TANNOY, TARGET, TECHNICS, THORENS, YAMAHA.

244-256 STATION ROAD, ADDLESTONE, SURREY
TEL: 01932 854522 FAX: 01932 832432

cosmic **OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK**
A world of difference

Lend us your ears and we'll blow your mind . . .

Arcam, ATC, B & W, Celestion, Denon, Kenwood, Kef, Marantz, Meridian, Michell, Mission, NAD, Pioneer, Panasonic, Quad, Rotel, Ruark, Sony, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, Teac, Technics, Yamaha and more.

Audition the very best at Lincolnshire's premier Hi-Fi dealer . . .

MANDERS
HI-FI LTD.
AUDIO • TV • VIDEO & SATELLITE SALES

2-4 EDWARD STREET (Off Pasture St.) GRIMSBY. TEL: (01472) 351391

To Advertise in

HI-FI CHOICE

call 020 7317 2600

READER CLASSIFIED

ADVERTISE IN HI-FI CHOICE FOR £5*. To advertise on this page, write your advert in block capitals and send it to: **Reader Classifieds, Hi-Fi Choice, 99 Baker St, London W1U 6FP.** Include a cheque for £5* made payable to Future Publishing Ltd. The advert will appear in one issue only, must be no more than 20 words (or five lines) long, and must include your phone number. Please ensure your ad is clear and legible (if possible, typed) and give your name, address (if these aren't included in your advert) and daytime phone number in case we need to check anything. Reader

Classifieds are for the use of private individuals only. All Reader Classified adverts will be printed on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available space, and Future Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for the accuracy of the information contained therein, nor any consequence arising from it, nor for any typographical errors. We reserve the right to amend or refuse adverts at the Editor's discretion and cannot guarantee that an advert will appear in any specific issue.

*This service is FREE to subscribers, provided that their subscriber number is enclosed.

FOR SALE

PIONEER REFERENCE PD91-CD. M90-Power. C90-Pre. Tuner, Offers. Pair Leak TL12+, £320. Sendor BC1s, £180. Call 07712589572 or 01942 720220.

BAT. BALANCED Audio Technology VK5i Remote Pre-amp, VK60 Stereo power amp, Astonishing sound, Mint, Boxed, £5,950. Call 020 8550 4223.

CASTLE HARLECH 2. 6 weeks old, Santos Rosewood, Mint. £650. Audiolab 8000A Boxed, Mint, £240. Ruark Templar, Rosewood, Boxed, Mint, £300. Call 01620 860071.

EAR V20 AMP, Phonostage, Preamp, MC3 Transformer all Boxed, Mint, and guaranteed. Looking for Gale Turntable Call 07944 909209.

IPL S3TL MK3 speakers on spiked sand filled base, black ash, bi-wire. £150. Call 01992 576533

CASTLE EDEN, Natural oak finish, Immaculate, 2.5 years old, Boxed (New £500) selling for £250 ovno. Call 0794 107 8947 or 01296 339979.

PHILIPS CD850 MkII, remote. Yamaha amp AX-300. Monitor Audio R852/MD Speakers with stands, £250 ono. Call 01992 576533 (Epping, Essex).

LINN MIMIK-II CD player £375. Linn Majik-I Amp. Linn Tukans, black with Linn wall brackets, Boxed New. Call 01256 783903.

AUDIO NOTE CDT ZERO Transport, DAC one 1x very latest, Audiocom clocked plus Q power. Silver interconnect and plugs (new £1,750) sell for £850. Call 01494 870120 or 0788 7955920.

CROFT VITALE valve preamp. Phono, Hardwired, No PCB, mint will demonstrate. £275. Call 01202 481 386 (Dorset).

B&W P6 Speakers in cherry, 3 years old rarely used, offers around £395. Call 0151 425 4142.



Rega Planar 3 in silver with Goldring 1006 cartridge - £220.

LIVING VOICE AUDITORIUM (beech) £680. Mission 752F £250. Two KEF T27 tweeters, two B200 bass units, plus 104AB crossovers £80. Call 0117 9830456 (Bristol).

REGA PLANAR 3 TURNTABLE in silver with upgraded tungsten counterweight and Goldring 1006 cartridge. Boxed, mint. £220. Call 07941 535 084.

LUMLEY LVI PREAMP £290 (was £1,150). HNE granite speaker plinths £80. Sonic link supermainns £30. Three Trichord Pulsewire interconnects, 1m (was £190 each) now £75 each. Call 01772 314151 or 07751475062.

ATC SCM20SL speakers (black ash) with heavy Target stands, mint, £1,200 ono (£2,400 new). Call Steve 07740 197194 (South East London).

HI-FI CHOICE back issues – 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, complete years. Free to anyone who wants them. Call 01843 601934 (Broadstairs).

CYRUS HARK STAND, four shelves and base, mint condition, unboxed. Collection only. £200. Call 07967 753509 (day) or 01992 410053 (eve) (Hertfordshire).

MONITOR AUDIO Studio 20SE loudspeakers, cherry, one year old, £700. Call 01792 511517 (Swansea).

KEF REFERENCE 105.3 speakers,

rosewood, boxed as new, £850. Sony 777ES SACD player, as new, £900. Call 01952 502097 (Telford)

B&W 603 S2 speakers, 2 months old, as new, £270. Teac AH 500i, 2 months old, mint, £150. Call 0151 426 3691.

CHORD FLATLINE Super, 2x5m bi-wire, £100. Headphone amp with PSU, £35. Partington A4 stands, £75. All mint. Call 01278 782622.

CROFT VITALE PRE, Series 5 power, See *HFC* review, £695. Two Naim Nait One amplifiers, immaculate, £150 each. Call 01429 290213 (Hartlepool).

IMF 50 FLOORSTANDERS, transmission-line speakers and stands, real ash veneer, very good condition, cost £500 new. Sensible offer secures, buyer collects. Call 01787 269559 (Essex).

LINN K400 bi-wire speaker cable, 6m pair, C/W 4mm banana plugs. Cost £206, offers £50+. Call Robert 07831 634531 (Greater London/Kent).

MARANTZ CD17 mint, Musical Fidelity X10D, fully welded Target B5 rack, turntable support and speaker stands. Offers? Call Alex 01572 771165 or 07941 838625.

AVI MEGATRONS. Amazing 3-way speakers, 2x10" bass per side, mid and top separate boxes, cherry finish. Move forces sale. Cost £4,000, £2,200 ono. Call 07980 211447 or 020 7439 1365.

NAIM 32.5, HICAP, 250 old style, boxed. Plus Monitor Audio 852MD speakers with stands. £1,250. Call 01708 457691.

KIMBER PBJ interconnect. WBT phonos. One metre pair, £42 (£71 new). Three half-metre pairs, £35 each (£60 new). Call Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield)

WANTED

DECCA INTERNATIONAL or LVX Plus tonearm, Audax HM170 CO carbon fibre drive units, or similar HDA units, Valhalla P/S board, moving coil step-up transformers. Call 01642 594645.

GOLD TONEARM required, Mørch, Odyssey or any other high quality arm with gold finish. Call 01273 478172.

BUYING TIPS

Buying secondhand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand new product engineered down to a price. Do some research on which brands and products have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a second-hand hi-fi dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty. So it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy. Products such as speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amplifiers, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be troublesome – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!

THE DIRECTORY

THE *HI-FI CHOICE* DIRECTORY ROUNDS UP OVER 1,000 PRODUCTS REVIEWED IN PAST ISSUES. HERE YOU'LL FIND OUR OPINIONS ON THE BEST HI-FI COMPONENTS, ALONG WITH GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ASSEMBLE THEM INTO FIRST CLASS HI-FI SYSTEMS.

THE ART OF SYSTEM BUILDING

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT BRINGING TOGETHER AN IMPRESSIVE HI-FI SYSTEM? IT GOES A LITTLE LIKE THIS...

When it comes to getting together a great separates system, identifying decent individual components is fundamental, but it isn't the whole story. There is the business of system synergy to consider, which put simply means how well your components gel as a whole. The degree to which this can affect the end result tends to increase with price, thus budget components are relatively immune (a competitively priced Best Buy disc player, amp and loudspeaker pairing of almost any hue will combine to make a good system). When considering a purchase it's always good practice to listen to alternatives. It's the only way you can learn what different components sound like and find out which ones appeal to you.

So once you have shortlisted some components, the next step is to track down a knowledgeable dealer to take you through the options available. As well as getting the basic hardware right there is the question of which cables to use; should you stick with what comes in the box or pay extra for interconnects and speaker leads? We firmly believe that cables make a worthwhile difference, but if you are sceptical any dealer should be able to demonstrate this for you.

And don't skimp on supports. The temptation is to use any old shelf or sideboard for system and speakers, but it's worth the outlay for speaker stands and proper system support.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

WIRING UP A SYSTEM IS REALLY QUITE STRAIGHT-FORWARD IF YOU FOLLOW A FEW BASIC GUIDELINES.

- When bi-wiring (see glossary) with speaker cable you will sometimes need to connect two plugs to one socket on the amp. If the amp has a binding post connection you can usually put one plug through the hole that goes across the post and one in the end. If this is not possible you may need to use spade connectors or have both pairs of cables soldered into single plugs at the amp end.
- If a cable has an indication of directionality, i.e. if there are arrows on the casing, use these with regard to the way the signal travels. If there are no arrows you can try it both ways and see if you hear a difference or just route the signal in the direction of the writing on the cable jacket.
- In multichannel AV systems you may have the option of routing video signals via the amp, or bypassing it. The former option gives easiest functionality if you use several sources, but by bypassing you are removing a switch and connection which should improve quality.
- Try to avoid lying mains cables across or beside signal cables as the field they produce can have a negative effect.
- Try to keep all cable runs as short as possible (unless you use Naim, in which case refer to manufacturer's recommendations).

AWARD TAGS

Whenever HFC reviews a group of like components we have the opportunity to give the best products a Best Buy or Recommended award. Best Buys are considered to offer an excellent standard of performance at an attractive price. Recommended products are first class components losing out to Best Buy status only because of a higher price or less competitive overall sound quality.

A third award, the Editor's Choice, is reserved for those products reviewed solo, such as you see in the First Impressions or High Performance sections. An EC is awarded where the Editor is convinced that a product offers exceptional quality for the price.



GLOSSARY

5.1 CHANNEL AUDIO: Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.

BALANCE: Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

BASS: The lowest three octaves of the audio band – hence 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz); 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz); and 'upper bass' the 80-160Hz octave.

BI-AMP: (sometimes tri-amp): Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

BI-WIRE: (sometimes tri-wire): Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each driver can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

CD-R: Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

CD-RW: Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players.

CLASS A: Operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to give lower distortion.

CLASS AB: Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

CLIPPING: An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

CLOCK: Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal.

CROSSOVER: A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

DAC OR DIGITAL-TO-ANALOGUE CONVERTER: The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

DOLBY DIGITAL DD (AC3): A compressed (10:1) digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where discrete side channels are used.

DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL: Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER: A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter.

DSP OR DIGITAL SIGNAL PROCESSOR: Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors it separates the left from right and front from rear while managing the various bass options.

DTS OR DIGITAL THEATRE SOUND: Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 4:1 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

DVD-A: High resolution variant on DVD offering up to 96kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range, discs are compatible with standard DVD players.

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL: Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced (AES/EBU) interface.

FILTERS: Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

FINALISE (CD-R): The process of copying the Table of Contents from its temporary area on CD-R and RW to the final position where it will be recognised by ordinary CD players.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

IMPEDANCE: With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier which is driving it.

JITTER: An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio, being imprecise.

LINE-LEVEL: Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and thus interchangeable.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION: A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

LOSSY COMPRESSION: Reduction in data density by recourse to a psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music.

MIDRANGE: The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz.

NETWORK: see Crossover.

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE: A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (say, below 100 ohms or so) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even when using long or unusual interconnect cables. A high impedance, especially in conjunction with an amplifier with a low input impedance (some are as low as eight kOhms, although the standard is 47 kOhms) can result in audible treble losses.

PLL OR PHASE-LOCKED LOOP: A technique by which a clock of defined characteristics is used to generate a new clock at a different frequency from the original.

PRESENCE: Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

QUANTISATION NOISE: A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

SACD: high resolution music only format developed by Sony/Philips and offering 100kHz bandwidth without digital filtering and its associated ills.

SAMPLE RATE: The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

SENSITIVITY: The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W).

THX: Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. THX Ultra being more stringent than Select.

TOSLINK: The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications.

TRANSISTOR/MOSFET: the two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages.

TREBLE: High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, eg above 3kHz.

TWEETER: Treble driver.

TWO/THREE-WAY: Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a 2-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

WATTS (PER CHANNEL): the Watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output.

INDEX OF TESTED PRODUCTS

AMPLIFIERS	
INTEGRATED	104
PRE/POWER	105
PHONO STAGES	106
MULTICHANNEL	106
CABLES	
ANALOGUE INT.	106
DIGITAL INT.	107
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES	108
MAINS CABLES & CONDITIONERS	108
CASSETTE DECKS	109
DISC PLAYERS	
ONE-BOX CD PLAYERS	109
CD TRANSPORTS	111
DACS	111
DVD PLAYERS	111
DIGITAL RECORDERS	
MINIDISC RECORDERS	112
CD RECORDERS	112
HEADPHONES	112
LOUDSPEAKERS	
STEREO	113
SUBWOOFERS	116
MULTICHANNEL	116
CENTRE CHANNEL	116
PERSONAL STEREOS	117
INTERNET AUDIO	117
RECORD PLAYERS	
TURNABLES	117
CARTRIDGES	118
TONEARMS	119
STANDS & SUPPORTS	
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS	119
SPEAKER STANDS	119
TUNERS	
ANALOGUE TUNERS	121
DIGITAL TUNERS	121

AMPLIFIERS

STEREO AMPLIFIERS – INTEGRATED

ISSUE NUMBER

POWER OUTPUT (W)

HEADPHONE SOCKET

REMOTE CONTROL

MC PHONO INPUTS

MM PHONO INPUTS

LINE INPUTS



STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	L	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	RC	HS	P	IN
	Affordable Valve Co. EL34	650	A real bargain on the face of it, but the sound is oh so soft, warm and old-valve. Too much of a good thing	4					40	202
	Arcam Alpha 7R	300	Decent, if slightly system fussy amplifier that no longer pulls all the right strings	5	●		●	●	45	196
	Arcam Alpha 8R	350	Workmanlike amplifier is well thought through, but is now beginning to show its age.	5	●		●	●	50	208
	Arcam Diva A65	380	Easy on the ear remote control amp, but not especially powerful.	5			●	●	40	217
BB	Arcam Diva A85	700	Much enhanced design topology give a more hard hitting, engaging sound than previous Arcams	7			●	●	85	214
R	Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously	5			●	●	100	181
BB	Arcam FMJ A22	1,000	Powerful, articulate, and expandable into a home cinema or multiroom amp/controller	7			●	●	100	201
EC	ATC SIA2-150	1,984	An impressive sounding integrated amp with a dynamic, open and detailed sound	4			●		150	192
	Aria S2	1,000	Glamorously packaged valve amp produces a real eyes closed, feet up kind of sound	4					12	190
BB	Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class	5	●	●			40	175
	Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality	5	●	●			40	181
R	AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads	5			●		100	175
	Bryston 860R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee	5			●	●	60	175
R	Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Solid value, decent build and a surfeit of watts make this an attractive proposition, but it can sound slightly loose	6			●		50	196
R	Canary Audio CA-608	1,495	If you value the grand scheme of things and appreciate a bit of dynamic vigour this could be the amp for you	4					24	202
	Chord CPM 3300	5,495	Very powerful yet compact amp with rather complex ergonomics and transparent sound. Oh, and a lovely blue glow	5			●		220	214
R	Copland CSA 28	1,249	Elegant Scandinavian cool, abundantly detailed if somewhat system dependent	5	●		●		60	189
	Copland CTA 402	1,698	A unusually flexible valve amp with an attractive and textured sound	5	●		●		35	193
	CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150	181
	Symbol CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40	178
R	Creek 4330	279	Diminutive but classy amp will drive anything, and can be specified in various configurations	4	●				40	192
	Creek 4330SE	499	Somewhat perplexing, though always interesting, miniature audiophile amplifier, needs careful system matching	5			●		50	208
	Creek 5350SE	799	Smooth, open and articulate sound and quality build, but bass is a tad heavy handed	6			●	●	85	214
R	Cyrus 5	500	A enjoyable amp that is assured and unflappable, although detail is unremarkable	7			●	●	45	205
R	Cyrus 7	700	Welcome return to form for the Cyrus stable: this is the best sounding audio brick around	6			●	●	60	196
BB	Denon PMA-255UK	140	Great beer-budget buy, with everything necessary for basic but decent high fidelity operation	5			●	●	30	208
	Denon PMA-355UK	230	Detailed, but rather inexpressive sound which doesn't quite live up to the claims.	5	●		●	●	50	217
R	Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers	5	●	●	●	●	70	181
R	Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system	5					60	175
	Exposure 2010	599	Neatly turned out amplifier, with mainstream appeal but bland with it	6			●		50	214
	Electrocompaniet EC1-3	1,000	Basically good, but too many rough edges to warrant recommendation	6			●		75	201
	Ezo Aria HE	449	Quick, detailed but aggressive and sometimes coarse sounding amp. Beautifully turned out, though	5				●	40	208
	Graaf Venticinqe	1,790	Smart and practical, but it just never seems to shine sonically	6					25	202
	Holfi Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65	181
	Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●		●	●	70	186
R	Kenwood KAF-3030R	250	Kenwood's best amplifier for some years has a lean bass but excellent mid and treble.	5	●		●	●	50	217
	Krell KAV-500i	5,000	More at home in background listening/home cinema applications than out-and-out audio maniac set-ups	5			●	●	250	192
	Linn Majik	845	Slightly rough and ready power amp modules, but capable preamp that can be expanded into a multiroom system	5	●		●	●	33	214
	Lundahl Mag Amp	1,735	Unusual valve/magnetic amp hybrid with relaxed balance and good timbre	5					23	196
	Marantz PM-6010 OSE	229	Good starter amplifier, with characteristic smooth, low key delivery	5	●		●	●	50	196
	Marantz PM7000	300	Lots of power for the price, but detail and subtlety seem to have been sacrificed	6	●		●	●	115	205
	Marantz PM6010 OSE KI Sig	400	Well-made, but somewhat ill-balanced amplifier that doesn't slot into most systems comfortably	6			●	●	50	208
	Marantz PM-17 Mk II	999	Big, bold, but over-fruity balance – the 'fat uncontroller' as one put it	6	●		●	●	60	214
	Marantz PM-17 KI-Signature	1,300	Full feature audiophile amp where the end results don't quite justify the fantastic ingredients	6	●		●	●	60	189
	Mark Levinson No383	5,500	Extremely versatile design that thinks and acts like a serious pre/power. Sounds superb	6			●	●	100	212
	Monrio Asty	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5					55	178
R	Musical Fidelity X-A2	500	A chip off the old block; sounds very similar to the X-A1 and XA-100R	6			●		75	208
	Musical Fidelity A3	849	Similar to the XA-100R internally, and a little too relaxed for some	5	●	●	●		85	196
	MVL A2	970	Curiously designed, and curious sounding amplifier with Sound Sentinel circuits to address perceived weaknesses	9	●		●	●	100	201
	Myryad T-40	400	The T-40 is a well built and sensible, but needs more dynamics and finesse	6	●		●	●	50	192
R	Myryad MI120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, although it can sound rather brittle	6			●	●	60	175
	Myryad MI 240	1,500	Big and powerful integrated amp sounds clean and neutral if a bit short on musical tautness and dynamic tension	8	OPT	OPT	●	●	120	216
BB	NAD C320	200	Excellent budget amp from the maker of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build	6			●	●	40	186
R	NAD C340	270	A classic NAD amplifier copes with any speaker, delivers plenty of power, and does so with calm decorum	6	●		●	●	50	192
BB	NAD C350	300	A typical NAD: refined, warm tonality, adequate detail, and a strong power yield	7			●	●	60	208
BB	NAD C370	450	Flexible, ultra-high power integrated amplifier delivers a real punch, but is not without finesse.	6	●		●	●	120	217
	NAD S300	1,900	Substantial integrated with loads of power and no shortage of finesse, slightly bass-strong	5			●	●	100	189
	Naim Nait 5	799	As always with the Nait, less is more, and the Nait 5's 30 watts seem to go a lot further with some sources	5			●		30	214
	Opera Aida	795	Low power (in practice) minimalist integrated amp, but the mahogany wings don't help it to fly	5	●	●			60	201
	Pathos Classic One	995	Unusual looks and even more unusual electronic design, but compromised musical potential	5			●		55	202
R	Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●		●	●	45	186
R	Pioneer A-607R	300	Lively, articulate amp with plenty of drive and a hint of brightness	5	●		●	●	60	192
	Plinius 8100	1,450	Slightly rough and ready, but plenty of balls from this stripped down antipodean.	6			●		100	214
R	Præcis Acustica Sonoro	1,800	It is not often that transistor amplifiers are made to sound so palpably valve-like	5					100	189
R	Primare A10	500	Beautifully made, smooth and easy sounding, and though not overtly detailed or dynamic, is well organised musically	6			●		50	208
R	Primare A20 MkII	799	Everything except packaging has changed in Mk II version: but bassier model has lost none of its refinement	5			●		70	181
BB	Primare A30.1	1,500	Smooth, detailed singing quality, elegant appearance, and healthy power yield	6			●	●	100	214
BB	Primare A30.1	1,499	Superb build and aesthetics, and undemonstrably musical down to its smallest screw	6			●	●	100	189
	Restek Fantasy II	1499	Muscular, but ultimately rather strident amplifier which needs careful system matching	6			●	●	100	189
R	Roksan Kandy KA-1	475	Power with control, barely compromised by a small degree of dryness	6			●	●	120	205
R	Roksan Caspian	795	Mainstream Roksan line level amp works well under most circumstances	6			●	●	70	201
BB	Rotel RA-931 Mk II	189	Simple, non-remote amp majors on clarity and transparency, without sounding over-analytical	4	●		●	●	35	208
BB	Rotel RA-971 MkII	275	Improved RA971 is a chip off the old block: bags of power, but with added precision and clarity	6			●	●	60	196
	Rotel RA-972	400	Better in the treble than the bass, which is a little too rounded and woolly	6			●	●	90	205
	Sharp SM-SX1	3,300	Jewel like 1-bit digital amplifier with limited power reserves but offering glimpses of sonic magic	5					50	211
	Sharp SM-SX100	10,000	The world's first stable, 1-bit digital amplifier is a technological milestone that should go from strength to strength	n/a					110	200
R	Sony TA-FB740R	200	Very open and clear sound, comfortable with a wide range of musical styles	5	●		●	●	60	205
	Sony TA-FB940R	300	Technically innovative amplifier fails to cut the mustard with complex material	5	●	●	●	●	70	208

STEREO AMPLIFIERS – INTEGRATED (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
	T+A PA-1220R	1,445	Unique presentation and feature set, but sometimes rather relentless sound quality	7			●	●	100	189
	Tact Millennium MkII	7,000	This digital class D amplifier represents a bold declaration on the future expansion of digital audio in the home	n/a			●		150	194
	TAG McLaren 60i	500	Clean, slightly antiseptic sound from this beautifully turned out entry level Audiolab 8000LX replacement	6				●	60	189
	TAG McLaren 60iRv	1,000	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive	6			●	●	60	184
	Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	550	Much improved build quality and silver finish, but the sound lacks physicality and can sound strained	6			●		65	196
R	Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall	6			●		50	175
	Teac A-E2000	180	Has the potential to cause significant damage in the budget amp sector once the wrinkles are ironed out	6					50	195
	Technics SU-A660 Mk 3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●			●	37	186
	Technics SU-A808	300	Intriguing amplifier, with abundant detail but dynamically rather flat	6	●		●	●	55	196
	Thule IA60B	700	Dry, edgy and glassy sounding amplifier, though the balanced input may appeal to some.	6				●	60	214
R	Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic	5					50	186
	Tube Technology Unisis Sig	2,400	A very attractive product which combines many classic valve attributes to good effect	5	●				30	202
	Yamaha AX-496	240	Lacklustre, if well equipped and powerful, amplifier shows some improvements over previous amps, but not enough	6			●	●	85	208
	Yamaha AX-596	300	Clean, agile and lean this amplifier isn't. Bold and powerful, however, it certainly is.	5	●		●	●	100	217
R	YBA Intégré	1,550	Careful system matching is essential, but this is definitely one of the good guys	6			●		50	214

STEREO AMPLIFIERS – PRE/POWER AMPLIFIERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
	Amp Flux System 2	3,000	Three-box affair with a clean, spacious sound and plenty of slam. A touch steely, but undeniably potent	5			●	●	50	187
	Alchemist Kraken APD7A/8A II	1,098	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	6					55	187
R	Arcam Alpha 9C/10P	1,000	Well specified and flexible preamp with sound only just lacking in greatness	6			●	●	100	187
SB	Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1					60	165
	Audio Note M Zero/P Zero	998	Neat shoe box-size components. Able to impart music with real life and soul when partnered with P Zero power amps	5					8	191
R	AudioNote M2Phono/P2SE	3,198	Wonderfully natural and inviting sound with great warmth and drama, but limited loudness capability	4	●				18	216
EC	Audio Research LS25/VT100	11,489	This is not so much a fine valve amp, as a fine amplifier, full stop (LS25 MkII/VT100 MkII)	6	●		●		100	216
EC	Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1					8.5	186
	Bow Technologies Warlock/Walrus	6,490	Heavyweight dual mono pairing with superb build and rich, refined sound	5			●		150	216
R	Bryston BP20/3B-ST	2,850	Recommended for pretty much any demanding application	8			●	●	120	212
	Cary CAD 2A3SE	1,575	Monoblock valve power amp. Low power but gives delightful speed, coherence and transparency	1					5	196
	Chord SPM-4000	8,500	Sound is as stylish as its appearance is bold. Probably one of the best amps you are likely to hear	1					410	202
SB	Creek P43R/A52SE	949	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from fine value preamp.	6			●	●	100	187
SB	Creek P43R/A43	1,148	Great value and a podium performance earning a best buy	6			●		140	212
	Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1					50	181
R	Crimson CS610/CS630	1,250	Good, clear sound, including a decent phono stage, but flexibility is limited. Slimline monoblocks with grunt and finesse	3	●	●			100	187
SB	Croft Vitali/ Series 5C	1625	Oddball retro style and ergonomics, but truly magical voice coherence and projection, great transparency	3	●				30	216
	Cyrus Power	498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1					50	183
R	Cyrus aCA7.5/Smart Power	1,250	Great for classical, jazz, and existing Cyrus owners, recommended	7				●	60	212
	Cyrus aCA7/aPA7	2,694	Low feedback power amp design that's a positive departure from the transistor norm, preamp is functional but not as impressive	5			●	●	150	190
	Cyrus aCA7.5/PSX-R aPA7	2,950	Very stylish 4-box modular system, slight forwardness delivers oodles of clarity and detail	7			●	●	150	216
	Densen Beat B-200	1,000	A versatile preamp with a high 'air-guitar' factor and Densen's characteristic styling	6	●	●				191
R	Densen B-300	800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1					100	183
R	Densen Beat 200/300	1,850	Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote L300 extra)	6	OPT		OPT		100	216
SB	Electrocompaniet EC4.7/120DMB	3250	Bulky Norwegian combo has wonderful broad-band transparency, wide dynamic range and fine musical tension	6			●		120	216
EC	Gamut D200	2,995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only). Formerly Sirius	1					200	183
EC	Levinson No380/No334	9,490	Preampifier combines precision and warmth with unusual configurability, power has refinement, authority and transparency to spare	6			●		125	195
	LFD Mistral Linestage/Power	898	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6					60	165
	Linn Kolektor/LK85	990	Beautifully tuned out machine, yet slightly bland, aimed at an all Linn system	9	●	●			62	212
	Michell Orca/Alecto mono	3,600	Line-level design with a gorgeous remote and focused, spacious sound	6			●		100	187
R	Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1					100	155
	Moth 30 Active LS/60 Stereo	948	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp, power amp lacks finesse and control, however	4					60	165
	Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5			●			166
R	Musical Fidelity X-P100	800	Good long-term listening prospects; detailed and a little fruitiness (tested with X-A200 power amp)	6	●		●			200
	Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	3,300	Powerful smooth sound with tremendous bass extension. Capacity to fulfil the demands of the most dynamic material	1					350	199
	Myryad MA120	450	Based on MI120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with MI120	1					60	165
R	Myryad MP100/MA240	1,600	Smart finish and impeccable manners, smooth, clean performance	6			●	●	120	212
R	NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp which sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●		●		165
R	NAD Silverline S100/S200	2,000	Beautifully built kit that sounds as good as it looks with heaps of power	7			●		200	200
EC	Naim NAC112/NAP150	1,375	Clean, clever simplicity, plus a very well balanced sound that's much sweeter than earlier Naims	6			●		50	213
	Naim NAC112/NAP150/FLATCAP 2	1,800	Adding a FLATCAP 2 brings a very worthwhile sonic upgrade to the basic NAC112/NAP150 combo	6			●		50	213
	Naim NAC102/NAP180	2,122	More of a 'character act' than a neutral reproduction system, majors on excitement at the expense of subtlety	6			●		60	200
EC	Naim NAP500	10,000	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading edge definition	1					140	208
	Quad QC-twenty four/II-forty	4,000	A classic valve amplifier in circuitry and sound, but with modern ingredients and gorgeous retro styling	7					40	213
R	Rega Hal/Exon	2,194	Passive line stage dedicated to Exon monoblock power amps, bold outgoing, in-command sound	6	●	●	●		125	165
SB	Roksan Caspian Power	595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1					70	183
	Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5				●	178	
SB	Rothwell Indus/Rubicon	1448	Quirky valve combo with passive pre-amp has a lovely neutrality and consistency across a wide dynamic range	6					10	216
	Samuel Johnson pca100	1,800	Stylish wood and metal facia - precise, clean sound with an emphasis on leading edges	6			●	●		201
	TAG McLaren PA20R/125M	1,500	Clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power	6			●	●	145	184
	Talk Hurricane 2L/Tornado 2	1,249	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6					65	165
	Technics SU-C3000	2,997	Price includes SE-A3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	5	●					188
	Technics SU-C1010	300	Although the sound's basically all there, it's arguable that a good integrated offers more, for less	6	●		●			200
	Thule Spirit PA100	600	More successful than matching preamp: sound is gutsy and lively, and generally clean	1					100	187
	Thule Spirit PR150B/PA150B	1,600	The limitations in the sonic performance mean that the competition has more to offer	6					150	212
	Unison Research S8	2,950	Outrageous Italian styling and an equally melodramatic sound, with splendid voice projection and tension	5			VOL		24	216

PHONO STAGES

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
	Clearaudio Symphono	740	Slightly inconsistent balance mars the performance of this lively performer	0		●				201
R	Creek OBH-9	160	A neat little unit with an essentially neutral and listenable character	0		●				189
	Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	826	Very hi-tech product which tends too much towards smoothness except at climaxes, which can be rough	0	●					189
	Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	350	Quite unusual design in many ways: sound is mostly good but never quite shakes off a 'synthetic' quality	0		●				189
R	Electrocompaniet ECP-1	495	An excellent phono amp that combines well-rounded balance with detail and low noise	0	●					189
BB	Moth 30 Series Phono	249	Fine sound all round, in any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage	0	●	●				189
	NAD PP-1	40	A basic phono stage that does its job rather coarsely: a bit bass-shy too	0	●					189
R	Pass Labs XOno	2,995	Not absolutely neutral, but the overall result is so beguiling it's hard to resist	0	●	●				201
R	Primare R-20	500	Fights a little shy of densely scored music, but generally an enjoyable and neutral performer	0	●	●				201
R	Pro-Ject Phono Box	40	Moving-coil compatibility is a dubious extra in a way, but MM performance is acceptable at this giveaway price	0	●	●				201
R	QED Discaver DS-1	35	It's cheap, it's cheerful, it's OK – perfectly adequate for use with a phono-less integrated, though not very refined	0	●					189
	Roksan Ar axerxes X/DS1.5	1,150	Delicate and well balanced, slightly congested at climaxes. Power supply expensive, but runs two Roksan components	0	●	●				189
R	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for information retrieval off any LP	0		●				201

AMPLIFIERS



SPECIFICATIONS

MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Arcam AVR100	800	A solid sounding and well-engineered AV amp with an affordable price tag. Good with music and well suited to smaller rooms	6			●	●	70	215
R	Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE/10P	2,500	Packed with a diversity of electronics that against engineering odds sounds extremely good	5			●	●	110	198
BB	Arcam FMJ A22 DAVE/P25	2,850	Powerful, authoritative, great stereo, excellent home cinema - what more can you want?	7			●	●	100	210
	Cyrus AV5	1,000	Few processors are as adept with music. An effective multi-channel solution for music fans	4			●		N/A	201
	Cyrus AV5/SmartPower	2,650	Refined, detailed and attractive, but ultimately lacking in balls.	3			●	●	60	210
R	Denon AVR-3300	800	Not as powerful as Denon claims, but nonetheless capable of impressive high-fidelity multi-channel sound	4			●	●	75	198
R	Denon AVR-3801	800	Well-endowed, sharply priced receiver is also a musical high roller.	8	●		●	●	105	217
BB	Denon AVC-A150E	1,200	State of the art sound quality, a strong feature set and reasonable pricing. What more could you want?	11	●		●	●	125	210
BB	Denon AVC-A15E	2,500	A powerful, articulate 7.1-channel integrated amp, loaded with features and equally and home with music and film soundtracks	12	●		●	●	170	215
	Kenwood KRF-V7773D	800	Bold, detailed presentation, but there are some technical limitations and a slightly mannered quality, especially with music.	10	●		●	●	120	210
	Kenwood KRF-V9993D	1,300	Complex amp that rocks with home cinema but loses out with music	7	●		●	●	110	215
BB	Marantz SR5000	500	Something of a rough diamond, but a powerful and entertaining package	5			●	●	105	198
BB	Marantz SR7000	700	Excellent at the price, and almost equally effective with 2-channel music and multichannel AV.	9			●	●	100	210
	Marantz SR-14EX Mk2	3,250	A weighty beast, with 7.1 processing but only five channels of amplification as standard. Highly capable with both music and movies, but rather costly all-in-all	8			●	●	140	215
	Musical Fidelity HTP/HT600	3,998	A very well matched pairing with considerable musical talents	8			●	●	100	207
R	Myriad MDP500/MA240/MA360	3,800	Superb three-box, five-channel AV amplifier. Great with movies and beats most multichannel amps hands down with music	9			●	●	120	215
BB	NAD T760	650	More than adequate home cinema receiver that unusually doesn't muck up the music	7			●	●	60	210
	NAD T770	1,000	Lacks both transparency and subtlety while the omission of dts will be a drawback for some at this price	5			●	●	90	198
	Nakamichi AV-10	1,000	A very powerful AV receiver that's easy to install and set-up with a civilised and subtle performance	4			●	●	140	198
	Onkyo TX-DS787	900	Obstructive ergonomics and messy sound undermine basically well-equipped receiver.	7			●	●	100	217
R	Onkyo TX-DS989	2,500	Authority personified, excellent AV signal processing, but sound quality a tad unsubtle.	9	●		●	●	160	210
	Pioneer VSA-E08	1,300	THX circuitry gives home cinema material a boost, but this is not an obvious first choice for music	10	●		●	●	100	210
	Primare P30/A30.5	3,700	No 5.1 channel input for DVD-A/SACD but capable of almost uncomfortable realism with real solidity and drive	8			●	●	120	210
R	Roksan DSP/5 ch amp/VSU	2,440	Clean, powerful stereo expanded seamlessly, if without distinction, to 5.1 channels.	4			●	●	80	210
	Rotel RSX-972	1,000	Not the brightest tool in the Rotel toolbox, and pricing is surely rather optimistic too.	8			●	●	75	217
R	Rotel RSP-976/RMB-1075	1,700	A potent and enjoyable two-box beast that gets to the heart of both music and movie sound	8			●	●	120	215
R	Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985 MkII	2,400	The hugely versatile processor is the weaker subjective link in this otherwise impressive combo	3			●	●	130	198
	Sony TA-E9000ES/N9000ES	2,300	Big, gold, powerful and remarkably versatile but fails to cut the sonic mustard	5			●	●	110	198
R	Sony VA777ES	1,500	Smart circuitry gives this model unusual precision and transparency, and it is a fine all rounder	9			●	●	100	210
EC	TAG McLaren AV32R EX	2,749	A flexible AV processor, unusually good with music. Would form the heart of a top-class multichannel system in standard or 7-channel 'EX' form	6			●	●	215	215
	Technics SA-DA10	500	Lower mid-market AV amp has all the right ingredients, but fails to stir the soul	5	●		●	●	80	210
	Technics SE-A1010/SU-C1010 x3	1,350	A preamp plus three stereo amps provide a six-channel AV solution without complex processing. Visually stunning but low on grunt and detail	6			●	●	70	215
	Yamaha RX-V1000RDS	800	Solid mainstream performer is more convincing as home cinema amplifier than for multichannel music.	8	●		●	●	100	217
	Yamaha DSP-AX1	2,000	An anorak's delight, and one of the most flexible and effective soundfield creators ever conceived	11	●		●	●	110	210

CABLES



SPECIFICATIONS

ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Acoustic Precision Eikos	89	Not entirely neutral: probably best suited to upbeat music. Very stiff construction			●		●			188
	Audioquest Sidewinder	40	Suppresses the sound. At this price it's a disappointment			●					211
R	Audioquest Coral	99	Slightly forward imaging hardly detracts from its excellent tonal qualities and detail				●				200
R	Cable Talk Advanced 3	35	Good sound and great detail, but a slight brashness in the treble	●							211
	Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price			●					176

ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	DIG CABLE TYPE							ISSUE NUMBER	
				SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE		
	Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100	Good bass but a lack of detail and differentiation of instruments	●		●		●				188
R	Chord Calypso	30	Informative, clear sound at a decent price	●		●		●				211
	Chord Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces			●		●				176
	Chord Chameleon 2	90	Deep bass is fine but despite that the sound can be a bit hard and lacking body and resonance	●		●		●				188
R	Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare	●		●		●				160
R	DNM Reson	40	Seemed a little harsh in the test system, but can work well and should be tried	●				●				200
BB	Ecosse The Composer	29	A high degree of realism and delicacy, and a fantastic price		●	●		●				211
	Goertz M3 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)	●				●				176
	Insert Audio IC100 MkII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness			●		●				176
R	Insert Audio Image 5.1	85	Very good detail and imaging; perhaps a touch bass-light		●			●				200
BB	Ixos Gamma Audition II	30	Detailed and neutral, with just a hint of pleasant mellowness	●		●		●				211
	Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●		●		●				176
	Ixos 1000	90	Nothing badly wrong, just a little bit bland and outshone by others at the price	●		●		●				200
BB	Kimber PBJ	68	Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble — excellent performance all round			●		●				188
R	Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed	●		●		●				176
	Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured — but not in a wholly negative manner	●		●		●				160
R	Nordost Solar Wind	85	Good tone and dynamics, with just occasionally a touch of bass-lightness in busy music					●				188
R	Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable	●				●				176
	Precious Metals SS35	50	Extended bass, but dry character suits electronic music better than acoustic		●	●		●				188
	Profigold PGA301 MkII	40	Mellow and well rounded, but can seem a little heavy		●	●		●				211
R	Prowire VHQ	10	This crisp cable lacks a little refinement, but it's great for the price		●	●		●				211
R	Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness			●		●		●		176
R	QED Qunex 1	20	Well balanced, and easily rivals more expensive cables		●	●		●				211
BB	QED Qnect 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value			●		●				176
R	QED Qnect 4S	70	Some coloration and roughness in the midrange and treble, but bass is gratifyingly solid	●		●		●				188
R	QED Qnex Silver Spiral	90	A great cable for lovers of big sounds	●		●		●				200
	Reference CS1	75	A moderate performer, with a little coloration and a tendency to lose bass at climaxes	●		●		●				188
	Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight		●	●		●				160
BB	SonicLink Whisper (Silver Pink)	45	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish, though...	●				●		●		160
R	SonicLink Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●		●		●				176
	SonicLink Message (Lilac)	60	Some dryness can affect transient sounds, though tone is generally good, especially in the bass	●		●		●				188
	SonicLink Violet	95	Better bass than treble — a little dry in the upper octaves	●		●		●				200
R	Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss			●		●				176
R	Straight Wire Sonata	80	Tonal balance favours lower frequencies but despite this it's a very listenable cable			●		●				188
	Straight Wire Encore II	100	Slightly variable bass performance is a weakness in this otherwise capable cable	●		●		●				200
BB	Supra EFF-ISL	80	Excellent sound in all areas — nothing to criticise	●		●		●				188
R	Tara Labs Prism 22	64	Mild tendency to plumminess offsets some hardness in complex music with mixed results		●	●		●				188
	Tara Labs Prism 55-i	195	Good with laid-back music, but seems lazy with more exciting material	●		●		●				200
BB	TCI Viper	55	Fine performance in all areas; just the smallest hint of sibilance. Very good value	●		●		●				200
BB	van den Hul PB5	50	A highly neutral cable with fine dynamic and rhythmic performance too — excellent			●		●				188
	van den Hul Source HB	65	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness			●		●				160
R	van den Hul D102 MkIII HB	80	A fine cable, but the competition has crept up and it no longer leads the pack	●		●		●				200

DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Audioquest Digital One	35	A neutral and capable cable that adds little or no character to the sound			●		●		E	207
	Chord Optilink	40	Beautifully made, but performance is practically indistinguishable from other, cheaper, Toslink leads					●		O	207
	Ixos 1051-100	39.95	Plenty of bass, and detail seems good, but there's a loss of involvement			●		●		E	207
BB	QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced			●		●		E	207
R	Ross OP004	19.99	Sounds much like most other Toslink leads: slightly lacking detail, but good value					●		O	207
	SonicLink Digital Optical	30	Possibly slightly more detailed than other opticals, but still no match for a decent electrical digital link					●		O	207



Sound Fantastic



Olsons new *Sound Fantastic* range of units are specifically designed for both the home and professional hi-fi audio markets.

Each unit is fitted with a 10A mains R.F.I. filter with earthline choke and transient suppressor, designed to filter mains-borne transients, switching surges, R.F. interference, intermittent spikes and other disturbances.

- Robust steel construction
- 13A Sockets
- 10A Panel Mount Fuse
- RFI 10A Mains Filter & Surge Suppressor
- External Earth Stud
- 2m x 1.5mm Screened Cable
- UK Plug - 10A Fuse Fitted
- Colour Black
- Specials to order

TYPE NO.	NO. OF SOCKETS	OVERALL LENGTH
HF 4	4	446mm
HF 6	6	557mm
HF 8	8	670mm

Call 020 8905 7273



DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Straight Wire Info-Link	300	A good cable, but bass seems a little light and detail suffers a little at climaxes							E	207
R	van den Hul Optocoupler	49.95	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types							O	207

LOUDSPEAKER CABLES (PRICES PER METRE LENGTH)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative								183
R	Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical								133
R	Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel, which was happy to accept its foibles								133
R	Audioquest Slate	15	Capable across the board, with just the smallest degree of dryness, but very listenable								203
R	Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings								157
R	Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music								168
	Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained								157
	Cable Talk Flat 2	5	Rather unexciting sound, with variable bass and dry voices								203
	Cable Talk Concert 2.1	8	Can make stereo images recede, and favours the upper bass								192
	DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension								168
R	Chord Company Odyssey	17	Relatively vice-free cable with good detail throughout the range and generally neutral bass								192
	Chord Company Rumour 2	10	Performance is listenable enough but fails to excel in any area								203
BB	DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire								133
	Ecosse Reference CS-2.15	12	Stereo and rhythm are good, but persistent dryness detracts significantly								215
R	Electrofluidics Monolith 2020	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere - one of the best cables available all round								203
	Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system								168
BB	Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value								157
R	Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative								157
R	Goertz M2	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility								168
BB	Ixos Gamma 6003	2.99	A little midrange dryness, but bass is among the best at this price, strong and consistent								203
R	Ixos Gamma 6006	5	Bass is better than treble, which can become spitty and sibilant - though only slightly								192
BB	Kimber 4PR	4.90	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right								192
R	Kimber 4VS	8.50	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass								183
R	Kimber 4TC	18.80	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas								168
BB	Kimber 8TC	348	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair								203
	Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unobtrusive music - can be dry and edgy								183
	Monster Cable Z1	12.50	Slightly bass-rich balance, and could do with a bit more detail								215
	Nordost Flatline Gold II	9.50	Exciting sound but a bit too 'in-her-face', and bass is not always even								192
	Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding - strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too								133
R	Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness								183
R	Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass - if slightly bright at times								133
	Precious Metals SL102	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures								183
	Profigold Silverflex LC8258	4	A pretty-looking cable that does little to offend but is let down by some congestion								203
	Prowire Out of Sight	1.99	Special-purpose cable for laying under carpets etc. Fair sound across the board								203
	Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound - but too messy and bloated for its own good								183
	Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality								157
	QED Qudos	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel								157
BB	QED Qudos Silver	5	A few minor flaws but overall performance is very assured for this price								192
	QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding								168
R	QED Profile Silver 12	15	Very slightly laid-back, but good tone and detail - wears its achievements lightly								215
	QED Genesis Silver Spiral	30	Commendable bass, with a little dryness and mildly compromised imaging; good, but not the best at its price								203
	SonicLink S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces								168
R	SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced								157
R	SonicLink AST75	2.95	Unusual materials and rather unusual performance too, strong on excitement and with plenty of bass								203
R	SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together								157
	SonicLink AST200x2	5.95	At its best with exciting music, this cable seems shy of subtler details								192
BB	SonicLink Rebel	7.50	Plenty of bass, but without sacrificing upper frequency clarity or dynamics								215
	Straight Wire Duo	3	Not so subtle and lacking some detail, but sound is consistent with level and musical style								203
	Straight Wire Rhythm	6	Its major flaw seems to be woolly and indistinct bass, which pervades most types of music								192
BB	Straight Wire Quartet	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience								183
	Supra Classic 6.0	4.95	It's all there, but a persistent lack of detail seriously mars the view								215
R	Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass - perhaps a touch of treble restriction								183
R	Supra Ply 3.4/S	7.95	Good in all areas with rich bass and just a touch of treble roughness								203
R	Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues - and very minor vices - across the board								183
R	Tara Labs Prism Nexa	9.95	Slight tonal softness affects both bass and treble, but the overall sound is very listenable								215
	Tara Labs RSC Prime 500	36	More suited to melodious music than anything with bite and drive, with only moderate detail								203
	TCI Python	7.99	No single major sin, but detail is not outstanding and rhythm isn't always completely solid								203
R	Townshend Isolda	50	Superb sound all round, and amplifier compatibility enhanced by included stabilising inductor								203
R	van den Hul The Snowline	5.49	A hint of high-end civilisation with a few rough edges and a slightly warm balance								215
	van den Hul Royal Jade	10.99	Lots of technology, but sound suffers from dryness and woolly bass								203
	XLO Pro 600	16.50	Decent bass and good treble, but sounds confused with densely-scored music								215

MAINS CABLES AND CONDITIONERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Audiolinx Blue Max	100	Expensive, but good value considering the improvement offered							PLT	218
	Audio Note AN-MP	99	A noticeable improvement on standard mains cable, but not as great as others								218
	Audiosource bbc	48	Very good value, extremely sharp detailing - maybe too sharp							PLT	218
BB	Audusa Eupen CSA	48	Reasonable cost, outstanding performance and a strong recommendation								218

MAINS CABLES AND CONDITIONERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	DIG CABLE TYPE						ISSUE NUMBER
				SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	
	Clearaudio Accurate Power Gen	1,090	Compact and beautifully finished unit that offers positive sonic benefits that justify the price							206
	GTA PHY-HP board	299	Oozing style and quality, the board generates an extremely natural and truthful sound							206
R	LAT AC-2	99	Excellent clarity, music sounds clean and easy to follow - enthusiastic recommendation		●	●		●		218
R	Lynwood Electronics Mega Power	295	Reasonable price model that improves focus while producing a sweet, tight and clean bass							206
	Maplins ASC 431	50	Excellent mains purifying abilities - including other equipment used elsewhere in the house			●		●		218
	Olson Sound Fantastic	80	Reasonable price, superior build quality - all in all, a bit of a bargain			●		●		218
R	PS Audio Power Plant	1,200	Power Plant improves the cleanness and separation of individual voices and instruments, giving an impressive 3-D quality							206
R	Russ Andrews Kimber Power Kord	70	Impressively detailed and crisp, choice of connectors can make even more difference				●	●		218
BB	Russ Andrews Kimber/Power Block	350	Improved version that elevates music to a cleaner and more three-dimensional experience with greater stereo imagery							206
	Russ Andrews The Purifier	250	More ambitious version of the Silencer that gives a cleaner, quieter background, allowing more low level detail							206
BB	Russ Andrews Silencer	40	A cost effect solution to noise-free mains supply that reduces 'hash' without losing brilliance and immediacy							206
	SonicLink SG Power	80	Bright, open and detailed with sweet and natural treble frequencies					●	PLT	218
	SonicLink 5-Gold mains	225	Delivers a clean incisive sound with excellent detail, clarity and with no increase in noise							206
R	Synergistic Res. Master Coupler	238	Absolutely outstanding performance, but extremely expensive				●	●		218
R	Trichord Research Powerblock500	300	Isolation transformer that bolsters clarity, openness and gives an increased refinement making for a purer and natural sound							206

CASSETTE DECKS



SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ADJUSTABLE BIAS							ISSUE NUMBER
				DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	
BB	JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
R	Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171
	Marantz 5D455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184
	NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
	NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171
	Nakamichi DR-10	800	An ergonomic oddity, but one of the last of the great cassette decks. Worth considering against MD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	195
R	Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3 heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	146
R	Pioneer CT-5550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	164
	Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171
	Teac V-1050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184
BB	Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7; clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	164
BB	Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
R	Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171

CD PLAYERS



SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SACD COMPATIBILITY							ISSUE NUMBER
				ELEC DIG OUTPUT	ASSEMBL ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	
BB	Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	166
	Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	165
	Advantage CD15	3,995	A CD player of some stature - what it lacks in dynamics it makes up for in subtlety and flow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	193
	Alchemist Kraken	1,249	Distinctive looking player likely to suit a Alchemist system, but will result in variable results elsewhere	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	190
R	Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	169
	AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	172
BB	AMC CD9/DAC8	200	Beer-budget two-box system (player plus DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	179
	Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	178
BB	Arcam Alpha 7SE	300	Sharper, clearer Alpha 7 SE, and more affordable than before	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	207
	Arcam CD72	400	Easy going, slightly soft-centred reworking of Alpha 7 in new, svelte DIVA clothing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	212
R	Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	178
BB	Arcam Alpha 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	176
R	Arcam Alpha 9	800	Refined, articulate player which employs new DAC technology to great effect	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	188
R	Arcam CD92	850	High resolution player needs a touch of spit and polish to be completely convincing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	212
R	Arcam FMJ CD23	1,100	World class presentation allied with innovative technology to deliver an engaging standard of music making	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	206
	Audio Analogue Paganini	750	Basically good, but sometimes heavy-handed player	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	191
	Audio Note AN-CD1	600	Easy on the ear, and for a valve player, easy on the pocket, but a bit Radio 2-flavoured	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	188
	Audio Note AN-CD2	999	High output impedance makes performance unduly system fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	195
	AVI 52000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-ear-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	176
R	AVI 52000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	169
	Balanced Audio Tech VK-D5	3,995	A valve-infused player with a big and engaging sound. Lacks a little subtlety	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	194
	Cambridge Audio D100	120	Hard, clanging and coloured sounding, and with suspect control logic	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	200
BB	Cambridge Audio D500	200	Clean and highly articulate player wears well in extended use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	202
R	Cambridge Audio D500 SE	230	A really lively sounding player with good detail but just a hint of dryness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	217
R	Copland CDA 266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	176
	Copland CDA 289	1,898	Beautifully built and musically enjoyable. Lacks some precision, but still among the best below £2,000	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	194
R	Symbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	176
R	Cyrus dAD1.5	395	Improved dAD1 variant has improved digital filter for a more natural, easy on the ear quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	191

ONE-BOX CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	ASX/BU ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	SACD COMPATIBILITY	ISSUE NUMBER
													212
R	Cyrus CD7	800	New Cyrus player has strong all-round attributes to match its good looks	●									212
R	Cyrus dAD3 Q24	900	Bold, lean and lively player demands sympathetic system matching			●							200
R	Denon DCD-435	130	Good low cost player, and a step up from the DCD-425, its predecessor			●			●				191
R	Denon DCD-655	180	Fine, slightly soft-edged budget player, and a good ameliorative for aggressive, edgy systems			●			●	●			200
R	Denon DCD-835	230	Refined sound with terrific bass extension. Some slight coloration			●			●	●			217
	Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high-tech player	●					●	●			179
	Densen B-400	1,280	Bold, purposeful sound, but lacks subtlety, and has some ergonomic flaws	●									212
	EZO Fog Stage 3	1,170	Curious player is difficult to drive, and has sound quality that both enchants and sometimes confounds	●									212
R	Kenwood DVF-3030	180	Solid CD player with straightforward features						●	●			207
BB	Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music — and has CD Text too	●		●			●	●			172
	Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●					●	●			179
	Kenwood DVF-R9030	800	Kenwood's first DVD-A player suffers from a mild compression of dynamics resulting in a polite yet matter of fact sound	●		●	●	●	●		●		206
R	Linn Genki	995	Explicit, rather bright sounding player with strong multi-room appeal							●			212
	Marantz CD5000	150	Well equipped budget player sounds thin and rough at times	●		●			●	●			202
	Marantz CC3000	150	Ragged sounding multisc player, but it is cheap and well equipped								●		204
BB	Marantz CD6000	250	Great package with all mod cons, and eminently listenable too							●	●		207
BB	Marantz CD6000 OSE LE	300	Detailed, well rounded, at home in any musical context — a real bargain							●	●		217
BB	Marantz CD6000 KI Signature	500	Excellent all rounder, a well appointed good value package							●	●		212
R	Marantz CD-17 MkII	800	Sophisticated player with a short but attractive feature set, and a new found bounce in its step	●				●	●	●			206
R	Marantz CD-17KI Sig	1,100	Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland	●						●			176
R	Marantz CD-7	3,500	A superbly designed CD player, both inside and out. Precise and dramatic in equal measure	●						●			194
EC	Marantz SA-1	5,000	The brand's first SACD player is a stunning machine that's equally as strong with conventional CD	●						●		●	208
	Meraucus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics — but it's not cheap	●									169
BB	Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed	●									176
	Monrio Asty	695	Well built player has solid, propulsive sound quality that deteriorates towards HF	●									200
	Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●									166
	Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●									184
BB	Musical Fidelity A3 CD	800	Excellent player has few faults apart from a slight loss of EHF detail	●									200
	Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●									184
	Myryad T-20	600	Matter of fact styling and sound quality, a tad bright for some systems	●									195
	Myryad MCD500	1,300	Well-built, attractive player, showing much promise, but can be a little heavy-going on audition	●									176
R	NAD C520	170	Significantly improved entry level NAD is smooth and dynamic, if slightly dull	●									202
	NAD C521	200	Good timing and excitement, but not good at holding the listener's attention	●									217
	NAD 523	250	Lacklustre musical presentation was disappointing on test; so was the absence of a digital output									●	204
	NAD C540	330	Not cheap, and disc handling is pedestrian at best, but the C540 is smooth & elegant with just a hint of aggression	●									200
R	NAD Silverline S500	1,100	It sounds as good as it looks, which is notably refined and easy on the ear	●	●	●		●					195
R	Naim Audio CD5	1,120	Recommended subject to audition, a dynamic machine, yet some physical minuses										212
R	Nakamichi MB-10	400	Jewel of a multi-disc player, with crisp sound and superb fuss-free compact packaging									●	204
EC	Naim NACDSII/XPS	5,625	Brings you the Naim sound, but for once doesn't have to rely on Naim ancillaries to get the results										188
R	Onkyo DX-7222	150	Competitive following recent price cut, and on the whole a strong performer musically	●		●				●			200
	Onkyo DX-7511	300	Earthbound mid-price CD player fails to excite	●						●			207
	Parasound CDP-1000	499	Comes on like a high end player, but ultimately sounds a bit weak and soft-centred	●									184
	Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●									172
	Philips SACD-1000	1,300	The first multichannel SACD on the market makes a good case for the format but doesn't match the 2-channel Sonys with CD	●								●	216
	Pioneer PD-5507	200	Low cost Legato Link implementation sounds gentle but slightly muddled	●									191
	Primare D20	799	Well presented player doesn't quite cut the mustard, though it performs promisingly	●									188
	Revox Exception E426	2,250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●					●				182
	Roksan Kandy	475	Slightly old-fashioned sound quality player available in various colour schemes	●									200
	Roksan Caspian	895	Improved Caspian (retested for 2001) is still bold, dynamic player, but rather more subtle and expressive	●									212
	Rotel RCD-951	300	Disappointing chopped-down RCD-971 — buy the original	●									191
BB	Rotel RCD-971	450	Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must	●									184
R	Rotel RCD-991	825	Strong midrange player with switchable dither levels to provide some system tweaking ability	●	●								212
	Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●									163
	Sharp DX-SX1	2,700	Stylish player with a slightly forward but extremely nimble sound. Connects to matching digital amp via dedicated umbilical	●							●		211
R	Sony CDP-XE330	100	Unrefined, but lively, detailed and highly affordable	●									202
	Sony CDP-XE530	140	Well equipped, but raw, scrappy sounding player lacks depth and weight	●									200
BB	Sony CDP-XB930E	300	Yet another first rate UK optimised player with all the bells and whistles	●									195
R	Sony SCD-XB940	550	First mainstream SACD player that easily outstrips comparable CD players at this price	●								●	206
BB	Sony SCD-555ES	1,200	Fabulously built with superb sound using both CD and Super Audio software, you'll be hard pressed to find a better CD player at the price	●									213
EC	Sony SCD-777ES	1,700	Beautifully built SACD player that looks like a bit of a CD player bargain	●									198
EC	Sony SCD-1	2,500	The first SACD player sounds fabulous but there's not much competition and limited software as yet	●								●	194
	T+A CD1210R	1,185	Intriguing player with rather pushy basic sound, but has switchable digital filters	●									188
	Talk Electronics Thunder 1	550	Entry level upgradeable Talk Electronics player sounds slightly muted	●									200
	Talk Electronics Thunder 2	699	Fine player, slightly lacking in dynamics, but readily, if expensively upgradable in various ways	●									191
R	Talk Electronics Thunder 3	1,000	Clean, fast, and availability of a complete upgrade path make this a good long term proposition	●									195
R	TAG McLaren CD20R	1,249	Dry and unatmospheric, but plenty of presence — recommended with caution	●									188
	Teac VRDS-9	700	Well-presented. This Teac is crisp, yet shallow, and inconsistent in sound quality and partnering skills	●		●							176
	Teac VRDS-25x	1,000	Excellent, individualistic player with bold, colourful sound, but test sample had iffy CD-R compatibility	●						●			195
	Technics SL-PG390	90	It's very cheap. Very, very cheap										202
	Technics SL-PS7	200	Strong, but ultimately rather opaque and hard-sounding, high tech CD player			●					●		207
R	Technics SL-MC7	300	Maximum storage capacity for a minimum price, and presentable sound too (multisc)				●					●	204
	Thule Spirit CD100	600	Definitely a try before you buy machine, but the bass and mid are excellent	●									188
	Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority	●									169
	Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●									166
	Tube Technology Fusion MkII	1,350	Improvements over the original model but still remains too inconsistent for its own good	●									206
	Tube Technology Fulcrum	2,800	An imaginative two-box player with a smooth sound that lacks some lustre	●	●								194
	Yamaha CDX-596	230	Well-priced and attractive-sounding, this player can read CD-RW	●									207
	Yamaha CDX-496	180	A rather splashy and approximate sound, further hampered by mechanical noise	●									217

ONE-BOX CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	AS/ESBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	SACD COMPATIBILITY	ISSUE NUMBER
	Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong	●		●				●			184
	YBA Spécial	695	There is nothing here to justify the pricing or the high-end parentage. Avoid										195

CD TRANSPORTS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	AS/ESBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	SACD COMPATIBILITY	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Audio Note CDT Zero	550	Although ominously esoteric on paper, it's smooth, open and easy on the ear in practice (Tested with DAC1)	●	●								212
	Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●		●							144
	Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material	●		●							162
	Theta Carmen	3,299	A well equipped and extremely upgradable CD/DVD transport. Right now, the finest of its type	●									203
	Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●									130
	Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)	●		●							162
R	Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●		●							162

DACs

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	AS/ESBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	SACD COMPATIBILITY	ISSUE NUMBER
	Alchemist TS-D-1	300	24/96-equipped DAC sounds tidy but a little shut-in with both 16-bit CDs and 24-bit/96kHz DVDs										187
	Audio Note DAC Zero	369	Neat valve-equipped DAC sounds smooth and fluid in the right system. (Tested with CDT Zero transport)										191
R	Audio Note DAC Zero1x	750	Although ominously esoteric on paper, it's smooth, open and easy on the ear in practice (Tested with CDT Zero)										212
	Audio Note DAC 5	18,500	Astonishingly natural and realistic in the right system, the only problem being the extravagant price										203
EC	dCS Delius	5,000	State-of-the-art resolution with considerably greater flexibility than anything else, hard to beat	●	●		●	●		●		●	207
	dCS Purcell	3,500	The first upsampler on the market adds significant depth and increased bass resolve with a suitable DAC	●	●		●					●	207

DVD PLAYERS



SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	AS/ESBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DVD-A COMPATIBILITY	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Alba DVD103	150	Good value for money but not much of a CD player, crude and serviceable but remarkably inexpensive	●									207
R	Arcam DVA DV88	899	A DVD-Video player built with non-obsolence in mind, but picture quality exceeds musical quality as a CD player	●									213
RE	Denon DVD-1000	300	Fine, stripped down player concentrates on the essentials, and scores a direct hit.	●		●							216
R	Denon DVD-1500	400	Colourful and engaging (if lightweight) sound, with excellent picture quality	●		●							207
R	Denon DVD-3300	999	Sometimes slightly inconsistent and strident sounding in all modes of use, but it pulls a little more off disc too.	●								●	213
R	Denon DVM-3700	1,000	One of the first multi-DVD players, and a fine all rounder, with average to good pictures, and better sound	●								●	204
EC	Denon DVD-5000	1,600	The first DVD-V player that ain't bad as a CD player. A fine musical device	●		●							187
R	Encore DV-450	200	Superb value for money, though mainly of interest to the videophile on a shoestring	●		●							207
	Hitachi DVP-505	300	DVD player has rather dark, unexpansive sound, but good picture quality	●		●							207
	Hitachi DVP-705	380	Mild mannered player works best with Radio 2 music, and gives clean, well endowed picture quality to match, along with sharp pricing.	●	●	●							216
	JVC XV-D701	500	Good video player, but rather undeveloped musically – CD Text is neat, though	●		●							198
	JVC XV-D723GD	500	Convincing DVD-Audio player that is ultimately let down by poor CD performance	●			●	●					206
	Kenwood DVF-R9030	899	The first multi-disc DVD-Audio player is physically large and ergonomically obstructive, but it is a smooth, slick operator	●		●						●	213
R	Kenwood DVF-9010	1,000	DVD player with brilliant picture and clean, lively sound	●									190
EC	Meridian DVS96	2,350	Very classy player with DVD-A upgrade potential, one of the few that is also a superb CD player	●									218
	NAD T-550	500	Soft-centred but likeable player in the classic NAD mould	●		●							202
	Nakamichi DVD-10s	600	Well engineered, but lacklustre specifications, moderate performance – and overpriced.	●		●							216
	Panasonic DVD-RV40	350	Modestly equipped, gives good pictures, but is musically unengaging	●		●							207
	Panasonic DVD-A360E	580	Powerful equipment, and unthrottled digital output notwithstanding, sound quality is modest at best	●		●							198
	Panasonic DVD-A7EB	699	Chopped down Technics DVD-A10 retains most of the flagship's headline features with well balanced, but less refined and less articulate sound	●		●						●	213
R	Philips DVD957	400	Slightly ill-disciplined, but bold, enthusiastic player which engages even if it doesn't always convince.	●		●							216
RE	Philips DVD750	400	Clever DVD with CD-R/CD-RW compatibility and surprisingly keen sound	●		●							198
	Philips DVD960	530	DVD-V player has strong sound quality and good, though slightly washed out, pictures	●		●							207
RE	Pioneer DV-636D	400	Bold, dynamic and detailed sounding player, with slightly simplified video feature set, sharper pricing and A1 pictures to match.	●		●							216
RE	Pioneer DV-717	550	Superb DVD player with good picture quality and which really knows how to play 24/96 discs	●		●							190
R	Pioneer DV-939A	1,200	Fine player with near state of the art video performance and attractive, easy on the ear music making, from CD and DVD-Audio alike.	●		●						●	213
R	Primare V20	1,000	Elegant and well built DVD performer that possess a strong picture quality and decent CD player	●		●							206
	Rotel RDL-995	700	Bold, sometimes aggressive sounding player needs RGB output to bring picture quality up to scratch.	●		●							216
	Samsung DVD-907	500	DVD player with below average picture, and lacklustre sound quality	●		●							190
	Sanyo DVD1500	219	Compact, low cost player is quite strong video performer, but lacks the wherewithal to succeed as a surrogate CD player.	●		●							216
	Sony Art Couture DVP-5435	350	Looks to die for and decent on-screen results, but sound is flat and grey	●		●							216
	Sony DVP-CX850D	600	Lacklustre sound quality is a disappointment, but the price is appealing for a 200-disc DVD player	●		●						●	204
R	Sony DVP-S7700	950	Powerfully endowed player offers articulate and believable sound	●		●							198
	Sony DVD-S9000ES	1,200	First DVD machine to play SACD has a 'Lexus' sound style that never really gets its hands dirty	●		●							210
	Sharp DV-760	500	Reasonable picture, but sonically brings new meaning to the term rough and ready.	●		●							202
	TAG McLaren DVD32R	3,995	A tour-de-force of engineering, albeit with matching price tag. But picture quality is second to none	●		●							212
	T-A DVD 1210R	1,699	Ergonomically a mess, but detailed, dynamic and emphatic, though there is no guarantee of a DVD-audio upgrade path	●		●							213
	Technics DVD-A10	899	Well built, early generation DVD-A player with full in-board DVD-Video decoding and a more than workmanlike sound.	●		●						●	213
	Theta DaVID	4,650	A top-notch CD transport, that also plays DVD-Video discs well. Pricy for a DVD transport, but worth it	●		●							191
	Toshiba SD-100E	250	Mainstream player offers so-so features, performance and pricing	●		●							207
	Toshiba SD-3109	380	Defocused and soft-edged, this is more attractive for its picture than its sound quality.	●		●							202

DVD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ISSUE NUMBER	DVD-A COMPATIBILITY	MULTI-DISC	VARIABLE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	BAL. ANALOGUE OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	ASSEMBY ELEC DIG OUT	ELEC DIG OUTPUT
	Toshiba SD500E	599	OK DVD-Video player, but lacklustre with music, especially when reproducing high resolution DVD-Audio material.	213	●	●							
	Toshiba SD9000	800	Costly, high tech player with stunning pictures and crisp, slightly lightweight sound	198	●		●						
BB	Toshiba SD900E	1,299	Top class DVD-Audio player and also a superb DVD-Video player; in this context pricing is competitive.	213	●								
	T+A DVD-1210R	1,699	Ergonomically a mess, but detailed, dynamic and emphatic, though there is no guarantee of a DVD-Audio upgrade path	213	●								

DIGITAL RECORDERS



SPECIFICATIONS

MINIDISCS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ISSUE NUMBER	FORMAT	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
	JVC XM-448	220	An hidden keyboard is a great idea, but musically it sounds rather cool and strident	205	MD		●	●
	Kenwood DMF-5020	250	it may be high-tech but nothing conceals the caricatured sound	205	MD		●	●
R	Kenwood DMF-9020	500	One of the best MD decks yet for sound quality, and the first to make titling a practical proposition	191	MD		●	●
	Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	177	MD		●	
R	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped but musically sleep inducing player that deserves its recommendation due to price	205	MD		●	●
	Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	184	MD		●	●
R	Sony MDS-JA555ES	650	Powerful demonstration of Sony's proficiency, it delivers the best MD can offer	205	MD		●	●

CD RECORDERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ISSUE NUMBER	FORMAT	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
R	Denon CDR-1000	339	Straightforward but attractive single CD-R/RW deck is a respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
	Denon CDR-1500	449	Ultra high jitter takes the sparkle out of an otherwise attractive dual disc CD-R/RW burner	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
	Harman/Kardon CDR-20	499	High jitter player makes quite good recordings that sound less good when played back internally, especially when using the internal record capable transport	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
	Hitachi DV-W1E	520	Combination CD-R/RW and DVD player has excellent ergonomics, but tends to sound rather opaque	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
	JVC XL-R5000	450	Flexible, ratty build, and attractive sound, but it's a little expensive compared to other rivals	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
	LG ADR-620	350	A powerfully equipped machine with useful multi-room capabilities, but sound quality is rough and ready	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
BB	Marantz DR6000	400	Classy CD-R/RW recorder is also a classy CD player, in contrast to most CD recorders	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
R	Marantz DR-17	1,500	Highly recommended, but with a jitter problem that, resolved, would improve sound quality	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
BB	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
R	Philips CDR785	350	Ragged play quality, but a good record performance from this well equipped, well priced CD-R/RW deck	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
BB	Pioneer PDR-609	250	Classy single deck CD-R/RW burner is also a good if characterful player	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
R	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	218	CD-R(W)		●	●
R	Pioneer PDR-W739	400	Flexible multi-disc that has everything including respectable sound and pricing	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
	TEAC RW-800	350	Capable recording tool, but a little rough and ready as a player	205	CD-R(W)		●	●
	Yamaha CDR-D561	449	Twin CD-R/RW burner makes solid, believable discs, but is priced higher than equivalent models from elsewhere	218	CD-R(W)		●	●

HEADPHONES



SPECIFICATIONS

HEADPHONES

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ISSUE NUMBER	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	MASS (g)	CLOSED BACK	OPEN BACK	CIRCUMAURAL	SUPRA-AURAL	ELECTROSTATIC	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR
R	AKG K100	36	Leather clad groover with bags of power and clarity, for a respectable asking price	205	190	100	●					●
	AKG 301	70	Big 'phones with even and detailed sound but lacks sufficient bass weight	194	230	100	●					●
	AKG K 240 DF	100	Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, if lacking in grunt	186	240	600	●					●
R	AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	99	270	120	●					●
R	Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	55	280	40	●					●
R	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	100	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal	194	250	66	●					●
R	Audio Technica ATH-M40	120	Incredible detail and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phone	186	250	60	●					●
	Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	133	124	40	●					●
	Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	111	120	250	●					●
	Beyer DT331	65	Clear and extremely detailed sound with rather thin bass	194	210	40	●					●
	Beyer DT431	81	Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give 100 per cent	186	210	40	●					●
	Beyer DT531	105	Average performer from an established player. Lacks punch and bite	205	245	250	●					●
R	Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. Even so, high tingle factor	172	200	250	●					●
BB	Beyer DT831	140	These provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and we're not just talking about the velvet ear pads	186	295	250	●	1/2				●
	Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	157	350	600	●					●
	Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	172	120	32	●					●
BB	Grado SR-60	79	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste	194	200	32	●					●
	Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	157	60	8	●					●
R	Grado SR-125	150	What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in musical quality	186	200	32	●					●
R	Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	163	200	32	●					●
	Grado SR-325	300	Elegant sound across the frequency spectrum; let down by old fashioned ear-piece design	205	200	32	●					●
BB	Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	55	400	200	●					●

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	MASS (g)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
	JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design		●			●	165	1/8	●	172
R	JVC HA-W200RF	75	Distinct lack of hiss from these FM cordless 'phones ensures that detail and depth are easily heard			●		●	280	20,000	●	186
R	JVC HA-DX3	200	Great headphone with a rich bass, careful mid-range and high comfort factor			●		●	340	90	●	205
	Koss TD/80	50	Oodles of bass but with a recessed midband; tiresome on the head with prolonged wearing					●	250	60	●	194
	Koss R/100	100	Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement			●		●	215	60	●	186
	Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness of the Float from which it is derived, but coarse mid/top					●	380	100	●	163
	Philips HP910	80	Ergonomically good but suffers from a muffled mid-range and over excited bass			●	●		247	32	●	205
	Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion		●			●	192	1/8	●	172
R	Sennheiser HD 570 Symph	90	Comfortable, light-weight 'phones with a detailed and open sound but lacks bass depth on weightier music			●	●	●	210	64	●	194
R	Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband			●	●	●	255	150	●	172
BB	Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable			●	●	●	255	150	●	157
	Sennheiser HD590	160	Assured and confident player with very low colouration and great comfort			●	●	●	270	120	●	205
	Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with a pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	●	●	●	●		260	N/A	●	163
	Sony MDR-V700DJ	100	Great looking fold-away 'phones with exceptional build quality. Kickin' bass		●			●	300	24	●	194
	Sony MDR-CD 2000	200	Large pads make for sweaty listening. Pure mid-tones, but weightless bass			●	●	●	300	32	●	205
BB	Technics RP-F800	50	Comfortable budget model that sounds sublime with great dynamics		●			●	160	40	●	205
	Technics RP-DJ1200	130	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof		●			●	230	32	●	172
R	Stax System II	400	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five star quality all the way	●	●	●	●		295	50	●	205
BB	Stax Lambda Nova Basic	395	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence -- and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	●	●	●	●		347	N/A	●	163
	Vivanco SR322	30	Weak design and uncomfortable, but redeems itself with substantial sound quality		●		●		248	32	●	205
	Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	40	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but sounds like a cheap FM tuner		●			●	210	FM	●	172
	Vivanco IRS800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven				1/2		226	1/8	●	172
R	Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive		●		●		175		●	157
BB	Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics		●		●		188		●	157
R	Vivanco SR 950	80	Cuddly feel and sound make these an enjoyable pair of 'phones						252	32	●	194
	Vivanco FM7980	80	A fair amount of whine and crackle detracts from 'phones which are otherwise very listenable		●			●	280	9,000	●	186
	Vivanco FM8180	99	Well thought-out features and a better than average sound are, at times, marred by intrusive hiss		●			●	240	9,000	●	186

LOUDSPEAKERS

STEREO SPEAKERS

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150	At a new low price, this has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side	19,96,5,24		87	6	40	●		187
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis Two	250	Floorstanding variation on the Aegis One theme, with a neutral, even and detailed if slightly shiny sound	19,87,24		89	8	40	●		201
	Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350	Clean and capable 2.5-way budget floorstander with fine dynamic range but some mid-bass excess. Mass-loaded	19,5,93,25		90	5	25	●		215
	Acoustic Energy AE120SE	500	Attractive styling and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load	18,97,28		89.5	10	25	●		199
R	Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000	Could be more neutral, but high-class build is reflected in a high-class sound. Very elegant too	21,98,30		91	3	25	●		190
	ALR Entry 2	250	Metal cone stand-mount has a generous performance envelope, but sound quality was controversial	20,33,29		90	4	22	●		201
	ALR Jordan Note 3	1,000	Very substantial, with tuneable ABR for better room matching. Sounds good but could be more neutral	24,5,37,32		89	5	30	●		211
	ALR Jordan Note 7	2,500	A beguiling Anglo-German collaboration delivers metal-cone precision with fine dynamic range	25,107,32		92	4	25	●		196
R	AR S20	180	Classic stand-mount might not have the most dynamic sound around, but it's an honest and effective musical communicator	20,37,28		90	4	28	●		215
	AR 15	275	Neat and chunky wall/stand-mount certainly knows how to rock and roll, less convincing on the delicate stuff	22,37,22		90	4	45	●		201
R	Arcaydis Concept 2	1,200	Solid oak floorstander is a little lazy sounding, but is well balanced and smooth with modest coloration	19,90,26		86	7	25	●		211
	ATC SCM10	1,000	A compact speaker with good transparency but lightweight bass	18,38,25.5		80	8	65		●	192
	ATC T16	1,750	Compact active 'home studio monitor' in colourful cast box, with considerable loudness potential	27,45,33		A	A	45	●		214
EC	ATC SCM50A SL	7,000	350 Watts of power combine with superb drive units and a 48kg cabinet to provide alarming resolution	35,1,171,6,48		A	A	38	●		218
	ATC SCM70ASL	10,500	Stylish aluminium casework disguises dynamic grip, tracking and precision that equals the very best	127,40,46		A	A	20	●		205
R	Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty, compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21		87	6	40	●		164
R	Audio Note AZ1	449	A fine partner for low power valve amps, it delivers music with great gusto and enthusiasm, but also more than its fair share of coloration	23,83,29		92	6	30		●	215
R	Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520	This classic large stand-mount might have throwback aesthetics, but it delivers an exceptional allround sound	36,79,28		92	4	20	●		204
	Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47		88	8	28	●	●	143
R	Audiovector C2	799	Elegant two-and-a-half-way has a big, full bandwidth sound, but midband seemed a little underdeveloped	19,106,27		90	4	20	●		190
R	Audiovector M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradable, too	20,102,30		89	4	22	●		180
R	AVI NuNeutron	500	A smooth and subtle though pricey sub-miniature, albeit with the inevitable limitations of the breed	14,27,23		86	4	50	●		190
R	AVI Biggatron Red Spot	600	Good bass coherence and timing, but the lean and decidedly forward balance won't be to every taste	19,5,37,30		88	7	30	●		211
	AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small-scale way	17,5,74,24.5		85	6	40	●		174
R	B&W 601 S2	200	A smooth and sophisticated stand-mount combines good drive with fine neutrality	20,5,36,23		89	4	30	●		207
BB	B&W 602 S2	300	Large stand-mount has fine dynamic literacy and good communication skills at a very competitive price	23,5,49,29		90	5	28	●		201
R	B&W 603 S2	550	Capable of being driven seriously loud, but the cautious balance seems less happy playing at low levels	23,5,87,29		91	4	22	●		193
	B&W CDM-1NT	750	An uncommonly stylish and sonically self-effacing stand-mount that should be very easy to live with	22,40,29		89	7	30	●		208
	B&W CDM-7NT	1,250	A very classy floorstander, in sound as well as looks, with fine bass drive, authority and overall neutrality	22,95,29		90	6	20	●		208
R	B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A small-sounding loudspeaker dynamically, but very stylish, clean and 'unboxy', delivering loads of detail	24,42,31		89	12	28	●		199
	B&W Nautilus 803	3,500	Classy looking three-way with impressively deep bass, wide dynamic range and a laid-back balance	29,108,42		89	3	20	●		210
	B&W Nautilus 804	2,500	The prettiest Nautilus has tremendous clarity and imaging but lacks the welly of bigger models	24,101,5,24.5		89	8	38	●		200
EC	B&W Nautilus 802	6,000	Outstanding example of the high-tech speaker builder's art, needs real power but gives real sound	39,111,55		91	8	34	●		183
R	B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud	52,111,69		91	8	34	●		186
R	Blueroom Minipod	249	The Minipod can show its competitors a thing or two about freedom from boxiness and looks fab	18,34,17		91	4	50	●		193
R	BC Acoustique Araxe	1,300	Neat compact floorstander is a very lively communicator, if a little short of deep bass grunt	21,92,30		94	3	40	●		204
R	Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-er-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28	●		180
	Carsson OAS2.2	1,500	Ultra-discreet design integrates cleverly with the listening room. Impressively unboxy, but sounds a bit thin	41,54,37		90	8	20	●		195
R	Castle Richmond	250	Tiny real-wood miniature has a lightweight but very coherent sound, a bit in-er-face but plenty of fun	17,33,20		90	5	50	●		201
	Castle Inversion 15	425	This striking looking standmount is a good all-rounder, commendably free from boxiness	22,42,25		91	4	30	●		193

STEREO SPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	PRICE	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Castle Severn ZSE	700	Pretty little floorstander is lively and communicative, if a little coloured in the voice band	21,84,24	88	6	28	●	●	204
	Castle Inversion 100	1,975	Large semi-omni design with gorgeous Art Deco styling, sounds open but bass alignment is ill-tuned	26,5,11,45	91	8	20	●	●	195
R	Celestion A Compact	600	Provided the room isn't too large and your tastes not too heavy, this is a charming little number	17,24,21	90	3	45	●	●	193
EC	Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35	88	6	25	●	●	164
R	Celestion A2	1,500	Full-scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39	89	6	22	●	●	180
	Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27	87	6	45	●	●	170
R	Chario Hiper 1000	300	Classy looking standmount has a sweet, easygoing sound with fine midband voicing	18,35,28	87	4	45	●	●	187
	Chario Constellation Lynx	550	Beautiful near-miniature is let down by a midband too laid back for its own good	20,36,26	87	3	40	●	●	190
EC	Chario Academy Millennium 2	2,100	Price includes stands. A showy speaker that lives up to its own hype	22,53,35	90	4	55	●	●	190
	Cyrus CLS70	800	Wonderfully striking styling, but presence is very laid back; likes playing loud	22,33,32	87	8	40	●	●	211
R	Cyrus Icon	2,500	First high end NXT speaker with huge omni-directional soundstage. But they have limited dynamics and unusual imaging	34,125,29	84	8	18	●	●	216
BB	Dali 606	400	A big bruiser at a tempting price. Sounds refined and polite, but also packs some punch	22,97,32	91	4	25	●	●	174
	Dali Royal Menuet MkII	429	Classy sub-miniature with a beautiful box and fine ingredients, but a little lacking in subtlety and excitement	16,26,18	87	3	50	●	●	190
R	Dali Evidence 870	1,249	A real heavyweight, sonically and physically, and good for movies as well as music	24,5,106,36	93	2.5	20	●	●	204
BB	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	Expensive for a vinyl-covered miniature, but an aristocrat amongst the breed. Is there a better small speaker around for the price?	17,28,5,24	87	4	40	●	●	215
	Dynaudio Audience 72	1,100	Very competent in most respects, but doesn't quite grab the attention; could be more communicative	20,97,26	89	3	20	●	●	211
R	Dynaudio Contour 1.8 MkII	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29	85	4	20	●	●	167
	Elac CL102 II	599	Chunky floorstander with classy drivers has a neutral, slightly 'shiny' character, and could have more punch	20,95,28	88	9	23	●	●	199
	Elac CL 310i Jet	800	It's pricey, and you can buy better performance for the money. Small speaker, good sound	12,3,20,8,28,2	86	4	42	●	●	191
	Eitax Liberty 3+	150	Bright, bassy, laid back and attractively evenhanded, but dynamically challenged. Big box for your dough	20,5,38,34	86	4	25	●	●	187
	Eitax Linear Response	249	A curiously dumpy shape, but smooth, laid-back performer is easy on the ears, with fine tonal accuracy	25,35,32	85	4	40	●	●	177
	Eitax Chroma Front	300	Gorgeous shiny styling package at an ultra-competitive price, suffers from an excess of rather flabby bass	19,98,28	87	4	25	●	●	201
R	Energy e:XL 25	400	Neat slimline design delivers a fine all round performance for the price, but could sound smoother	15,87,31	90	4	25	●	●	201
R	Excel 202A	1,795	Very Pro-styling, a compact active monitor in BBC tradition - neutral, unboxy and laid-back	15,21,5,36	A	A	25	●	●	214
BB	Epos M12	429	Retains the beguiling midband coherence that made the ES12 such a favourite. A genuine class act, sonically and aesthetically	20,38,26	86	7	40	●	●	215
	Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27	88	7	40	●	●	170
	Genelec HT206	1,400	Baby active monitor goes very loud for its size. Very neutral but a tad boxy	20,31,24	A	A	40	●	●	214
R	Heybrook Prima 2	159	Great openness, speed and timing. Sounds fresh and vital, though sometimes lacks scale and weight	20,29,18	87	6	50	●	●	179
	Heybrook HB1	180	Good value but an uneven performer, the HB1 provides plenty of fun with the volume turned well up	21,38,25	88	3	50	●	●	207
EC	Heybrook Heylette	200	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match	19,5,30,22	88	4	45	●	●	187
BB	Heybrook Optima	259	A dumpy ugly duckling with a heart of gold. Deserves a better tweeter, but communicates well	22,88,29	94	4	30	●	●	193
EC	Heybrook Heylios	269	Classically styled stand-mount has a fine balance of smoothness and dynamics, plus real wood veneer	23,5,36,27	89	6	25	●	●	201
	Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29	89	6	45	●	●	174
R	Heybrook Duet	750	Looks slightly old-fashioned, sounds a bit coloured but its fine timing and liveliness serve music well	23,43,30	88	11	27	●	●	199
	Heybrook Octet	1,800	Good-looking but pricey floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31	90	6	25	●	●	180
R	Indigo Three	500	Cute 'n' chunky standmount is an entertaining communicator. Great fun, despite some sonic weirdness	23,30,5,32	86	17	24	●	●	199
BB	Infinity Alpha 30	299	Some sharpness and nasality, but fine musical literacy plus a good measure of dynamic expression adds up to a great value floorstander	22,86,29	89	4	30	●	●	215
	Jamo E800	200	Nicely voiced, open midband but bottom end is a bit strong and amorphous	17,5,33,29	87	3	30	●	●	207
	Jamo D830	1,400	Dynamically exciting and communicative, but lacks both smoothness and neutrality. Pricey too	24,5,38,32	88	5	30	●	●	211
BB	JBL LX2	250	Invgorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with enthusiasm	22,40,27	87	8	40	●	●	170
	JBL Ti200	400	Very substantial standmount knows how to rock and roll, but can sound uncouth on more delicate material	21,41,30	92	5	40	●	●	193
	JBL SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	17,5,51,31	86	8	40	●	●	174
R	JBL 4312 II	1,000	Crude but startlingly effective dynamics. The original party animal knows just how to rock'n'roll	36,60,30	94	4	25	●	●	190
R	JBL SVA 2100	1,250	Monstrously large and brutish styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	91	8	<20	●	●	180
	JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy, scratchy treble	26,5,94,30	91	4	33	●	●	183
BB	JBL Xt140	500	Real wood and a cute shape, with a punchy driving bass, and a restrained overall balance	23,82,31	88	6	40	●	●	210
R	JMLab Electra 905	1,200	Compact but massively engineered, delivers a very classy sound with exceptional dynamic range	23,5,47,28	90	4	40	●	●	204
R	JMLab Mezzo Utopia	7,250	Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with fantastic coherence	35,115,47	92	4	30	●	●	186
BB	JPW ML510	130	Lots of good quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22	88	5	50	●	●	169
	JPW ML910	330	Loads of speaker for the money, plenty of headroom and loudness capability, but sounds dull	23,104,30	91	4	43	●	●	183
R	JPW ML1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	91	6	25	●	●	170
	KEF Cresta 2	149	A good looking/value package but sonically disappointing, and no match for the Q15	20,5,37,24	91	4	40	●	●	195
S	KEF Q15.2	200	A vigorous and entertaining compact speaker that remains particularly well aligned for close-to-wall siting	20,5,31,27	89	3	30	●	●	207
	KEF Q35.2	350	A very decent and good looking compact floorstander, but a pair of stand-mounted Q15.2s is likely to have the performance edge	21,78,5,27	90	2.5	25	●	●	215
	KEF Q55.2	500	Beefy vinyl-finished UniQ delivers loads of bass, but might have more control	21,87,29	90	4	25	●	●	210
R	KEF Reference One-Two	1,350	Limited low bass but bags of headroom. Coherent and lively sound, but could be more transparent	22,5,87,35	89	3	40	●	●	211
	KEF RDM Three	1,500	Definitely a speaker aimed at long-term satisfaction rather than immediate impressiveness. Nice	24,100,27	90	4	40	●	●	189
	KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	89	4	30	●	●	167
BB	Keswick Audio Aria II	379	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24	89	8	20	●	●	148
R	Keswick Audio Torino	999	Good value, lively contender with distinctive styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	26,93,28	90	4	20	●	●	167
R	Linn Kan	295	Great bass discrimination from size, ensuring a very informative, if slightly shut-in experience	19,31,19	86	4	45	●	●	187
S	Linn Katan Aktiv/LK140	2,325	Too small to have much grunt or loudness, but bright top is very sweet, clear and detailed	17,34,23	A	A	40	●	●	214
BB	Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity	21,5,98,29	91	4	25	●	●	180
EC	Living Voice Avatar	2,500	Dynamic and highly resolved yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance	21,5,104,27	91	8	40	●	●	218
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R	4,000	Discreet but extremely fine design with external crossover and an affinity with great amps and sources	21,5,104,27	89	8	45	●	●	196
	Magnat Vintage 320	350	Loads of speaker for your money, but the sound is thick, heavy and lacking in presence and authority	25,102,30	90	4	20	●	●	201
	Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	89	5	30	●	●	183
	Magnat Vintage 710	800	Very competent but didn't particularly stand out; distinctive styling and slightly shiny sound	20,27,42,32	90	5	25	●	●	211
R	Magnat Vintage 720	1,200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,32	88	4	20	●	●	180
	Martin-Logan Prodigy	8,967	Combines the finesse of an electrostatic with the grunt of cleverly engineered cone bass to good effect	42,179,71	91	4	28	●	●	204
BB	Meridian M33	1,495	Compact active wall-mount packs remarkable dynamic vigour into a very discreet package	15,38,22	A	A	45	●	●	214
	Mirage FRX7	550	Neat slim floorstander has a heavy, laid back balance, probably better suited to movie than music reproduction	17,5,95,32	90	4	25	●	●	204
	Mirage OM-5	3,000	A meaty model that goes loud without distortion, digs deep with aplomb and creates plenty of depth of image	133,30,42	90	6	22	●	●	206
	Mirage OM-10-1	2,000	Tall black omni-bi-pole has plenty of bounce and dynamic vigour, but is more room sensitive than most	23,118,30	88	4	20	●	●	210
R	Mission 700	130	A lot of speaker for the money. Good bass weight and extension and goes loud with ease	18,34,26	87	8	40	●	●	179
S	Mission 771e	200	Beautifully styled miniature has a delightfully voiced midband, and real wood finish too	17,31,22	86	6	45	●	●	207
BB	Mission m73	200	Sharply priced and good looking floorstander. Dynamics are a little limp, but it has a good overall balance. Excellent value for money	20,87,5,31	88	3	25	●	●	215
	Mission 780	299	Gorgeous miniature has a fine midband and clean, bright treble, slightly odd bottom end	16,5,28,27	86	6	40	●	●	201
R	Mission 773e	400	Beautifully designed slim floorstander could be more neutral but still delivers an all-round entertaining sound	17,5,88,26	92	4	30	●	●	193

STEREO SPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	PRICE	SIZE (WxHxD) (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/M)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FREQ. (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31		●	90	4	40	●	●	183
R	Mission 782	699	Ultra-compact floorstander has a glorious midband and slightly odd bass. Good communication skills	16,5,82,28		●	86	9.5	25	●	●	199
R	Mission 775e	800	Lots of speaker for the money, and musically involving too, if a little short of serious weight and authority	23,115,30		●	93	3	25	●	●	204
R	Mission 783	1,000	Plenty of bass weight, and a clean, articulate midrange, but the two don't quite seem to gel	20,5,97,33		●	87	5	20	●	●	211
BF	Monitor Audio Bronze 2	180	A real corker, which combines solid material value for money with a fine all round sonic performance	18,5,35,27		●	89	3	30	●	●	207
R	Monitor Audio Bronze 3	270	Very similar to the Bronze 2, though not necessarily better. Good value with better dynamic expression than most of its ilk	18,5,87,24		●	90	3	30	●	●	215
	Monitor Audio Silver 5i	450	Great looking, sharply priced real wood floorstander, but bottom end lacks drive and tension	20,81,21		●	87	5	30	●	●	210
	Monitor Audio GR20	1,500	Solid and confident design with all metal drivers and neutral if slightly uninspiring sound	20,92,5,30		●	89	6	30	●	●	212
	Mordaunt-Short MS902	200	Gorgeous metal-finished budget stand-mount has a shiny sound to match its looks	18,31,25		●	87	4	45	●	●	207
BB	Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27		●	89	6	30	●	●	164
R	Naim Credo	1,060	Involving sound, but rather forward and cold. Good clarity, but some coloration and a lack of richness	24,89,30		●	88	8	28	●	●	180
R	Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27		●	88	6	25	●	●	143
EC	Naim NBL	6,648	Elegant, large floorstander is exceptionally informative with an awesome dynamic range and dry, forward balance	29,116,47		●	89	4	20	●	●	200
R	Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24		●	86	6	50	●	●	183
R	Neat Mystique Mk2	575	This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality, some might find the top end too insistent	20,86,18		●	85	6	23	●	●	177
R	Neat Neat Petite III	795	The treble is peaky, but this is still one of the most coherent and communicative miniatures around	20,30,5,20		●	86	5	30	●	●	211
R	Neat Elite	1,195	A highly entertaining all-rounder, has a planar tweeter that sounds sweet, if not particularly smooth	20,88,18		●	88.5	6	25	●	●	195
R	NHT Super Zero	200	If tiny size is top priority, the Super Zero is worth considering. It looks nice and sounds articulate, but it definitely needs a subwoofer	14,23,14		●	84	8	100	●	●	215
BB	NHT Super One	250	A fine compromise between size and performance, sensitivity and hence loudness capability is modest	18,5,29,5,23		●	85	8	30	●	●	170
BB	NHT 1.5	400	This compact standmount sounds much bigger than it has any right to. Good timing and communication skills	18,42,26		●	85	6	40	●	●	177
R	NHT Super Two	550	Black and shiny compact three-way floorstander has marvellously even balance and good coherence	18,5,100,26		●	87	8.5	25	●	●	199
	Oheocha D2-Iso-5	2,500	Radical aluminium pawn shaped cabinets combine with multiple drivers make a subtle and refined sound	37,94,37		●	89	8	30	●	●	217
	Opera Prima	495	Good-looking hardwood enclosure, plus fine mid and treble, but less satisfactory bass	19,34,31		●	90	4	40	●	●	190
	Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27		●	88	8	30	●	●	167
R	Orelle Swing	1,200	A superb example of what an essentially small loudspeaker can do, with bags of brio and enthusiasm	18,101,28		●	87	8	45	●	●	195
DF	PMC TB2	600	A worthy and prettier successor to the TB1, which sets a high standard in its size/type class for neutrality and transparency	20,40,5,31		●	88	8	30	●	●	211
R	PMC LB1	999	Still fully competitive eight years after our original review, this genuine compact monitor is now a modern classic	17,5,53,26		●	87	6.5	40	●	●	199
BB	PMC FB1	1,275	Handsome floorstander has the lively coherence of a simple two-way alongside impressive bass weight and extension	20,105,31		●	88	6	20	●	●	204
R	PMC AML1	3,525	Sparkling active Pro monitor with serious attitude: 'in yer face' balance, with great dynamics	20,40,32		●	A	A	25	●	●	214
	Polk RT16	799	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39		●	91	4	22	●	●	160
	ProAc Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25		●	86	8	30	●	●	149
	ProAc Tablette 2000 Sig.	899	Beautifully veneered compact stand-mount is classically balanced, if a little on the bright side of neutral	19,36,26		●	87	6	30	●	●	204
	ProAc Studio 125	1,000	Pretty if pricey compact floorstander with a beautifully natural and neutral midband, and some bass thump	20,94,28		●	87	8	28	●	●	192
	QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal standmount with heavy, laid-back natural but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36		●	83	4	25	●	●	167
	Quad ESL-989	4,600	A very 'different' speaker experience, with magnificent midband transparency and imaging, but limited loudness capability	67,134,32		●	83	3	38	●	●	213
R	Rega Jura	450	Beefy sounding, chunky floorstander sounds very 'direct coupled' to the music, if a touch 'boom n' tizz'	22,5,92,5,26		●	90	5	25	●	●	193
R	Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20		●	87	8	40	●	●	139
R	Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence	34,42,27		●	95	8	55	●	●	167
	RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24		●	81	8	22	●	●	167
	Roksan ROKone	595	Large standmount is musically very communicative, if a little coloured	21,45,33		●	89	6	30	●	●	160
R	Roksan QJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, two-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46		●	84	8	20	●	●	167
BB	Royd Doublet	485	Great value compact floorstander: lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19		●	90	4	28	●	●	160
R	Ruark Epilogue	269	Beautifully finished miniature with a lively balance and plenty of charm; best suited to smaller rooms	17,29,23		●	87	8	47	●	●	183
	Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31		●	87	8	40	●	●	174
	Ruark Prologue One R	949	Strikingly contemporary compact floorstander is well voiced but a little lean in overall balance	17,5,93,28		●	88	5	25	●	●	204
R	Ruark Excalibur	7,000	A big, handsome speaker with a big, laid-back but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom	30,125,53		●	90	4	30	●	●	186
R	Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,17		●	86	8	45	●	●	164
	Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25		●	83	3	30	●	●	164
	Snell K.5	795	Classy AV-ready stand mount is very solidly engineered. Sound is neutral but lacks excitement	22,46,30		●	87	6	25	●	●	190
BB	Snell E.5 Mk2	1520	Large floorstander has serious deep bass extension, and also a delicate midband with low coloration	22,109,30		●	89	4	20	●	●	211
	Snell XA75ps	4,500	Active bass floorstander with marvellous mid coherence, slightly suspect bass integration.	28,117,50		●	91	6	25	●	●	194
	Soliiloquy SM 2A3	1,095	Fine match in balance, coherence, transparency and speed. Intended for use with Cary CAD 2A3SE	35,5,19,30		●	91	8	45	●	●	196
	Sonus Faber Concertino	599	A beautifully neutral loudspeaker in a beautiful Italian suit of clothes. Classy, if quite pricey	21,32,29		●	87	5	30	●	●	193
	Sonus Faber Grand Piano Home	1,589	Classy walnut n'leather floorstander with fine engineering and lovely midband voicing	23,5,29,108		●	90	3	25	●	●	214
	South Coast Speakers Lancelot	895	Pretty compact standmount has nice ribbon tweeter but sounds a bit soft and lacks dynamic vigour	19,36,26		●	84	8	45	●	●	199
R	Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27		●	87	8	30	●	●	160
EC	TAG McLaren F1	15,000	Oddball aesthetics with accurate, unflappable, controlled and consistent sonic neutrality	40,127,48		●	87	8	25	●	●	202
BB	Tannoy mX2	150	Surprisingly refined considering its very modest price: very communicative with outstanding midband delicacy	18,5,33,25		●	89	4	45	●	●	207
	Tannoy Revolution 1	200	Pretty little mini-monitor is smooth, well mannered and polite to a fault, lacks dynamic expression	17,30,22		●	86	4	30	●	●	187
BB	Tannoy mX3	300	A great all-round compromise at a very modest price, combining good looks with fine midband voicing	18,5,87,26		●	90	5	40	●	●	201
	Tannoy mX4	350	Pretty 2.5-way has a clean and unboxy sound with respectable transparency, but lacks the dynamic grip and drive to make music really involving	18,5,96,26		●	89	3	20	●	●	215
BB	Tannoy Revolution R2	350	Bargain price real wood floorstander is beautifully voiced and very even-handed, if a tad laid back	17,94,24		●	90	4	20	●	●	193
	Tannoy Revolution R3	550	Handsome real-wood floorstander does a decent job, but lacks the evenness of its smaller R2 brother	18,5,103,28		●	89	8.5	28	●	●	199
R	Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too	24,85,23		●	87	6	26	●	●	167
	Tannoy ST-100	1,200	This supertweeter adds a subtle and delicate effect while also broadening the soundstage at a price	15,10,5,6		●	95	8	N/A	●	●	206
EC	Tannoy TD10	5,000	Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for	35,101,37		●	91	6	38	●	●	215
	Tannoy Kingdom 12	6,000	Something of a throwback, but great fun, with fine dynamics and authority, but a tricky amp load	54,106,46		●	92	3	28	●	●	213
	Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity	25,78,37		●	85	8	25	●	●	152
	Triang Cometes	359	Communicative standmount has great midband dynamics, but the very bright top end might be intrusive	22,40,29		●	91	4	42	●	●	193
BB	Triangle Zephyr II	599	Loads of fun. Dramatic dynamics and righteous timing will give any hi-fi system a wake-up call	22,94,29		●	91	4	25	●	●	190
EC	Veritas H3	6,000	Loads of fun with wonderful dynamic and temporal integrity from horn-loaded Louthier drivers	30,110,47		●	104	4	50	●	●	191
	Vienna Acoustics Mozart	1,500	Gorgeous slimline floorstander sounds very laid-back but very charming, and musically literate	17,97,30		●	88	7.5	25	●	●	199
EC	Wilson benesch Discovery	5,500	Innovative three way with built-in stand, combines great subtlety with weight and headroom	23,47,38		●	6	45	●	●	●	212
EC	Wilson benesch Bishop	20,000	Deep and even bass sets new standards for cleanliness and clarity; lovely open midband too	23,161,561		●	89	4	S20	●	●	189
	Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23		●	88	4	45	●	●	169
	Wharfedale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	200	Lively and exuberant, but a tad untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard	19,29,5,24		●	88	4	40	●	●	187
	Wharfedale Pacific P140	500	A lot of speaker for the money, but bass is unruly, even in a large-sized room. The smaller P130 might give a better bottom-end balance	22,113,36		●	89	3	25	●	●	215
X	Zingali Overture 25	1,975	Gorgeous, pricey, imposing standmount has a horn tweeter of great delicacy. Impressively weighty	30,57,38		●	90	8	25	●	●	195

SUBWOOFERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/m)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43				20		●	179
R	B&W ASW1000	499	Bulky heavyweight is a high quality item, able to generate more bass output than music is likely to need	54,47,50	●	A		A20	●		198
	Jamo D8SUB	950	Pretty but pricey, the D8SUB packs plenty of punch (for movie fans), but doesn't delve deep enough for music replay	45,5,41,45,5		A		30			210
R	JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39				20		●	179
	M&K MX70	795	Cutely compact and entertaining too, but lacks the ultimate extension to justify its high price	37,32,30	●	A		25			210
	Mission 7AS2	399	Ugly if very effective at supplying very low bass, but filter could do with more flexibility higher up	56,30,31	●			<20	●		198
R	Paradigm PDR-10	150	Not much grip, drive or authority, but it doesn't get in the way and it is very cheap	34,5,36,42	●	A		25			210
	Polk PSW430	400	A lot of subwoofer for your money, but lacks deep grunt and is more movie than music oriented	38,5,45,46	●	A		25			210
R	REL Q50	375	This good looking if bulky sub does the business with impressive flexibility and sonic self-effacement	42,53,31				20			210
R	Ruark Log-Rhythm	775	Adds weight and scale with commendable discretion, making a positive contribution to the whole musical exposition	43,43,43	●	A		<20			210
	Soliloquy S10	1,050	(Active) Pretty subwoofer, cosmetically matching SM 2A3 speakers, pricey and mid-bass a bit strong	51,30,5,46	●	A		25	●		196

SATELLITE & SUBWOOFER SYSTEMS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/m)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
R	AE Aego2	300	Not quite a serious hi-fi speaker system, but a seriously fun type product for all that (19x35x27cm sub)	7,10,9		A	n/a	45	●		218
R	Bandor Trident II	776	Loudness is limited, but overall sound is impressively homogeneous and coherent. (31x46x31cm sub)	12,13,10-12				25	●		218
R	Boston Micro 90	650	Lacks warmth but the midband is smooth and impressively evenhanded (37x36x39cm sub)	10,17,14		88	4	28	●		218
R	Camasse Jupiter/lo	1,228	A sub/sat combo that really competes with proper stereo speakers. Striking styling and stereo imaging (40x43x41cm sub)	15 diam		94	2	30	●		218
	KEF KMS2002	499	Looks the business, but lacks deep bass and the presence/treble is also too restrained (32x36x32cm sub)	13,23,14		85	3	45	●		218
	Mission FS2	450	Intriguing NXT speaker technology has minimal visual impact, but lacks dynamic precision (32x47x25cm sub)	13,5,28,4,5		86	6	40	●		218
	NHT Super Zero/Sub One	1,000	Decent enough, but not the prettiest nor the best value around for music replay - one for movie fans (40x41x42cm sub)	14,23,14		84	8	30	●		218
R	Ruark Vita 100	900	Not the cheapest sub/sat, but certainly one of the most accomplished, sonically and visually (30x42x30cm sub)	11,20,17		86	6	40	●		218

LOUDSPEAKERS

MULTICHANNEL SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/m)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350	High value floorstander has deep and even bass and a smooth neutrality thereafter	19,90,25	●	90	5	22	●		198
R	B&W LCR6	349	Large, gutsy standmount intended for all-round AV use delivers fine performance as a stereo pair too	20,5,55,32		90	5	20	●		198
	B&W Nautilus package	6,500	This classy, laid-back package is arguably too good for current programming. Very bulky centre speaker	var	var	n/a	3	20		●	210
	Definitive Technology BP2X	595	Pricey but effective bi-polar surround speaker, with unusually high sensitivity	23,37,15		94	4	120		●	198
	Definitive Technology BP2004	1,700	Pricey bi-polar floorstander has a fine midband, let down by its built-in powered subwoofer	19,104,31	●	91	5	28	●		198
	Dynaudio LIRC 120	439	Slim centre and front standmount, has an evenhanded but rather laid back balance but lacks drive	16,5,57,31		89	5	25	●		198
	Jamo Concert package	2,500	Lovely main speakers sonically overshadow the centre, while surrounds are a bit obvious too	var	var	n/a	5	30		●	210
BB	JBL Xti-series package	1,100	Hexagonal boxes all round, this package has decent authority and all round tension	var	var	n/a	5	40		●	210
	KEF Q-series package	880	Cleverly designed, vinyl-finished UniQ package packs a goodly thump but centre and surrounds stand out	var	var	n/a	3	25	●		210
	Mirage OM-series package	2,000	Big black and bouncy package with omni fronts has plenty of vigour but some coloration var	var	var	n/a	4	20		●	210
R	Mission 77DS	199	Neat flush-mount surround speaker has no bass but a smooth midband and nicely restrained treble	34,26,12		92	4	120		●	198
	Mission Cinema 8 package	1,400	Beautifully styled and cleverly designed package, but could have more grunt and drive for the price	var	var	n/a	4	30		●	210
	Polk RTE 1000p	1,300	Tall elegant tower with built-in powered bass 'subwoofer' that needs using with discretion. Bright but engaging	20,110,35	●	91	4	25	●		198
	Monitor Audio Silver series	1,000	Great looking conventionally styled package lacks something in dynamic drive and tension	var	var	n/a	4	30		●	210
R	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority but must be 5.1-connected var	var	var	n/a	3	25		●	210
R	PMC FB1/7B2 package	2,200	Classy if bulky and pricey package has good transparency, coherence and weight	var	var	n/a	6	20		●	210
R	Rega Jura/Ara/Senta	920	Classy real wood package does a good all round job, but sounds bright and might have more surround weight	var	var	n/a	4	25		●	210
BB	Tannoy mXAV4 package	500	Lacks grunt, grip and authority, but smooth and refined with seamless surround coherence	var	var	n/a	4	20		●	210
BB	Tannoy Saturn 56LCR	400	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	21,38,29		89	6	25		●	198
BB	Tannoy Saturn 56	500	Fine value vinyl floorstander offers plenty of genuine grunt and real dynamic tension	21,89,29	●	91	4	20	●		198

CENTRE CHANNEL SPEAKERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/m)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis Centre	140	Good value centre-front speaker but a tad shut in and with a slightly obvious top end (price per speaker)	46,17,20		89	5	50	●		198
	B&W Nautilus HTM1	1,500	Very bulky for a centre speaker, though very capable too - a little less laid back than its siblings	76,37,30		89	4	30		●	210
	Castle Keep	250	Substantial centre-front speaker based on Harlech drivers but with rather brighter voicing	48,17,29		88	8	45		●	198
R	Definitive Technology CLR2002	595	Pricey, but undoubtedly one of the better centre-front speakers around, with fine timing and open voicing	55,5,17,5,31		90	4	40		●	198
	Jamo Concert Center	550	A decent balance match but lacks the class and grip of the Concert 8s, and is bulky and pricey too	55,22,30		87	5	100		●	210
BB	JBL Xti10C	200	An elegant, cleverly designed centre and a good match for the 40s. Better value than most too	51,19,5,27		88	5	50		●	210
	KEF Q95C	200	This a fully designed UniQ centre looks much better than most on top of the TV set	40,17,17		89	3	120		●	210
	Mirage OM-C2	600	Large but discreet omni-bi-pole matches OM-10-1 well but lacks tight focus, and seems expensive	64,18,5,31		88	4	50		●	210
R	Mission 77C	199	A good centre-front match for 77-series, the triple tweeter might be a curiosity, but voicing is very good	42,17,21		91	4	100		●	198
	Mission 78C	350	Makes a good visual and sonic match for the 782, but quite pricey by comparison, given the ingredients	45,17,19		86	3	100		●	210
	Monitor Audio Silver Centre 10i	300	Neat and good looking partner to the Silver 5is, but a little more forward, and quite expensive too	50,17,21		87	4	100		●	210
R	Mordaunt-Short MS 504	200	Smart yet discreet and a good match for the 502. Sounds clean and expressive, and is well priced	50,19,20		88	3	120		●	210
R	PMCTB2MIC	325	This bulky centre speaker is quite pricey, but it combines good transparency with some authority	40,20,31		87	6	50		●	210
	Polk CS 1000p	999	Monstrously large and heavy centre-front speaker, presumably for those with monstrous intentions	87,22,35		92	4	25		●	198
R	Rega Senta	185	The very compact Senta is sensibly priced, a bit bright maybe, but articulate and expressive	32,16,21		88	4	120		●	210
BB	Tannoy mXC	100	Could be more exciting, but a very impressive centre speaker at an unusually reasonable price	42,16,21		89	4	120		●	210
BB	Tannoy Saturn 56C	200	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	38,21,29		89	6	25	●		198

PERSONAL / INTERNET			SPECIFICATIONS						
PERSONAL STEREOS			STORAGE FORMAT	RECORDING	IN-LINE REMOTE	CODEC	PC CONNECTION	STANDARD CAPACITY	ISSUE NUMBER
STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS						
	Aiwa HS-PX307	30	So-so sound but an impressive features roster. Decent value overall	Cassette		●			204
R	Aiwa AM-HX50	180	Neat play-back only personal with an impressively full-bodied sound, though short on detail	MiniDisc		●			204
	JVC XL-PG31	60	'Challenging' looks and frankly unpleasant sound add up to a player that's best avoided.	CD					216
	JVC XM-R700SL	250	The most expensive player here, but its in-er-face sound and slab-like, heavy design make its value questionable	MiniDisc	●	●			216
R	Kenwood DPC-X517	100	Clean, funky bass makes for an exciting sound; an attractive proposition, if you can stomach the looks	CD					216
R	Panasonic RQ-SX71	70	A sleek aluminium body, decent sound and superb features	Cassette		●			204
	Panasonic RQ-SX91	80	A super-slick personal for well-heeled cassette users. Sound is rather bright	Cassette		●			204
	Panasonic SJ-MR100	250	Well built and nicely appointed, though performance is unremarkable at the price	MiniDisc		●	●		204
R	Philips ACT7582	115	A splash-proof body and an entertaining sound – the perfect CD personal for holiday japes	CD					204
R	Sharp MD-MT877H	230	Pleasantly up-front sounding player in a sexy little package, well worth your attention if you like that kind of thing	MiniDisc		●	●		216
	Sony WM-EX404	35	Super-stylish but sonically flawed, with particularly uncomfortable earphones	Cassette					204
BB	Sony D-EJ925	149.99	Beautiful design matched with a beguiling sound – a clear Best Buy	CD			●		216
BB	Sony MZ-G750	199.99	Light, simple to use, and with a relaxed and enjoyable sound, and with a tuner too!	MiniDisc		●	●		216
BB	Sony MZ-R91	250	A petite and sexy beast with good sound and excellent facilities	MiniDisc		●	●		204

INTERNET AUDIO			SPECIFICATIONS							
STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS							
	Aiwa MM-VX100	130	Aiwa's expertise in the personal stereo field is visible, but performance is only average	Solid State	●	●	MP3	PRL	32MB	204
	Audio ReQuest ARQ1	568	Full size separate containing CD player, hard drive and PC connection. Sign of things to come?	CD/H/D	●		MP3/WMA	APR/USB	17GB	208
BB	Creative Labs Digital Jukebox	349	Smartly designed high-capacity portable with storage for over 1,000 tracks	Hard Drive			Agnostic	USB	5.7GB	208
R	DigMedia Music Store	350	Innovative CD/hard drive combo with optional solid state portable. MP3 with or without a computer	CD/H/D	●		MP3	USB	5.4GB	208
	JazPiper MV32P	125	First wave player that looks good but sounds bright. Includes voice recording and phone book features	Solid State	●		MP3	PRL	32MB	195
	LG MF-PD360	130	Good looking and temptingly affordable, but features and performance are nothing special	Solid State	●		MP3	USB	32MB	208
	LG AHA-FD770	200	Cassette and solid state personal in one – novel idea, poor execution	SS/Cass	●	●	MP3	PRL	32MB	204
	Logix Ezzone	219	Novell MP3 player that uses omega Click! discs for storage. Chunky but quite effective, and discs are much cheaper than memory cards	Click! Discs	●		MP3/WMA	USB	40MB	213
R	Neo-25	420	Sparsely equipped but efficient hard drive portable with an exceptionally high potential capacity. Average in the sound department	Hard Drive	●		MP3	USB	10GB	213
R	Philips eXpanium EXP103	190	The best MP3-CD personal, at least at the time of writing... An effective solution for MP3 on the move	CD			MP3			213
	Philips Rush SA126	250	Sound is a little thin and wishy-washy, and the fiddly controls and lack of remote make it difficult to use	Solid State	●		MP3	USB/PRL	64MB	216
R	Pine D'Music	120	Good build, solid sound and a voice recording mode make this a good first-time buy	Solid State	●		MP3	PRL	32MB	195
	Pontis SP504	158	Not the best aesthetically, but exceptionally good MP3 sound	Solid State	●		MP3	USB	32MB	204
R	Rio 500	190	Well featured and a strong performer, though new generation Rios have now arrived	Solid State	●		MP3	USB	64MB	195
R	Rio 600	169	Neat design, strong future-proofing, good features and sound. Only its memory lets it down	Solid State	●		Agnostic	USB	32MB	208
R	Rio 800	300	If you're interested in solid state, this player's great sound and ease of use make it worth a look	Solid State	●	●	Agnostic	USB	64MB	216
	Sanyo SSP-PD7	250	Cute but pricey with limited supplied memory, but sound is good and it's one of the first to employ AAC coding	Solid State	●		MP3/AAC	USB	32MB	213
	Schneider MPMan F20	99	The world's first MP3 personal. Basic but still good value	Solid State	●		MP3	PRL	32MB	195
	Smart Portable MP3 Disc Player	119	CD personal that also plays MP3 tracks burnt onto CD-R discs	CD			MP3			208
	Sony NW-MS7	249	A gorgeous little personal using Sony's Memory Stick storage. Good but pricey	Solid State	●		MP3/AAC-3	USB	64MB	208
	Sony NW-MS9	300	It's got size and simplicity on its side, but it's up-front, boomy sound is significantly below par	Solid State	●		MP3/AAC-3	USB	64MB	216
R	Sony MDC-PC3	350	A MiniDisc deck which hooks to a PC. Introduces cheap and flexible MD media to the world of MP3	MiniDisc	●		MP3/AAC	USB		213

RECORD PLAYERS			SPECIFICATIONS								
TURNTABLES			MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS								
BB	Audio Note TT1/ARM1	594	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high end performance at an affordable price	●			33/45	●	●	●	203
	Avid Acutus	4,995	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings, don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	●			33/45	●	●		194
	Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●			33/45				144
R	DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●			33/45		●	●	144
	Dual CS 455.1	220	Neat record player with automatic convenience (and 78rpm), but doesn't match simpler manual rivals sonically		●		33/45/78	●	●	●	203
R	Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph			●	33/45	●	●	●	103
R	Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●			33/45	●	●		91
R	Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc. still top rank	●			33	●	●	●	103
R	Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●			33/45	●	●		91
R	Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●			33/45	●			55
EC	Michell Gyro SE	775	A stunningly desirable combination of looks, solidity and sound make this a tempting turntable	●			33/45	●			190
BB	Michell Orbe SE	1,725	A Superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price	●			33/45	●			192
BB	NAD 533	220	Sonically a little crude, but musically satisfying results at a very modest price	●			33/45		●	●	203
BB	Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●			33/45		●	●	159
BB	Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●			33/45		●	●	164
	Pro-ject Classic Cherry	450	A great looking turntable with a generous and dynamic sound, but lacks something in overall coherence	●			33/45		●		203
	Pro-ject Perspective	750	Flexible facilities and competitive package, but performance of turntable alone is behind the best	●			33/45	●	●		192
R	Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi – it's that good	●			33/45	●	●	●	138

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPEEDS					SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
				MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	EXTERNAL PSU	SUSP SUBCHASSIS			
BB	Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●					●	48	
R	Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●					●	164	
BB	Rega Planar 2S	619	Great looking turntable has a silky smooth sound with exceptional midband coherence	●					●	203	
BB	Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●					●	159	
R	Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●					●	159	
EC	SME Model 10A	3,333	Elegant and extremely capable design with Series W309 hybrid arm, superbly built						●	195	
EC	SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm						●	186	
BB	Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges	●					●	103	
	Thorens TD146 VI	550	Tonearm not quite up to turntable's potential; this semi-auto is much pricier than manual TD166	●					●	203	
	Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●					●	159	
R	VPI HW19 Junior	650	A notably large and handsome turntable with good sound quality and considerable upgrade potential	●					●	203	
R	Well Tempered Record Player	850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●					●	136	
EC	Well Tempered Reference	5,500	Superb mechanical stability and unflappability result in a clean reproduction	●					●	205	
BB	Wilson benesch The Circle	795	A beautiful turntable with a sumptuous sound, all at a very reasonable price – a clear Best Buy	●					●	192	

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced	●			2.8		48
	Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	330	A well-finished cartridge with a sound that's smoothly detailed, but also rather unexciting		●		0.4	8	192
BB	Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy		●		0.55	11.5	175
BB	Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well		●		1.0	6	48
	Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail		●		0.1	6	103
BB	Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price		●				103
R	Dynavector DV-20X L	299	Articulate-sounding, with impressive treble resolve, though lightweight at times. Needs a high quality turntable and arm		●		0.25	8.6	192
	Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent		●		0.15	5.3	158
R	Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm		●		0.25	12	84
R	Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk		●		0.25	8.5	175
EC	Dynavector DRT XV-1	2,500	Capable of conjuring one of the most tactile, three dimensional sound stages on the vinyl planet. Extremely entertaining		●		0.3	13	208
R	Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●			5.0	7	67
R	Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency coloration apparent	●			6.5	7	85
R	Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●			6.5	7	85
R	Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative		●		0.5	8	84
	Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively, though		●		6.5	6	91
	Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound is not the cleanest		●		0.5	8	103
	Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end		●		0.45	8	175
BB	Grado Prestige Gold	149	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge		●		4	6	158
	Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users		●		1.7	6.5	175
BB	Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus		●		4.5	5	Col
	London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever		●		5.0	6	67
	London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and nonlinear, with a questionable effect on records		●		5.0	6	84
	Lyra Lydian Beta	599	A thoroughly enjoyable cartridge – smooth, agile and dynamic in character		●		0.5	8	192
R	Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●		0.3	7	158
EC	Lyra Helikon	1095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons. Albeit fussy about vinyl quality		●		0.5	8	215
	Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak		●		0.22	10.5	175
BB	Ortofon S10/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●			3.0	5	85
R	Ortofon S20/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the S20/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●			3.0	5	67
R	Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes		●		3.3	4	103
BB	Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up		●		0.35	7	103
	Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable		●		0.5	11	139
	Ortofon MC25FL	250	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP		●		0.5	11	139
BB	Ortofon MC 10 Supreme	300	A full and cultured-sounding cartridge, with collective attributes far outweighing its shortcomings		●		0.5	10.7	192
	Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings		●		0.5	10.7	158
BB	Ortofon Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound		●		0.25	8.5	175
R	Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere – one of the very best		●		0.12	10	84
	Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo		●		0.12	10	91
	Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow body, but the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●			5	4	67
R	Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●			5.0	5	67
R	Reson Recla	250	If you're after a high quality moving magnet cartridge, they don't get much better than this	●			6.5	6.3	192
R	Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●			6.5	5	91
BB	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300		●		2.5	9	192
R	van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●			5.5	6	103
	van den Hul DDT-II	600	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy		●		0.35	7.6	158
R	van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass		●		0.4	6	60
R	van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money		●		0.4	6	60
R	van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal		●		0.4	6	72
R	van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm		●		0.65	7	175
R	van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse		●		0.4	6	122
R	Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive		●		0.58	6	158
R	Wilson benesch Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound		●		0.45	7	175

TONEARMS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	EFFECTIVE MASS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High		●			79
R	Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Med		●		229	67
BB	Rega RB250	109	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low		●		237	60
BB	Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low		●		237	60
R	Roksan Tabriz Basic	350	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low		●		240	91
K	SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low		●		233	60
R	SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low		●		233	60

STANDS & SUPPORTS

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Aavik C4	200	Attractive wood finish stand with a very large footprint but sound is a little coloured	77	47			4	MDF	206
R	Aavik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47			4	Wood	193
R	Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered for the money	36	60,39			4	Glass	181
R	Apollo Symphony	245	Simple steel and glass stand which majors in excitement factor but lacks precision	73	46.5		●	4	Glass	206
R	Apollo Soprano	275	Uninspiring looks and sonic performance that can be beaten at this price	68.5	45.5			4	Glass	193
R	Apollo Mezzo Soprano	340	Heavyweight contender packing a big sonic punch. Looks cool, but can contribute a bit of character	68.5	53.5,44			4	Glass	217
R	Atacama Europa	240	Stylish, expandable modular design with agreeable full-bodied sound – great value	67	48.6			4	Wood	193
R	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept	81	50,50		●	4	Glass	217
BB	Audiophile Furniture Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43			4	MDF	193
R	Avid Isoschelf	1,100	An enthusiasts equipment support stand free from coloration if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48			5	MDF	193
BB	Clearlight Audio RDC Aspekt	549	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well damped design. Its performance makes the price tag seem rather good value	75	53.5,45			4	MDF	217
R	Custom design E'lite E4	250	Fairly laid back for a glass/steel rack. Just loses out sonically to the competition	51	62,51			4	Glass	217
R	Custom Design Aspect650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46		●	4	Glass	206
R	Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1,199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49		●	4	Marb	181
R	Elemental Audio Isotube X4	849	A hefty stand that demonstrates just how much difference a good support can make	90	49		●	4	Glass	193
BB	Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34		●	3	Glass	166
R	Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39			4	Resin	181
R	Kestrel Furniture Nightingale	495	Well engineered furniture quality rack with thoughtful extras. Large with pleasing but not winning performance	91	62.5,53.5			5	wood	217
R	Mana 4-tier	500	The ultimate statement in steel and glass; adds resonance in a way you'll love or hate	87	45		●	4	Glass	206
R	Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	299	25kg stand with shelves between variable-height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40			4	Glass	166
R	Optimum Int 2000 OPT660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52			5	Glass	181
R	Projekt Furniture A4	215	An elegant support stand that blends in to any home environment with a laid-back sound	56	48			4	Wood	193
R	Quadraspire Q4	280	Simple but modestly effective and very attractive	52	49			4	MDF	206
R	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	440	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5			4	Wood	217
R	Sonus System Elite	330	Rather ugly and seems to offer little over and above cheaper steel and glass stands	68	50		●	4	Glass	206
R	Sound Organisation Z545	160	Budget price and great looks make this a great value stand	73	46		●	4	Glass	193
R	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, 5 shelves too! Well balanced and under £200	92	50,40			5	Glass	217
R	Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28		●	4	Glass	181
R	Soundstyle XS100	270	Less character than other similar stands, but sound is somewhat short on transparency	72.5	49.5		●	4	Glass	206
R	Soundstyle Radius SR100	280	Stylish looks and a smooth sound	63.5	49.5		●	4	Glass	193
BB	Standesign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price with good sonic performance	88.5	50.8		●	4	Glass	193
BB	Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	980	Serious resolution and stunning isolation from air decoupled self levelling design. If you have the cash, buy one	61	53,39.5			4	MDF	217
BB	Wilson benches Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50			4	Wood	181

SPEAKER STANDS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Alphason Akros II	65	A well-specified budget stand but the sound is as subtle as a house party	60,45	16.5		●			202
R	Alphason HDS	85	A reasonable stand with a smooth but rather bland sound balance. Good finish options	45-60	15.5,15.5		●			189
R	Apollo Olympus	75	A popular stand and a decent performer, but unremarkable by today's standards	40-60	15,12.5		●			189
R	Apollo A4/6	82	A pretty and robust design that sonically fails to stand out from the crowd	51,40,51	18		●			202
BB	Atacama Nexus 6	50	An excellent all round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14.5, 18		●			202
R	Atacama R724	150	Atacama uses its market strength to deliver a superbly appointed product at a very reasonable price	60	15,17		●			189
R	Custom Design R/S300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16.5,18		●			202
R	Elemental Isotube SZse	599	Stands of distinction, able to free the speaker's sound from its box in a way budget stands simply can't	61	23,27		●	●		189
R	JPW HS1	120	A purposeful stand, a touch dry-sounding but particularly strong with bass. Great for rock and dance music	61	19,21		●			189
R	Mana Sound Base	175	The Sound Base plinth simply improves the sound of every speaker placed on it	8	29,32					202
R	Mission Stance	100	Detailed and open but needs a firm foundation to give its best	60	19,15		●			202
BB	Partington A-4	119	An oddball stand with a sound that's sheer class. More open and focused than almost anything below £150	50-100	19,22		●			189
R	Partington Dreadnought Ult.	299	Super heavyweight stand that is an open window to the speaker placed on it	63	20.5,23.5		●			202
R	Russ Andrews Torlyte	599	Subtle and musical-sounding stands, though a touch more 'pizzazz' is need for Recommendation at this price	61	33.5,24					189
R	Sonus Systems Excel	110	Strong performance when filled with sand but design flaws let it down	65,45	20,22.5		●			202
R	Sound Organisation Z524	69	A coherent-sounding stand with particular strengths in the midband, though quality drops at the frequency extremes	61	16,17					189
BB	Sound Organisation Z522	89	Easy going and likeable performer straight out of the box	59	16,17		●			202
R	Sound Style Select	95	OK but not as good as its cheaper brother the Z522	59	16,17		●			202
R	Target HM60	106	A solid and well-built stand laid-back to the point of coma	40-70	16.5,19		●			202
R	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works well with decent floorstanders as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48					202

MISSION

Award – Winning Speakers available from:



MUSICAL IMAGES

Covent Gardens Branch - 18 Monmouth Street 0207 497 1346
Edgware Branch - 173 Station Road 0208 952 5535
Hounslow Branch - 45 High Street 0208 569 5802



6-8 Bancroft
Hitchin, Herts
SG5 1JQ

David Orton Audio Visual ALL REGION DVD Players Available

Multiroom Installations,
Demonstration Rooms & Interest Free Credit available



TEL: 01462 452248
FAX: 01462 458424
Email: davidov@aol.com

FULL
MISSION
RANGE ON
DEMONSTRATION

HOME CINEMA
WIDESCREEN
PLASMA & DVD

244-256 STATION ROAD, ADDLESTONE, SURREY
TEL: 01932 854522 FAX: 01932 832432

OTHER BRANDS INCLUDE
ARCAM, CABLE TALK, DENON,
DUAL, JAMO, KENWOOD,
MARANTZ, NAD, PIONEER, QED,
QUAD, SENNHEISER, SONY,
TANNOY, TARGET,
TECHNICS, THORENS, YAMAHA.

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK
COSMIC
A world of difference

Practical Hi-Fi

0% Finance available on
selected items

- ▶ MANCHESTER: 65 Bridge Street - 0161 839-8869
- ▶ PRESTON: 43 Friargate - 01772 883958
- ▶ WARRINGTON: 88 Bridge Street - 01925 632179
- ▶ BOLTON: 33 Knowsley Street - 01204 395789
- ▶ CARLISLE: 106 English Street - 01228 44792
- ▶ BLACKPOOL: 81 Whitegate Drive - 01253 300599
- ▶ LANCASTER: 84 Penny Street - 01524 39657

English Audio

Stockist of

MISSION

37 Whitecross Road, Hereford,
HR4 0DE
01432 355 081

Sounds



Perfect
at J D Brown

Where Music Matters

Hi-fi at its best

26 St Andrews Street
Dundee
Tel 01382 226591
Fax 01382 229994

Sales, Service and Installation
Open Mon-Thur 10-7
Fri 10-6
Sat 9-5

TUNERS

ANALOGUE TUNERS

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Cambridge T500	180	Very capable tuner suited to good and less good reception conditions	FM,M,L	64			●	●	193
R	Creek T43	399	Quality UK-made tuner offering classy sound in all areas at a very fair price	FM,M,L	64		●	●	●	193
R	Cyrus FM7.5	400	Beautifully made and presented, with sound that's a small but worthwhile advance over budget models	FM	7			●	●	211
BB	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	●				193
R	Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM,M	40	●			●	184
	Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3			●	●	184
BB	Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM,M,L	30	●			●	166
	Leak Trough Line - GTA	300	A renovated classic with a style all of its own coupled with an emotive and gutsy performance	FM	0			●	●	206
	Linn Pekin	545	Smart and high-tech tuner which integrates well with Linn systems but offers less appealing performance out of that context	FM, M	80		●	●		211
R	Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80		●	●		142
BB	Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models	FM,M	60	●				184
	Marantz ST6000	150	Another budget killer from Marantz, with sound well above its class and useful features	FM, M, L	90	●		●		211
R	Myryad T-30	400	Attractive product that produces attractive sounds too: capable of very musical performance with a good aerial	FM	29		●	●		193
	Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20			●	●	184
	NAD C440	200	Rather polite sound, a little vague at times, that seldom offends but never excites	FM,M	30	●				193
	Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM,M	40	●		●	●	166
	Roksan Caspian	595	Neat fascia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50		●	●	●	184
	Sony ST-SE500	140	A lot of features for the money, but sound lacks detail and has some coloration	FM,M,L	30	●			●	193
	Roksan Kandy KT-1	375	Well made but sound is a bit lacklustre and lags behind some budget models	FM, M, L		●				211
	Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM,M	20					166
	Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM,M,L	30	●		●	●	157
R	Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM,M,L	30	●		●	●	184
	Thorens TRT2000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun	FM,M	59	●	●	●	●	157

DIGITAL TUNERS

STATUS	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	800	The first DAB tuner and arguably still the best, but the system's still not perfect	DAB	7	●	●	●	●	199
	Arcam FMJ DT26	1,000	Metal-cased version of the Alpha 10 DAB, not so competitive now DAB prices are dropping	DAB	7	●	●	●	●	211
	Cymbol C-DAB 1	1,000	The first 'high-end' DAB tuner, although format is the ultimate limitation. Gorgeous finish	DAB	8	●	●	●		199
	Pision Wavefinder	299	Bizarre-looking DAB tuner that requires a powerful PC to operate - great gadget, sound variable	DAB		●		●		211
	Sony ST-D777ES	550	Smart and useful with DAB and FM in one box, but neither band really shines	DAB, FM, M, L	99	●	●	●	●	211
R	Technics ST-GT1000	500	Handy tuner that combines DAB, FM and AM in one unit and substantially lowers the price bar for DAB entry	DAB,FM,M	97	●	●	●	●	199
BB	Videologic DRX-601E	299	Cheapest DAB tuner to date, and concedes little if anything to dearer models	DAB	10	●		●	●	211

SUBSCRIBE TO HI-FI CHOICE NOW!



AND SAVE OVER 25% ON THE COVER PRICE!

HOTLINE NUMBER
+44 (0) 1458 271147

Choosing a good hi-fi dealer is the most vital step in acquiring the system that is right for you. This unique directory gives full information on dealers able to help in your area.

DEALER Directory

Members of the British Audio Dealers Association are able to offer:



- Two year guarantee, transferable to another BADA dealer should the purchaser move more than 30 miles from his/her original address
- low cost five year guarantee option
- proper demonstration facilities
- seven day exchange or refund scheme if the dealer's advice is taken on product selection
- fully guaranteed service work
- customer complaints procedure in the event of problems

For more information contact BADA on ☎ 020 7226 4044

BATH/BRISTOL

THE RIGHT NOTE, tel: 01225 874728. Give your ears a new reference point for the best sounds at any price. Forget reviews and trying to put together a system like a patchwork quilt with the 'best' bits around. It's *our* job to do the assessing, you judge the results. Come here, or we'll come to you, and *plan* a system for the future, even if you spread the purchases. Leave "upgrade-itis" behind, save money and enjoy music. Just listen, and you'll know. CD: Accuphase, Advantage, Audio Synthesis, Balanced Audio Technology, dCS (Elgar etc), Meracrus, Pass, Sugden, Wadia. Vinyl: Audio Synthesis, Basis, Clearaudio, DNM, Graham, (The) Groove, Lehmann (Black Cube), Michell, Sumiko, Transfiguration. Amps: Accuphase, Advantage, Balanced Audio Technology, CAT, DNM, Gamut, Lumley, Meracrus, Michell, Nagra, Pass, Sonneteer, Spectral, Sugden. Speakers: Audio Physic, BKS, Ethos, Harbeth, Lumley, Magneplanar, NEAT, Totem, Verity Audio. Tuners: Accuphase, Magnum Dynalab. Cables: Argento, Chord Co, DNM, Hovland, Nordost, SonicLink, Siltech, Yamamura Churchill. Mains: Accuphase.

BEDFORDSHIRE

RICHARDS AUDIO VISUAL, 4 Greyfriars, Bedford MK40 1HP. Tel: 01234 365165. Email: richavbed@aol.com. FRIENDLY PERSONAL SERVICE. MULTI-ROOM HOME INSTALL SPECIALISTS. FREE HOME SURVEYS. Stockists of Arcam FMJ, Audioquest, B&W, Bose, Cabletalk, Cyrus, Denon, Marantz, Mission, Moth, Optimum, Ortofon, Pioneer, Pro-Ject, QED, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Talk Electronics, Tannoy, Target, Teac, Van den Hul, Yamaha and more. LISTENING ROOM. 0% FINANCE. Open 6 days 9.30-5.30. CAR PARK AT REAR OF SHOP.

BIRMINGHAM

SOUND ACADEMY, 111 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1PU. Tel: 0121 321 2445. Audio equipment from leading and specialist brands, with 3 demo floors, home trials, home cinema with instore demo theatre, evening demos by appointment. In house service dept. Mail order avail. Int. free credit subject to status. Open 6 days 9am - 6pm. Late night Friday. Expert advice, cable dressing and free installation. Also at 152a High Street, Bloxwich, Nr Walsall, W Midlands. Tel: 01922 493499/ 473499.



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NORTHWOOD AUDIO, 98 Cambridge St, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BA. Tel: 01296 428790 (A/P), fax: 01296 421282. Selected sounds from Acoustic Energy, Alchemist, Audiomeca, Audio Note, Boston, B&W, Cabletalk, Castle, Chord, Chord Company, CR Development, Davis, Denon, DNM, D.P.A., Epos, Exposure, Harman Kardon, Heart, KEF, Klipsch, Linn, Magnat, Marantz, Michell, Micromega, Monitor Audio, Musical Technology, NAD, Pioneer, PMC, ProAc, Quadraspire, Rega, REL, Rose, Rotel, Ruark, Sony, Stax, System Audio, Talk Electronics, Tannoy, Target, Teac, UKD. Nobody ever regretted purchasing the best. Export orders welcome. 2 demo rooms. Credit facilities available.

HAZLEMERE AUDIO. Music Lovers - the chance to increase your enjoyment of music. Objective advice, comfortable listening rooms, home demonstrations, free installations, exceptional customer service, and some of the world's finest equipment: Accuphase, ATC, Audio Analogue, BKS, Clearaudio, Creek, Crimson, DNM, Epos, Gamut, Nagra, Passlabs, Opera, Ortofon, Rehdeko, Resolution, Reson, Rockport, Sugden, Totem, Triangle, Trilogy, Unison Research. For an appointment (day or evening) call High Wycombe (01494) 865829

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

SYSTEMS - Specialists in Sound. 28-30 Burleigh Street, Cambridge CB1 1DG. Tel: 01223 461518. Open Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm. Stockists of Arcam, REL, Denon, Mission, Yamaha, NAD, Marantz, Technics, Rotel, Sony, Project, Musical Fidelity, Ruark, Castle, Acoustic Energy, Wharfedale, Myryad, Audioquest, Soundstyle and much more. Demonstration room available.

THE AUDIO FILE, 41 Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3BW. Tel: 01223 368305, fax: 01223 354975. Open Mon-Sat 9-5.30pm. Sstreater@aol.com. Interest free credit. Absolute Sounds, Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Bose, B&W Nautilus, Cyrus, Denon, KEF, Linn, Loewe, Marantz, Mission, M & K, Onkyo, Pioneer, ProAc, QED, Rega, Sony, Tag McLaren, Yamaha. **BADA**

CHESHIRE

ACOUSTICA, 17 Hoole Rd, Chester CH2 3NH. www.acoustica.co.uk. Tel: 01244 344227. All that's best in Hi-Fi and Home Cinema from quality manufacturers including Naim, Rega, Arcam, Musical Fidelity, Rotel, Seleco Projectors, Kef, Ruark, Densen, Primare, Teac, JM Lab, Nakamichi, Quadraspire, Celestion and Crimson. We offer friendly, helpful advice, interest-free

credit and trade-in facilities, and deliver and install systems throughout Cheshire, Merseyside and North Wales. Open Tues. - Sat. 10-5.30, evenings by arrangement.

ACTON GATE AUDIO, 4 Ruabon Rd, Wrexham. Tel: 01978 364500. Audio Visual specialists. Arcam, Bose, Boston, B&W, Celestion, Castle, Denon, GLL, Harman-Kardon, Jamo, JBL, Marantz, Michell, Mission, Mordaunt-Short, Musical Fidelity, Myryad, NAD, Micromega, Quad, Rotel, Rogers, Roksan, Ruark, Tannoy, Teac, TDL, UKD, Yamaha DSP member. Demonstration room, installation service. Easy parking and motorway access. Mastercard, Visa etc.

AUDIO COUNSEL, 14 Stockport Rd, Cheadle, Cheshire. Tel: 0161 428 7887. Please see entry under Greater Manchester.

DOUG BRADY HI-FI, Kingsway Studios, Kingsway North, Warrington WA1 3NU. Tel: 01925 828009, fax: 01925 825773. For the widest range of high quality hi-fi in the Northwest. Family business est. 35 years. 3 demo rooms, inc. home cinema, home trials; deliveries throughout NW; Mastercard, Visa, credit facilities. Open 10-6; Send for free map and/or 5 page sale list **BADA**

THE HI-FI SHOWROOMS, 12A West Str, off West St Car Park, Congleton, Cheshire. Tel: 01260 280017. E-mail: mail@hifishowrooms.co.uk. Web site: hifishowrooms.co.uk. Naim Audio, Audiolab, Rega, REL, Arcam, Technics, KEF, NAD, Harman-Kardon, Yamaha, Rotel, Lexicon, RCF, Millennium, NHT, JBL, Onkyo, Sony, Marantz, Toshiba, Panasonic, Ruark, Jamo, Celestion, Qed, Teac, Castle. Front and rear projection systems, 3 demonstration rooms, 1 AV with 8ft screen, customer car park. The North West's Premier Audio Visual Specialist. Mastercard, Visa, Amex, JCB. 9.15-5.30, Closed Sun/Mon.

CORNWALL

SOUNDS PERFECTION, Nightree House, Mawgan, Helston, Cornwall, TR12 6AX. Tel/fax: 01326 221372. Email: nigel@soundsperection.co.uk. www.soundsperection.co.uk. Alchemist, Audio-note, Audio Spectrum, Avid Audio Design (The Groove), Border Patrol, Boston Acoustics, Cable Talk, Henley Designs, Lexicon, Michell, Nordost, Parasound, Monitor Audio, Musical Fidelity, Primare, Project Turntables, REL, Roksan, SME, Sonic Frontiers, Stands Unique, Philosophy, Audioquest, Tannoy, Target, Teac, Thorens, V-Damp Isolation, Unison Research, Audio Analogue, J.M. Labs, Electrocompaniet, Triangle, Trichord, Sugden, Tara-Labs. Open 6 days a week Mon-Thurs 10-7, Fri 10-6, Sat 9-5.

DORSET

MOVEMENT AUDIO, 588 Ashley Road, Parkstone, Poole. Tel: 01202 730865/380018. Arcam, Audio Vector, B&W, Castle, Cyrus, Denon, Marantz, Mission (inc. FS series), NAD, Pioneer, Roksan, REL, Rotel, Shearman, Tannoy, Yamaha. 3 demo rooms, Home Cinema and Hi Fi specialists, easy parking on site, high quality used equipment, massive range of audio and video leads and connectors etc. Credit facilities. Visit us on www.movement-audio.co.uk. Open Tues-Sat 10-5.30. **BADA**

MOVEMENT AUDIO, 926 Wimborne Road, Moordown, Bournemouth, Dorset. Tel: 01202 529988/ 520066. Arcam, B&W, Celestion, Denon, Marantz, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Opera, Pioneer, Project, REL, Rotel, Tannoy, Teac, Yamaha. Home cinema and Hi Fi specialists, full demo facilities, friendly expert advice, home demo and installation, easy parking, credit facilities, Visa/Mastercard. Open Tues-Sat 9.30-5.30. **BADA**

SUTTONS HI-FI, 18 Westover Road, Bournemouth. Tel: 01202 555512. Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Atacama, Celestion, Cable Talk, Denon, Definitive Audio, KEF, Linn, Meridian, Mission, M+K, QED, Rotel, Sennheiser, Teac, Sony, Talk Electronics, Tag McLaren, Wharfedale, Yamaha, DTS & Dolby Digital, DVD. 2 single speaker listening rooms, home demonstrations, free installations. Open Mon-Sat 9-5.30. Call for details. **BADA**

WEYMOUTH HI-FI, 33-35 Maiden Street, Weymouth. Tel: 01305 785729/766345. Arcam, B&W, Castle, Celestion, Denon, KEF, Musical Fidelity, Panasonic, Pioneer, Project, Quad, Rotel, Technics, Yamaha plus large range of P.A. and DJ audio and lighting, multi room and commercial installation specialists, Home Cinema and DVD, Projection TV and plasma, 2 demo rooms, credit facilities, Visa/Mastercard. Open Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 **BADA**

ESSEX

CHEW AND OSBORNE, 148 High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4AG. Tel: 01992 574242. 26 King Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1ES. Tel: 01799 523728. Specialists in home entertainment equipment for over 30 years. Demo facilities in all branches with extensive range of Hi-Fi & AV products including Yamaha, Pioneer, Sony, Arcam, Bang and Olufsen, B&W, Marantz, Tannoy, Cable Talk, Pro-Ject, Nakamichi, NAD, Sennheiser, Loewe. Full installation service available. Interest free credit facilities. Service department.

RAYLEIGH HI-FI, 44a High Street, Rayleigh, Essex. Tel: 01268 779762. Arcam, Atacama, Bose, Chord, Copland, Cyrus, Denon, KEF,



INDICATES MEMBERSHIP OF THE BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION

DEALER Directory

Krell, Lexicon, Linn, Loewe TVs, Marantz, Micromega, Mission, Miller & Kreisel, Naim, Ortofon, Parasound, Pioneer, Proceed, Quad, QED, Rega, Roksan, Rotel, Ruark, Revox, Seleco, Sennheiser, Stands Unique, Stax, Sugden, Tag McLaren, Target, Van Den Hul, Wilson Benesch XLO Yamaha. www.rayleighhifi.com

BADA

RAYLEIGH HI-FI, 216 Moulsham St, On-the-Parkway, Chelmsford. Tel: 01245 265245.

BADA

RAYLEIGH HI-FI, 132-134 London Road, Southend-on-Sea. Tel: 01702 435255.

BADA

RAYLEIGH HI-FI, at Dansk International Furniture World, Lakeside Retail Park, West Thurrock. Tel: 01708 680551 Open on Sundays.

BADA

EMINENT AUDIO SOUTH. Are you as happy as C.Mead? (Croft Vitale & Series V) "The transparency, speed, timing, clarity and sheer enjoyment is stunning. I have heard American equipment at over £5000 that does not sound a patch on it" If not, ring us on 01708 755100 or visit the Croft web-site at www.eminentaudio.co.uk

HAMPSHIRE PORTSMOUTH

JEFFRIES HI-FI, 29 London Road, Portsmouth PO2 0BH. Tel: 023 9256 3604. Email: sales@jeffries.co.uk. Hi-fi, home cinema and custom install specialists. Range includes Acoustic Energy, AKG, Apollo, Arcam, Audio Technica, Audiophile, Beyer, Chord, Cura, Denon, Goldring, Grado, Ixos, Jamo, JBL, KEF, Linn, Linn Knekt, Loewe, Miller & Kreisel, MusiQ, Musicworks, Naim, Nordost, Ortofon, Panasonic, Partington, Projekt, QED, Quadraspire, Rega, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, Sonance, Soundstyle, Sound Organisation, Systemline, Teac, Top Tape, Traxdata, Yamaha. 2 demo rooms. Open Tues-Sat. Free parking, bus route, credit facilities. Winner Sony/Hi-Fi News Best Southern Dealer. Est 1935. www.jeffries.co.uk

BADA

HEREFORDSHIRE

ENGLISH AUDIO, 37 Whitecross Road, Hereford HR4 0DE. Tel: 01432 355081. Arcam, ATC, B&W, Castle, Cura, Cyrus, Denon, KEF, JM Labs, Marantz, Mission, Musical Fidelity, Naim, Pink Triangle, Pioneer, Pro-Ject, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Stax, System Audio, Tag McLaren, Teac, Vienna Acoustics, Wadia, Yamaha and others. Single speaker demo room. Home trial. Free install. Service dept. Mastercard, Visa, Credit arranged. Open Mon-Sat 9.30am-5.30pm.

BADA

HERTFORDSHIRE

THE AUDIO FILE, 27 Hockerill St, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM23 2DH. Tel: 01279 506576. 9-5.30 open 6 days, 9-8pm Thursdays. Absolute Sounds, Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Bose, B & W Nautilus, Cyrus, Denon, KEF, Linn, Loewe, Marantz, Mission, Miller & Kreisel, Naim, Onkyo, Pioneer, ProAc, QED, Rega, Sony, Tag McLaren, Yamaha. 0% credit. Web site: www.audiofile.co.uk

BADA

RICHARDS AUDIO VISUAL, 85 St Peter's Street, St. Albans AL1 3EG. Tel: 01727 868700. Email: richavst@aol.com. FRIENDLY PERSONAL SERVICE. MULTI-ROOM HOME INSTALL SPECIALISTS. FREE HOME SURVEYS. Stockists of Arcam FMJ, Audioquest, B&W, Bose, Chord Company, Cyrus, Denon, Marantz, Mission, Moth, Optimum, Ortofon, Pioneer, Pro-Ject, QED, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Tannoy, Target, Teac, Van den Hul, Yamaha and more. LISTENING ROOM. 0% FINANCE. Open 7 days Monday to Saturday 10.00-6.00, Sundays 11.00-5.00. MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK NEARBY.

DARBY'S OF ST. ALBANS, 6 Market Place, St. Albans, Herts. Tel: 01727 851596. Hert's premier Hi-Fi/AV specialists, est. 1946. Full home cinema demonstration suite. Whether your needs are large or small, we stock it all: Arcam, Yamaha, Quad, Denon, Sony, B&O, Pioneer, REL, JVC, KEF Reference, Mission-Cyrus, Ruark, Celestion, Polk, and many more. Free delivery and installation. Open 9-6 Mon-Sat.

BADA

DAVID ORTON AUDIO VISUAL, 6-8 Bancroft, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1JQ. Tel: 01462 452248, fax: 01462 458424. Stockists of Apollo, Arcam, B&W, Cyrus, Denon, Marantz, Mission, Pioneer, Quad, Rotel, Ruark, Soundstyle, Teac, and many others. Hi-Fi listening room and A/V demo room. Workshop off premises. Mastercard, Amex, Visa, Diners. Interest free and instant credit. Open 9.30-5.30 Mon-Sat. E-mail: davidortonaudiovisual@compuserve.com

KENT

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, Beckenham Branch, 126 High St, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1ED. Tel: 020 8663 3777, fax: 020 8663 3555. Musical Images is a main authorised dealer for over 100 leading Audio Visual manufacturers. For multi-room, home automation and audiophile installations plus unsurpassed service, our award-winning stores are recognised centres of excellence. Over the past 15 years Musical Images has established a unique reputation for customer care and we ensure all the latest Hi-Fi technology is on permanent demonstration in luxurious surroundings. Open seven days a week and with 0% finance available (subject to status), to experience the best team in the business, make sure you visit Musical Images. Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 10am-4.30pm.

THE

JOHN MARLEY HI-FI CENTRES LTD, **DOVER HI-FI**, 43 High Street, Dover. Tel: 01304 207562. Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Denon, JBL, KEF, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Pioneer, Panasonic, Rotel, Ruark, Tannoy, TDL, Technics, Yamaha. A/V demo room. Full service department. Mon-Sat 9-5.30. Free installation. Credit to £1000. Mastercard, Visa, Switch, Electron. Established 29 years. Expert advice. Friendly service.

LANCASHIRE

ADVENTURES IN HI-FI, 5 Bishopsgate, off Hallgate, Wigan WN1 1NL. Tel: 01942 234202. For the best hi-fi and home cinema products from quality manufacturers including Naim, Rega, Cyrus, NAD, KEF, Denon, Dynavector, Shahinian, JM Lab, PMC,

Project, Quadraspire, Sim2 and Sanyo projectors. We offer friendly advice, excellent demonstration facilities, 0% finance, free delivery and installation throughout the North West. Opening hours 10.00 - 5.30 Tuesday to Saturday, evenings by appointment.

LEICESTERSHIRE

LEICESTER HI FI CO, 6 Silver Walk, St Martins Square, Leicester LE1 5EW. Tel: 0116 253 9753, fax: 0116 262 6097. Website: www.leicesterhifi.co.uk. Email: info@leicesterhifi.co.uk. Arcam, B&W, Bryston, Chord Electronics, Copland, Cyrus, Denon, Greig IK Loudspeakers, KEF, Marantz, Michell, Miller & Kreisel, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Nakamichi, Nautilus, Pioneer, PMC, Project, Quad, Rotel, Roksan, Sony, Talk Electronics, Tannoy, Teac, Technics, Yamaha, etc. 4 listening areas/rooms over 3 floors, we can demonstrate, deliver and install. Hi-A/V and multiroom. Credit facilities. All cards taken, open Mon - Sat 9.30-5.30

BADA

LINCOLNSHIRE

STAMFORD HI-FI, 9 Red Lion Square, Stamford, Lincs PE9 2AJ. Tel: 01780 762128. Aiiwa, Denon, KEF, Kenwood, Marantz, Mission, NAD, Pioneer, Quad, Technics, Yamaha, plus all major speaker manufacturers. Expert advice, comparator demonstrations on two floors, part exchange, Hi-Fi purchased for cash. No appointments necessary, home trial facilities, free installation, service department. Mastercard, Visa & credit charge, finance available. Mon-Sat 9-5.30pm, closed Thursdays.

LONDON

CHOICE HI-FI, London SW14. Tel: 020 8392 1959/1963, fax: 020 8392 1994. E-mail: info@choice-hifi.com. The most comprehensive range of new and second hand equipment anywhere in the country. Unique knowledge and experience in mid- to high-end systems and equipment matching. Part exchange welcome, upgrade service and interest free credit available. Home installation and multiroom specialists. Brands include, but not limited to: Michell, Lavardin, Trichord, Krell, Audio Research, Wadia, Musical Fidelity, Audible Illusions, Boulder, SME, Alon, Tara Labs, ATC, XLO, Van den Hul, Bryston, Target, Naim, Quad, Sonus Faber, Wilson Audio, Martin Logan, Meridian. If it's high-end and it's good, we've got it. Others may sell you hi-fi, at Choice we sell solutions.

BILLY VEE SOUND SYSTEMS, 248 Lee High Road, Lewisham, London SE13 5PL. Tel: 020 8318 5755/020 8852 1321. Arcam, AVI, Denon, Linn, Marantz, Mission, Naim, Rega, Rotel, Sugden, etc. Two domestic style listening lounges. Apts required, service dept, home trial facilities, interest free credit, instant credit. Mastercard, Visa. Open Mon-Sat 10-6.30, Closed Thurs.

BADA

CORNFLAKE.CO.UK, 37 Windmill Street, London W1T 2JU. Tel: 020 7631 0472, fax: 020 7436 7165. E-mail: help@cornflake.co.uk. Open Tues-Sat 10-6, Thurs 10-7. The specialists in high quality sound, be it for one room or many more. They offer

friendly advice, and a full delivery and installation service is available. Two listening rooms with full A/V facilities demonstrating Arcam, ATC, AVI, Barco, Bryston, Dynaudio, Mark Levinson, Naim, Origin Live, Proceed, PMC, Rega, Royd, Yamaha and more. Service department. Amex, Mastercard, Switch, Visa and worldwide mail order service. Still the coolest Hi-Fi shop in London. www.cornflake.co.uk

GRAHAMS HI-FI, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Rd, London N1. Tel: 020 7226 5500. Winner Sony/HFN Greater London Dealer Award 1986/89/90. "One of the 5 best hi-fi shops in the world". Arcam, Linn, Meridian, Naim, Rega, etc. Systems from £500. Free parking, 4 demo rooms, service dept, open Tues-Sat. Ring for appointment.

BADA

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, Covent Garden Branch, 18 Monmouth Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9HB. Tel: 020 7497 1346, fax: 020 7497 9205. Musical Images is a main authorised dealer for over 100 leading Audio Visual manufacturers. For multi-room, home automation and audiophile installations plus unsurpassed service, our award-winning stores are recognised centres of excellence. Over the past 15 years Musical Images has established a unique reputation for customer care and Musical Images Covent Garden has the distinction of being the first Sony ES Centre of Excellence in the world. Open seven days a week and with 0% finance available (subject to status), to experience the best team in the business make sure you visit Musical Images. Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 10am-4.30pm.

THE

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, 173 Station Road, Edgware HA8 7JX. Tel: 020 8952 5535, fax: 020 8951 5864. E-mail: sales@musical-images.co.uk. See main entry above.

THE

ORANGES & LEMONS, 61-63 Webbs Road, Battersea SW11. Tel: 020 7924 2040. Juicy fruit from London's newest, freshest hi-fi/home cinema retailer. Telephone for demonstrations or just pop in. All the usual, ie friendly and efficient service, free home installation, credit cards, 0% finance available, plus all the very best from: Arcam, Cable Talk, Chord Co, Demion, Denon Lifestyle, Epos, NAD, Naim, Neat, QED Multiroom, Quad, Rega, Roksan, Rotel, Royd, Ruark, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Wilson Benesch, Yamaha with more to come. The innovative AudioVisual retailer.

BADA

THOMAS HEINITZ, 35 Moscow Road, Bayswater, London W2 4AH. Tel: 020 7229 2077, fax: 020 7727 9348. Tube Stations Queensway & Bayswater. Parking meters available. Demonstration room by appointment. Stockists of Acoustic Energy, Bryston, Cura, Linn, Loewe, Naim, Neat Acoustics, Pioneer, PMC, Proac, Rega, Teac, Cyrus, Denon. Payment via Mastercard, Visa, cheques, cash and interest free credit facilities (details on request). Open 10.30am-6pm, Tuesday-Saturday.

EMINENT AUDIO SOUTH. Are you as happy as C.Mead? (Croft Vitale & Series V) "The transparency, speed, timing, clarity and sheer enjoyment is stunning. I have heard American equipment at over £5000 that does not sound a patch on it" If not, ring us on 01708 755100 or visit the Croft web-site at www.eminentaudio.co.uk

BADA
BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION
the symbol of security

INDICATES MEMBERSHIP
OF THE BRITISH AUDIO
DEALERS ASSOCIATION

DEALER Directory

GREATER MANCHESTER

AUDIO COUNSEL, 14 Shaw Road, Oldham OL1 3LQ. Tel: 0161 633 2602, fax: 0161 633 2502. Arcam, Audiolab, Rega, Naim, Rotel, Royd, Marantz, Sonus Faber, Ruark, Epos, Denon, Yamaha, Bang & Olufsen. Free installation. Major credit cards and credit facilities. Open Tuesday-Saturday 10-5.30, 8pm on Thurs.

ADVENTURES IN HI-FI, 5 Bishopsgate, off Hallgate, Wigan WN1 1NL. Tel: 01942 234202. See main entry under Lancashire.

MERSEYSIDE

ACOUSTICA, 17 Hoole Rd, Chester CH2 3NH. Tel: 01244 344227. See our main entry under Cheshire.

MIDDLESEX

MUSIC MATTERS, 344 Uxbridge Road, Hatchend, Middlesex HA5 4HR. Tel: 020 8420 1925. Arcam, Audio Research, B & W, Castle, Celestion, Chord, Cyrus, Denon, Dynaudio, Jamo, KEF, Krell, Marantz, Martin Logan, Meridan, Michel, Mission, Monitor Audio, Musical Fidelity, Naim, Panasonic, Pioneer, ProAc, Project, Quad, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, SME, Sonus Faber, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, TEAC, Technics, Theta, Yamaha. Excellent demonstration and home trial facilities. Free installation. Customised multi-room systems. All major credit cards accepted. Full credit facilities available. Tues - Sat 10.30-5.30, Thurs 10.30-6.30. **BADA**

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, Edgware Branch, 173 Station Rd, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JX. Tel: 020 8952 5535, fax 020 8951 5864. Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-6pm Sun 10am-4.30pm. See main entry under London. **ITX**

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, Hounslow Branch, 45 High Street, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 1RH. Tel: 020 8569 5802, fax: 020 8569 6353. Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-6pm Sun 10am-4.30pm. See main entry under London. **ITX**

WEST MIDLANDS

SOUND CINERGY, 37 High Street, Aldridge WS9 8NL. Tel: 01922 457926. Specialists in Home Entertainment. Quality Hi-Fi / Audio Visual / Multi-Room solutions and accessories from Apollo, Arcam, Atacama, Boston, Linn, Linn Knekt, Loewe TV, Marantz, NAD, Ortofon, Project, QED, REL, Royd, Sennheiser, Stands Unique, Systemline, Tannoy. Finance facilities. Free car parking. Tues. - Sat. 10 - 5.30. Web site: www.sound-cinergy.co.uk

SOUND ACADEMY, 152a High Street, Bloxwich, Nr Walsall, W Midlands. Tel: 01922 493499/ 473499. Audio equipment from leading and specialist brands, with 3 demo floors, home trials, home cinema with instore demo theatre, evening demos by appointment. In house service dept. Mail order avail. Int. free credit subject to status. Open 6 days 9am - 6pm. Late night Friday. Expert advice, cable dressing and free installation. Also at 111 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1PU. Tel: 0121 321 2445. **BADA**

MUSIC MATTERS, 363 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B17 8DL. Tel: 0121 429 2811. Arcam, Audio Research, B & W, Castle, Celestion, Chord, Cyrus, Denon, Dynaudio, Jamo, KEF, Krell, Marantz, Martin Logan, Meridan, Michel, Mission, Monitor Audio, Musical Fidelity, Panasonic, Pioneer, ProAc, Project, Quad, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, SME, Sonus Faber, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, TEAC, Technics, Theta, Yamaha. Excellent demonstration and home trial facilities. Free installation. Customised multi-room systems. All major credit cards accepted. Full credit facilities available. Tues - Sat 10.30-5.30, Thurs 10.30-6.30. **BADA**

MUSIC MATTERS, Hobbs Moat Road, Solihull, W. Midlands B92 8JL. Tel: 0121 742 0254. Tues - Sat 10.30-5.30 Thurs 10.30-6.30 **BADA**

MUSIC MATTERS, 9 Market Street, Stourbridge, W. Midlands B97 1AB. Tel: 01384 444184. Tues - Sat 10.30-5.30 Thurs 10.30-6.30 **BADA**

MUSIC MATTERS, 10 Boldmere Road, Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands B73 5DT. Tel: 0121 354 2311. Tues - Sat 10.30-5.30 Thurs 10.30-6.30 **BADA**

ACOUSTICA, 114 Wolverhampton Road, Stafford ST17 4AH. Tel: 01785 258216. See our main entry under Staffordshire. **BADA**

NORFOLK

BASICALLY SOUND, The Old School, School Rd, Bracon Ash, Norwich NR14 8HG. Tel: 01508 570829. Arcam, Audio Analogue, Bayer, Bryston, Cabeltalk, Chord Co., Opera Speakers, Denon, Dynavector, Epos, Grado, Heybrook, Naim, Opera, ProAc, PMC, Sound Organisation, Rega, Royd, Soundstyle, Teac, etc. 2 comprehensive demo rooms. Home trial. Free installation. Visa, Mastercard, HP facilities. 0% Finance. Tues-Fri 9.30-1, 2-5.30. All day Sat. **BADA**

RIVER CROSSING AUDIO, The Old Barn, Glandford, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7JP. Tel: 01263 741230. Open Tues-Sat 9am-6pm. Other times by appointment. Leave the noise of the city behind! Our showroom is a converted barn, situated in a picturesque north Norfolk village with ample off-road parking. We are pleased to demonstrate systems including Canary, Chord, CR Developments, Densen, Fi-Rax, Michell, MVL, Myryad, Rothwell, Veritas Loudspeakers (including the award-winning H3) and many others.

AUDIO IMAGES, 128 London Road North, Lowestoft NR32 1HB. Tel: 01502 582853. See main entry under Suffolk.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

LISTEN INN - KJ West One Group, 32 Gold Street, Northampton NN1 1RS. Tel: 01604 637871. The world's finest hi-fi and a/v equipment: Arcam, Copland, Denon DiVA, FMJ, NAD, Naim, Pioneer, Plasma, Rega, Rotel, Sennheiser, Sonus Faber, Wilson Benesch. Audition rooms, free parking, part exchange, finance facilities. Open 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat (Closed Thursday). **BADA**

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

DEFINITIVE AUDIO serves the first time buyer and the seasoned audiophile with the same high level of care and interest. Our aim is long term customer satisfaction. We achieve this with impartial advice, quality back-up service and a genuine interest in your needs. We have an established reputation for delivering sound quality benchmarks with innovation. Our range of carefully selected brands includes Art Audio, Border Patrol, Living Voice, Musical Fidelity, Wadia and many more. We have extensive part-exchanged stock. Open Mon-Fri 9.30-6.30, Sat 10.00-1.30. Visa/Mastercard /Switch/Amex. For more information call 0115 973 3222 or fax 0115 973 3666.

NOTTINGHAM HI-FI CENTRE, 120-122 Alfreton Road, Nottingham. Tel: 0115 978 6919. The area's oldest established specialist (Est. 1969). Two superb demonstration rooms, easy free parking. Home cinema and multiroom. Stockists of: Arcam, Audiolab, Celestion, Denon, KEF, Linn, Loewe T.V., Marantz, Micromega, Michell, Mission-Cyrus, Rotel, Sennheiser, Yamaha. Mon-Sat 9-5.30. **BADA**

OXFORDSHIRE

ASTLEY AUDIO LTD, 3 Marketplace, Wallingford OX10 0EG. Tel: 01491 839305, fax: 01491 825024. Founded 1975. Great deals on Aura, B&W, Denon, Dual, KEF, Kenwood, Marantz, Mission, Mordaunt Short, Panasonic, Pioneer, Sony, Tannoy, Technics, Yamaha. Home trial, installation and delivery service. Service dept on site. 2 yr guarantee on most products. Interest free credit on selected items. 1 home cinema room, 2 listening rooms. Mastercard, Visa, Amex, Diners. Instant credit. Tues-Fri 9-5.30, Sat 9-5. Tapes & C.Ds stocked.

OVERTURE HI-FI, 3 Church Lane, Banbury OX16 8LR. Tel: 01295 272158. Arcam, Bose, Cura, Denon, Linn Products, Mission, Naim Audio, Quad, Yamaha. For sensible unbiased advice, call Oxfordshire's audio experts. Superb demo facilities. Home cinema, multiroom & commercial installations. No appts nec, service dept, free install, home trial. Mastercard, Visa, instant credit. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 9.30-5.30. **BADA**

OXFORD AUDIO CONSULTANTS, Cantay Hse, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1JE. Tel: 01865 790879, fax: 01865 791665. E-mail: oxford.audio@btinternet.com. Quad, Denon, B&W, Pink Triangle, Krell, Sonus Faber, NAD, Rotel, Musical Fidelity, Pioneer, Marantz, Copland, Teac, Audio Analogue, Castle, Yamaha, Proac, REL. Demo room. Home trial and free installation. Instant credit, Mastercard, Amex, Visa. 10-6 Mon-Sat. **BADA**

SHROPSHIRE

CREATIVE AUDIO, 9 Dogpole, Shrewsbury SY1 1EN. Tel: 01743 236055. Email sales@creative-audio.co.uk, www.creative-audio.co.uk. One of the largest ranges of quality HiFi/Audio Visual equipment outside of London. Arcam, Ash, Atacama, Cabeltalk, Celestion, Chord, Cura, Cyrus, Denon, Dual, Heybrook, KEF, Mission, Onkyo, Optimum, NAD, Naim, QED, Quad, Rega, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Teac, Wharfedale. Large selection of bargain special purchases available on most makes. Comfortable listening

room, expert installation (including multiroom and DVD home cinema), free 2 & 5 year warranties, selected used equipment, part-exchange welcome, specialist workshop facilities. Mastercard/Visa/Switch/Amex and low cost finance from £250 up to £15,000.

SOMERSET

MIKE MANNING AUDIO, 110 Middle Street, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1NE. Tel: 01935 479361. 54 Bridge Street, Taunton. Tel: 01823 326688. www.mikemanningaudio.co.uk. The HiFi and A/V specialists. The best in HiFi from: Arcam, B&W, Castle, Denon, Densen, Heybrook, JM Lab, KEF, Loewe TV & Video, Marantz, Naim Audio, NAD, Pioneer, PMC, Rega, Rotel, Royd, Shahinian, TDL, Teac. Dedicated listening lounge for relaxed and unpressured demonstrations. Home installations on most systems. Full service department. Mastercard, Visa, Instant Credit Closed Mondays.

STAFFORDSHIRE

ACOUSTICA, 114 Wolverhampton Road, Stafford ST17 4AH. www.acoustica.co.uk. Tel: 01785 258216. All that's best in Hi-Fi and Home Cinema from quality manufacturers including Naim, B & W, Arcam, Musical Fidelity, Rotel, Seleco Projectors, Kef, Ruark, Densen, Primare, Teac, JM Lab, Nakamichi, Quadraspire, Celestion and Crimson. We offer friendly, helpful advice, interest-free credit and trade-in facilities, and deliver and install systems throughout Staffordshire and the Midlands. Opening hours Tues. - Sat. 10.30-6.00, evenings by arrangement.

SUFFOLK

ANGLIA AUDIO, The Street, Hessett, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9AZ. Tel: 01359 270212. Hi-Fi and speaker centre dedicated to quality hi-fi since 1971. Open 10-6. Closed Wednesdays and Sundays. Evening and Sunday demos by appointment.

AUDIO IMAGES, 128 London Road North, Lowestoft NR32 1HB. Tel: 01502 582853. The shop for real Hi-Fi separates and home cinema. Refreshingly different range as well as established manufacturers. Hi-Fi from budget to high-end, transistor & valve. A/V from £100 to a £100,000 custom install. Projection systems, DVD players and movies. Separate demo room, range of credit facilities, free fitting & the best and friendliest service available. **BADA**

EASTERN AUDIO, 41 Bramford Rd, Ipswich IP1 2LU. Tel: 01473 217217. Email: HiFi@eastern-audio.com. Giving sound advice for over 25 years. Parking. Demo room. Lots of free advice. Arcam, Meridan, Denon, Quad, NAD, B&W, Celestion, Project, KEF, Castle, Technics, Top Tape, plus all the usual and unusual leads, cables, stands, racks, headphones, cartridges & styli etc. **BADA**

STOWSOUNDS, Stone Farm, Borough Lane, Gt Finborough, Suffolk IP14 3AS. Tel: 01449 675060 Specialist Hi-Fi dealer with great products from Acoustic Solutions, Alchemist, Atacama, Audioquest, Beyer, Cable Talk, DPA, Electrocompaniet, Exposure, Grado, JM Labs, Kimber, Magnat, Neat, Nordost, QED, SonicLink, Sonneteer, **BADA**

BADA
BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION
the symbol of security

INDICATES MEMBERSHIP
OF THE BRITISH AUDIO
DEALERS ASSOCIATION

DEALER Directory

Sound Organisation, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Van den Hul, other makes and used equipment available. call us for more details.

SURREY

COSMIC HI-FI SUPERSTORE, Est 1962, 244-256 Station Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2PS. Tel: 01932 854522/ 832400/851753, fax 01932 832432. Open 7 Days a week, Mon-Sat 9-6pm, Fri till 8pm, Sun 10-4pm. Large free car park, fully equipped service department, massive showroom. Arcam, Audio Quest, Cable Talk, Denon, Dual, Elac, Jamo, Kenwood, Marantz, Mission, NAD, Nakamichi, Pioneer, Quad, Sennheiser, Sony, Tannoy, Target, Technics, Thorens, Wharfedale, Yamaha home cinema, widescreen TV, projection TV, Laserdisc. Int. free credit. All major credit cards.

INFIDELITY, 9 High Street, Hampton Wick, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey. Tel: 020 8943 3530. Arcam, Densen, B&W Nautilus, Musical Technology, Meridian, Linn, Naim Audio, Neat Acoustics, Royd, Rega Research, Rotel, Shahinian, Proceed & more. Single speaker listening room. Appts pref, free installation, service dept. Major credit cards. Closed Mon, Tues-Fri 10.30-7. Sat 10-6.

BADA

PJ HI-FI, 3 Bridge Street, Guildford GU1 4RY. Tel: 01483 504801/ 304756. Mon-Sat 9am-6pm. Arcam, B&W, Denon, Linn, Meridian, Mission/Cyrus, Kef, Marantz, NAD, Pioneer, Primare, Proac, Quad, REL, Rega, Rotel, Tag McLaren, Yamaha. Demo rooms for Hi-Fi/home cinema, parking, delivery & installation. Service department on premises. Call now.

BADA

ROGERS HI-FI, (Established 1940), The Old House, 18 & 20 Church Street, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1EW. Tel: 01483 425252. Email: DaveRogers@rogershi-fi.co.uk.

Denon, Heybrook, Marantz, Musical Fidelity, Myryad, NAD, Rotel, Ruark, Sennheiser, Tannoy, Teac, Thorens and more. Demonstration room with inglenook fireplace, coffee on demand, and not an attitude problem in sight! Service department, delivery and installation. Mastercard/Visa/Switch/Solo. Open Monday-Saturday 9.30am-5.30pm, later by appointment.

SPALDINGS HI-FI, (Established 30 years), 352-4 Lower Addiscombe Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7AF. Tel: 020 8654 1231/2040. Linn, Naim, Quad, Meridian, Mission, Marantz, Denon, Ruark, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, Arcam, KEF, Castle, Musical Fidelity. 3 demo rooms including A/V room. Service dept, free install, home trial facilities, appointments advisable. Mastercard, Visa, Amex, interest free credit, instant credit. Mon-Sat 9-5.45. Tues-8. Service dept.

BADA

SUSSEX (EAST)

JEFFRIES HI-FI, 69 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JE. Tel: 01273 609431. E-mail sales@jeffries.co.uk Hi-Fi, home cinema and custom install specialists. Range includes Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Atacama, Audio Technica, Beyer, Chord, Cura, Denon, Dynavector, Goldring, Grado, Ixos, Jamo, JBL, KEF, Linn, Linn Knekt, Loewe, Miller & Kreisel, MusiQ, Musicworks, Naim, Nakamichi, Ortofon, Panasonic, Partington, Projekt, QED, Quadraspire, Rega, REL, Rotel, Sennheiser, Shahinian, Sonance,

Soundstyle, Sound Organisation, Systemline, Teac, Top Tape, Traxdata, Yamaha. 2 demo rooms. Open Tues-Sat. Free parking, bus route, credit facilities. Winner Sony/Hi-Fi News Best Southern Dealer. Est 1935. www.jeffries.co.uk

BADA

JEFFRIES HI-FI, 4 Albert Parade, Green Street, Eastbourne BN21 1SD. Tel: 01323 731336, fax: 01323 416005. E-mail sales@jeffries.co.uk Hi-Fi, home cinema and custom install specialists. Range includes Acoustic Energy, AKG, Apollo, Arcam, Atacama, Audio Technica, Beyer, Chord, Denon, Goldring, Grado, Ixos, Jamo, JBL, KEF, Linn, Linn Knekt, Loewe, Miller & Kreisel, MusiQ, Musicworks, Naim, Nakamichi, Ortofon, Panasonic, Partington, Projekt, QED, Quadraspire, Rega, REL, Rotel, Ruark, Selego, Sennheiser, Sonance, Soundstyle, Sound Organisation, Systemline, Teac, Top Tape, Traxdata, Yamaha. 2 demo rooms. Open Tues-Sat. Free parking, bus route, credit facilities. Winner Sony/Hi-Fi News Best Southern Dealer. Est 1935. www.jeffries.co.uk

BADA

THE POWERPLANT, 66/67 Upper North Street, Brighton BN1 3FL. Tel: 01273 775978, fax: 01273 748419. E-mail: email@powerplant.co.uk Whatever your budget we can help you choose from our carefully selected range of today's finest Hi-Fi and home cinema equipment. Recommended agencies include Arcam, ATC, B&W, B&O, Cyrus, DEF Tech, Imerge, Linn, Marantz, Mark Levinson, M & K, PMC, ProAc, Rega, Revel, Ruark, QED, Systemline, Tag McLaren Audio, Yamaha. Excellent demonstration facilities, knowledgeable and friendly staff. Multiroom specialist, CEDIA member. Open Tues-Sat 10am-6pm. Late evenings by appointment. All major credit cards. Full credit facilities.

BADA

SUSSEX (WEST)

AUDIO DESIGNS, 26 High Street, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 3AS. Tel: 01342 328065. www.audiodesigns.co.uk. Hi-Fi, home cinema & multiroom specialists. Authorised stockists of: Arcam (inc. FMJ, DIVA & Alpha), ASH, The Chord Company, Cyrus, KEF (inc. Reference), Linn (inc. CD12 & Klimax), Loewe (inc. Spherros), Marantz, Mission, Naim (inc. CDS & NAP500), Pioneer, PMC, Primare, ProAc, Pro-ject, QED, Quadraspire, Rel, Rotel, Ruark, SIM2 (inc. DLP), Sennheiser, Soundstyle, Stands Unique, Tag McLaren, TEAC, Thorens & more. Probably the largest demonstration stock in the South, with three dedicated demonstration rooms together with a friendly team of staff and service facility. Finance available. 9.30-6 Mon-Sat.

BADA

BOWERS & WILKINS LTD, (Est 1945), Littlehampton Road, Worthing, (near Thomas a Becket). Tel: 01903 264141. E-mail: sales@bowersandwilkins.co.uk. Web site: www.bowersandwilkins.co.uk. 1 minute from A24 & A27. Free local parking. Acoustic Energy, B&W, Denon, JBL, Marantz, NAD, Optimum, Philips, Tannoy, Teac, Technics, and many more in 4 demo rooms. Systems, Hi-Fi and home cinema, DVD and projection TV. Service dept, installations. Open 6 days a week. Mastercard, Visa, instant credit to £1,000 subject to status.

TYNE AND WEAR

GLOBAL HI-FI CENTRE, 87 CLAYTON STREET, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE1 5PY. TEL 0191 230 3600 FAX: 0191 222 0286. Email: info@globalhificentre.com www.globalhificentre.com. FOR THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION IN HI-FI, CUSTOM DESIGN, INSTALLATION OF HOME CINEMA & MULTI-ROOM SYSTEMS, IT'S GOT TO BE GLOBAL HI-FI CENTRE. COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTANCY SERVICE OFFERING QUALIFIED ADVICE FROM CONCEPT TO DESIGN. THREE STATE-OF-THE-ART SHOWROOMS, INCLUDING A SUPERB MULTI-ROOM FACILITY. AUTHORISED DEALER FOR MAJOR MANUFACTURERS INCLUDING ALL THE LATEST GREATEST DOLBY DIGITAL, D.T.S., THX AND EX SURROUND SOUND SYSTEMS. BRING THE BIG SCREEN HOME WITH PLASMA SCREENS, REAR PROJECTION, WIDESCREEN TV'S, AND LCD/DLP/CRT/ PROJECTION SYSTEMS. ACOUSTIC ENERGY, AUDIO ANALOGUE, BOSE, BOSTON ACOUSTICS, CURA, CREEK, CHORD ELECTRONICS, DAVIS PROJECTORS, DENON, ELAC, FUJITSU PLASMA, HEYBROOK, JBL, JVC, KEF, (INC. THX & KEF REFERENCE), LINN, MARANTZ, MYRIAD, NAKAMICHI, NAD, NHT, OPTIMUM, PANASONIC, PARASOUND, PIONEER, PROJECT AUDIO, REL, ROKSAN, ROTEL, SELECO PROJECTORS, SONY, TALK ELECTRONICS, TANNOY, TEAC, TECHNICS, VESTAX, VIENNA ACOUSTICS, YAMAHA. FOR THE ULTIMATE HI-FI & HOME CINEMA SOLUTION, GO GLOBAL, WE'RE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY, FROM STARTER KITS TO STATE-OF-THE-ART SYSTEMS.

CEDIA

ica. Friendly service, impartial advice, home demonstrations, free installations, car parking, and the best range of quality products including...Audio Analogue, Acoustic Energy, Audio Note, Audion, Densen, Denon, Dynaudio, EAR, Graff, NAD, Naim Audio, Musical Fidelity, Musical Technology, Michell, Pioneer, Pro-Ac, Rega, REL, Ruark, Sugden, Teac, Unison Research, Yamaha and many others. Open Mon-Sat. Instant credit facilities available. Feel free to call for more details.

YORKSHIRE (SOUTH)

DONCASTER

THE HI-FI STUDIOS, The Long Barn, Wakefield Road, Hampole, Doncaster DN6 7EU. Tel: 01302 727274/ 725550, fax: 01302 727274. Email: info@thehifistudios .freeserve.co.uk. Hi-Fi, home cinema and multi-room experts. Musical Fidelity, Tag McLaren, Electrocompaniet, ProAc, Ruark, Castle, Teac, Unison Research, John Shearman, Impulse Horns, Monitor Audio, Harbeth, Alchemist, NAD, Michell Turntables, Nottingham Analogue Studios, Audio Analogue, Living Voice, Exposure, Densen, Lynwood Electronics, Celestion (A Series only), Opera, Trichord Research, Nordost, Stands Unique, Stax Electrostatics, Ortofon, Project, Goldring, REL Subwoofers, Yamaha A/V, Proceed Digital Cinema, Tag McLaren & Denon Home Cinema products, plus others. Viewing and demonstration by appointment. Home trials and free installation on hi-fi equipment. Mastercard, Credit card and finance facilities. Phone for more information. 10am-6.30pm Tues-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat. Closed Sunday & Monday.

THX BADA

SCOTLAND

DUNDEE

SOUNDS PERFECT. Hi-Fi at it's best. 26 St. Andrews Street, Dundee. Tel: 01382 266592, fax: 01382 229994, E-mail: sales@sounds-perfect.co.uk. Exceptional quality and professional service at Dundee's premier Hi-Fi store. Open 6 days a week. 10 - 7 Mon - Thurs, 10 - 6 Fri & Sat. Demonstrations are available outside of these hours by appointment. Main dealers for Arcam, Rotel, Marantz, Technics, Roksan, Sony, Musical Fidelity, Tannoy, Mission & B&W.

WALES

NORTH WALES

ACOUSTICA, 17 Hoole Rd, Chester CH2 3NH. Tel: 01244 344227. See our main entry under Cheshire.

ACTION GATE AUDIO, 4 Ruabon Rd, Wrexham. Tel: 01978 364500. Demonstration room, installation service. Easy parking and motorway access. Mastercard, Visa etc. See main entry under Cheshire.

WILTSHIRE

SALISBURY HI-FI, 15 Catherine Street, Salisbury. Tel: 01722 322169/330841. Arcam, Audio Analogue, B&W, Celestion, Chord Company, Denon, KEF, Marantz, Meridian (inc. Digital theatre), Mission, Michell, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Naim, Nordost, Opera, Project, QED, Rotel, REL, Teac, Yamaha. Home Cinema and Hi Fi specialists, multi room and commercial installation specialists, service dept. on site, high quality used equipment, projection TV and plasma. 2 demo rooms, credit facilities, Visa/Mastercard. Open Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30

BADA

YORKSHIRE (EAST)

THE AUDIO ROOM, 2 George Street, Hedon, Hull HU12 8JH. Tel: 01482 891375. Superior quality Hi-Fi, home cinema and multi-room. Authorised agents for LINN PRODUCTS, REGA, CYRUS, B & W, MUSICAL FIDELITY, SONY, MARANTZ, PMC, DENON, LOEWE SYSTEMS, QUADRASPIRE, STANDS UNIQUE, QED, THE CHORD COMPANY and ECOSSE. Open Mon-Sat 9am-7pm (later if required). Credit facilities & home demonstrations available. Free car parking as well as a relaxed and comfortable environment assured. East Yorkshire's friendliest dealer.

ZEN AUDIO, 35 George St, Hull HU1 3BA. Tel: 01482 587397. Hull's best Hi-Fi store! From entry-level systems to high-end ext-

BADA
BRITISH AUDIO DEALERS ASSOCIATION
the symbol of security

INDICATES MEMBERSHIP
OF THE BRITISH AUDIO
DEALERS ASSOCIATION



KEEP AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

With wearable technology concepts
that will change the way you work

PLUS: MiniDV camcorders on test, and how to
blow £1 billion on the world's most expensive
kit. Only in **T3** issue 63, on sale now.



Get **THREE** trial
issues of **T3**
delivered **FREE**
for just **£6.95!**

To order call 01458 271121 and
quote order code T3HA01. UK only.

www.t3.co.uk

MISSION

Award – Winning Speakers available from:

the audio file

COME AND EXPERIENCE HI FI AND HOME CINEMA AT ITS BEST

MISSION

THE AUDIO FILE,
27 HOCKERILL STREET,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD,
HERTFORDSHIRE CM23 2DH
TEL: 01279 506576
FAX: 01279 506638
WEBSITE: www.audiofile.co.uk

ABSOLUTE SOUNDS

NAUTILUS ■ B&W ■

ONKYO ■

BOSE ■ MILLER &

KREISEL

BOSTON ■ ARCAM

DENON ■ SONY

CYRUS ■ REGA

LINN ■ NAIM

TAG McLAREN

SONY ■ PIONEER

LOEWE ■ TEAC

YAMAHA

KEF ■ CASTLE

MARANTZ

PROAC ■ QED

SYSTEMLINE

INTEGRA RESEARCH

IMERGE

INFORMED, INDEPENDENT, EXPERIENCE & ESTABLISHED FOR OVER 17 YEARS

Audio Visual Specialists...2 Demo Rooms

SEE & HEAR THE BEST TODAY

• DVD • THX/AC-3 PROJECTION • WIDESCREEN •

• ARCAM • CASTLE • DENON • MARANTZ • YAMAHA • PIONEER • SONY • CASTLE • KEF • REL • PRO-JECT • NAD • TANNOY • NAKAMICHI and lots more

0% FINANCE

AVAILABLE ON SELECTED ITEMS

Unit 35, Observatory Centre, High Street,
Slough, Berkshire SL1 1LE
Tel: (01753) 531785

AUTHORISED DEALER FOR:

MISSION

Frasers

HI - FI VIDEO



It costs the same to get it right as it does to get it wrong

At the Listening Rooms, we pride ourselves on matching your needs with exactly the right equipment, whatever your budget, and because we only stock the best, that's what you'll get.

What you'll also get is sound professional advice and a chance to relax and listen to some of the world's finest Hi-Fi equipment.

35 years combined experience.
Two Fully equipped listening rooms.
Home installation service.
Multi-room design and installation.
2 years Parts and Labour guarantee.
Home cinema surround-sound
Export and Credit facilities.

0% FINANCE SUBJECT TO STATUS

• ACOUSTIC ENERGY • ARCAM • AUDIO RESEARCH
• AUDIOLAB • AURA • BOSE • CELESTION • COPLAND
• CYRUS • DENON • EPOS • HARMAN KARDON
• JBL • KEF • KRELL • LINN • MARANTZ
• MARTIN LOGAN • MERIDIAN • MICHELL • MICROMEGA
• MISSION • MONITOR AUDIO • MUSIC FIDELITY X SERIES
• NEAT PETITE • PINK TRIANGLE • PIONEER • PROAC
• QUAD • REL • ROGERS • SME • SONUS FABER
• STAX • THETA • WILSON AUDIO • YAMAHA •

THE listening rooms

www.listeningrooms.com

161 Old Brompton Rd. London SW5 0LJ.
Tel: 0207244 7750/59. Fax: 0207 370 0192
Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm.

Nearest Tube: South Kensington or Gloucester Road

Lend us your ears and we'll blow your mind . . .

Arcam, ATC, B & W, Celestion, Denon, Kenwood, Kef, Marantz, Meridian, Michell, Mission, NAD, Pioneer, Panasonic, Quad, Rotel, Ruark, Sony, Tag McLaren, Tannoy, Teac, Technics, Yamaha and more.

Audition the very best at Lincolnshire's premier Hi-Fi dealer . . .

MANDERS HI-FI LTD.

2-4 EDWARD STREET (Off Pasture St.)
GRIMSBY. TEL: (01472) 351391

Richard's Audio Visual

Stockists of all Mission ranges

0% finance subject to status

"Expert, friendly service" - Listening Rooms

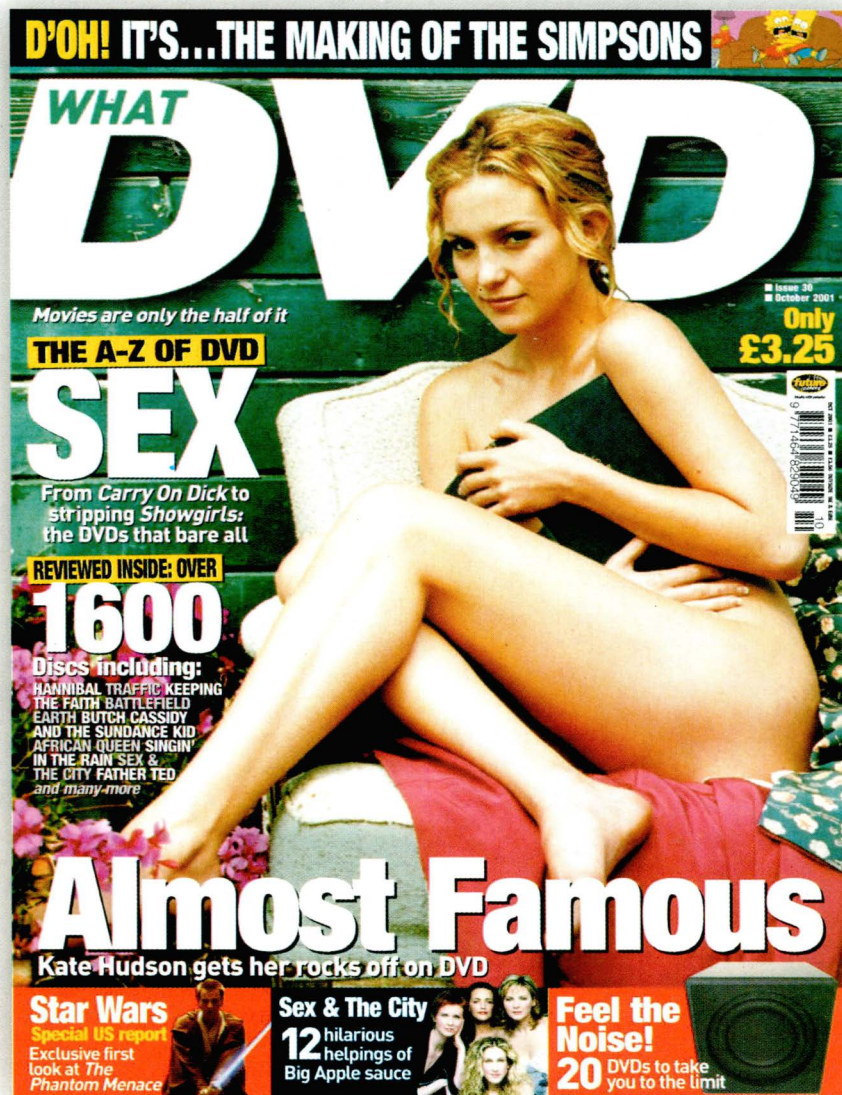
4 Greyfriars, Bedford Tel: 01234 365165

Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30

85 St Peters Street, St Albans Tel: 01727 868700

Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00, Sun 11.00 - 5.00

OOH, MISSUS!



Sex The A-Z of DVD Sex: everything you ever wanted to know about smut but were afraid to ask

Doughnuts *The Simpsons*: from Tracey Ullman to Television Über-family

Rock 'n' Roll Kate Hudson groupies out in the prog rock hit *Almost Famous*

Plus Exclusive *Star Wars* first look ■ 20 DVDs to rock your speakers ■ Your problems solved

Hannibal Traffic Keeping the Faith Battlefield Earth Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid Sex & The City Father Ted and more...

WHAT DVD ISSUE 30 ■ ON SALE NOW



BACK ISSUES



- APR 2001/ISSUE 213
- SACD/DVD-A/DVD-V Bench Test
 - Blank Digital Media tested
 - MP3 player group test
 - Quad valve amps/ELS 989 speakers



- MAY 2001/ISSUE 214
- Integrated Amps £500-£1,500 tested
 - Budget turntables and cartridges
 - Active speakers tested
 - The key to system synergy



- JUNE 2001/ISSUE 215
- Loudspeakers £160-£500 tested
 - High end Multichannel amplifiers
 - Check out the best speaker cables
 - Tannoy's superb TD10 loudspeakers



- JULY 2001/ISSUE 216
- DVD players £219-£600 tested
 - High end valve and solid state amps
 - CD, MD and MP3 personals tested
 - Philips SACD-1000 multichannel SACD



- AUG 2001/ISSUE 217
- Stereo versus surround amps
 - Budget CD players
 - Equipment supports
 - SACD versus DVD-A in surround



- SEPT 2001/ISSUE 218
- CD recorders Bench Test
 - Sat/sub speaker systems tested
 - High quality mains cables group test
 - ATC SCM50A SL active loudspeakers

TO ORDER YOUR BACK ISSUES

YOUR DETAILS

Name _____
 Address _____

 Postcode _____
 E-mail address _____
 Card Number _____
 Expiry Date _____
 Signed _____

UK READERS

Future Publishing Ltd,
 freepost BS4 900, Somerton,
 Somerset TA11 6BR

OVERSEAS READERS

Future Publishing Ltd,
 freepost BS4 900, Somerton,
 Somerset TA11 6TB, UK

WHICH ISSUE(S) DO YOU REQUIRE?

MONTH & YEAR	ISSUE NUMBER	AMOUNT

HOW WILL YOU BE PAYING?

Make cheques/POs payable to Future Publishing Ltd. (PLEASE TICK RELEVANT BOX)

CHEQUE
 MASTERCARD
 SWITCH
 VISA
 POSTAL ORDER

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

UK £4 (per issue), Overseas £6.95 (per issue)

BACK ISSUES

Back issues from 1999 onwards are available by mail order. They cost £4.00 (UK) or £6.95 (overseas). Both prices include p&p. Order by phone on (01458) 271147 or e-mail: entertainment.subs@futurenet.co.uk.

We accept Mastercard and Visa credit, or Switch debit cards. Or send a cheque or PO made out to Future Publishing using the form on the right.

If you are interested in a HFC review of an older component and the back issue has sold out, we can usually send photocopies of individual reviews to any UK address for a flat fee (inc. p&p) of £5.00 per review. You must know in which issue the original review appeared; we are unable to search back issues for old reviews. Send a written request, enclosing a cheque for £5 made payable to Future Publishing Ltd, to: Hi-Fi Choice Reprint Service, Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, LONDON W1M 1FB.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SERVICE IS ONLY FOR OTHERWISE UNOBTAINABLE REVIEWS.

NEXT MONTH...

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Next issue, we look at eight players that cover the entire gamut of the available 'next generation' players. This kit promises to get the most out of DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD, along with current favourites CD and DVD-Video. In our first Bench Test of players like these, our experts put models from Sony, Panasonic, Pioneer, Philips and more through their paces. No other magazine can boast such a comprehensive, definitive round-up, so don't miss it!

DESIGNS ON YOUR MUSIC

Not everyone wants a waist-high pile of black boxes pumping out their music. Some people crave style. If you're one of them, you won't want to miss next issue's test of sexy little mini systems. Models from the likes of Cyrus, Denon, Technics, Kenwood and Myryad promise great music as well as good looks – join us to find out how they get on.

TAKE A STAND

If this month's test of top-notch loudspeakers has got you thinking, then don't forget what every good stand-mount needs – a sturdy stand! Next month, we test a dozen rock solid specimens from Atacama, Mission, Quadraspire, Mordaunt Short, and Cyrus, amongst others.

PLUS...

TAG McLaren's ultimate style system: the heavenly, B&O-beating Aphrodite... We take a look at Myryad's new top-of-the-range CD player, the MCD600... AVI revamps its heavyweight S2000 pre/monoblock power amp combo – and we've got the review... All the latest news and reviews from hi-fi's most reliable grapevine – only in *Hi-Fi Choice*.

HFC 220 • ON SALE 14th SEPTEMBER

All future contents subject to change



PLEASE PHOTOCOPY

Size matters

PAUL'S KEEN TO POINT OUT THAT 1.5 INCHES CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE...

This month's speaker test, and the success of the two 'retro' Spondor and Audio Note designs, both using 8-inch frame main drive units, brought to mind a trip I made up to Yorkshire, way back in the 70s. In those days that county was definitely the heartland of British hi-fi manufacture, as a vast plant at Idle on the outskirts of Bradford churned out huge numbers of Wharfedale speakers. The whole caboodle – enclosures, drivers, etc. – was made on the same site, alongside Leak speakers and electronics (both companies operating under the Rank Organisation banner at that time).

There was also a large and very creative Engineering department. Many of the people I first met there are now major movers on today's UK hi-fi speaker scene. Alex Garner heads up Tannoy's engineering department, for example, while Dr Peter Fryer is a key member of the B&W's team.

INCHING CLOSER...

It might have been Alex, Peter, or maybe one of the others... We were wandering around the research building, being shown a number of very clever research tools, chatting one-to-one with various members of the engineering team, and I honestly can't remember who came up with the comment that the 8-inch driver with one-inch voice-coil was the ideal all round compromise for the main driver of a simple two-way.

It wasn't part of the official presentation, even though the 8-inch two-way 'bookshelf' Dentons and Lintons had long been the foundation of Wharfedale's mass market success. But it was certainly a comment that struck a chord in a journalist whose 8-inch driven Spondor BC1s had already shown up larger, more pretentious designs.

It is, however, an opinion distinctly at variance with the situation pertaining today, where the 6.5-inch main driver is indisputably king of the heap (usually with a 1.25-inch, 32mm voice coil). In any group test today, chances are that more than 90 per cent will use 6.5-inchers, either singly

as straight two-ways, or in multiple arrays as two-and-a-half- or three-ways.

There are several reasons why the 6.5-inch has taken over, the most obvious that it can be mounted in a slimmer enclosure, while its shallower cone will assist time-alignment with the tweeter, for easier crossover integration.

Furthermore, modern drive units offer greater cone excursion and thermal power handling, while the falling cost of manufacture has made multiple arrays more commercially feasible.

Today the 8-inch driver has become so rare that I was quite startled to find two turning up in this month's Bench Test – and also quite gratified to find how good they sounded. Besides the Spondor and Audio Note brands featured in this issue, only Naim springs to mind as another regular user of the size.

BIGGER IS BETTER

As with most things in loudspeakerland, there are trade-offs, and both the Spondor and Audio Note designs showed some lack of net energy in the crossover (presence) region – and sounded a little 'shut in' in consequence. But their confidence and authority through the bass and mid-band seemed to have an edge over speakers with smaller main drive units.

I've often found that 'miniature' speakers (those with 5-10 litre enclosures and 5.25-inch main drivers) sound a little 'small' dynamically, whereas speakers with larger diaphragms seem more secure and believable in the way they track and deliver the dynamic contrasts of the music. Typically, a 6.5-inch driver has nearly twice the cone area of a 5.25-incher, but only just over half that of the 8-inch.

I doubt we'll see a general return to the 8-inch main driver, if only because people want their loudspeakers to look slim. However, its nearest modern equivalent, perhaps, is the twin 6.5-inch two-and-a-half-way, which has a slightly larger total bass cone area, and somewhat smaller midband. Nearly all such designs are floorstanders, but stand-mounts like B&W's excellently muscular LCR6 represent a configuration that deserves much closer scrutiny.

Paul Messenger has reviewed more speakers than you can shake a stick at, if it turns signal into sound he's heard it.



"THE 8-INCH DRIVER HAS BECOME SO RARE THAT I WAS QUITE STARTLED TO FIND TWO TURNING UP IN THIS MONTH'S BENCH TEST."

Would you look at the size of that! Audio Note's AN-J, with 8-inch driver.



The New D2-ISO-5
Speaker System



"solidity, presence and believability ... listen to music as it was meant to be, realistic is the only way"

- Jason Kennedy, Editor Hi-Fi Choice, August 2001

O'hEocha Design UK & Ireland,
Tel.: 00 44 1564 78 25 02 (UK ONLY)
00 353 91 50 69 70 / Fax: 00 353 91 50 69 72
e-mail: oheocha_design@yahoo.co.uk
Website: o-d.co.uk

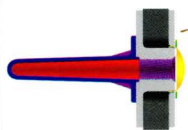
Look out for
the D2's
in the forthcoming
"A.I. Motion Picture"
courtesy of
Warner Brothers

o'heocha
design • revolution

technically beautiful CM Series

bwspeakers.com

Explore the B&W CM Series



NAUTILUS™ TECHNOLOGY

The CM Series tube-loaded tweeter is derived from the world-leading technology found on our flagship Nautilus™ speaker, widely acknowledged as the best loudspeaker money can buy. Tube-loading the tweeter ensures far greater absorption of unwanted radiation and results in a more focussed and natural high frequency sound.



Sounds as good as it looks

One look tells you that this is a speaker that will enhance any environment. Finished in real wood veneers with a stylish brushed aluminium baffle, no other speaker in its class brings music to life with such realism yet fits so effortlessly into your interior. The CM doesn't only look beautiful, it sounds amazing too. Including audio technology derived from the ground-breaking Nautilus™, the CM Series is the perfect solution for interior design-conscious music enthusiasts.

For further information contact B&W Loudspeakers UK on 01903 750750



LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE