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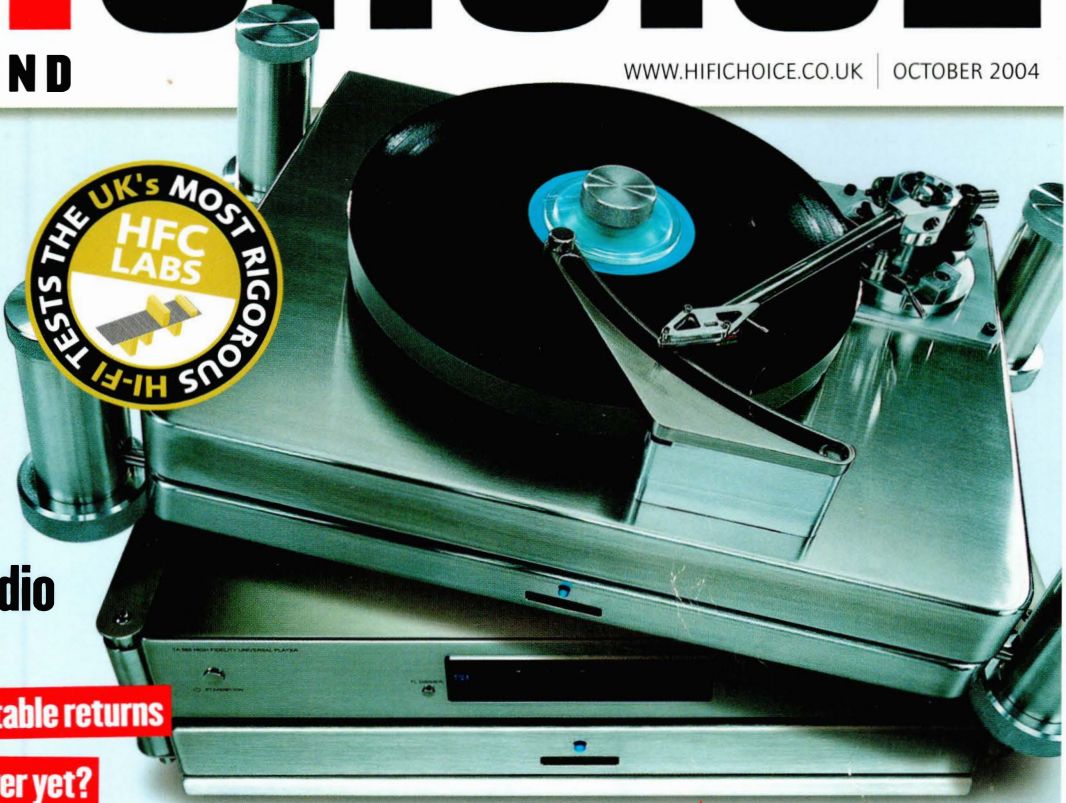
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HI-FI CHOICE

OCTOBER 2004 ISSUE 259

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WELCOME TO HI-FI CHOICE

To ensure you get the best information, opinion and advice, *Hi-Fi Choice* employs the most knowledgeable and experienced hi-fi writers in the business...



"Music digs deep into our emotional core like no other art form. It touches the soul and makes grown men weep. Hi-fi is simply a means to a musical end – it provides the conduit for its energy and detail, delivers scale and space, ensures you get closer to the tone and impact of the original performance. It makes music seem more real and hence achieve its emotional goal. Quite simply, the music that moves you, moves you more." Tim Bower, Editor



PAUL MESSENGER

A former *HFC* editor, Paul has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for nearly 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected sonic scribes and probably the UK's foremost loudspeaker reviewer.



DAN GEORGE

Dan is a huge hi-fi nut whose dream came true when he became *HFC*'s reviews editor. Armed with a bristling contacts book and a pair of razor-sharp ears, he ensures that only the most interesting products make it into *HFC*.



ALVIN GOLD

Alvin cut his hi-fi teeth in retail, and has been writing about his obsession for more than 20 years. In that time he has contributed his encyclopaedic knowledge to almost every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides).



DAVID VIVIAN

An award-winning journalist, David's sharp ears and equally sharp powers of description are a valuable mix for *HFC*. He also writes about cars, but who needs that the latest Lotus when you've got the finest hi-fi to test drive?



RICHARD BLACK

Richard is a professional musician, an experienced recording engineer and a highly knowledgeable hi-fi analyst to boot. He has a particular knack for writing about complicated subjects in a comprehensible way – and he only writes for *HFC*.



PAUL MARCHANT

Lab expert Paul is a senior engineer and lecturer at one of the UK's top broadcast colleges, and is often hidden behind a mountain of electronics test gear. Hi-fi started as a hobby nearly 20 years ago and has progressed to an obsession.



JASON KENNEDY

Jason previously edited *HFC*, but can now be found swanning about the wilds of Sussex indulging himself with the very best hi-fi money can buy. His own system is simply sensational (trust us) and his love of music knows no bounds.



ALAN SIRCOM

After a stint selling hi-fi, Alan began his journalistic career at *HFC* some 12 years ago. Now a successful freelancer, you too can benefit from his extensive hi-fi knowledge, from purist two-channel stereo to the latest multichannel gear.

ESTABLISHED 1975

HI-FI CHOICE is your essential guide to audio excellence in the home, from vinyl records to the latest digital music formats. For 29 years, our unique tests have brought you the most thorough and reliable hi-fi journal around. And our mix of cherry-picked kit, rigorous group tests and in-depth equipment reviews continues to ensure that **HFC** is the magazine you can trust. Published 13 times a year, it's the smarter hi-fi read...



HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE >>

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

Six new CD players in two price brackets, with three from £600 to £900, and three more from £1,000-£1,600.

TOP TOWNSHEND

Townshend Audio's ultimate analogue and digital offerings exclusively reviewed.

SPECIAL SPEAKERS

World's first reviews for Naim's new Ariva and Ruark's latest Talisman III.

FLEXIBLE FRIEND

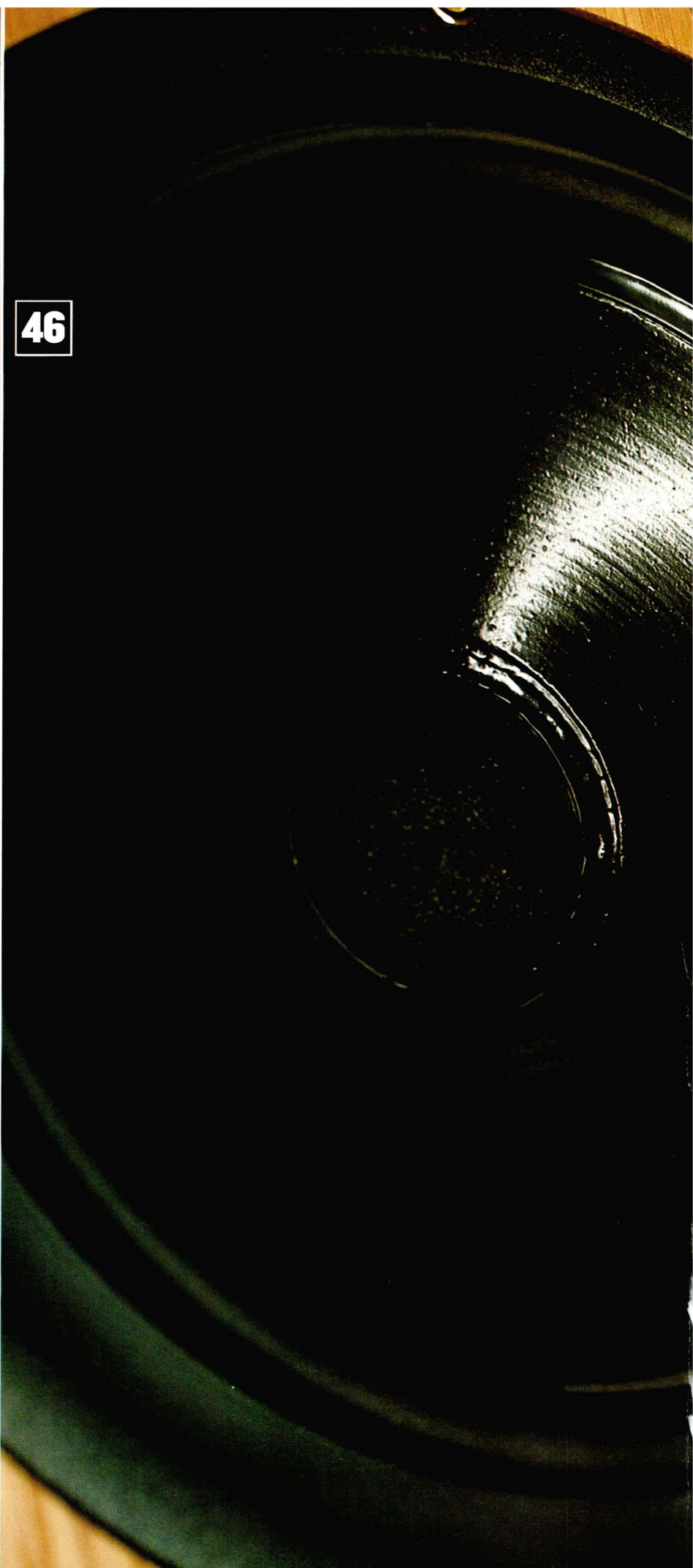
First-ever test – Linn's Unidisk SC combines a universal player with a preamp/processor.

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *HFC* is on sale 1 October. Ensure you never miss a thing – turn to p84 for our latest great subscription offer!



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ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

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BUYER'S BIBLE

The ultimate guide to high performance hi-fi and AV, gathering together all our favourite products for your perusal. Your shortlist starts here...

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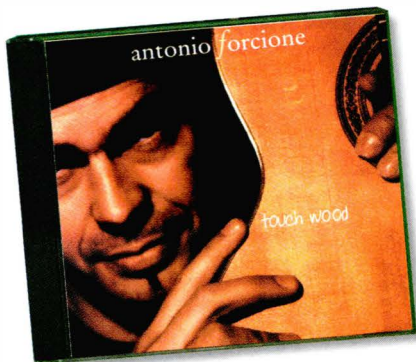
FREE MINI-MAG!

Don't miss our new second-hand mini-mag

- 2 Guide to second-hand kit – this issue, Arcam, plus DIY tips
- 3 Trading Pages
- 7 Reader Classified

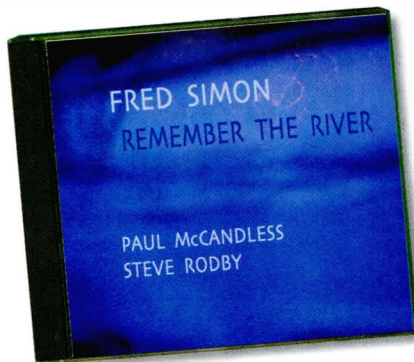
All you need to know about your exclusive Naim CD

You've heard the hi-fi, now hear the music! The latest in our series of exclusive free CDs holds another ten prime cuts from Naim Audio's music label, all beautifully recorded for your listening pleasure...



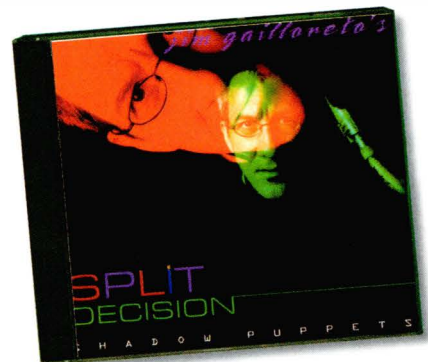
1. ANTONIO FORCIONE Tarantella

Taken from the CD: *Touch Wood* (Naim CD069)
The tarantella was a dance of old Italian folklore – one who had been bitten by a tarantula spider was said to have been able to dispel the poison from his body by doing this fast and furious dance. Taken from Antonio's latest album, this track echoes the awesome speed and agility necessary for this ancient remedy.



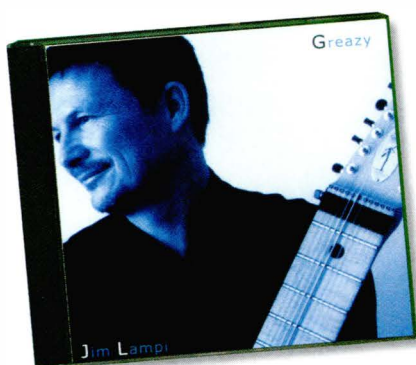
2. FRED SIMON December Together

Taken from the CD: *Remember The River* (Naim CD081)
Taken from Fred's brand new album for The Naim Label, *December Together* is both beautiful and bittersweet, notable not only for its divine lyricism, but also for some inspired improvisation between Fred, Paul McCandless and Steve Rodby. A class act and no mistake.



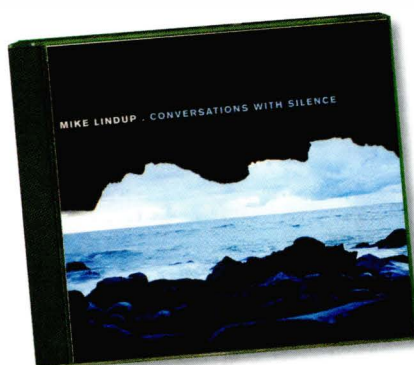
3. JIM GAILLORETO'S SPLIT DECISION Jump St(u)art

Taken from the CD: *Shadow Puppets* (Naim CD076)
Jump St(u)art is an astonishing composition highlighted by the playing of this very skilled group of master musicians, led by saxophonist Jim Gailloro. The track demonstrates how textures and dynamics can send the imagination spinning into other jazz worlds, the free quality of the playing tempered by the group's controlled virtuosity.



6. JIM LAMPI Ernest

Taken from the CD: *Greazy* (Naim CR01)
Chapman Stick maestro Jim Lampi has performed with his five-and-a-half octave instrument all over the world. The unique sound has intrigued many musicians including John Martyn, with whom Jim plays on a regular basis. This track features some wonderfully deep notes and a breezy rhythm.



7. MIKE LINDUP Heart Of The Matter

Taken from the CD: *Conversations With Silence* (Naim CD073)
This engaging solo piano composition is taken from ex-Level 42 founder Mike's debut solo album. *Conversations With Silence* is the album that Mike has always wanted to make, and is a wonderful showcase for his talents as both composer and pianist.

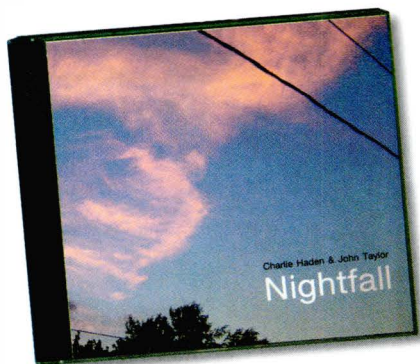


8. NEIL STACEY GROUP Her Smile

Taken from the CD: *Leave It To Last* (Naim CD062)
The Neil Stacey Group is an exciting project led by this hugely talented English guitarist, specialising in acoustic-led groove jazz with help from piano, drums, bass, percussion and saxophone. *Her Smile* is one of many original tracks that were both written and arranged by Neil.

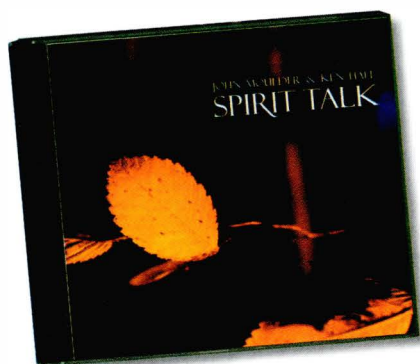
SPECIAL OFFER! GET ANY OF THESE NAIM CDS FOR JUST £5!

Show this page to any of the retailers listed and you'll get £7.99 off any of these Naim Label CDs. Only the CDs featured on *Naim - The Hi-Fi Collection 2* (free with HFC 259) are included in this offer. Purchases must be made in-store at one of the Naim Audio dealers listed right. Regular CD selling price: £12.99. Offer open to every CD purchased from the titles listed below prior to the end of November. Offer ends 30/11/04.



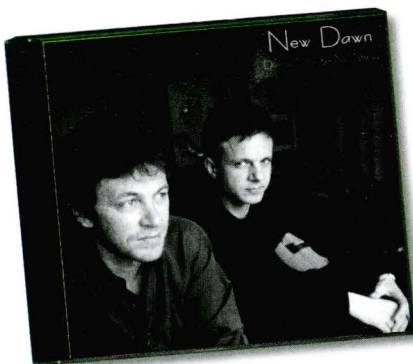
4. CHARLIE HADEN AND JOHN TAYLOR Nightfall

Taken from the CD/LP: *Nightfall* (Naim CD077/LP078) *Nightfall* is a truly magical listening experience. Charlie Haden, one of the world's best known and most respected double bassists, is on the top of his form for this track written by himself. The great British jazz pianist John Taylor adds his own unique finesse to the mix, thus completing a sublime musical story.



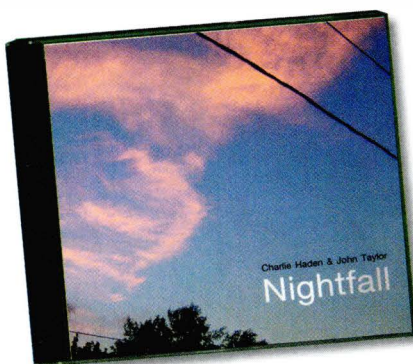
9. JOHN MOULDER AND KEN HALL Falling Grace

Taken from the CD: *Spirit Talk* (Naim CD071) This Steve Swallow-penned tune is given the guitar and vibes treatment by these two hugely talented musicians. The amazing fluidity of the vibraphone is complemented perfectly by the guitar, forming a musical end result that is both spirited and effortlessly beautiful.



5. DOMINIC MILLER AND NEIL STACEY Shape of My Heart

Taken from the CD: *New Dawn* (Naim CD066) This Sting/Dominic Miller-penned track should need little introduction, but is given a beautiful reworking by these two supremely talented guitarists. Dominic has been a regular in Sting's band for the last eighteen years but was keen to work with Neil after seeing him perform at a gig - this project is the result.



10. CHARLIE HADEN AND JOHN TAYLOR Song For The Whales

Taken from the CD/LP: *Nightfall* (Naim CD077/LP078) This extraordinary track was written by Charlie in homage to these mighty mammals when the Save The Whale campaign was in its infancy. Charlie uses his bow to eerie effect, producing a low arco sound which is startlingly and touchingly similar to whale song.



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* Optional 7.1 system available

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- ▶ Low loss
- ▶ Wide dispersion
- ▶ Ultra-fast drivers
- ▶ Time coherent
- ▶ Low coloration
- ▶ Amplifier optimised



www.dali.dk

IN ADMIRATION...



LINN EXOTIK MULTICHANNEL PREAMP

Think 'best of British hi-fi' and in many minds two names still dominate – Linn and Naim. New product from each is always exciting, and we're delighted to be auditioning the Exotik, Linn's latest flexible preamp. This multichannel model is derived from the £6,000 stereo Klimax Kontrol (see last month's special *The Collection* issue) and is said to deliver purist audio performance.

This is great news for anyone who fancies dipping a toe into multichannel depths without compromising two-channel

performance. Linn also has a digital variant on the way, the Exotik+DA, which offers an additional digital processing module compatible with all the major audio algorithms from the likes of Dolby and DTS.

As with most of Linn's products these days, the Exotik features a full complement of connectivity options, including a multiroom option using Linn's own Knekt system, so its appeal reaches beyond the purist audiophile.

To find out more, see our in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice

PRODUCT Linn Exotik

TYPE Multichannel preamplifier

PRICE £1,750

KEY FEATURES High-performance stereo and multichannel preamp • Available with or without digital processing • Full complement of connectivity options • Linn Knekt multiroom compatible

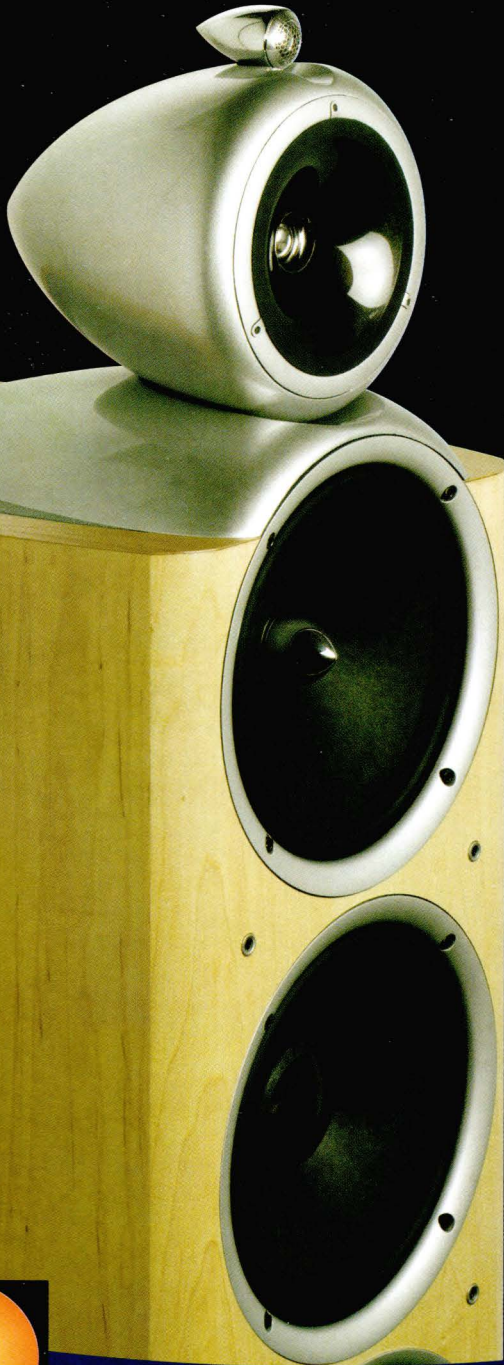
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SONY SCD-XE597 SACD PLAYER

From the spec sheet alone, Sony's new audio-only SACD player has got us chomping at the bit. It's a dedicated music machine with a fresh design approach that's introduced some exciting new features at an amazingly low price point. Designed to make the most of both DSD data from SACDs and 16-bit/44.1kHz PCM code from standard CDs, the player sports a multi-level DAC to combine the best aspects of one-bit and multi-bit converters for what Sony says is an exceptionally transparent sound.

Further technical trickery includes a newly developed chipset that integrates a number of processing functions to minimise jitter, and an intelligent servo for precise high-speed tracking. Quite how Sony does it for the price we don't know, but for pin money, everyone will be able to get a taste of multichannel SACD without committing a fortune.

To find out more, see our in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice

PRODUCT Sony SCD-XE597

TYPE Audio-only multichannel SACD/CD player

PRICE £150

KEY FEATURES Super Audio D/A converter
● New DSP chipset ● Multichannel speaker time alignment ● High-quality analogue power supply

CONTACT 08705 111999

www.sony.co.uk

NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

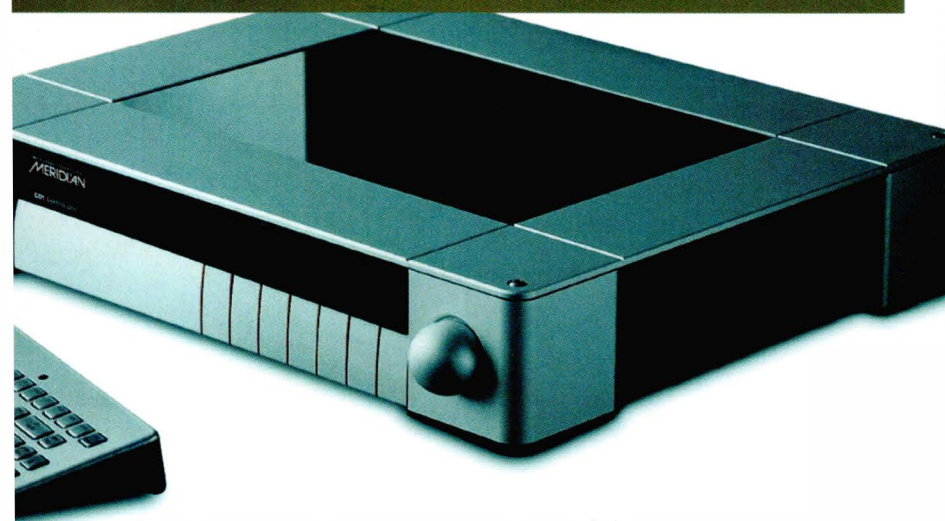


DENON DVD-3910

Denon's replacement for the *HFC* Award-winning DVD-2900 universal disc player is here. Denon promises giant-slaying performance from the new DVD-3910, which boasts a feature list to make the competition wince. Not only does it support SACD, DVD-Audio, DVD-Video and CD – it's also the first player with 'final-spec' HDMI connectivity, which means that both digital video and all forms of digital audio (including hi-res multichannel) may be streamed from the same output for the first time. Plenty of alternative connections are also available, plus a hard-wired stereo path for CD to match the player's "audiophile construction". You can read our in-depth review in the next issue.

Price £900 **Due** Now

☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk



MERIDIAN G56/G57/G55/G01

Meridian's G-Series is finally complete with the inclusion of four new analogue products. The digital specialist has just released a pair of two-channel power amps (G56 and G57), as well as a multichannel power amp (G55) and a stereo control unit with tuner (G01, pictured). The power amps' circuitry derives from the reference DSP8000 digital loudspeakers and Meridian claims substantial power and clarity across the entire amplifier range.

Price G56: £1,500, G57: £2,000, G55: £2,700, G01: £1,450 **Due** Now

☎ 01480 445678 🌐 www.meridian-audio.com



SONY NW-HD1/VGF-AP1

Sony's hard disk portables may have arrived too late to worry the executives at Apple, but its new NW-HD1 is the smallest, lightest and thinnest hard disk audio player on the market. What's more, it boasts a class-leading 30-hour battery life (against the new iPod's 12 hours) and advanced shock resistance – crucial, says Sony, for a Walkman-branded product.

The G-Sensor anti-shock technology means that if the player is dropped, a velocity sensor temporarily removes the head from the disk to avoid fatal damage. It also features a 20GB capacity – enough for up to 900 CDs or 13,000 songs (in ATRAC3plus at 46kbps) – and includes a 25-minute buffer memory and seven-line LCD screen. Sony also has another player, the 20GB VAIPO Pocket VGF-AP1, which has a colour screen and is capable of acting as a digital photo album, or an external hard drive.

Price To be announced

Due NW-HD1: Now, VGF-AP1: October

☎ 08705 111999 🌐 www.sony.co.uk



JAMO E7

Jamo is making bold claims about the new decoupled tweeter technology implemented in its latest low-cost E7 speaker range. The design decouples the tweeter from the rest of the speaker to minimise coloration from cabinet resonance, an idea that was inspired by technologies featured in high-end speaker designs. The result, Jamo claims, is "uncommonly detailed and realistic reproduction of high frequencies". Unwanted resonance has been controlled further by using offset cabinets and a new fibreglass bass/mid driver. There are three speakers in the range plus a centre speaker and subwoofer.

Price From £150 to £460 **Due** Now

☎ 01788 573100 🌐 www.jamo.co.uk

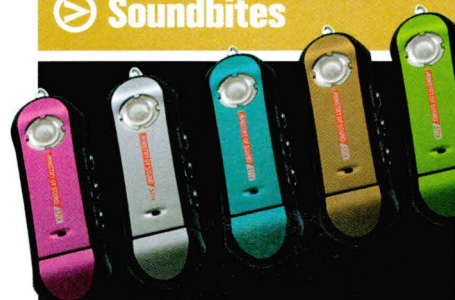


AVI LABORATORY SERIES PRE/POWER AMPS

Gloucestershire hi-fi specialist AVI is expanding its Laboratory Series with new pre and power amps. The 200-watt Stereo Power Amplifier is essentially similar to the power stage in the earlier Laboratory Series Integrated (see review, *HFC* 241), so as to facilitate bi-amping, but the Lab Series Pre-Amplifier is new and said to be considerably more sophisticated. It features six inputs, low noise transistors in the input stage and discrete transistors operating in Class A for the output. An optional MM/MC phono stage and a 24-bit DAC upgrade are available at extra cost, with the latter said to maximise performance from older CD players or DAB/DVB signals.

Price Pre-Amplifier: £1,399, Stereo Power Amplifier: £1,299 **Due** Now ☎ 01453 752656 🌐 www.avihifi.com

Soundbites



MINISTRY OF SOUND has launched a colourful assortment of MP3 flash memory players called the XS Series Rainbow Stix (£70). Each lipstick-sized player comes preloaded with MOS's DanceNation 2004 album to get listeners going. Despite a capacity of just 30 tracks the units offer quick and simple USB plug-and-play compatibility for rapid transfer of audio files. ☎ 0870 010 5676

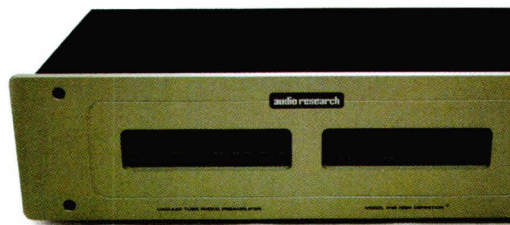
SENNHEISER says its new 500-series open-backed headphones offer technology passed down from the £300 HD650 but in a more affordable package. Both the HD515 (£70) and the HD555 (£100) feature extended bass from a redesigned diaphragm, with fully adjustable bodies. ☎ 0800 652 5002

PURE has unveiled its replacement for the Evoke-1, the world's best-selling DAB radio. The new Evoke-1XT (below) features a new speaker and LCD screen, plus redesigned casework and USB connectivity for future software updates. The tabletop portable is available now, priced at £100. ☎ 01923 260511



APPLE has tackled the iPod's biggest shortcoming with its new fourth generation model – that of battery life. The latest iPod lasts for 12 hours before it needs re-juicing, and also features a new click wheel and a redesigned shuffle function for random play of up to 10,000 tracks. Pricing has come down to £219 for the 20GB version and £299 for 40GB. ☎ 0800 039 1010

THE CHORD COMPANY is now manufacturing a silver HDMI cable called the Silver Plus. The cable has been designed to maintain quality over longer runs and is available in lengths of 1.5 to 15 metres, with prices starting at £80. ☎ 01980 625700



AUDIO RESEARCH PH5

Audio Research is exploiting the continuing vinyl resurgence with the release of a new valve/transistor hybrid phono stage, the PH5. The new full-width unit will directly replace the PH3/PH3SE models and will now feature fascia-mounted controls with an LED display. The product also allows cartridge-loading adjustment for the first time from both the front panel and remote control.

Price £1,800 **Due** Now ☎ 020 8971 3909 🌐 www.audioresearch.com



LINN KINOS

Linn's diversification into the AV market continues with the launch of the Kinos system controller, essentially a high-end multichannel preamp/processor and audio/video switching unit. It's been designed to complement Linn's Unidisk range of universal disc players and supports all the latest coding algorithms, as well as both 5.1 and 7.1 configurations. The product is available in two guises – the standard Kinos and the Kinos+DSP, which includes additional 'record paths' for independent recording or distribution of a single analogue source or the digital source currently being listened to at any one time.

Price Kinos: £4,500, Kinos+DSP: £5,000 **Due** Now ☎ 0141 307 7777 🌐 www.linn.co.uk

DYNAUDIO AUDIENCE 72 SE

Danish loudspeaker specialist Dynaudio is continuing its tradition of creating Special Edition versions of selected speakers by refining the popular Audience 72. The new SE version of the floorstander features a new tweeter, updated bass/mid drivers (from the Contour 1.8MkII) and a new crossover. The aesthetics and dimensions remain unchanged, apart from the darker driver frames to distinguish the SE specification. Four natural wood finishes are available.

Price £1,750 per pair **Due** October ☎ 07970 074717 🌐 www.dynaudio.com

The Insider

THIS MONTH, HFC TALKS TO...

ERIC KINGDON

Job Title: European technical marketing manager
Company: Sony



What's your most exciting product in development at the moment?

There are lots! Many are driven by a rapidly converging market. A personal favourite is a new high-end digital amp and Super Audio CD player using an advanced version of S-Master Digital Amplification technology – possibly the most natural sound I've heard in a long time.

What's the future of hi-fi?

The future depends upon the industry's attitude to a rapidly changing market. By that I mean we need to be adaptive, open-minded and very strong promoters of the technology and quality we have to offer.

DVD-Audio or SACD – and why?

Super Audio CD offers the greatest choice of titles and delivers uniform quality, irrespective of the number of channels.

Is the universal disc player the future of CD playback?

There's no doubt that a combination player is an attractive proposition for some. Ultimately a dedicated player can be better, but there is room for both.

What type of products will consumers be buying in five years time?

Hopefully Sony! There's an entire article in this answer for a future issue...

Hi-Fi Diary

SEPTEMBER

24-26 **The Hi-Fi Show and AV Expo**
Heathrow, London, 020 8774 0847
London's best-established hi-fi show

OCTOBER

10 **National Vintage Communication Fair**
National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham,
07947 460161
Hi-fi antiques and collectables fair

23-24 **Home Entertainment Show**
Manchester, 01524 36991
The premier AV show in the north west

NOVEMBER

5-7 **What Hi-Fi Sound & Vision Show**
Novotel London West, 020 8267 8378
Second year for this London show

Multichannel via the net

The PC came another step closer to ousting the wireless as the audio receiver of choice last month when a DTS multichannel signal was transmitted via the internet in Sweden. In a trial with Swedish Radio, a 24-bit/96kHz 5.1-channel signal was streamed onto the Sprint Network via internet protocol (IP) at 1.5Mb/s, a rate equivalent to that used on DVD video and digital video broadcasting (DVB).

The signal used was taken from a live concert and transmitted via an MPEG2 encoder with IP outputs – this signal could then be decoded using a proprietary DTS software player designed for the purpose. Ted Laverty of DTS explained, "The exercise arose out of our ongoing cooperation with Swedish Radio and their DTS-encoded DVB satellite service. They are experiencing demand for the high-quality DTS downloads on their website and were keen to examine the viability of providing a streaming signal of the same quality."

Dolby, meanwhile, has launched Dolby Digital Plus as a potential broadcast format for the future. An enhanced version of the existing DD system (AC-3), DD+ or E-AC-3 will be compatible with current decoders but supports data rates of up to 6Mb/s and uses variable bit rates to produce up to 7.1 discrete channels.



Sony Music joins BMG

Both European and American trade commission bodies have approved the merger of Sony Music Entertainment and BMG Entertainment, a move which will create the world's largest music company. The resulting behemoth will control 30 per cent of the music market, putting it ahead of Universal Music which currently has a 26 per cent share.

The new group will combine top-selling artists such as George Michael, Usher, Bruce Springsteen and AC/DC and represents the largest collection of record labels on the global market. The merger is an attempt to combat an ongoing slump in music sales which have dropped by nearly a third over the last three years, an occurrence inevitably blamed on piracy. (Nothing to do with quality of output...)

Music companies including the EMI Group, which has previously been blocked from merging with BMG, and Apple iTunes opposed the move on anti-trust grounds but it was not considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the merger would disadvantage the consumer or create an unfair monopoly.



Cyrus and Mission change hands

Two formerly interwoven brands, Mission and Cyrus, are now under new ownership. Cyrus MD Peter Bartlett, along with two partners, has engineered a management buy-out and purchased the brand name and assets of Cyrus Electronics from NXT and formed a new company, Cyrus Audio. The move will not affect staffing, premises or the product range, which is about to be expanded – the new company will be launching "stunning upgrades" to its Cyrus 8 amp and a replacement for the CD8 CD player, albeit with only small changes in model name, as well as a high-end DAC in the autumn. Meanwhile, loudspeaker brand Mission, which until a few years ago was under the same ownership as Cyrus, has been acquired by Fundamental-e Investments.





Sound quality counts!

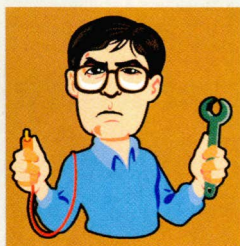
According to a UK survey, sound quality is our biggest priority when it comes to choosing how we listen to our favourite artists. The survey commissioned by Sony, Philips and Universal Music also revealed that people who prefer to listen to music on the best kit they can afford were most likely to say that they do so "to help keep them sane."

More men than women said they only ever listen on the best audio equipment they can afford, but more women than men said they wanted high quality at home but are less fussy on the move. Surround sound, meanwhile, turned out to be more popular among the 18-24 age group than with those aged 45-54.

Dirk de Clippeloir, of Universal Music, added: "This has also become important for artists such as Sting, Jamie Cullum (pictured above) and many others whose music is now being produced as Super Audio CDs."

JIMMY'S TWEAKS #25

HANDY HINTS FROM JIMMY HUGHES – HI-FI'S SUPER TWEAKER



Needle talk

Hi-fi is usually positioned in a socially convenient room location – often quite close to the listening seat, or between the speakers. Nothing wrong with that. But for those playing vinyl, don't forget that most cartridges (moving coils especially) produce reasonably high levels of 'needle talk' – a thin, somewhat

brash/edgy high frequency sound – as the music plays. Although low in volume level, needle talk can nevertheless be detected, and its presence impairs clarity, transparency, and cleanness.

To minimise these ill effects, position the equipment as far away from both the speakers and listening seat as possible. Failing that, try erecting a temporary barrier in front of the turntable.

TOP 10 TRACKS FOR TESTING TREBLE

- 1 **Billie Jean** Michael Jackson (right)
- 2 **Wuthering Heights** Kate Bush
- 3 **UFOrb** The Orb
- 4 **Isobel** Björk
- 5 **Freddie Freeloader** Miles Davis
- 6 **Flower** Duet Delibes
- 7 **Miss Chatelaine** k.d. lang
- 8 **Blowin' In The Wind** Bob Dylan
- 9 **Pantala Naga Pampa** Dave Matthews Band
- 10 **Shape Of My Heart** Sting



New Music

IN THE STUDIO

ARTISTS RECENTLY ABSENT FROM THE CUT AND THRUST OF SHOWBIZ HYPE DUE TO FINISHING THEIR LATEST ALBUMS



U2

Title: *Vertigo*

Release date: late autumn

U2's follow-up to 2000's *All That You Can't Leave Behind* could be out sooner than intended. During a photo session in Nice, a CD containing several of the new songs went missing, and Bono immediately announced that if they surfaced via the internet, the official release would be rushed forward. "We will put it out immediately as a legal download on iTunes, and get hard copies into the shops in a month," he said.

REM

Title: *tbc*

Release date: Oct 2004

According to Michael Stipe, world events have had a "profound impact" on REM's new album. "There's some stuff on here that's pretty hardcore, and fairly political," he says. The band is planning a two-week 'stop Bush' tour in the run-up to the US election and among the more overtly political titles on the album are *Final Straw* and *The Outside*, featuring rapper Q-Tip.

COLDPLAY

Title: *tbc*

Release date: early 2005

Coldplay have been in New York recording the follow-up to *A Rush Of Blood To The Head* with producer Ken Nelson. "I've been listening to Jay-Z and Kraftwerk a lot, trying to get inspiration," singer Chris Martin reveals. Following the birth of his first child with actress Gwyneth Paltrow earlier this year, he adds reassuringly, "but I'm not singing about nappies or anything."

MARIANNE FAITHFULL

Title: *Before The Poison*

Release date: 27 Sept

PJ Harvey has written and produced much of the new album from the sixties icon.



Other collaborators include Nick Cave, with whom Faithfull co-wrote four songs. Blur's Damon Albarn has also written her a song and the album will come with liner notes by acclaimed novelist Will Self. Song titles include *There Is A Ghost*, *In The Factory*, *Desperanto* and *The Mystery Of Love*.

FOO FIGHTERS

Title: *tbc*

Release date: 2005

Ex-Nirvana man Dave Grohl has had a busy summer, playing drums on forthcoming albums from Garbage and Nine Inch Nails. Now he's turning his attention to a new Foo Fighters album to be recorded in the band's studio in LA. "I think it's going to be a two-record set, ten acoustic songs and then ten tracks that are just really heavy," he says.

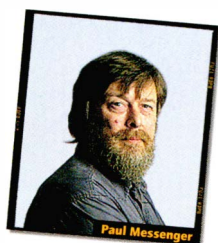
ALSO COMING SOON...

JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

Yo-Yo Ma Plays Morricone (Oct), **Glenn Gould** Bach: Well-Tempered Clavier (Oct), **Lang Lang** Live At Carnegie Hall (Oct), **Pavarotti** 30th Anniversary Concert (Oct)

DVD-AUDIO/ SACD

Björk Medulla (SACD/ DVD-A, Sep), **Cincinnati SO (Jarvi)** Stravinsky: Rite Of Spring (SACD, Sep), **Eschkenazy** The Gershwin Album (SACD, Sep), **Mark Knopfler** Shangri-La (SACD, Sep)



Paul Messenger

Parlez vous?

The hidden joys of French speakers

With a depressing lack of patriotic fervour, I seem to have developed a particular fondness for French loudspeakers. Enthusiasm for French food is understandable enough, ditto French wine of course, though I've never developed a similar taste for French coffee.

But speakers? Since the top British speaker brands are respected and sold throughout the globe, the notion that we could learn anything from across the channel might seem strange, especially since so few French brands have attempted to sell their wares on the UK scene.

Cabasse is the 'grande dame' of French speaker makers, with a history that goes way back to the 1950s, and the first to awaken my

“Righteously realistic dynamics seem to be a key characteristic of French speakers.”

interest in the French approach. In 1992 the Bisquine featured a pulp cone main driver with one of the biggest magnets I'd ever seen, delivering a degree of dynamic expression and grip that was truly exceptional.

That first experience proved to be quite prophetic, because rightfully realistic dynamics seem to be a key characteristic of French speakers. It's certainly very much the distinguishing factor in models from Rehdeko and Triangle, with Rehdeko being the most extreme example.

Triangle is a rather different proposition. Though it shares with Rehdeko a penchant for paper cones and fabric surrounds, its loudspeakers do have a somewhat broader appeal, and the company fully intends to move ahead of Cabasse and claim the number two slot in France behind the much larger Focal-JMLab operation.

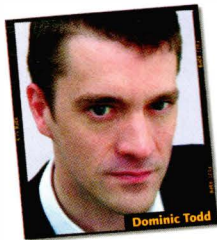
Triangle and Focal-JMLab are very different in their approach, but do have one thing in common. Both were founded around 25 years

ago, so they're much younger than most serious British brands (excepting the likes of PMC and Wilson Benesch). Relative youth, and the fact that both are still owned and run by their founders, plays no small part in their success in my opinion, as it ensures consistency of vision and direction. Both too owe part of their success to the fact that they make their own drive units.

Whereas Focal-JMLab has been busy pushing the new materials boundaries with its sandwich cones and beryllium tweeters, Triangle's Renaud de Vergnette is a respecter of historic techniques, and tends to use traditional materials such as paper cones, fabric surrounds and horn tweeters.

French brands might have been slow to try and make it here in Britain, but several are now available. Each has a distinctive individuality, very much adding to the richness of choice now facing speaker buyers on UK shores.

Paul Messenger is a former editor of Hi-Fi Choice and has been writing about his favourite hobby for nearly 30 years



Dominic Todd

Multi-flannel

Hi-res multichannel? Who wants it?

It's a simple and obvious fact that the high-resolution formats of SACD and DVD-Audio have yet to capture the general public's imagination to any great extent. Something of an understatement you might think, and an issue that has been well documented both here and elsewhere. Much of the blame has been put at the feet of the marketers, especially on the software side of things. Yet, while this has played a role in the disappointing performance, I feel that the hi-fi manufacturing industry must take a proportion of the blame that's due. The problem lies with the product planners and, yes, the marketers again.

In respect to a DVD player, you can see that DVD-Audio kind of makes sense. While most people are happy enough simply watching films on their player, there are a small minority who would appreciate the higher musical resolution offered by DVD-A. All well and good so far, but where does SACD fit into this particular picture? DVD-A is already targeting a tiny proportion of DVD buyers, and the addition of SACD merely adds to the confusion. Yet, no-one appears to have told the manufacturers this, as they all go hell for leather to produce ever cheaper 'universal' DVD players. I have no idea how many compatible sub-£200 DVD players ever play a DVD-A or SACD disc, but I would be surprised if it was over 0.5 per cent, let alone a whole one per cent.

This cannot make any kind of sense. What the industry needs to realise is that most hi-fi separates customers still predominantly use stereo. They may well have an AV system in the other room, but comparatively few have melded the systems together. At the moment, they are generally quite happy with CD. And it's here where the marketing focus of the hi-res formats has gone decidedly wonky. While SACD and DVD-A have the potential to excite listeners, they lack a barnstorming product that will really focus people's attention on them. In short, the product simply isn't sexy enough. Let's face it; most tech-savvy music fans are buying iPods and not SACD or DVD-A machines. ▶

R

RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

NAD 3020
AMPLIFIER



Conduct a straw poll among any group of randomly assembled audiophiles, and there will be no doubt about the outcome. The

most famous budget amplifier of all time was the NAD 3020, a design that put the British firm on the map, and which in later years spawned many alternatives and successors both from NAD itself and from elsewhere, all of which were promoted as "the new, improved 3020". Perhaps they were and perhaps they weren't, but none of the putative replacements ever achieved the success and kudos of the original 3020.

The NAD 3020 was introduced in 1977, at the late, lamented, Harrogate hi-fi show by the firm once known as New Acoustic Dimension. It sold for five pence shy of £80, and within a fairly short time it had succeeded not just in putting NAD's name on the map, but also in becoming a powerful sales tool for the then leading hi-fi retail umbrella organisation, Hi-Fi Markets. Public relations then, as now, were handled by ex-journalist Andy Giles, and he reminds me of one true story, which goes back to when he was hired by Malcolm Blockley, then MD of Hi-Fi Markets, which was also NAD's distributor. Malcolm gave a sample of the amplifier to Andy, pointing out that it was, in fact, amazing. Andy then listened, thought to be too good to be true for the price, and gave it to the likes of David Praker (a respected journalist/reviewer), Paul Benson (editor of influential audiophile mag *Hi-fi Answers*) and yours truly. The reaction was more than a little positive. It was positively ecstatic. When Malcolm saw the resulting reviews he said: "Well, if it's that good – I'd better listen to one". He'd never heard it himself!

What made the 3020 so special? It wasn't the looks. Frankly, the NAD 3020 was pig ugly, with its dull, unattractive plastic buttons and rotary controls, but it was at least distinctive, and so was the horizontal input/output panel on the back, a feature that eventually disappeared in later versions. It wasn't the specifications, which were basic even then – 20 watts or so per channel and a conventional interface including tone controls (the 3020



"Frankly, the NAD 3020 was pig ugly, with its dull plastic buttons, but it was at least distinctive."

just predated the drift away from bass and treble controls, and from memory it never caught up). And it certainly had nothing to do with build quality. The metalwork was nondescript, the components ordinary and internal build quality was distinctly tatty, with lots of untidy wire links of the kind that have almost disappeared from the insides of modern amplifiers. The 3020 did have 'soft clipping' though, which helped prevent the amplifier or the loudspeakers coming to harm after moderate abuse.

No, what first bought the NAD to notice was its ability to get to grips with complex and difficult loads. This was first demonstrated to the public (quite possibly at Harrogate) by connecting a pair to several high-end loudspeakers wired in parallel, so that the composite load would have been perhaps one or two ohms. Of course it didn't go loud, but it didn't let go either. This was enough to attract attention, but what really gave it public appeal was its easy, relatively graceful and attractive sound quality. It was immediately apparent that this was not just another rather untidy and grainy sounding box of transistors. This was an amplifier that had a story to tell, and the number of excellent first-time systems that were built around this unprepossessing little box if tricks is beyond count. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



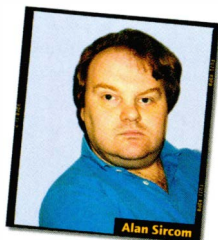
“The logic of argument is of interest, not just to wordsmiths and journalists, but to anyone who likes to win them.”

Yet there is some light at the end of the tunnel. After reportedly predicting the premature death of two-channel stereo, Marantz is having to eat its alleged words with its latest product – a two-channel SACD player. Now, SACD recordings have always been available in just two channels, and the first players were all exclusively stereo-only, but these days almost all discs and players also offer a multichannel option. The SA-8400 is different – it aims simply to offer a competitive sound from ordinary CD and exceptional performance with SACD, all in a standard stereo setting.

It might seem odd but to me this makes perfect sense. As punters upgrade their CD players they can be eased into the joys of hi-res sound without having to get rid of their CD collection, or buy another three or four speakers. DVD-A can then be left solely to the DVD players, but only the more expensive ones. This would leave the bargain basement DVDs free to concentrate on superior video quality and, with the advent of blue laser, longer disc lengths.

Quite how the public will react to Blue-ray, however, is a different matter again. Let's just hope it's handled within the industry with some consistency and common sense.

Dominic Todd began his hi-fi career in the retail business and has been a freelance hi-fi reviewer and columnist since 1993



I think, therefore...

Logical denial of spurious hi-fi claims

I have, of late, developed an interest in logic. Not just the AND, OR and NOT gates found in computers and CD players. The logic of argument is of interest, not just to wordsmiths, but to anyone who likes to win them.

Although most logic courses now discuss processing argument in an algebra of weird terminology only comprehensible to linguists and philosophers, the old formal fallacies are important for recognising bad arguments.

What on earth does this have to do with music and hi-fi? First, it allows anyone to determine the subtle, entirely fallacious thought used in advertising campaigns. More importantly, it demonstrates why the internet, for all its notionally 'free' access, is often desperately unfiltered. This allows entirely

loony concepts to be accepted as kosher, with mediocre products praised and decent products vilified, often by people who have no 'hands-on' knowledge of the products in question.

The most common fallacy is the *argumentum ad hominem*, which attacks the person making the argument, instead of the argument itself.

This appears on forums ("I know you like the Okeykokey 2000, but you're mental"), often in a more subtle form called 'poisoning the well' ("Of course you like vinyl; you've got thousands of CDs"). Answering back similarly is known as *tu quoque* 'you too' fallacy.

Another common fallacy is the No True Scotsman, the argument of shifting goalposts. This is common in

forums when someone makes a comment ("All people hate valves"), which is challenged ("I like valves") and then the *ad hoc* argument shifts ("Well, all good listeners hate valves"). The person making such a statement will often continue to arbitrarily exclude things until they have worn down the opposition. Vinyl and valve enthusiasts favour the *argumentum ad antiquitatem* ("If it's old, it's good"), while DVD-Audio buffs spout the *argumentum ad novitatem* ("New is better").

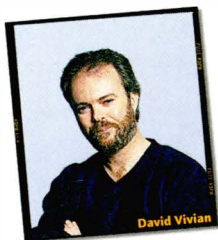
Almost unique to the hi-fi industry is the *argumentum ad crumenam*, the fallacy of believing that money equals correctness ("I'm rich and I own one of these, so should you") and its inverse, the *argumentum ad lazarum* ("Because I am poor, I can make better buying decisions than someone with money to burn").

Finally, we come to the fallacies used by hi-fi brands to sell their wares. Most common is the *dicto simpliciter*, or the sweeping generalisation ("People like CD, you are a person, you'll love this"). *Argumentum ad verecundiam* (appeals to authority, as in "Reviewer X loves our new player – buy it") and *argumentum ad populum* (appeals to the masses, as in "Everyone loves this – buy it") are also popular.

There are dozens of argument forms, good and bad, all of which can subtly shape your opinions about a product. These are only the most obvious, and easiest to spot, but there are others more subtle and more disingenuous. One of the best places to find all of them online is: www.datanation.com/fallacies.

But why is any of this important? Simply stated, because everyone should base their decisions on performance and value, not on the argument of others. No matter how elegant, or fallacious.

Alan Sircom began his journalistic career at HFC 12 years ago. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes



Land of the rising fun

More Japanese esoterica, please...

For some years, the thrust of Japan's hi-fi art seems to have been directed at devising ever more potent electronics to put in ever less expensive 'made for Britain' budget amps.

That, at any rate, is the bit we see and, let's face it, the bit we like. Watching the corporate might of Pioneer, Sony, Rotel, Marantz *et al* slug it out to provide the sexiest sound for our fussy British ears is a gas. Witnessing the downtrodden British amp makers get off their butts and come out fighting is fab. Great stuff. The consumer can't lose.

But don't go getting the impression that anyone else is quite as fascinated as we are over whether the new Arcam is better than the latest Anglicised Rotel or Denon. Business is business: if foreigners suddenly developed a yearning for bloated, lumpy bass, sucked-out midrange, chromium-plated treble, smeared imaging and no sense of timing, you can bet your last Yen that Japan Inc's products would be just that little more smeared than the rest.

The way Japan sees things on a global level, however, the hair-shirt sonic predilections of an idiosyncratic, modestly-sized market on the other side of the world are of no great consequence. In downtown Tokyo, 'budget' is plain budget. Nothing tweaky or breathed on – just solid high-volume engineering with curly writing, a slightly bright sound and lots of knobs. About as much use to an audiophile as a 2CV would be to F1's Jenson Button.

Does that mean there are no music lovers in Japan? Hardly. When the Japanese go for it, they really go. Why get hot and bothered over a cheap Denon with a few wizard capacitors when you can have a supercar-priced Audio Note Ongaku and make music so real you can almost touch it. That's doing things properly and a good indication that, when it comes to 'high-end', Japan's is arguably higher and more evolved than anyone else's.

But we shouldn't complain. After all, we do have access to a fair slice of super-chops specialist Japanese esoterica: the already mentioned (Kondo) Ongaku, Koetsu and Accuphase to name just three. What we need, of course, is for more mainstream Japanese manufacturers to bring their heavy-duty gear over here. Full credit to Marantz for laying on some deluxe CD players and amps but we want the kit you have to take out a second



Back in 1979, digital recording technology was still so new that no major record label had yet committed to using it exclusively

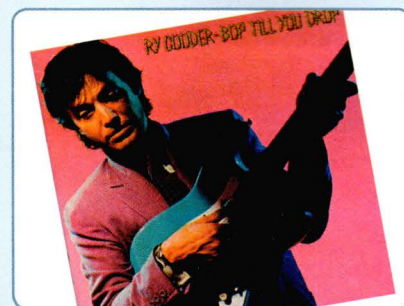
to record an album. The long-playing record that was chosen as the first to accept this potentially poisoned chalice was a solo work by well-respected session slide guitar virtuoso and roots music archivist Ry Cooder, at this stage yet to become renowned for his film soundtracks and world music explorations.

As it turned out, *Bop* was the first of a trilogy of works mining a rich seam of country, blues, R&B, soul and rock 'n' roll from the fifties and sixties which continued the following year with *Borderline* and trailed off with the less satisfying *The Slide Area* in 1982.

Most of the tracks are fairly obscure cover versions, although there's a radical reworking of Elvis's hit *Little Sister* and a beautiful instrumental take on Ike and Tina Turner's *I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine*. The band, as befitted Cooder's extensive session connections (by this stage he'd played with Captain Beefheart, the Rolling Stones, Neil Young and many more) was stellar, including the omnipresent rhythm section of drummer Jim Keltner and bass maestro Tim Drummond. Additional vocals came courtesy of Chaka Khan and Bobby King, and from the off it's a gorgeous record packed full of pop/soul classics, with a strong dash of good old Sun sessions fun thrown in – everybody sounds like they're having a great time, even on tear-jerkers like the Bobby King-led *I Can't Win*.

But while the performance is flawless, what doesn't come across so strongly is the quality of the recording. It has to be said that there's an overall thinness to this record which really does it no service, and which played its part in initial antipathy to the concept of digital recording in general.

During the guitar-led instrumental version of *I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine*, Cooder's instrument seems tainted by a degree of 'pumping' granular background noise, pointing to a degree of quantisation distortion, the sort that arises with signals that have been converted to digital with too few bits. *Bop* was



"The entire album was recorded on an early 3M digital machine using 16-bit encoding."

recorded on an early 3M digital machine which used 16-bit encoding, which should have been ample in theory. Legend has it, however, that the guitar part was originally recorded too low and when it was later mixed, the engineer quite naturally increased the level, not realising that with digital recording, this would have the effect of highlighting the deficiencies of that original low recording level, bringing the disparities into the audible range. While it doesn't destroy a great tune, it's frustrating to know that it could have been even better.

If a signal is recorded at too low a level digitally, it has the effect of recording it with less bits than specified. It was later realised that 16-bit recording in effect left no room for adjustment, since any degradation in the resolution brought any distortion dangerously close to the audible level.

Cooder has since disowned this album, which is a shame, since it's a perfect example of a fine performance undermined (only slightly) by the limitations of technology. No-one's ever levelled the same criticism at Robert Johnson's spare recording output, so why should Cooder be punished? The 1983 CD issue did nothing to correct the limitations of the original, making this an album that's surely long overdue for a considered remastering. **HFC**

Dave Oliver

MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

RY COODER
BOP TILL YOU DROP

❏ mortgage to put a deposit on – power amps that cause the town's lights to dim when you switch them on, CD players built to withstand a nuclear shockwave, speakers that can mimic a nuclear shockwave.

Do we get them? No. We get Sony Qualia – or what happens when Sony tells its brightest designers to let their imaginations run wild, money no object. In the Qualia range there's a tiny £1,100 MiniDisc player (just what I always wanted), a truly terrible looking pair of £1,500 headphones and a £2,200 digital camera the length of your index finger (I really do want that). No zillion-watt, gold-plated power amp, though, but I live in hope.

David Vivian has been wallowing in gorgeous hi-fi and then describing its virtues/vices in Hi-Fi Choice since 1990



Bland Ole Opry

Putting the blue in bluegrass

There are two ways to make reproduced music more convincing. One is to increase the quality of what you hear from your home music system. The other is to decrease the quality of what you're used to hearing from the real world. Either way, you narrow the gap and play a good trick on yourself.

As a dyed-in-the-wool bluegrass fan – surely I'm not the only American to find himself with two housecats, called one Flatt and the other Scruggs – I attend a number of music festivals every summer, which is when bluegrass musicians make hay. And as much as I enjoy those events, I'm sorry to say they play an increasing role in compressing people's expectations of live sound.

The problem is with that most popular of instruments, the guitar. When I was but a wee lad, there were two sorts of guitar – electric and acoustic. (Let's leave the dobro out of this for now, please.) That was as it should be. But today we have the *electricized* acoustic guitar – a horrid bastard with a sound hole *and* a built-in pickup, the latter allowing the instrument to be plugged straight into the mixing board.

The sound that comes out of those things is nothing like that of a guitar, acoustic or otherwise. It lacks the dry, woody quality of a fine old Martin heard live or through a decent microphone. It lacks the comparative warmth



“Bob Dylan, Doc Watson and many others sound a great deal more ‘realistic’ on my hi-fi than they sound live, in concert.”

of a Gibson Jumbo, or the sparkle of a Taylor, the full bottom end and unique percussive quality of a Gallagher, or the complex character of Ireland's fine Lowden. Modern pickups make steel strings sound like a cross between elastic bands and barbed wire, and they make fine wooden instruments sound like plastic. Cheap plastic at that.

At the recent Grey Fox festival in New York's Hudson River valley there was no shortage of that electrified acoustic sound. Although the finest bluegrass soloists are hip to this – master flatpicker Tony Rice has in fact pioneered microphone techniques that preserve the real acoustic sounds of his Martin and Santa Cruz dreadnoughts (built in 1935 and 2000, respectively) – most contemporary singer/songwriters seem to revel in their bad taste and indifference.

Here's a tip: when attending acoustic music festivals such as Grey Fox, Merlefest, Rockygrass, or even your own Cambridge Folk Festival, the best strategy is to skip the performances on the main stage in favour of the musicians' workshops, held throughout the day in smaller sub-venues. Whether you're learning how to play an instrument or not, the workshops provide a rare and intimate setting in which to hear superb acoustic instruments

and their players at close range.

And the point remains that, in 2004, Bob Dylan, Lucy Kaplansky, Leftover Salmon, Jim Ibbotson, and even Doc Watson sound a great deal more 'realistic' on my hi-fi than they sound live, in concert. A good trick indeed.

Art Dudley has written for Hi-Fi Heretic, Sounds Like and Listener. He lives in the US and works as Stereophile's editor-at-large



DualDisc dilemma

DVD/CD hybrid disc faces more problems

A few months have passed since the DVD Forum announced its official support for DualDisc, the hybrid DVD/CD solution designed to challenge SACD in the race for

world audiophile domination. But not only does DualDisc bring about another twist to the high-resolution format wars tale, it also introduces us to the three Cs of DVD-Audio – choice, compromise and confusion.

DVD-Audio provides a banquet of choices for the producer and DualDisc adds yet another to the menu, that of a dedicated CD-DA (Compact Disc-Digital Audio) layer.

This should offer more opportunities for the humble silver disc, but compromise comes in the form of DualDisc's physical construction. Although DVD-9 (dual layer) variations have been tested, initially discs will be limited to DVD-5, with its storage limit of 4.7GB. Cinram, the replication plant responsible for DualDisc in the US test markets is close to developing a DVD-9 version, but as yet it doesn't fully comply with CD-DA thickness specifications. More alarmingly, their DVD-5 version has also eaten one sausage roll too many, which may be an undisclosed reason why DualDisc titles have yet to put in an appearance.

Back to the problems of space... 4.7GB might seem a lot, but 60 minutes of uncompressed 24-bit/96kHz PCM across six channels needs a whopping 5.9GB and you can't fit a quart in a pint pot! Meridian Lossless Packing helps, compressing by up to 40 per cent and thereby reducing our hour-long file to a manageable 3.54GB, but that leaves little room for DVD-Video content, extra videos or alternative mixes, such as a dedicated stereo track. Labels are therefore faced with a conundrum – release with a CD-DA layer and drop bonus features, or wave goodbye to the CD altogether and offer as much high-quality material as possible.

The only real flaw of the DVD-Audio format is that when purchasing a disc, you're never really sure what you're going to get. Confusion abounds among consumers; the audio could be anything from 44.1kHz to 192kHz, 16-bit to 24-bit, and have any number of channels. There might be a stereo mix on the disc and there might not, and then we have the DVD-Video content to contend with...

All that choice is a delight for the producer and there is a certain level of honesty involved: on a DVD-Audio disc, 48kHz PCM is just that, while on an SACD disc, 48kHz PCM is hidden behind a veil of DSD secrecy, and the average man in the street ends up being completely bamboozled. Choice and confusion come hand-in-hand and the flexibility of the format itself could lead to its downfall. The solution would be for the DVD Forum to impose rigid rules upon DualDisc, such as mandating a dedicated high-resolution stereo mix, but such heavy-handed tactics run the risk of annoying both producers and artist alike, and could be the worst compromise of all.

Stuart M Robinson is editor and publisher of HighFidelityReview.com, a website dedicated to high-resolution digital sound

TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

THE PERILS OF NOISE



We talk about 'noise' loosely as any unwanted sound, or in electronics any random unwanted signal. Unwanted signals related

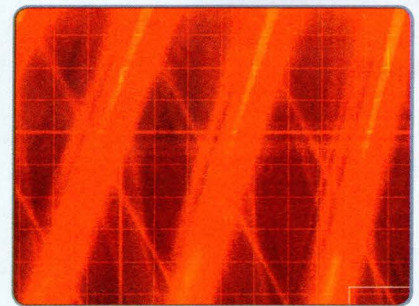
to the input are generally thought of as distortion and non-random unwanted signals are interference and suchlike.

'Unwanted' says it all, of course. But there are two complicating factors when we try to banish noise. First, it can be reduced but never eliminated. Second, how low must it be to become inaudible?

Let's have a look at the source of noise to see why it can't be eliminated. In the end, it comes down to random motions of matter's fundamental particles – you may remember 'Brownian motion' from school physics. At a submicroscopic level things are whizzing around and bumping into each other, and that (simplifying horribly) is where the noise comes from. Put any electronic component on a table and there is a noise voltage present between one end and the other. The air in your ear-hole vibrates in a noisy manner even in a 'silent' environment.

In practice, many electronic devices produce more noise than basic principles dictate, due to various imperfections in their design and assembly. For example, a phono amplifier may produce excess noise because not enough (or too much) current is flowing in the input transistors. Designers try to optimise all these things but there's usually a trade-off at some point, if only a cost-based one – nevertheless some phono stages produce almost no noise above that generated by the cartridge itself.

That last remark leads directly to consideration of what is an acceptable noise level. Let's keep the cartridge as an example. Having finite resistance it produces a finite, calculable noise level at its output. If we design a phono amplifier that adds no measurable noise, it is arguably quiet enough – improvements would be academic. Radio engineers talk about 'noise figure', which means the amount of noise an amplifier adds. A 1dB noise figure phono amp would give a result 1dB noisier than a hypothetical 'perfect' amplifier with a given cartridge. We could improve things with a



“If we design a phono amplifier which adds no measurable noise, it is arguably quiet enough.”

higher output cartridge, but hardly at all with a better amp. Similar considerations apply with microphones – in fact, ideally the microphone itself should be the limiting factor in the record/replay chain.

Noise figure is a useful engineering guide when there's a definable baseline. But let's have a look from the other end – how far down from signal levels should noise be? In this column two issues back we mentioned that dither – noise! – in CD recordings has been shown to be audible at -92dB and below. Clearly we want to aim to better that at all stages where possible. Fortunately, if one goes through the sums, it turns out that making amplifiers with a better specification than that is quite possible, though not trivial. In fact, the best DVD-A and even CD and SACD systems, end-to-end, are practically blameless from a noise point of view.

Hooray! But we'll end on a warning note. Noise masks fine details in recordings and its source may not be electronic. Mechanical noise from CD players, road noise from outside, air noise from ventilating systems, all have the same effect. Audio design engineers know that noise at very low levels can degrade performance, but reducing noise from other sources can also be extremely beneficial to a hi-fi system. **HFC**

Richard Black



ESSENTIALS



PHILIPS DA1000 DAB POCKET RADIO £149

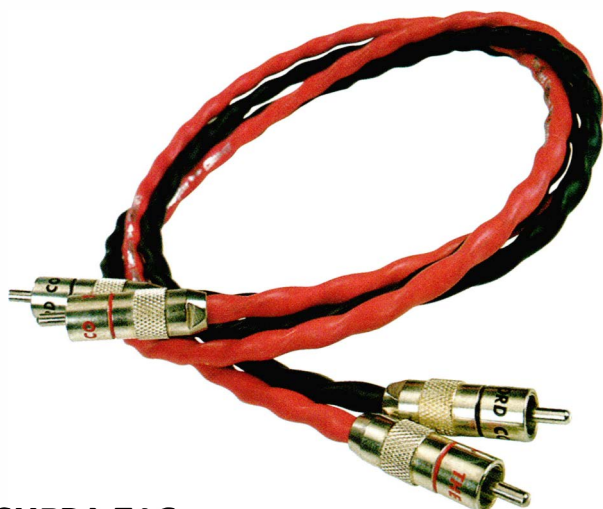
As pocket DAB models go, this one is particularly neat, smart and easy to operate. It also offers FM, extending its usefulness outside the DAB coverage area. Features are a good set for such a small unit, including proper signal quality information, station sorting and so on – no RDS on FM, though. Battery life is about eight hours on rechargeables, more on alkaline cells. The lead to the supplied in-ear phones doubles as an antenna, quite successfully. Sound is above average, helped by the phones' slightly dull quality which masks DAB 'spit' a bit – but reception seems good and FM is clean too. The sound is at least free from background hisses and whistles, which seem to be a feature of a few recent DAB sets. Overall, a good radio for use on the move by the music lover and drama/documentary listener alike.

☎ 020 8665 6655 # www.philips.co.uk

CHORD COMPANY CHORUS INTERCONNECT £200 (1M PAIR)

The Chord Co's top interconnect uses silver-plated conductors and high-grade insulation materials, with a classic 'pseudo-balanced' configuration that makes it potentially directional – it's marked accordingly. It doesn't look remarkable, but turns out to be a bit of a star sonically, especially notable for its even-handed balance. Bass is very well extended and also well integrated with higher frequencies: if treble sometimes seems recessed, in fact it's the lack of grain that can give that impression. Occasionally there's the slightest hint of congestion in complex musical structures but generally this is a sweet and informative cable.

☎ 01980 625700 # www.chord.co.uk



SUPRA ZAC DIGITAL INTERCONNECT (OPTICAL) £32

Upmarket optical leads may seem a contradiction in terms, but apart from the fact that some modern equipment has only optical outputs and inputs there are occasional advantages. For a start, you'll never get earth loop problems from an optical lead! This particular lead claims particularly low loss – the tight-fitting connectors probably help too. Whatever the reasons, it produced clearly improved results compared with giveaway optical leads in various applications, the sound seeming more tightly focused and more three-dimensional.

☎ 01622 664070 # www.supracables.co.uk

RUSS ANDREWS MEGA CLAMP ULTRA MAINS SPIKE PROTECTOR £255

Russ Andrews is one of a few firms offering mains noise-damping devices that occupy a 'wall wart' case and need only to be plugged into a socket next to the hi-fi to quieten down rogue pops and crackles caused by spikes in your mains. Most cost a score or so – but look at the price of this one! We compared it with a cheaper model and it is indeed more efficient, though the law of diminishing returns may dim its appeal for all but the most dedicated audio tweaker. All the same, it does fill a gap between cheap clamps and full filtering solutions and will offer worthwhile window wash to an already highly transparent system.

☎ 0800 373467 # www.russandrews.com



BEYERDYNAMIC RSX600 CORDLESS HEADPHONES £100

☞ Cordless cans just seem like such a nice idea. The lead is always in the way on regular headphones and one careless move can drag light equipment off the shelf to an early death. This light and comfortable unit offers freedom from the wires, the sound being transmitted by UHF radio from a small base station which doubles as a stand and battery charger. Trouble is, though, that the sound is really not great. There's a level of constant background hiss that one wouldn't accept in a portable player, and while the claimed 100m range might hold up okay in open space, within a house it drops to a tenth of that once there's a wall of two in the way. You could get the gist of the news or *The Archers* via these, but for music use you'll definitely want to spend more or stick with the wires.

☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.beyerdynamic.co.uk



ISOTEK GII MINI SUB MAINS FILTER BLOCK £495

☞ When we reviewed the original Mini Sub filtering distribution block we liked it a lot. The GII upgrade is externally much the same, but its filters have been modified to give better outlet-to-outlet isolation and better protection from all kinds of mains-borne nasties. Two sockets offer up to 10A and four more, with additional filtering, up to 6A – enough for almost any system. The already fine performance seems somewhat improved and a typical system can gain extra layers of sonic information. At its unchanged price, this looks like a better bargain than ever and a truly essential accessory for a loved music system.

☎ 0870 241 2469 🌐 www.isoteksystems.co.uk



WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 5 INTERCONNECT £70 (1M PAIR)

☞ The name is shared with a speaker cable we liked a few issues ago, denoting parity in Wireworld's meticulously hierarchical catalogue – this is an 'Upgrade' cable. It uses the company's 'Symmetricoax' construction, giving high-ish but not problematic capacitance, and it is notably flexible. Termination is in good quality retro-looking phono plugs. Sound is good, particularly in the bass which is muscular without being overpowering, and very clearly defined. The treble seems just slightly dark-toned, somehow, and lacks a touch of detail compared with the finest you'll find at the price, but stereo imaging is good and in general this is a capable interconnect with all-round appeal.

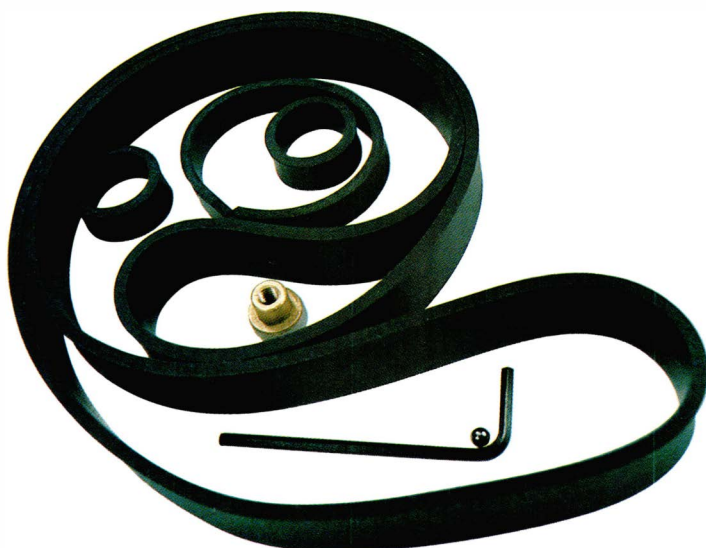
☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.com



SRM/TECH TURNTABLE UPGRADE KIT £30-£48

☞ Remember LP player tweaking? It was once all the rage, and now it's back with this neat little kit. Details vary slightly depending on turntable (kits are available for Linn, Rega, Thorens and Dual) but basically you get damping rings to fit to the platter and motor and a 'thrust bearing' assembly which is glued to the motor's underside. The idea is to lift the spindle slightly and thus reduce motor noise, which with the standard Philips motor used by most manufacturers was always a problem. Assembly is pretty simple and the results amply justify the cost and trouble: a sample Rega gained an impressive amount of extra detail, easily equivalent to a major cartridge upgrade. Highly recommended.

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.srmtech.co.uk



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Between the lines

Reissuing acclaimed eighties guitar-pop beacons the Go-Betweens meant a labour of love for both the band and their remastering maestro alike. **Dave Oliver** found out why

While the English indie scene in the eighties centred around the stylised miserablism of The Smiths, and America swooned to REM, Australia's Go-Betweens forged a distinctive line in yearning romance and the simple pleasures of a beautiful tune. Possibly that continent's greatest ever 'pop' group, they were certainly the most nearly-famous band of that decade. With celebrity fans including Michael Stipe and U2, they fashioned gorgeous guitar-spun pop and earned lashings of critical praise, yet singularly failed to become household names. They struggled gamely for ten years, through six albums, and at least that many line-up changes before collapsing in 1988 amid the sort of internecine romantic squabbles that would have been familiar to those other great pop tunesmiths Fleetwood Mac, just as the public were beginning to take notice.

The songwriting duo at the heart of the band, Robert Forster and Grant McLennan renewed their partnership in 2000 (without

drummer Lindy Morrison, violinist Amanda Brown or bass player Robert Vickers) after a decade of meandering solo projects, and are now producing music that's every bit as sweet and compelling as that of old. But it's the last three albums of their original incarnation on which their reputation (and the adulation of their world-wide cult following) is largely built, and which offer their strongest thumbed nose

completely obsolete, which was a bit of a challenge. For example Sony developed a format called F1, and the playback was on Betamax video cassette. And because they were done in the UK, the coding was PAL, so I had to find a PAL Beta machine here in the US and after 25 years, the only place to look was e-bay. I managed to pick one up for \$45.

"Another thing when I'm mastering is that I

"We didn't want it to be a digital sound with, like, knives flying through the air."

to the folly of the record-buying masses.

These classic albums, *Liberty Belle And The Black Diamond Express*, *Talullah* and *16 Lovers Lane*, have now been reissued in gleaming new presentation sets. Each comes with an additional album packed with contemporary sessions, bootlegs and other material, but as with any reissue, it wasn't easy to make the package work as a viable aural document.

The band were keen to have something that would be more than just an update, as singer Robert Forster explains: "Everything that we've recorded was done initially in analogue, so for people with finely tuned hi-fis, what they're going to hear is warmth and beauty. We didn't want it to be digital with, like knives flying through the air, we wanted a warm sound."

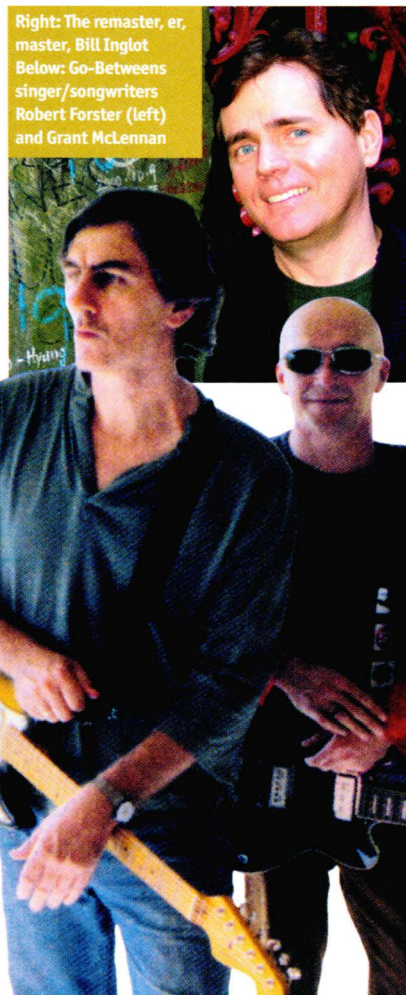
The man charged with the task was Bill Inglot, the analogue-favouring remaster guru behind literally hundreds of Warners albums by everyone from Aretha Franklin to Fleetwood Mac to Faith No More, who worked for zero pay on what he considered a dream project.

"I was always a fan so I couldn't miss the opportunity," explains Bill. "I'm probably one of the few remaining people who tries to mix to analogue whenever I can and I'm very careful not to deviate too much from the sound of the original vinyl LP. It's like a cornerstone – you have to be somewhat faithful to what the original intentions were when it came out on vinyl.

"One of the things with the bonus discs was that some of the original material was on digital formats that are now

often listen to stuff at home and one of my favourite pieces of equipment is a Cambridge Soundworks Model 88 Henry Kloss stereo radio. Basically it's a table radio with a subwoofer but it's got a very balanced sound. It's kinda sloppy in terms of near field but it's the most musical piece of equipment I've ever owned. I have four, I'm afraid in case one breaks."

The process may not always have been high tech, but a lot of love and consideration went into creating the Go-Betweens' Expanded Edition reissues – essential listening for anyone with a heart and an ear for a perfectly constructed tune. **HFC**



Right: The remaster, er, master, Bill Inglot
Below: Go-Betweens singer/songwriters Robert Forster (left) and Grant McLennan

Go-Betweens greatest

1. *Liberty Belle And The Black Diamond Express*

The aficionados' favourite album, packed with superb tunes and beautifully apposite strings, from the first-love rush of *Head Full Of Steam* to the grand strife of *Apology Accepted*.



2. *Talullah*

The album that introduced multi-instrumentalist Amanda Brown, whose violin graces the tracks *The Clarke Sisters* and *Right Here*.



3. *16 Lovers Lane*

Their slickest production included their only 'hit' *Streets Of Your Town*, but the band's internecine romantic tangles at the time have led to the label: 'the indie *Rumours*'.





WIN!

REGA'S SUPERB P7 TURNTABLE WORTH £1,298

Rega is one of the most dedicated two-channel stalwarts in the hi-fi industry today, even now refusing to be swayed by the swelling multichannel tidal wave. Founded 31 years ago, the Essex-based company's comprehensive equipment range covers all things stereo, including CD players, tuners, amps, speakers and of course, turntables. Rega's brand new and completely gorgeous P7 blew us away in our September issue (*HFC 257*) – it's a supremely involving design, one of the very best at its highly competitive price point. Its cutting-edge design uses an oxide platter on a composite plinth, with an aluminium surround – and it looks divine.

The P7 shares many of the qualities of Rega's flagship deck, the P9. We love its relaxed and natural balance, plus its ability to recover information while keeping great musical time. The deck comes complete with Rega's new RB700 arm, ready for use with a cartridge of your own choosing. And for your chance to win one, simply answer the question below correctly. A winner will be drawn at random.



CONGRATULATIONS...

to our last winner, Mr B Martyn of Oxon. He receives a fabulous Quad preamp and power amp!

QUESTION:

What has Rega refused to be swayed by?

- A:** High winds on the Dartford Bridge
- B:** The swelling multichannel tidal wave
- C:** A company holiday in the Bahamas with the all-Essex under-21s netball team

TO ENTER:

By Phone: Simply call **0905 053 3352** and follow the instructions (call will cost 50p per minute and last no longer than 90 seconds).

By Text: Send the text message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B or C to **85070**. For example, if you think the answer is A: High winds on the Dartford Bridge then text HFC COMP1 A to 85070.

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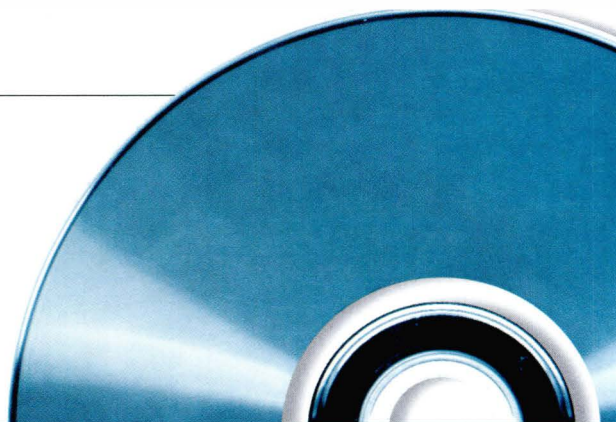


ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

Reviews by Charlotte Bridges, Dan George, Alvin Gold, Jason Kennedy, Dave Oliver, Mark Prendergast, Phil Strongman, Nigel Williamson



AUDIOPHILE VINYL

NANCY WILSON Son Of A Preacher Man

Capitol/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl
Music: This 1969 release by prodigious jazz diva Nancy Wilson is no longer available on CD so fans will welcome this classy Pure Pleasure pressing. Wilson started recording in 1959 and continues today, racking up a formidable back catalogue in the interim. Her style here is less jazz influenced and more pop/soul, and she uses her superb voice to great effect throughout, but especially on *By The Time I Get To Phoenix*, the Jimmy Webb classic which is sung slow and easy but with tremendous feeling. Arrangement and orchestration is very classy throughout, with contributions from Jimmy Jones, Phil Wright and Joe Parnello giving a luxury feel. ★★★★★
Sound: Another great pressing from Pure Pleasure, this recording sounds its age but also reveals a lot about that remarkable voice – you can hear the studio and the mic but the quality comes first. ★★★★★ JK

TOM WAITS Swordfishtrombones

Island/Simply Vinyl 180g vinyl
Music: Was this the last great Tom Waits album? Released in 1984, it was his first 'jazz'-influenced LP, but this is jazz that's more Beefheart than Blakey, wild but coherent improv-blues that skirts around the tune, kept in place by Waits' still intelligible lyrics. There's a degree of the gravel that is his signature today but it's kept at bay as if he's testing the waters of acceptability. Tracks like *16 Shells From A 30.6* and the well-nigh perfect *Frank's Wild Years* are as fresh and vibrant as anything you'll hear. The real instruments and drums from veteran percussionist Victor Feldman are the icing on the cake. ★★★★★
Sound: A great recording at the time, it has plenty of tonal variety and colour, making it a great way to show off a good system. This, combined with the quality of pressing, makes it a past and future classic. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs are available from Vivante: ☎ 01293 822186 @ www.vivante.co.uk and Simply Vinyl: ☎ 020 8545 8580 @ www.simplyvinyl.com

COMPACT DISC & VINYL



EINOJUHANEN RAUTAVAARA

The Journey – Symphony No. 8 etc.
 Osmo Vänskä (cond), Jaakko Kuusisto (violin), Lahti Symphony Orchestra
 BIS CD 1315
Music: Finnish composer Rautavaara (born in 1928) stands in relation to Sibelius in much the same way that Takemitsu does to Debussy. The music is modernist, but while not conventionally tonal, it is unquestionably melodic and episodic, and unlike some of the more caricatured examples of modern music, it elicits a strong emotional response. It is also extremely original: the voice really is Rautavaara's own, and the music conjures up a sense of near-constant rapture. ★★★★★
Sound: While the playing is committed, fluid and thoroughly engaged, the recorded sound is yet another excellent BIS recording – immediate, yet full of subtlety, detail and space, a difficult combination to carry off. ★★★★★ AG



MOZART, SCHUBERT ETC.

Piano Sonata No. 15 in C, Rondo in A minor and others
 Li Jian (piano)
 Audiofon CD72057
Music: This disc's Mozart pieces, notably the earlier ones, have the perfect simplicity of the man at his most beguiling. Musically they are spare and perfectly formed; one note less and they would simply fall to bits. Similarly, the *Wanderer Fantasia* is one of Schubert's masterpieces. Again simple, but very profound, and once again perfectly formed. The short *Sancan* piece by the way turns out to be a disarming evocation of a music box, an encore piece, complete with bum notes, and with the tempo running down towards the end as the springs gives out. Miniature perfection. ★★★★★
Sound: A great showcase for this young Chinese pianist, recorded with few takes and a minimum of edits. ★★★★★ AG



KEITH LEVENE

Murder Global/Killer In The Crowd
 Underground Inc
Music: The man who co-founded The Clash and Public Image Ltd has been pretty damn quiet for the last few years – he's actually been doing music for adverts and the like – but he's back with a limited edition set (plus bonus DVD) that shows the guitarist is still a 'master magic musician'. *Object B* has sweeping strings and an Epiphone Les Paul that burrows its way into your soul while the short but sweet *Aztek Legend* finds the axeman close to world music territory. The title track is a jewel, with blizzard layers of guitar half covering Levene's classic rock vocals. A strange and entrancing disc. ★★★★★
Sound: Levene often mixed stuff in the studio with PiL – *Commercial Zone* was his – and his experience is obvious here. A dynamic production that draws you in. ★★★★★ PS

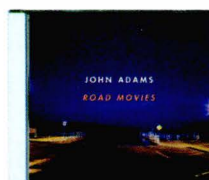
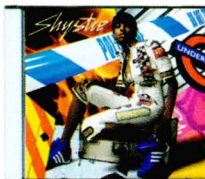


SHYSTIE

Diamond In The Dirt

Polydor

Music: Twenty-one-year-old Chanelle ('shy but feisty') Scott, aka Shystie from east London, first hit the post-garage scene in 2003 with her comeback to Dizzie Rascal's *I Love You*. Now she's back with her first album, packed with lightning speed raps and lyrics straight from the streets. The brooding single *One Wish* sets out her tough-talking stall with minimal beat distraction while the string arrangements, acoustic guitars and finger-clicking R&B of *Unfinished Business* shows she's more than a mercury-tongued MC. Her style and approach has clear inspirations from Missy Elliott and Eve but more than anything she comes across as a younger, and definitely more feminine, English version of Eminem. A diamond in the dirt that deserves to be polished. ★★★★★
Sound: Spare, often stark production will show up any tendency to sibilance in the bile spit lyrics, and while the more R&B flavoured tunes take on a generic lushness, there's never any excess of syrup. ★★ CB

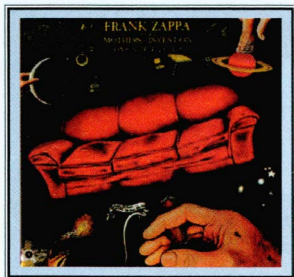


JOHN ADAMS

Road Movies

Nonesuch

Music: A collection of Adams music new and old, mostly for piano with one violin featuring on the title track. It's all about pulse and changes in tempo as America's most important minimalist composer takes us on a voyage through his mental landscape. *Phrygian Gates* and *China Gates*, from 1977, are the most 'minimalist' pieces, revelling in a love of 'wave motion' and evolving repetition. Elsewhere, the pulsations are more harmonically complex with the syncopated rhythms of *American Berserk* reminding us of jazz. As ever, Adams' 'maximal minimalism' induces excitement and fascination. ★★★★★
Sound: Beautifully modulated piano sounds throughout. Producer Judith Sherman makes just two pianos sound like bliss. ★★★★★ MP

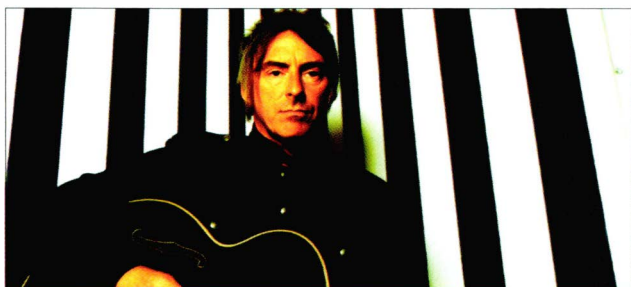


THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "One of Zappa's most accessible albums."

FRANK ZAPPA AND THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION One Size Fits All Rykodisc

Music: The Mothers on this 1975 studio album are a rather more jazz-oriented combo than those who appeared on Zappa's early works but they are no less entertaining. With the talents of George Duke, Chester Thompson, Tom Fowler, Ruther Underwood, Johnny Guitar Watson and Napoleon Murphy Brock, *One Size* has been described as the closest Zappa came to prog but it's closer to jazz with a heavy dose of blues on tracks like *San Berdino* and

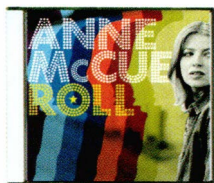
Po-Jama People. But it's also one of Zappa's most accessible albums, and features the piquant *Florentine Pogen* alongside nine other standout tracks. ★★★★★
Sound: As a recording this album has a lot to give. It's not as pristine as some but there's plenty of detail and some great playing on a wide variety of electric and acoustic instruments. It also has some of the greatest sleeve art in the history of rock. ★★★★★ JK



PAUL WELLER STUDIO 150

V2

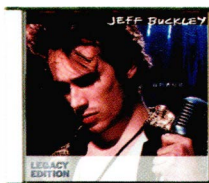
Music: You might have expected a covers album from the man many still respectfully call 'The Modfather' to consist of sixties classics by the Who, Small Faces and the Kinks. Instead, Paul Weller has gone for a much more diverse selection that ranges from funk to folk. Heaven knows what made him cover such over-familiar pop-rock chestnuts as the Carpenters' *Close To You* and *All Along The Watchtower*, both of which suffer from the curse of over-familiarity, as well as a certain amount of pub rock stodginess. Much more satisfying is some of the more R&B-tinged material that includes terrific versions of Rose Royce's *Wishing On A Star*, Sister Sledge's *Thinking Of You* and an arresting cover of obscure seventies northern soul favourite *If I Could Only Be Sure*. ★★
Sound: Made, as you will no doubt be unsurprised to learn, in Amsterdam's Studio 150, there's a refreshing spontaneity that comes from the entire album being recorded more or less live and without overdubs. ★★★ NW



ANNE MCCUE Roll

Cooking Vinyl

Music: Aussie rocker Anne McCue's debut album is brimming with electric country rock and skilled guitar work. Despite her blues roots, her sound on *Roll* has evolved to appeal to a wider audience, cruising somewhere along the middle of a freeway, probably in the southern US. However, there's a weighted balance towards the minor keys that gives it an edge and character that pulls it away from the mainstream. *Roll*'s powerful trio of musicians echoes some of her lead influences – Cream, Hendrix and The Jam, with just a dash of Sheryl Crow. ★★★★★
Sound: It might not be pressed for the audiophile, but the simple and eternally classic three-piece line-up keeps the production tight and the music firmly in the groove. ★★★★★ DG



JEFF BUCKLEY Grace (Legacy Edition)

Columbia

Music: The sole album Jeff Buckley released in his lifetime is arguably the most influential recording of the last decade, since just about every singer-songwriter to emerge since has come under its spell. As we approach its tenth anniversary, this expanded double CD version includes a dozen unreleased tracks from the same sessions. By and large Buckley chose the best material for the original album, but there are still some magical moments including stunning covers of Hank Williams' *Lost Highway* and Dylan's *Mama You've Been On My Mind*. ★★★★★
Sound: The original album has a pristine, sparkling sound. Sensibly, the second disc of out-takes has been left with a rougher, work-in-progress feel. ★★★★★ NW

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

ROLLING STONES

More Hot Rocks (Big Hits & Fazed Cookies)

SACD (stereo SACD plus stereo CD layer)

ABKCO

Music: The follow-up to *Hot Rocks* fills in the gaps left by that compilation with 29 tracks from the Brian Jones era, or the sixties as they were known back in the day. Alongside the tracks you might remember like *Not Fade Away*, *Have You Seen Your Mother Baby* and *Let It Bleed* there are less well known tunes like *Tell Me*, *Fortune Teller* and *Long Long While*. The collection is taken from arguably the band's most creative period, from the blues-influenced early years to the psychedelic era of *Satanic Majesties*. If you haven't heard this stuff, its influence on many contemporary 'indy' bands might come as a shock, and if you have, but not for a long time, it's a great nostalgia trip with many pleasant surprises. ★★★★★

Sound: Discreetly marked as an SACD, this pair of discs has a revealing, sometimes stark, sound that is brimming with energy if not bandwidth or dynamics. Still, there's more bass than you might expect. ★★ JK



TODD RUNDGREN

Liars

DVD-Audio (24/96 surround, 24/48 stereo, Delby Digital)

Silverline

Music: Todd Rundgren's return to form surprised just about everyone but himself. Eschewing prog rock histrionics and increasingly self-indulgent technological blind alleys, *Liars*' eclectic mix of Ibiza dance anthems, Philly soul, golden pop tunes and much else besides reminded us the Wizard really is a True Star. Lyrically tied around the concept of lies, he's fashioned a broad and varied *smörgåsbord* that sounds like no-one else, while borrowing from everyone. Played and sung almost exclusively by Hawaii's most famous resident, it's largely built on layers of analogue synths and is a treat from start to finish. ★★★★★

Sound: There's plenty going on in this 24/96 surround version, with varying approaches taken to different tunes, from a tighter, more front-heavy approach on *Soul Brother* to the full surround club experience on *Truth*. Be careful with your placement of the rear speakers – Todd's put a lot of high-level frequencies in there and if you have them too close they'll mess with your head. ★★★★★ DO



KODÁLY, BARTÓK

Dances From Galanta (Kodály), Music For Strings, Percussion And Celeste, Divertimento (Bartók)

Sir Charles Mackerras (cond), Scottish Chamber Orchestra

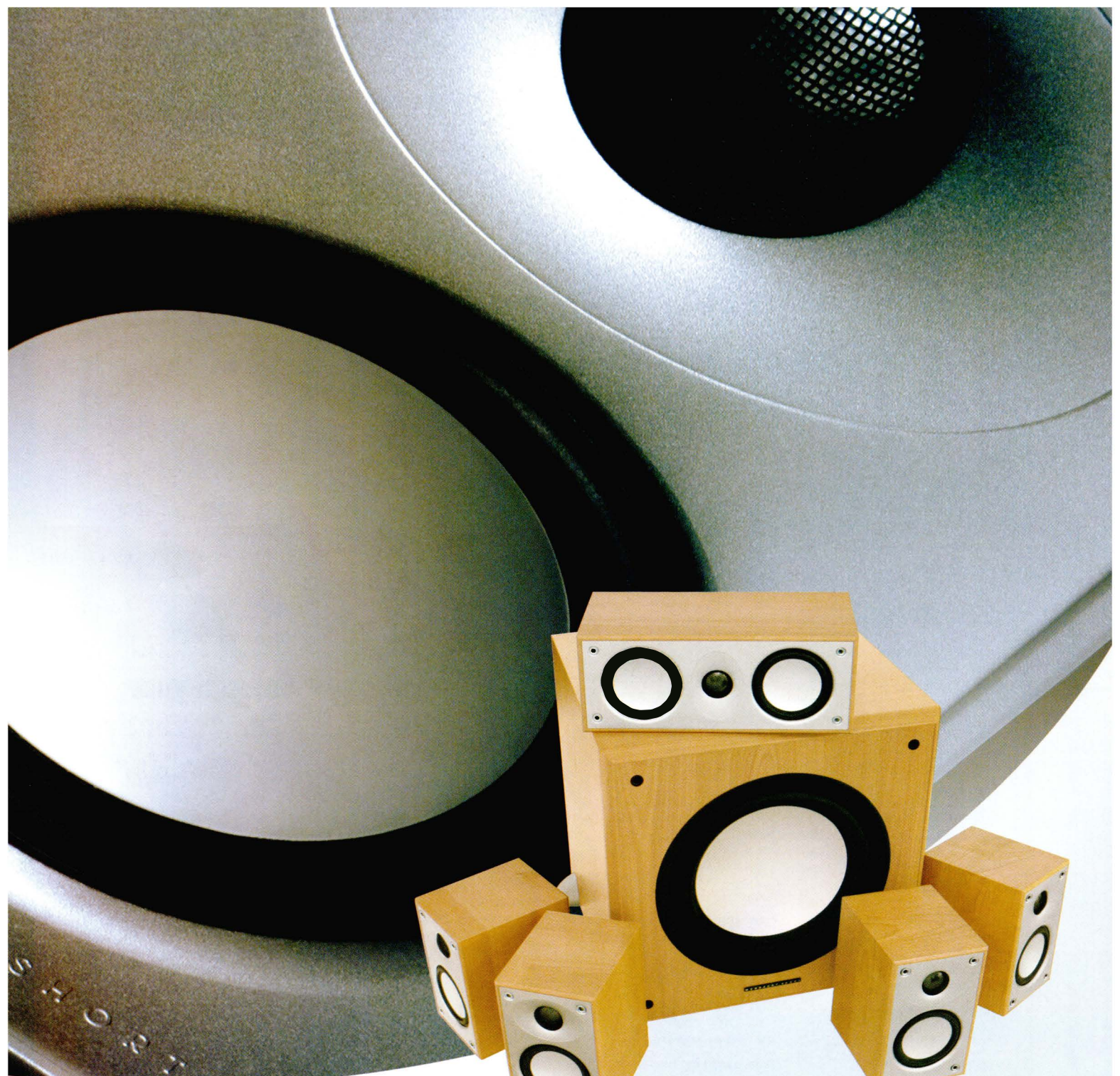
SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Linn Records CKO234

Music: Two popular and frequently recorded works from key 20th Century European composers, Kodály's *Dances From Galanta* and Bartók's *Music For Strings, Percussion and Celeste* make excellent bedfellows in this expressive and haunting disc, whose elastic phrasing and measured, understated qualities do much to keep you on the edge of your seat. The solo woodwind playing in the *Dances* especially is magical, but most impressive are the long drawn out tempi which in less skilled hands could loose impetus and tension. ★★★★★

Sound: Made in Edinburgh's Usher Hall and Greyfriars Church, Linn's team has managed to conjure up a sound as rapt and as expressive as the music itself. It's not as showy perhaps as some of the classic recorded versions, but the sound retains its presence throughout the long, very quiet passages in the main Bartók piece. ★★★★★ AG





Avant Premiere Plus

The new Mordaunt-Short Avant Premiere Plus system is a complete Home Cinema loudspeaker package offering outstanding sonic reproduction from unobtrusive enclosures.

The individual components combine to deliver a seriously impressive listening experience redefining expectations from speaker systems of this size and price point.

Avant Premiere Plus. Where size is no compromise.



Mordaunt-Short's continued commitment to engineering excellence has seen the company pick up repeated awards.

www.mordaunt-short.co.uk

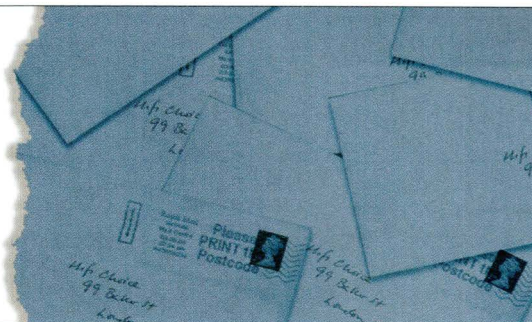
MORDAUNT-SHORT

ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

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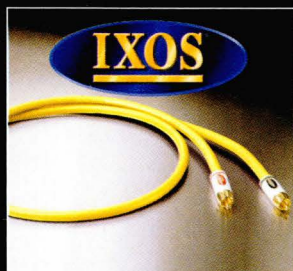


★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

PODDIE AND PROUD

I can't agree with Douglas Marc's letter criticising MP3 audio, (The Numbers Game, *HFC* 257). I have a pretty good system, (TAG/Tannoy), and as an early birthday present, I received a 40GB iPod. I play it in airport lounges, in the car and even through my hi-fi system when I'm working and want some background music. The excellent online Gracenote database identifies the tracks for you, and has found some pretty obscure albums – even magazine freebie compilations. Using the impressive AAC data-reduction codec results in surprisingly good sound through my home set-up – not as good as CD, sure, but not unlistenable. A nice touch is the random setting – I have around 2,500 CDs at home. We should not be scared by these new music delivery methods but listen to what's on offer – you may be surprised.

Kenny McHardy via email



WIN IXOS INTERCONNECTS!

The author of our letter of the month receives a free pair of Ixos XHA606 interconnects worth £60, featuring Gamma Geometry and silver plated OFC conductors for superior sound. So get writing! (250 words max please...)



Above: Marantz PM7200 causes Class switching controversy

HANDBAGS AT DAWN

In your reviews of the Marantz PM7200 amplifier (*HFC* 248), and its KI Signature version, you state that switching between Class A and Class AB mode can be done on the fly. This is incorrect and possibly explains the review comments that claim there was very little difference in sound between the two modes. If the reviewer cared to read the manual he will have noted that the amplifier has to be switched off before switching between the two modes, otherwise it will not function. I understand the presumption that if the front panel LED lights up then it must be working, but this is not the case. As a retailer, it would be appreciated if your reviewers knew exactly what they were talking about before they published incorrect facts and therefore misleading reviews.

Chris Taylor Sevenoaks Sound & Vision, Edinburgh

HFC We noticed Marantz's cautionary note about mode switching but we tested it very carefully (inside the amp's circuit) and it does indeed switch over between modes with the power on, as we said in the review. There's no audible giveaway, which is impressive, but it does happen. That the modes sound so similar is a vindication of those designers (for instance Doug Self – see his book *Self On Audio*) who maintain that a well designed Class AB stage can as near as dammit match Class A. And of course there's more to any amp than just the output stage.

TURN THE TABLES

I was very pleased to see the article on the Thorens TD125 in *HFC* 256 as I have owned a Mk2 since the mid-seventies. So often only the 124 or 150 get mentioned in the press. Mine is partnered by an SME 3009, Stanton 681 EEE and Rega Fono. I have been wondering about upgrades – I still like the look of the Thorens, but I'm not sure how it compares with

“As a retailer, it would be appreciated if your reviewers knew exactly what they were talking about...”

modern turntables. Your article does not say how it compares, and part of my question is where to start – cartridge, arm, phono stage or the deck itself? Shall I upgrade the Thorens with an Origin Live DC kit? Replace the cartridge (the Shure V15 has been mentioned)? Or, replace the arm (Origin Live modded Rega)? Perhaps I should chuck the whole lot and start from scratch?

Hugh Marks via email

HFC While decks like the Michell Gyro SE and Rega P7 would bring worthwhile improvements over your current set-up there's still a lot to be said for upgrading the arm and cartridge. The Thorens TD 125 (below) is fundamentally a fine turntable and with a decent modern tonearm such as Rega's RB700 or SME's Model 309, it would provide a platform for an affordable but serious cartridge. The contenders here would be the Sumiko Blue Point Special, Reson's Etile or if you can stretch to it, something really tasty like a van den Hul MC One Special.



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IN THIS ISSUE

FANTASTIC NEW ISSUE OUT NOW! Fresh off the press, the August issue of Hi-Fi Choice is packed full of exclusive in-depth tests of the latest high-performance kit, including...

• The world's most rigorous group test of 300 hi-fi amps, £800 to £2,500 - six crucial combos from Acousto Equator, W&A, Primare, Quid and Baccan

• Digital versus analogue: Taglio players from Wadia (CD) and Gramaud (vinyl) demonstrate the state of the state-of-the-art

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@ ONLINE FORUM

A few choice comments plucked from our online forum. Join in the fun at www.hifichoice.co.uk

Review more Chinese kit – Jungson, Korsun, Shengya, Shanling, Original and Xindak all deserve comparisons against European kit.

Taymat

I do like a good cuppa during my listening sessions – not any old tea bag for me though, it has to be Yorkshire Tea. Do any fellow Forum members use Yorkshire Tea Bags? Maybe a blind test is called for?

Bill Wanfield

HFC Interesting. Here at Hi-Fi Choice we prefer the Fair Trade Tea Direct bags. The growers get the best rates and pick the best tips. It's a truly high-end brew, whereas other magazines just use vending machines – eugh.

I am getting fed up with the current trend of loud or 'hot' CDs that all the major labels are pushing. I bought the Velvet Revolver CD recently, it's so loud and compressed it sounds awful. The same goes for many other new titles that I've bought recently. Yet anything released before about 1995 sounds great. Queer.

Daglesj

Due to an imminent hi-fi upgrade I will have to get rid of the missus – 28 years old, nagging (lifetime guarantee), comes with 50 pairs of unused shoes, offer of a miserable lifetime. Hurry for God's sake!

Curtis



Above: Hegel's H1 amp should help reduce the 'Janet Street Porter' effect

STRIPPERS

Looking through some old back issues of *Hi-Fi Choice* I came across a letter in the August 2003 (HFC 244) edition from Roger Harris, quizzing you on which Castle speakers to partner with Cyrus equipment. In your reply you stated that Harlech speakers would, "strip the wallpaper". I have a Cyrus CD7Q and Harlechs and by golly you are right – I acquired the speakers by default and although my wife loves the look of them she did comment that "they sound better in the kitchen", i.e. thirty feet away. Strip the wallpaper? Castle should rename them 'Janet Street Porter', as they strip the gums off your teeth! So am I stuck with almost £3,000 worth of prime pork, or is there perhaps an amplifier out there you can recommend to bring order? I have a £1,500 budget.

Phil Reid via email

HFC We can't make promises, but we can suggest some great amps that will add warmth and hopefully keep your wallpaper intact. Try Primare's A30.1 (£1,500) – it's smooth and detailed, so it should soften the balance without inhibiting the resolving power of the CD7Q/Harlech combo. Another option is the little-known Hegel H1, also £1,500 and equally adept with music, giving a beguilingly rich presentation. A no recommendation at this price should be without AVI's Lab Series Integrated – suck it and see with this one though.

ONE LUMP OR TWO?

Due to a 'creative' tax return and a year's collection of £2 coins, I find myself with around £500 to spend on a subwoofer. My home cinema system is a Mordaunt-Short affair, and I'm thinking of buying an MS909W or REL Q150E/Q200E to replace my current sub, as these are around the same price. However, for the same money, I'm toying with the idea of two cheaper MS309W subs. What's your take on the two versus one approach?

Kevin Hatton via email

“Strip the wallpaper? Castle should rename them 'Janet Street Porter', they strip the gums off your teeth!”

HFC That's an excellent question, Kevin. Similar to the sweet spot with stereo imaging, a subwoofer can sound either very good or very bad due to room-induced resonances, depending on where it is placed within the room and where you are sitting. As home cinema is generally more communal than music listening, the chances are that there will be more people to consider besides yourself when deciding on your set-up for speakers and subwoofers. Using more than one unit will enable you to cancel some room resonances while at the same time not exciting others, and you'll find that this can give greater uniformity for all listeners in the room – better quality bass over the entire listening area, rather than just one seat.

Below: REL Q150E



For Sale

PERFORMANCE MULTI-CHANNEL MUSIC/HOME CINEMA SYSTEM

containing four components, all virtually brand new, complete with original packaging & manufacturer's warranties: high-fidelity CD player, DVD (Audio & Video) player, SACD player and a comprehensive AV processor. **A bargain at £2,995 the lot.** (Same price as the Linn UNIDISK SC player I've replaced them with). For more info/specs etc... phone 0500 888 909 and ask for Ivor. I'm also open to offers for my rather attractive multi-shelf equipment rack.



NAIM CDX2 CD PLAYER | NAIM NAC 252 PREAMPLIFIER | NAIM SUPER-CAP POWER SUPPLY
NAIM NAP 250 POWER AMPLIFIER | B&W SIGNATURE 805 LOUDSPEAKERS | £13,140

English accent

What happens if you team B&W's HFC Award-winning Signature 805 with some very British Naim components?

There is a school of thought – not always disputed at this address – that British hi-fi is the finest in the world. I should qualify that. It's also the coolest. And, pound for pound, the best value. Well, like the lager, 'probably'...

I'd like to suggest a reason for this. Our unpredictable weather. As a nation we spend a lot of time sitting indoors when, according to the calendar, we should be out in the sun. Not just ordinary, music-loving Joes and Josephines like us but music loving audio engineers and industrial designers, too. At a stroke, it explains our pallid complexions and thriving music culture. But it also explains why we've been knocking out the good stuff for longer than just about anyone else. The Hi-Fi Hall Of Fame is littered with landmark products that were made (or at least designed) in good ol' Blighty. Think Quad, Linn, Meridian, Arcam and Tannoy – familiar names in audio-literate households all.

Most of all, think of Naim Audio and Bowers & Wilkins. Naim is arguably the most famous cult hi-fi brand on the planet and a polariser of opinion *par excellence*. The Salisbury-based company founded by the late Julian Vereker MBE some 27 years ago commands brand loyalty rivals can only dream of. It's not that everyone loves Naim. Some audiophiles simply don't (or refuse to) get on with it. But more than the kit – which these days is everything from phono stages to AV speaker systems – Naim customers buy a belief system that offers an alternative to the vagaries of conventional mix 'n' match separates.

Whatever you think about the design (in fact, plain 'industrial' fits remarkably well), this is undoubtedly a beautiful concept: secure refuge from all the confusion and pitfalls. Place a foot on

the first slab of the Naim path to audio nirvana and the rest light up in neon, each step perfectly choreographed to plot the most cost-effective route through the next performance gateway. No blind alleys, no tantalising diversions, no exotic cables or snake oil. It's the Naim way or the highway.

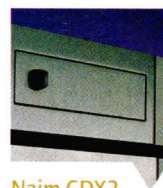
Worthing-based speaker manufacturer Bowers & Wilkins meanwhile, has invested heavily in state-of-the-art production facilities to maximise consistency and minimise errors. Ideologically, there's a breezy gulf between the two companies. If Julian Vereker's motivation was music, John Bowers' was to build the perfect loudspeaker. For the purposes of this *Beautiful System*, it's the exquisite standmount Signature 805, which if not quite perfect, is certainly the very best small speaker it's ever made.

NEVER MIND THE 'HI-FI'

Naim's philosophy is, above all, simple: never mind the 'hi-fi', a music system that doesn't deliver the musical message has failed. It's a music system's ability to finely differentiate between, say, a good performance, a better one and a great one, contends Naim, that is the true measure of its worth, not having the lowest possible measured distortion or the widest bandwidth. A system that doesn't make sense of the music – the timing, the nuance, the emotions behind it – is a dud and it doesn't matter how 'neutral' it sounds. Dull is dull and flat is flat: music is made by real people, the best hi-fi should have that 'human' quality, too. The bottom line is that the listeners enjoy themselves as much as the musicians who made the recording.

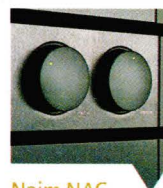
In the light of that, many thought that Naim didn't give two figs about

"A hi-fi system that doesn't make sense of the music – the timing, the nuance, the emotions – is a dud and it doesn't matter how 'neutral' it sounds."



**Naim CDX2
CD player**
£2,700

Featured in last year's HFC Awards, the CDX2 mixes Naim's rhythmic qualities with real finesse.



**Naim NAC
252 preamp**
£4,100

Supersedes the much-loved NAC 52 and delivers both connectivity and control advances.



**Naim
Super-Cap
power supply**
£2,775

Has the ability to improve the system's sound quality right at the music's heart.



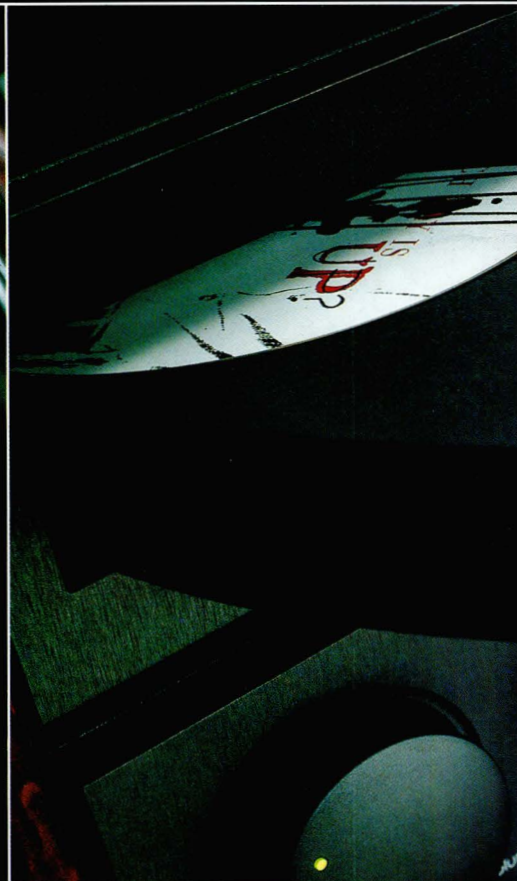
**Naim NAP 250
power amplifier**
£2,315

The new version is fast, dynamic, detailed and can now drive almost any load.



**B&W
Signature 805
loudspeaker**
£2,500 per pair

High-class, straight-bat sonics mesh superbly with the Naim electronics.



hardware cosmetics, either. But the company started paying attention to the importance of aesthetics a few years ago when it made over its entry-level series 5 range and introduced a handsome beast of a high-end power amp called the NAP 500. The rest of the range has now visited the beauty clinic, too – not just because Naim wanted a better looking version of its trademark 'stark individualism' but also for solid sonic reasons. The shapes may have changed but the non-magnetic property of the aluminium casing, the vibration-absorbing feet and how the PCBs are mounted (expensively, on compliant pillars) all contribute to a better sonic performance.

So focused is Naim on squeezing maximum sound quality from its electronics that it continues to stand by its preference for DIN connectors, despite now offering user-configurable inputs/outputs, which allow the latest generation of Naim customers to use a wide range of other manufacturers' RCA phono cables and components.

Not that we'd dream of doing that with a system comprising the £2,700 CDX2 CD player, £4,100 NAC 252 preamp with Super-Cap power supply (£2,775) and, finally, the £2,315 NAP 250 power amp. As its name suggests, the CDX2 is an update of the original, and highly acclaimed, CDX. Both the swing-drawer transport with its disc-

stabilising magnetic puck and the chipset have been upgraded, the latter to include an HDCD decoder/digital filter. Eight-times oversampled data is sent to two (one for each channel) Burr-Brown PCM mono D/A converters. A separate, fully optimised master clock controls all main digital functions, and the clock configuration and layout are engineered to minimise jitter. A seven-pole analogue filter follows the DAC to remove spurious noise. In addition to a clearer layout of the back panel, RC5 and optional RS232 ports have been fitted so that the CDX2 can be integrated into home installations.

Perhaps the best example of The Naim Way, though, is that all the player's main control functions are handled by a microprocessor running Naim-written software. Every aspect of the SAA 7376 servo controller/decoder functionality is under software control – Naim-written codes maximise performance in all areas. For example, the transport parameters are optimised for each disc as it is loaded. Now that's attention to detail.

CLASSIC NAIM

The NAC 252 preamp is a direct descendant of the revered NAC 52 but significantly better in every area, including control and connectivity. (Naim doesn't believe in small, incremental tweaks). Much of the R&D

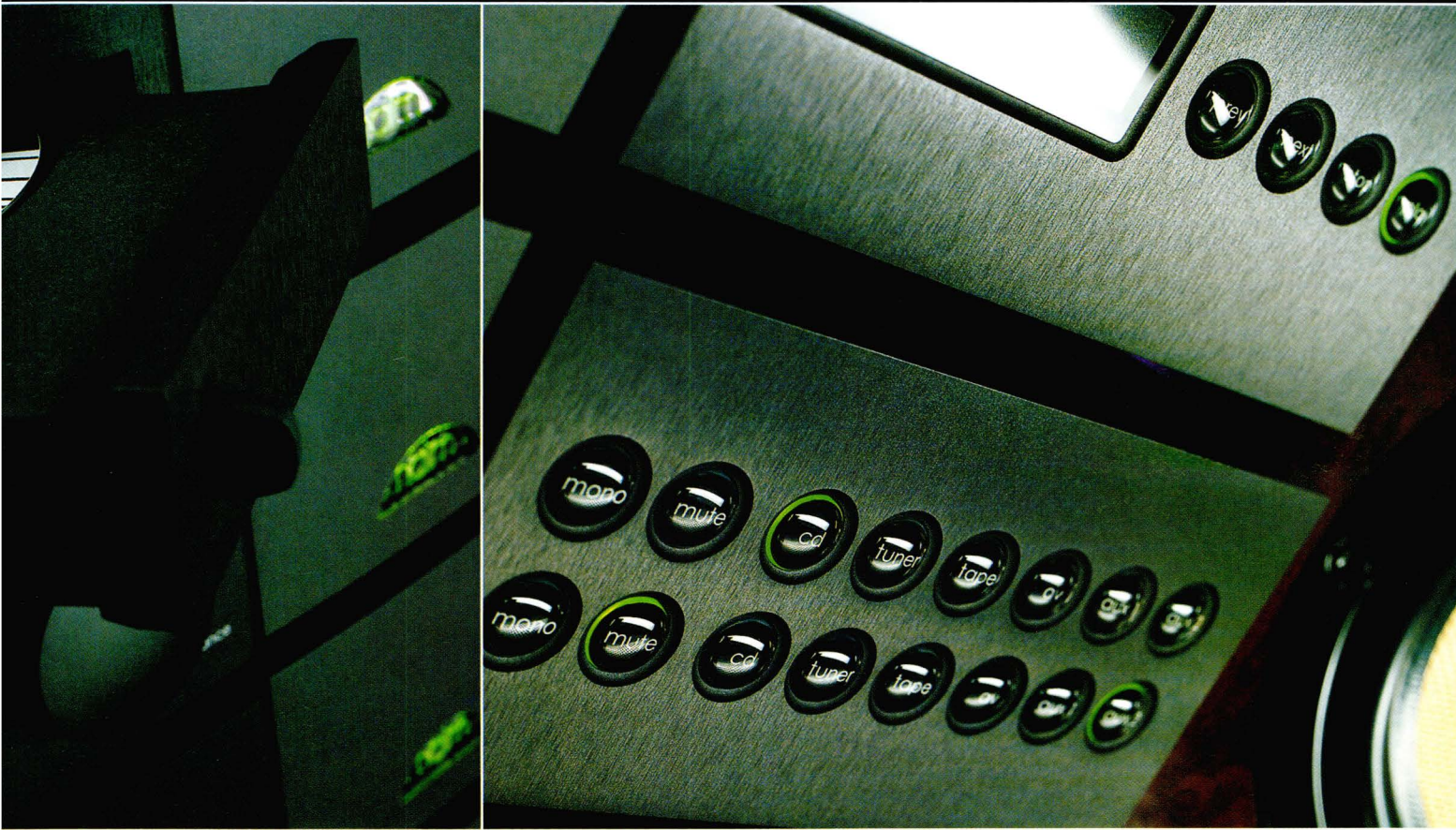
that was lavished on the flagship 552 preamp has trickled down to the 252, including the improved earthing arrangements which have resulted in an entirely new circuit topology, built upon a single very high quality, anti-resonance main audio circuit board.

The NAC 252 features a silent microprocessor that sleeps during listening and controls all aspects of the amp, including optical protection circuits that continuously monitor the power supplies ensuring safe shutdown in the event of a power cut, as well as the user-configurable 'Smart IR' system remote control. Ten independently regulated power supplies are fed from the matching Super-Cap power supply. Totally separate regulated supplies for the digital control and switching means no noise in the audio circuits.

If there's such a thing as a classic Naim product (in some people's eyes, they're all classics), it has to be the NAP 250 power amp. In name it's been around as long as its maker and, until recently, it hadn't changed much at all, still capable of showing a clean pair of heels to many a younger design. But Naim reasoned that given the years of research that went into the NAP 500, many of the same technical developments could be successfully applied to the NAP 250.

Thus, the 250 gets a new circuit design with improved earthing





“This system exhibits quite stunning grip and presents music in a tangible, coherent way with oodles of drive and rhythmic integrity – a perfect example of musical literacy winning out over hi-fi minutiae.”

arrangements and uses the same 007 transistors that were custom-designed for the NAP 500. These each provide up to 80 amps and 350 watts (the 250 is rated at 80 watts per channel into eight ohms), negating the need to use parallel pairs of transistors which, Naim contends, always have a negative effect on sound. Additional 007 transistors are used in the fully regulated power supply. Naim claims that the NAP 250 is stable into any load and able to drive a two-ohm load for long periods of time.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Not that the £1,250 Signature version of B&W's compact entry-level Nautilus 800 Series speaker, the 805, presents a particularly troublesome load. In principle, it's a simple two-way, standmount design with a curved-back, ported enclosure, 6.5-inch woven Kevlar bass/midrange unit and a free-mounted aluminium dome tweeter. The 'Signature' is intended to look and sound better than the regular 805. On the outside, our sample was finished in dazzling (and very glossy) red 'bird's eye' veneer; grey

'tiger's eye' is optional. The lacquering takes six days to complete.

Inside, improvements to the bass/midrange driver and crossover are said to greatly improve midrange transparency. B&W's tweeter-on-top technology claims two benefits: one, to circumvent the transmission of soundwaves along the baffle surface and refract off the cabinet edges; independence also allows it to be set back and time-aligned with the acoustic centre of the bass/midrange cone, which offers a general improvement to time-coherence and clarity. So it stands to reason that it should be a kid-glove fit with the natural exuberance of the Naim electronics. One finishing touch – £700-worth of rather lovely Chord Company Signature speaker cable. Okay, Naim's own NAC5 cable would have done just fine at a fraction of the price but, what the hell, we've already spent over £13K.

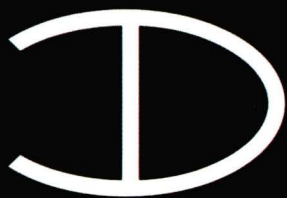
It's money superbly well spent, too. This system exhibits quite stunning grip and presents music in a tangible, coherent way with oodles of drive and rhythmic integrity. It sounds, well, very

natural and real – an example of musical literacy winning out over hi-fi minutiae. It isn't that the tonal balance might or might not be perfectly neutral; the thought simply never occurs to you. This is music making of the tactile, explicit and believable variety. It grabs your attention and won't let go. Anything with energy and a musical pulse is grist to the Naim mill.

But the Signature 805s definitely play their part here, being transparent to the Naim kit's abundant musical skills without over-egging an already pretty full-on presentation. The combination has terrific resolving power and dynamic expression. Bass isn't especially deep but it is powerful with a seductively sumptuous quality. It's also wonderfully agile and tuneful without being overtly 'taut 'n' twangy'. Treble is clean, extended, extremely open and rich with shimmering detail. Timing's right on the money, capable of capturing the deftest shifts of tempo. Yeah, it's a beaut all right. If this system doesn't put a huge smile on your face, it's hard to know what will. **HFC**

David Vivian





Densen Audio Technologies



The New B-250 Preamp From Densen - Versatile musicality

The new reference preamplifier from Densen is perhaps the most advanced stereo preamp on the market. It is filled with advanced solutions, which all share the goal of giving you even more musicality. The volume is controlled by an extremely precise attenuator made of Vishay metal film resistors, which is switched by relays controlled by the microprocessor.

This results in an unsurpassed precision and refinement, and the attenuator contains no less than 256 steps! It contains socket for the SA Board for surround, sockets for DP-03 and DP-06 MM and MC stages. The amplification stages are all completely new designs, based on advanced class A designs, which have been encapsulated on the board to avoid any kind of interference with the delicate signal, while producing a musicality which is truly outstanding by any standards.

Technical features:

- Line inputs: 4 sets + 2 tape loops
- Preamp outputs: 4 sets
- Power supply size: 3 x 20 VA
- Storage capacity: 100.000 uF
- Output stage: 6 watt class A amp with zero feedback
- Upgradeable internal CPU unit
- Upgradeable to surround with add-on board
- Ready for Densen's DP-03 & DP-06 phono stage
- Ready for the Gizmo system remote
- Ready for multiroom
- Ready for intelligent communication via the DenLink cable
- Upgradeable with external power supply
- Available in black with gold or chrome knobs or albino silver chassis.
- Lifetime warranty

Acoustic Arts
Watford
Tel. 01923 245250

Audio Counsel
Cheadle
Tel. 01614 916090

Audio Counsel
Oldham
Tel. 01616 332602

Hi-Fi Studios
Doncaster
Tel. 01302 725550

Kevin Galloway
Audio
Kilmarnock
Tel. 01563 574185

Midland Audio
Exchange
Belbroughton
Tel. 01562 731100

Mike Manning
Taunton
Tel. 01823 326688

Mike Manning
Yeovil
Tel. 01935 479361

New Audio Frontiers
Loughborough
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Phonography
Ringwood
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Progressive Audio
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Hull
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REVIEWS



Welcome to the HFC hardware reviews section – the only place for definitive tests of the latest hi-fi components. Our unique combination of extensive listening, unsighted comparisons and scientific lab reports, conducted by the UK's most experienced set of reviewers, ensures you're holding the most comprehensive and reliable guide to high performance hi-fi in the world.

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OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Percentage ratings for various different criteria, like sound quality and value for money

Our overall conclusion

You can find more civilised players for the money. But few combine dynamics with fine timing skills as effectively as this. **HFC**
Jason Kennedy

VERDICT

SOUND >> 83%

FEATURES >> 85%

BUILD >> 85%

VALUE >> 85%

CONCLUSION

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 84%

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

The product's final score. All criteria are taken into account but the emphasis is on performance. Components scoring more than 85% may qualify for an HFC Award Badge

OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



Best Buy

A component receiving the coveted Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy Badge has been judged to deliver excellent performance at its price point, thereby offering outstanding value for money.



Editor's Choice

This Badge is awarded only to those components that are judged to deliver reference-standard performance, regardless of cost. These products may be considered among the very best of their kind.

Turn the page for the most rigorous tests of serious hi-fi in the business...



The Max factor

The Rock turntable shook up hi-fi two decades ago. Can its 25th anniversary incarnation do the same?

PRODUCT Townshend Audio Rock Anniversary
TYPE Turntable and tonearm
PRICE £7,500 (turntable: £5,500, arm: £2,000)
KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 47x15x36cm (excluding stand) • Weight: 20kg • Special fluid damping trough • 33/45rpm manual speed change • Dedicated isolation stand
CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155
🌐 www.townshendaudio.com

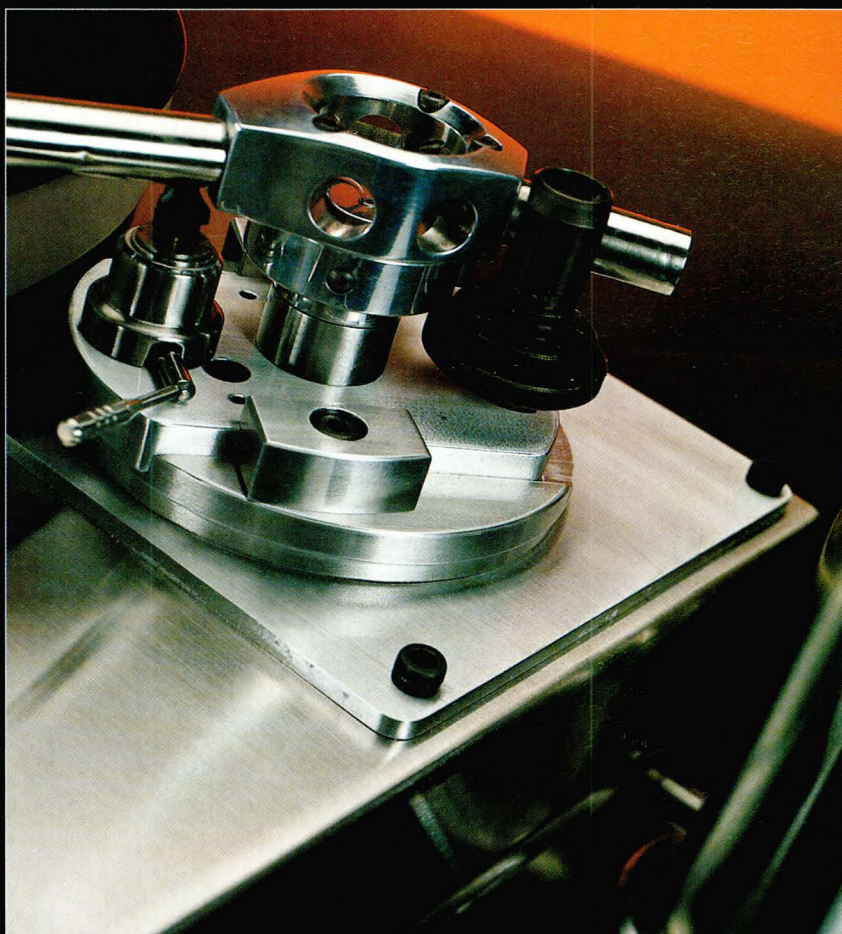
The Rock turntable is something of a hi-fi legend. With its trough of silicone goo and plaster of Paris construction it's certainly a radical design, but at a time when the Linn LP12 was the only record player worth having, the suspension-free, high-mass approach of the Rock was tantamount to revolution.

Designed in 1980 at the Cranfield Institute of Technology by Jack Dinsdale (who also invented the transformerless transistor amplifier in 1962) and developed by John Bugge for his Masters thesis, the original Rock took a completely new approach to controlling resonance in turntables. The deck's most notable feature is the trough that sits over the LP and contains silicone fluid which damps vibrations in the arm and cartridge.

The trough acts as an anchor for the tonearm and cartridge right at the point of maximum resonance, and locks the arm as solidly as the bearings do at the pivoting end. To understand how it works, imagine how easy it is to walk through water, then contrast this with the difficulty faced when trying to run through the stuff. The resistance of the water varies with

speed or frequency, and the same thing happens with the trough. The outrigger 'paddle' on the end of the arm can easily move at the speed required to track the groove but at the higher frequencies generated by the stylus/groove interface it is heavily damped. The silicone fluid is of just the right density to offer maximum damping at this frequency.

Bugge spent a considerable amount of time developing the Excalibur tonearm which is available in its original form for the first time in this Anniversary edition. It also incorporates some thinking that is distinctly 'out of the box'. The ideal tonearm is one that does not move any more than is required for the stylus to transcribe the record, and this arm is 20mm shorter than usual at 8.25in. The reason being that self damping (of the tube) is significantly



“At a time when the Linn LP12 was considered the only record player worth having, the suspension-free, high-mass approach of the Rock was tantamount to revolution.”

improved and the frequency of the first break-up is pushed to nearly twice what it would be in a nine-inch arm. The quid pro quo is that tracking error is increased but only by 0.125%.

The arm has a rigid, thin-walled, foam-filled stainless steel tube with a magnesium headshell scarf jointed on, the theory being that stainless steel has far greater stiffness than magnesium where it's needed, but magnesium's high damping and low mass is critical at the headshell. The latter has three fixed-position mounting points for the cartridge rather than the usual slot arrangement, and this, alongside 2mm of adjustment at the arm base, allows for any cartridge to be set up correctly with no danger of the significant distortion that arises when a cartridge is mounted at the wrong angle. Townshend makes an unusual alignment


gauge that allows you to trace the tracking error of any given set-up so that the optimum position may be achieved.

Another unusual aspect of this arm is that it places the vertical movement bearings in the same plane as the vinyl, further reducing unwanted movement and maintaining constant tracking force. It's also unusual in that it has two counterweights. The rear-most weight balances the arm/cartridge in the vertical plane so that the centre of gravity of the arm is at the point of intersection of the two bearing axes before applying downforce with the side weights. The semi-fixed weight is arranged to have its centre of gravity as close as possible to the vertical axis to minimise the moment of inertia of the arm, hence the 24.5 degree offset.

The Anniversary arm has a double outrigger that sits in the trough, and this increases the stiffness of the fluid 'lock' at the 10Hz resonant frequency of the arm/cartridge combination.

The Anniversary turntable still uses plaster of Paris in the plinth but the platter is a composite of a glass substrate and PVC with a damping adhesive layer between the two (there's also an acrylic version available, as in our pictures). The PVC forms an interface with the vinyl record that acts in a mechanically non-reflective manner to drain energy and turn it into heat. A clamp system with an adjustable centre to accommodate different vinyl thicknesses ensures that there is a good interface between record and platter.

The turntable's power supply is located in the lower section beneath the plinth and ▶



“With its dry, tight bass and relatively uncoloured balance, the original Rock was a pill that only the very confident were prepared to swallow.”



drives the AC synchronous motor with a dedicated power conditioner. The power supply and plinth are separated by rubber feet while the whole caboodle comes with one of Townshend's new spring-suspended isolation cradles. Unlike the one on the TA 565 universal disc player (see p58) this has only two pillars at either end forming supporting legs and spring suspension units.

SOUND QUALITY

At the time of the original launch the Rock caused a fair amount of controversy, its critics suggesting that it didn't have the 'musicality' of their beloved LP12s while advocates bathed

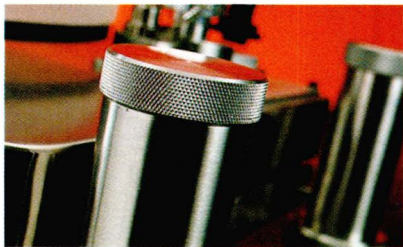
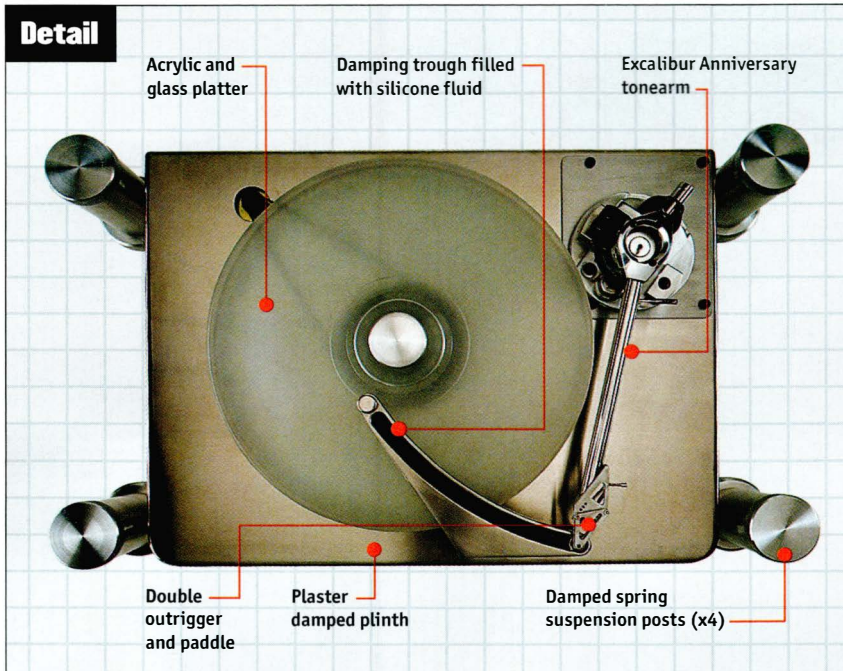
in the most substantial bass reproduction ever heard from vinyl. 25 years later its latest incarnation is still a shock to the ears for anyone not used to the 'trough effect'. The extent to which it negates vinyl's primary resonance is so great that it initially seems almost cold and 'digital'. We get so used to vinyl's warmth that it's difficult to hear, but it's one of the reasons why people like the medium and learning to live without it takes a bit of acclimatisation.

The lack of what in many respects is the 'romance' of vinyl is probably the reason why the Elite Rock, as company founder Max Townshend's first turntable was called, did not achieve world domination in the eighties. In

these digital days it is hard to appreciate the popularity that attributes such as pace, timing and 'musicality' had in the eighties, but there was a time back in the day when you couldn't call yourself a hi-fi enthusiast if you didn't have a turntable that emphasised these characteristics. So the Rock, with its dry, tight bass and relatively uncoloured balance, was a pill that only the very confident were prepared to swallow. One enthusiast at the time was the jazz pianist Keith Jarrett, who was so impressed that he wrote a glowing affidavit for Townshend to use in its marketing. Playing Keith Jarrett's *Köln Concert* on the Rock does nothing to play down the hard sound of the instrument but reveals a lot about that piano's bottom end, and plenty about the acoustic of the venue, which, though dry, reveals itself when the low notes come into play.

Studio recordings like HIM's *Many In High Places* sound remarkably calm and assured on this turntable; low-level detail begins to make more sense, and sampled voices for instance become much more intelligible. The way that individual instruments and voices have been recorded and treated is also abundantly clear, the sensation being one of great insight and very fine resolution.

Listening was carried out with a Blue Oasis moving coil cartridge (recently re-tipped by Expert Cartridges). It's not a needle you can get hold of easily but is certainly worth well



over four figures. It was selected for neutrality and smoothness and quite possibly a more romantic cartridge would have injected a bit of colour into the sound. But if it's the aural truth you're after, colour is not going to help and the vigour and resolve of what the Blue Oasis does in the Rock cannot be argued with.

The proof of the pudding is in the listening. John Fahey's guitar when combined with a band sat surprisingly deep in the soundstage, while his playing sounded remarkably fluid and natural – you could hear the finger picking but the tune came first. Even more startling was the vigour the deck brought to familiar recordings like Steely Dan's *Black Friday*, which produced a level of energy and low frequency grunt that beggars belief. Despite having played this track on great systems for years the bass content was never fully revealed before, and was quite a pleasant surprise on a record I thought I knew intimately. Television's angular *Venus* was every bit as steely as you'd expect but the tunefulness of the playing, especially that of bass player Fred Smith, exposed an almost prog-esque aspect to the band. Then there's Jaco Pastorius on Joni Mitchell's *Cotton Avenue*, the tone and precision of his playing producing genuinely melodic bass that was nothing short of sublime with the Rock.

It's easy to get carried away with the Rock's bass capabilities simply because they are pretty well unique thanks to the trough, but that's

not to say that the rest of the range is not well served. Another familiar track, Miles Davis's *So What*, revealed a hidden reverb on the double bass, not to mention further insight into the genius of Coltrane, and his qualifications for saint-hood became even clearer with this degree of resolve.

This is a constantly engaging and revealing record player, the extra pff of the trough is easily outweighed by the visceral reality of the music it lets the cartridge extract. There will still be those who prefer the warmth of undamped tracking, but if you want to hear more of the music and less of the medium this is a superb device for the job. The extent to which well known music is invigorated by the Rock is simply remarkable – older recordings breathe like new ones and new ones reveal weight, depth and perspective that eludes most conventional turntables. In the bass it has no peers, and while alternatives may be able to match it in other respects, as a complete package it's truly special. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 96% [Progress bar]	PRO A genuinely radical and highly effective design that produces the best bass you will ever hear from vinyl, coupled with a powerful, vigorous sound overall.
FEATURES >> 90% [Progress bar]	CON It's not the slickest or most ergonomically perfect deck for the money. Care needs to be taken with the trough fluid to avoid sticky accidents!
BUILD >> 80% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 85% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION The latest incarnation of a classic turntable provides a result that is as stunning as ever – if you want to hear through vinyl's warmth and get to the meat and bones of the music, this is a fantastic tool for the job.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 91%	

ROCK LEGEND



DESIGN

When the original Rock first appeared in 1980 it was a shock, not just because of how it looked, or the materials involved in its construction, but also because of the technology involved. The crux of this turntable is the fascinating inclusion of front-end damping provided by the trough of silicone fluid that controls resonances via an outrigger attached to the tonearm's headshell (pictured above). The idea for this came from Jack Dinsdale at the Cranfield Institute of Technology, where he is Professor of 'mechatronics' – the combination of mechanical engineering and electronics.

Max Townshend (the man behind Townshend Audio) met Jack purely by chance in the late 1970s and was initially given the option of marketing what would become the Cranfield Rock turntable. As it turned out, John Bugge, who took the Rock from concept to working prototype was unable to produce a turntable that cost less than an arm and a leg, so Max took hold of the production reins.

The original Rock was made of Granitan, a mouldable mixture of graded granite and epoxy. This was used to make the platter and plinth for the first two hundred Rocks, but it was expensive and difficult to produce and so Max hit upon using plaster of Paris which is stiff, if not particularly strong (turntables don't need to be as strong as the large-scale lathes that inspired Bugge).

SET-UP

The Rock is unusual in that it does not need to be perfectly level – the front-end damping largely stops the cartridge being affected by gravitational pull. Early dems of the deck involved Max showing that it was possible to play a record with the turntable at an angle just short of where the silicone would flow out of the trough. By the way, it's worth avoiding putting a finger in this fluid as it's likely to fall onto the vinyl – it can be removed with washing up liquid but it's very sticky!

This latest Rock comes with its own suspension system and is self-isolating, so it works well on any steady support. Cartridge-wise, in the past, slightly brighter designs such as the Dynavector D17 MkII have been the preferred choice of Rock owners but it is well suited to almost any moving coil and will reflect its quality accordingly. As for tonearms, you can fit a bolt-on outrigger to any (nine-inch) arm but Townshend's own arm will always have an advantage because of its integral outrigger.



Blast from the past

One of the original high-quality floorstanders from hi-fi's heyday is reinvented for a new generation

PRODUCT Ruark Talisman III

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £1,499 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 22x84x31cm

⊕ Weight: 18kg ⊕ Two-way, bass reflex configuration

⊕ 180mm SEAS pulp cone bass/mid driver ⊕ 27mm

SEAS synthetic dome tweeter ⊕ Sens./imp: 88dB/8 ohms

CONTACT ☎ 01702 601410 🌐 www.ruark.net

The Talisman was one of a handful of speakers that defined the first wave of high-quality floorstanding column designs. There was the Mission 753, the Rega ELA as well as the Ruark, and as Ruark points out in its supplied literature, the Talisman entered the market as many of us were discussing the relative merits as CD and vinyl. It was originally introduced in 1989, three years after the company was formed, and upgraded to MkII form the following year. It is the most successful loudspeaker Ruark has ever made.

Now in its third iteration, the Talisman III belongs in the Heritage range alongside the Sabre II, and in the not too distant future, the Crusader III, respectively smaller and larger than the Talisman. Our protagonist in this test is a two-way loudspeaker in a more or less conventional wood-veneered enclosure, but a closer look yields up a number of subtleties that may escape initial attention.

The Talisman baffle, for example, is gently tilted back, though whether this is enough to provide any useful time alignment is not clear, but it's certainly enough to ensure that the front and rear walls of the enclosure are not parallel. In addition, the front baffle section wraps around to the side, adding a second structural layer where it is required most, and giving each panel a distinctive resonant behaviour of its own. The enclosure is critically damped, and also reinforced by a non-symmetric brace, with a closed-off base section available for mass loading.

As with earlier Talisman versions the drive units are sourced from SEAS. The bass/mid driver is a 180mm treated profiled pulp cone unit with a pure rubber surround, mounted in an alloy chassis. This driver hands over at the 3kHz crossover point to a 27mm dome tweeter with a Sonolux dome and polymer surround, a

low hysteresis (effectively high response speed) combination optimised for good transient behaviour, and fitted with a vented magnet. The use of a slightly larger tweeter than usual is consistent with some of Ruark's previous designs, and probably helps with power handling – but the specified frequency response to 22kHz (-3dB) would be impressive for a 25mm unit.

Changes from the previous models are in general subtle but significant. The reflex port has migrated around to the rear, perhaps to reduce the audibility of any internal resonances, but the enclosure is otherwise similar (but not identical) to the original. The new tweeter replaces a slightly smaller textile dome unit, and the bass unit has increased in size from 165mm to its current 180mm, with a consequent improvement in low-frequency response under free-field conditions from 46Hz to 42Hz (-3dB) – figures that will be improved by the loading effect of room boundaries.

The speaker's power handling has gone up from 100 to 150 watts, while the sensitivity and nominal impedance figures remain unaltered at 88dB/W at one metre and eight ohms respectively. The Talisman III gives every indication of being easy to drive. It works consistently with a range of amplifiers (Arcam, Audia and Stello for this test), with the moderate sensitivity placing no strains on any of the amps given the speaker's own power handling limitations (discussed later).

The front wrap is finished in a choice of natural oak or rich walnut (sic), with yew and rosewood to be added as extra cost options later in the year. The standard of fit and finish is extremely high, though the speaker has a rather traditional, four-square styling that is probably fitting for the nature of the target audience. The base is reinforced and equipped with 8mm sockets for the spikes which are supplied. The speaker is finished with substantial bi-wire terminals feeding a hard-wired crossover internally, and some attractive if discreet badges, all adding subtle reinforcement to the message that the Talisman III is a high-quality product.

SOUND QUALITY

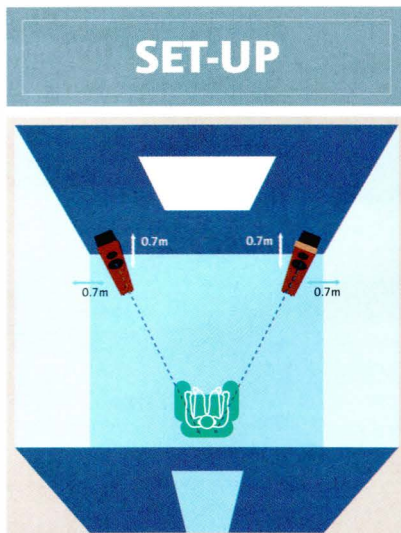
Our first impression of this new model at a recent hi-fi show was that it was a really good loudspeaker that sounded completely on form: clean, articulate, agile and a speaker that gets to the heart of the music in a way that doesn't happen a lot, especially (for whatever reason) at hi-fi shows. It was clearly a thoroughly engaging and likeable design, with more of an emphasis on qualities like clarity and analysis than with previous Ruarks. Another impression, however, was that this was not a new loudspeaker at all, but actually one of the earlier versions of the Talisman.

On audition, as it turned out, the similarity between old and new may be more apparent than real. The new model has a certain poise and energy that has not always been part of previous designs. Earlier Ruarks had sometimes seemed to be developed with more of an eye (ear?) to avoiding treading on people's audio sensibilities, occasionally at the cost of making a firm musical statement, and in this respect the new model has redressed the balance. To some extent, it may look like yesterday's news, reinforced by the Heritage range name, but this is not the way it sounds. ▶



“It may look like yesterday’s news, reinforced by the Heritage range name, but this is not the way it sounds.”

[Review] Ruark Talisman III loudspeaker



POSITIONING

The Talisman III has relatively uniform imaging in the lateral plane, but with the usual albeit relatively modest deterioration off-axis. The Talisman is designed particularly to be used proud of rear walls, and this is doubly important now that the reflex port is on the back panel as it needs a certain amount of room to breathe. At the same time, the speaker's naturally lean balance requires some reinforcement from room boundaries, and in the HFC test room, the optimum balance was achieved with the speakers' rear panel around 70cm forward of the back wall, and toed in just enough to provide a sight line down the inside edges of the enclosures.

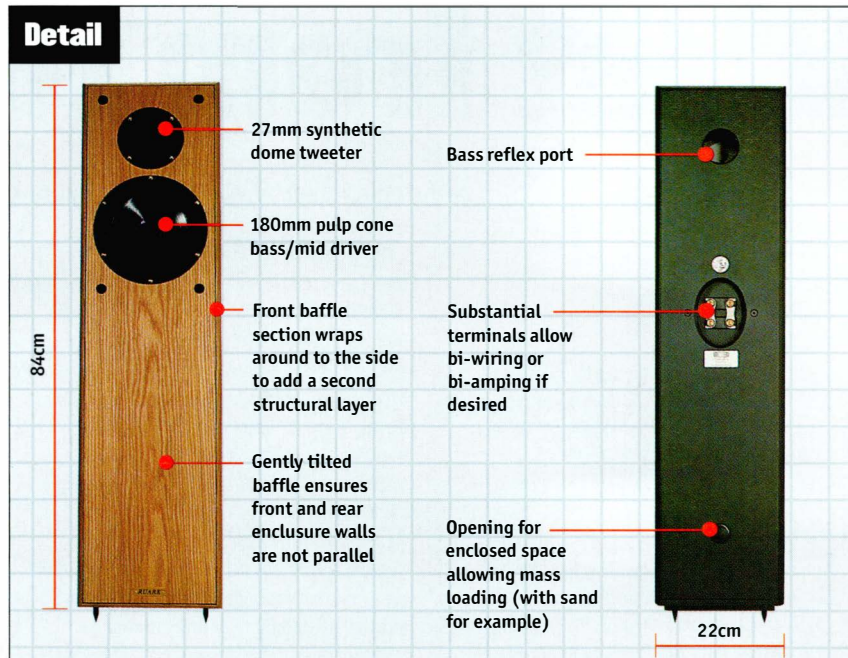
If the room is wider than it is long, and especially if there are likely to be two or more people listening at any time, try an alternative toe-in arrangement in which the angle is increased so that the outside enclosure edges are visible from the central listening position, and the front output of the speakers meet at a point which is a little forward of the listening position.

Small but useful changes in midband voicing can be effected by altering the relative height of the front and rear spikes, which will allow you to tilt the speaker a little more or less. As always though, don't decide on any final orientation before you're sure that the speakers have been thoroughly run in, which will probably take a week or so of normal use.

SYSTEM MATCHING

As noted in the main copy, the Talisman III has a medium power handling figure, and a rated sensitivity of 88dB/watt at one metre, which implies a loudspeaker that will work with the majority of good quality amplifiers in the 80 to 120-watt region. There is nothing about the voicing of this speaker that places any special or surprising demands on the amplifier, though it is transparent enough to show clearly any limitations in the quality of the electronics.

The Talisman III did respond well to the extra punch and vitality of amplifiers like the Stello pre/power combination (also reviewed this month, see p52). You may just find that subtle use of the bass control available in amplifiers like the Arcam FMJ A32 will be beneficial in some rooms. The operative word in this case, however, is 'subtle'.



It's not perfect, of course. The new larger bass driver has led to a more extended bass response on paper and probably in practice, while power handling has been increased by up to 50 per cent without any measurable effect on system sensitivity. At normal listening levels with most music types, the Talisman sounds very well balanced in the bass, with a solid, extended feel in keeping with its floorstanding status – but no more. Push the volume level up a few notches and the character of the bass changes significantly. The natural flow of musical dynamics is disrupted and soon the speaker begins to sound a little uncomfortable, and held back at the lowest frequencies. For this reason if for no other, this is not perhaps the most convincing rock music loudspeaker around.

But at more modest volume levels and probably even at moderately high-ish levels in smaller rooms, the Talisman III is going to sound completely at home. It may not be the biggest, deepest animal in the pack, but it qualifies for most purposes as a full bandwidth loudspeaker. It is elsewhere that the Talisman III really comes into its own. Without descending into hard or congested sound, the

Ruark has a bold, clean presentation, an upfront quality that gives the music a real sense of presence, but also very firm control. Soundstaging is well articulated forward and behind the plane of the speakers, and the sense of a clear, open window on the music is sustained by a treble output that is balanced to perfection – it is neither bright nor dull, and there is no real sense of a transition between the mid and the top. It's just a natural extension of what the loudspeaker does so well elsewhere...

In fact, that is the story of the Talisman. It's a neat, unprepossessing loudspeaker that has the unity and articulation of a small but high-quality standmount, with the extended frequency coverage of a full-size loudspeaker. It does not have the bloom often considered a requirement for home cinema purposes; it is in fact a purist stereo loudspeaker aimed squarely at the purist hi-fi fraternity, the kind of speaker that makes a statement about the music and never about itself. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 87%	PRO After a period of relative inaction from Ruark, the Talisman is reintroduced as a purist stereo loudspeaker with a leaner, more agile and transparent sound.
EASE OF DRIVE >> 86%	CON Modest power handling capabilities limit over-enthusiastic use with some music types, especially in very large rooms.
BUILD >> 90%	
VALUE >> 84%	
CONCLUSION Something of a rarity – a purist stereo speaker with no home cinema pretensions – the Talisman III follows in the footsteps of its predecessors with a lively, clean and open window on the music, its own personality subsumed in the job at hand.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 86%	



Authorised Stockists

Aberdeen Holburn Hi-Fi, 01224 585713 • **Basingstoke** Audio T, 01256 324311 • **Beckenham** Musical Images, 0208 6633777
Birmingham Music Matters, 0121 4292811 • **Bournemouth** Movement Audio, 01202 529988 • **Brentwood** Audio T, 01277 264729
Bristol Radfords, 0117 9441010 • **Cambridge** Hughes Ltd, 01223 461518 • **Canterbury** Canterbury Hi-Fi, 01227 765315 • **Cardiff** Sevenoaks, 02920 472899 • **Carlisle** Practical Hi-Fi 01228 544792
Cheadle Audio Counsel, 0161 4916090 • **Cheltenham** Hutchinsons, 01242 573012 • **Cheshire** Hi-Fi Stereo 0161 9735577 • **Cornwall** R.J.F., 01209 710777 • **Coventry** Frank Harvey, 02476 525200 • **Crewe** Sound of Music, 01270 214143 • **Darlington** Music Matters, 01325 481418
Edinburgh Hi-Fi Corner, 0131 5567901 • **Edinburgh** Hi-Fi Corner, 0131 2201535 • **Exeter** Howards, 01392 258518 • **Falkirk** Hi-Fi Corner, 01324 629011 • **Gateshead** Lintone Audio, 0191 4772771 • **Glasgow** Glasgow Audio, 0141 3324707 • **Glasgow** Hi-Fi Corner, 0141 2265711
Guildford P.J. Hi-Fi, Ltd. 01483 504801 • **Hampshire** Hampshire Audio, 01962 854466 • **Harrogate** Hi-Fi Hut, 01423 810990 • **Hastings** Adams & Jarrett, 01424 437165 • **Hereford** English Audio, 01432 355081 • **Hove** Sevenoaks, 01273 733338 • **Hull** Zen Audio, 01482 587397 • **Inverness** Telly on the Blink, 01463 233175 • **Lancaster** Romers Hi-Fi 01254 887799 • **Lancaster** Practical Hi-Fi, 01524 39657 • **Leeds** Sevenoaks, 0113 2452775 • **Leicester** Sevenoaks, 0116 2536567 • **Lewisham** Billy Vee, 0208 3185755 • **Lincoln** Sevenoaks, 01522 527397 • **Liverpool** Sevenoaks, 0151 7078417
London Bartletts, 0207 6072296 • **London** K.J. West One 0207 4868262 • **London** Spatial Audio, 0207 4365358 • **Macclesfield** Dooleys, 01625 423158 • **Maidstone** Home Media Ltd., 01622 676703
Manchester Practical Hi-Fi, 0161 8398869 • **Montrose** Robert Richie, 01674 673675 • **New Malden** Unilet Sound & Vision 0208 9429567
Newbury B&B Hi-Fi 01635 32474 • **Newcastle** Global Hi-Fi Centre, 0191 2303600 • **Newcastle (metro)** Lintone Audio, 0191 4600999
Norwich Martins Hi-Fi, 01603 627010 • **Nottingham** John Kirk, 01159 252986 • **Nottingham** Sevenoaks, 01159 112121 • **Oxford** Audio T, 01865 765961 • **Preston** Sevenoaks, 01772 825777 • **Reading** B&B Hi-Fi, 01189 583730 • **Rugby** Sounds Expensive, 01788 540772
Salisbury Hi-Fi, 01722 322169 • **Scarborough** Zen Audio, 01723 350850 • **Sheffield** Moorgate Acoustics, 0114 275 6048 • **Shrewsbury** SMC Sound and Vision, 01743 232317 • **Solihull** Music Matters, 0121 76520254 • **Southampton** Sevenoaks, 02380 337770 • **Staines** Sevenoaks 01784 460777 • **Stourbridge** Music Matters, 01384 444184
Sutton Coldfield Music Matters, 0121 3542311 • **Tunbridge Wells** Sounds of Music, 01892 547003 • **Warrington** Doug Brady, 01925 828009 • **Watford** Hi-Fi City, 01923 226169 • **Weybridge** Sevenoaks, 01932 828525 • **Wigan** Adventures in Hi-Fi, 01942 234202 • **Witham** Sevenoaks, 01376 501733 • **Wolverhampton** Sevenoaks, 01902 312225
Worcester Worcester Hi-Fi, 01905 612929 • **York** Vickers Hi-Fi, 01904 629659

Product of the Year 2002-2003

What Hi-Fi Sound & Vision (11L Loudspeakers)

Product of the Year 2003-2004

What Hi-Fi Sound & Vision (11L Loudspeakers)

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Hi-Fi News (99Series and 11L Loudspeakers)



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Flexible friend

Linn breaks the mould by combining a universal disc player with a preamp/processor

PRODUCT Linn Unidisk SC

TYPE Universal disc player/preamp/processor

PRICE £2,995

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 38x8x37cm

• Weight: 4.3kg • One-box universal disc player plus preamp/processor • Incorporates Linn's Silver Disc Engine for optimal signal handling • Fixed and variable audio outs • Can process up to eight additional sources

CONTACT ☎ 0141 307 7777 🌐 www.linn.co.uk

Linn has never been a firm afraid of bending the rules when those rules are entirely arbitrary. Breaking out power supplies from integrated preamps and turntables, active speakers with crossover modules built into the power amps and fully isolated enclosures within speaker cabinets are all evidence of Linn refusing to follow well trodden paths if it thinks it can do things better.

The Unidisk SC follows the same rule-breaking ethos. It can be used both as a dedicated source component or it can replace both disc player and processor. If you take the latter route, simply hook the Unidisk SC directly to a five-channel power amp and you have a complete system, with the flexibility to add eight other digital and analogue audio (and, in a more limited capacity, video) sources.

In directly Linn terms, the Unidisk SC blends many of the good parts of the £6,500 Unidisk 1.1 and £4,500 Unidisk 2.1 players with the £8,000 Kisto preamplifier/processor in a single box. There is a lack of 7.1 channel support for those who want to switch between THX-style side satellite speakers and behind-the-listener surround for music use. Naturally (but unlike the first Linn Classik Movies system), it includes processing for Dolby Pro-Logic II, Dolby Digital and DTS for any external sources as well as the signals off the internal transport. It can also support AAC and MP3 recordings, both internally and externally (via digital inputs).

Not that you'll need many other sources – Linn's player supports almost every current format for music and video replay via 12cm disc (see box, right). The Unidisk ethos involves using separate signal paths for each disc process. In most universal players, the digital signal off-disc runs along common processing signal paths from beginning to end; here the same chipset performs different tasks depending on the signal it receives. The Linn method is different; the type of datastream dictates what signal path (and, consequently, which chipset) is used. This is a function of Linn's proprietary 'Silver Disc Engine' used in all Unidisk products.

As this multiplicity of roles implies, the Unidisk SC is extremely well placed in the connectivity stakes. Well, almost – there's no DVI/HDMI digital picture link. This is a demonstration as to how fast the home cinema world moves. A year ago, digital picture connections were the stuff of legend and top-notch plasma TVs. This year, they are appearing on a rising number of products. Next year, almost every DVD player and display device that isn't a conventional CRT TV set will sport these connectors. This may prove a significant gap in Linn's spec, unlike i.Link/IEEE 1394/FireWire, which really isn't that important in this context.

In Europe, the Unidisk SC involves two Scart sockets (other versions include progressive-scan enabled component video connectors), one input and one input/output. The Scarts can be switched between composite video, RGB Component and Colorstream Component video, while the DVD output can be both interlaced or progressive scan component for the most cinematic pictures. This requires a Scart to three-phono cable, however. There are also S-Video inputs and outputs.

On the audio side, there are four digital inputs (two coaxial, two optical), plus optical and coaxial outputs. There are also three pairs

of phono analogue inputs, and six phono outputs for the 5.1 channel hook-up. Then, there are the obligatory connections to multiroom components – there are six Knekt connections for Linn multiroom systems and IR, RS232 and remote phono inputs and outputs for Crestron-style remotes.

Naturally, this level of complexity means a complex installation. Linn has tried to keep the set-up process straightforward, but it involves a trawl through the manual, on-screen and front panel displays and a variety of button pushes on the remote and front panel. This isn't helped by the supplied handset, which is not the most intuitive around (and is remarkably similar to Arcam's model), but familiarity does make this more workable. Eventually...

SOUND QUALITY

This could be an extremely hard product to evaluate, simply because there are so many aspects to the performance. But it isn't, since it performs consistently well as a CD player, a DVD-Audio player, a DVD-Video player and an SACD player, and also as a preamplifier and processor. In fact, this makes the process simple – if you like any one aspect of the Unidisk SC's performance, chances are you'll like it throughout. Of course, the reverse is also true.

As such, there's no real need to break down the performance of the Unidisk into its constituent parts. Once set up, the Unidisk SC behaves flawlessly, treating every disc in its drawer with equal aplomb, and treating each external component as a seamless extension of the Silver Disc Engine.

It's an extremely direct, clean and detailed sound that's as dry as James Bond's Martini, served inside an Aga in the middle of the Gobi Desert. Any sense of flabby overhang to the sound is eradicated entirely, and is instead presented six-pack tight. In multichannel mode, sounds are steered around the room with the sort of precision watchmakers crave,

while in stereo the fine detail makes you whip out those Dylan SACD reissues, to finally hear what was going on in those 1960s studios.

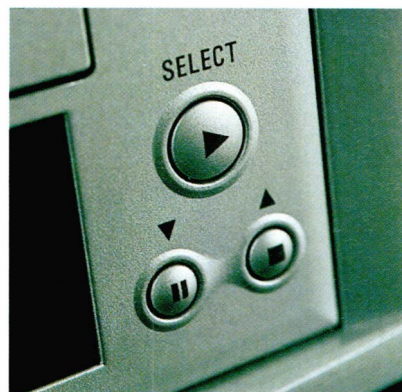
Don't expect a mellifluous soundstage, unless you have really open-sounding speakers. Sounds are solid and deeply articulate, but rooted to their individual cabinets. Yet, although this might appear disconcerting, it actually 'makes' the sound of the Unidisk SC, giving it a sense of studio-like directness. Okay, so the holographic soundstaging of Damien Rice is less pronounced, but many would trade this for studio-like control over every part of the sound.

No description of the Unidisk SC's sound is complete without mentioning *Dark Side Of The Moon* on SACD. Perhaps the designers built the player with this in mind, because this complex, swirling recording has always sounded confused and cluttered on most players. Here, everything is in order and it's your head that starts to spin, not the music. Visions of lying face down in fields, giggling away to all those clocks at the start of *Time* spring to mind.

VIDEO PERFORMANCE

Picture-wise, the player is an exemplary performer, arguably sharper in S-Video mode than many lesser mortals in the realm of the DVD player. On component video through the Scart socket, the depth and richness of the picture has a cinema-like quality that suggests really fine engineering – the gritty Petersburg Crater explosion in the opening chapter of *Cold Mountain* looks like a maelstrom of dirt and gore, rather than a series of digital blocks crowding the screen. The picture is the one point where the connectivity limitation shows, though – a product this good should have a fantastic digital picture output, but there isn't one. Still, in most systems (mine included) this would remain unchecked... for now.

Even the audio processing behaves in a similar manner, tightening up the sound of slightly flabby, floppy-sounding DVD-Video



FORMAT COMPATIBILITY

DVD-AUDIO	✓	DVD+R	✓
DVD-VIDEO	✓	DVD-RAM	✗
SACD	✓	MP3 AUDIO	✓
CD	✓	WMA AUDIO	✗
HDCD	✗	AAC AUDIO	✓
CD-R/ RW	✓	VIDEO CD	✓
DVD-R/ RW	✓	JPEG PICTURES	✓

discs in the process. The hi-fi purist hat stays firmly in place when it comes to DPL II, though. Although it's nice to have the option to process the stereo output of CD into 5.1, in almost every case, the player sounds best in straight stereo.

Linn-ites are proclaiming the Unidisk SC to be the most significant thing on the market since the birth of DVD, but that's going too far. Nevertheless, it is a ground-breaker. Don't use it as just a source component – that's a waste of a good preamp and processor. Instead, rebuild your system around the Unidisk SC, with it taking centre-stage as source and control device combined. Hmm, redesigning a system around a component? Maybe it is as significant as the Linn acolytes believe. **HFC**

Alan Sircom

SILVER DREAM MACHINE

The Unidisk SC is the third – and least expensive – universal disc player from Linn. All feature Linn's Silver Disc Engine, a proprietary decoding technology that scans the disc to determine the type of recording and then presents the right circuitry to process it – a more expensive, but more correct, method than shoe-horning the vagaries of different digital formats into the same processing. But this aside, the models are very different.

The Unidisk 1.1 and Unidisk 2.1 are similar, top-of-the-range universal disc players, with the Unidisk 1.1 having the performance edge over its cheaper sibling. They are remarkably similar in specification terms, and include DVI digital connections, balanced stereo XLR connectors for the main left and right channels and the extremely cool high-tensile metal drawer found in players like the Linn CD12 and the Ikemi.

These glossy finishing touches are not found in the Unidisk SC. Instead, it offers a standard plastic drawer, no digital picture link, single-ended phono connectors for the left and right main channels... and a fully functioning processor/preamp stage, obviating the need for a separate processor or preamp.

The three have very different priorities. Where the other Unidisk players are designed to work at the head of a top-flight home entertainment system, the Unidisk SC works at its core, entirely rethinking the way a system is constructed. Now, that's a completely different way of thinking.



VERDICT

SOUND >>> 86%

>>> SUB RATINGS
CD 83% SACD 88% DVD-A 88%

VISION >>> 88%

FEATURES >>> 94%

VALUE >>> 85%

PRO

A new category product with an outstandingly precise and consistent performance. And importantly, a product that doesn't punish audiophiles for watching movies.

CON

If you don't like the dry, focused sound, there's a lot of it not to like. Lack of digital video connection may prove a limitation in the near future.

CONCLUSION

Kudos to Linn for breaking the rules so successfully. This integrated disc player/preamp/processor cuts down on boxes but doesn't compromise on performance. One of the best examples of music/movie convergence to date? We think so.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >>> 88%



Stello pair's a steal

The Korean high-end brings audio innovation and strong performance at attractive prices

PRODUCT Stello DP200 and S200

TYPE DAC/preamplifier and power amplifier

PRICE £1,495 each (phono and ADC boards extra)

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 44x10x3.5cm

(both units) • Weight: DP200 9kg, S200 14kg

• DP200 – Built-in DAC (ADC and phono board optional) • Three analogue inputs (one balanced XLR, two unbalanced phono) plus four digital inputs

• S200 – Rated power output: 200W per channel

CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705 🌐 www.aprilmusic.com

Stello is a South Korean 'high-end' brand with a gimmick: its products are offered at unusually low prices. Of course, nothing is high-end just because it describes itself as such, so this review is designed to wrinkle out whether Stello also performs like a high-end brand.

It certainly looks good on paper. The simple, purposeful styling is a good start, and the classic stripped-down finish also points in the

same direction. No, the wraparound lid and main chassis are not quite as good as the best, and internally the daughter boards that are connected to the main PC motherboard are not secured at their flappy ends, so low-level microphony could be an issue under extreme conditions. The front panel extrusions, however, are excellent, and the quality of the key internal components and the rear panel connectors are particularly strong.

Tested here are a stereo DAC/preamp, the DP200, and the S200 stereo power amp, but the Stello range also includes an analogue preamp, a component D/A converter and a CD transport. The S200 power amp is a dual mono design fed by a 1kVA toroidal transformer and a 180,000µF reservoir capacitor bank, with heatsinks running down the sides. Inputs are both balanced and single-ended, and power output is 200 watts per channel (eight ohms). It may also be bridged for a 600-watt output.

The DP200 is a little different from your run-of-the-mill high-end preamp. It includes a well-sorted upsampling A/D converter, which

user-selectable from 48kHz, 96kHz, 192kHz or bypass, which allows the clock frequency of CD for example to remain at 44.1kHz, with no awkward conversion to 48kHz, and then perhaps back again, depending on the recording device used. The volume control can be bypassed if the DP200 is to be used strictly as an A/D or D/A converter, or perhaps if it is to be used as the front channel preamplifier chain in a multichannel system, with the system volume set by an external processor.

The control system is simple and elegant, and supported by an attractive and legible two-line, 16-character display. Supplied is a

“There was rarely any feeling that the Stellos were working hard, even when playing loud.”

will provide a 24-bit/96kHz digital feed from any of the analogue inputs for recording. The input could be a line level source, but equally it could be from a record player as the DP200 is optionally available with its own phono stage, the P1. Suitable for both MM and MC cartridges, it has a range of gain (two each for MM and MC) and impedance settings (six in total, 10-47kohms) sufficient to suit virtually any cartridge. The manufacturer suggests using the DP200 with a digital recorder as a means of archiving a vinyl record collection.

On-board D/A conversion is also included, allowing up to four digital sources to be fed through and converted to analogue for subsequent amplification. The analogue circuit is fully balanced, though single-ended in and outputs are available. The DP200 also includes its own discrete headphone amp – not just a potted-down version of the main output. The digital volume control has 120 0.5dB steps, but there is no channel balance facility.

The DP200 is designed to be modular, but the review sample was supplied fully loaded with the P1 MM/MC phono input board and ADC1 upsampling A/D converter board, priced at £185 and £130 respectively, which can be added to the basic unit as and when required.

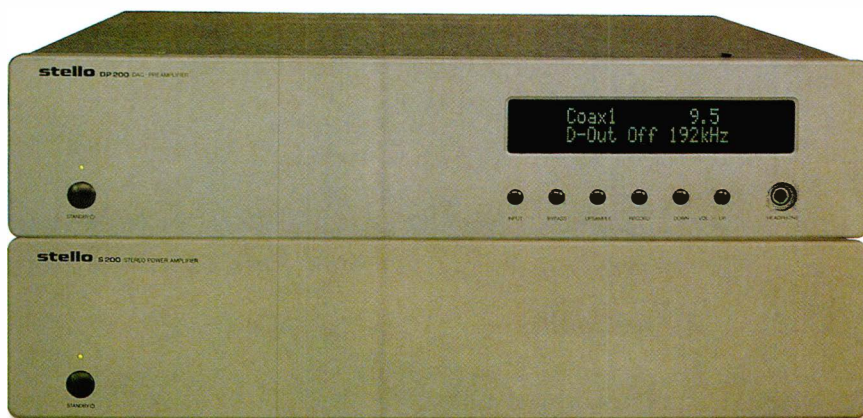
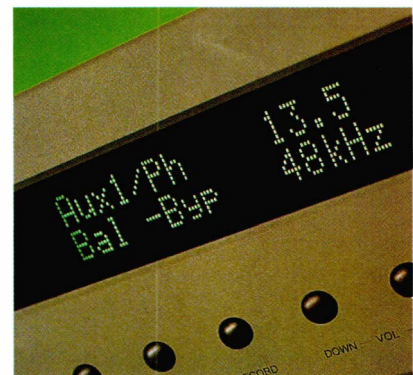
The A/D converter optionally upsamples input data to 24 bits, with sampling rate

full-function machined alloy remote control of the kind that is solid and heavy enough to help ward off intruders. The handset includes RC5-compatible transport/player controls – RC5 is Philips-compatible, but will also work with a wide range of specialist brands.


SOUND QUALITY

The two components can connect with each other in either single-ended or balanced mode, and in a direct comparison using Nordost Valkyrja in each case, the balanced option was preferred with the volume level normalised between runs. The balanced sound has more body and warmth, though the difference is small. As luck and good planning would have it, I had access to a balanced source in the form of a Krell SACD Standard, so for much of the available time the system was run fully balanced. Speakers included a pair of B&W Nautilus 800s and also Lumley Lampros 300ABs, which will be reviewed in *HFC* soon.

There were no problems configuring or using the Stello pair, which operated seamlessly and without noticeable hum or noise. However, it's worth noting that the DP200, whose preamp section operates in Class A, runs even hotter than the power amp. Bear this in mind if they are to be stacked, but using them side by side or on different rack levels is obviously preferable.



The Stello combination is a surprisingly good one, but let's make clear at the outset that no-one is going to mistake it for, let's say, a valve amplifier. It doesn't have the warmth, euphony or musical intensity of valves at their best. The Stello pairing – and what is true of one component is essentially true of them both – sounds clean and cool, with a lean yet robust tonality which is reminiscent of some Krell products from a few years ago. There is never any doubt about the amount of detail extracted from disc, or the clear, concise way in which it is presented, but some might regard the combination as slightly stand-offish.

Overall, though, the Stellos are very easy to like, and hard to fault in any substantive way. They don't make badly recorded music sound good, and the latest girl or boy band still sound like what they are. But they do give well recorded material a chance to express itself as intended. The combination seems more than usually transparent and open, so there is rarely any feeling that the two components are 

Q & A

We discussed some of the issues arising from this review with Simon K Lee, president and managing director of Stello's parent company, April Music



HFC: When was Stello founded?

SKL: Stello was founded in 1999, a year after the establishment of April Music, but the roots of the company go back a full 25 years to when I first met electronics designer Thomas Uhm at university.

How do you manage to maintain pricing that even other Far Eastern producers probably wouldn't be able to sustain?

Manufacturing costs basically depend on volumes and hi-fi is not a mass production technology. For Stello, we try to make our designs simple for better and faster machining, and strive for cleaner layouts and ease of use, but we won't compromise on the sound side. Fortunately, people have begun to understand our policy.

Can describe briefly the circuit topologies of the main components, especially the preamp, power amp and phono amp?

The preamp uses J-FETs to ensure a high-input impedance, which avoids compromising the input signal. There are no op-amps on board, and except for the phono stage we use a 50-volt supply voltage (op-amps would be limited to around just 30 volts) to maintain dynamics and musicality.

An AD797 op-amp provides RIAA filtering, but the other stages are all discrete, with a full complementary push-pull output. The preamp output stage is balanced and operates in full Class A which delivers the benefit of lower distortion. The power amp also uses a high-impedance J-FET input, and the circuit is fully symmetrical.

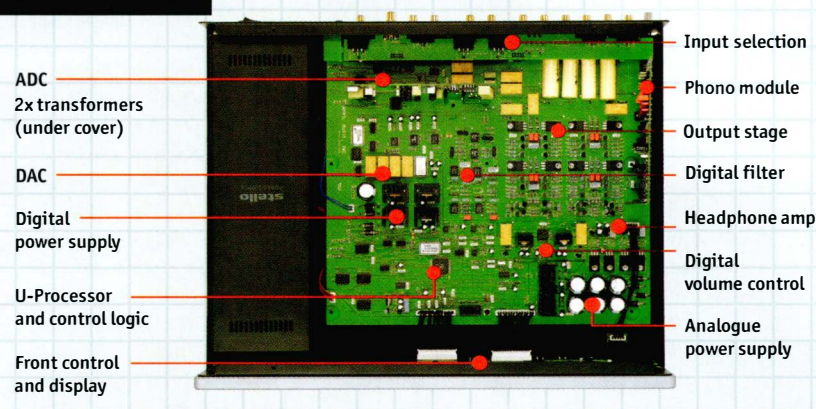
Do you intend to expand into multichannel audio or home cinema, or low-cost integrated amps and CD players?

The SP200 pure preamp/processor will come out this autumn. There is no video switching to help guarantee very high quality music and film sound replay. The S500 five-channel amplifier will be the preferred partner for the SP200, and a CD/DVD player and CD/SACD player will be shown before the end of the year. There will also be a lower cost Stello 100 series unveiled this autumn.

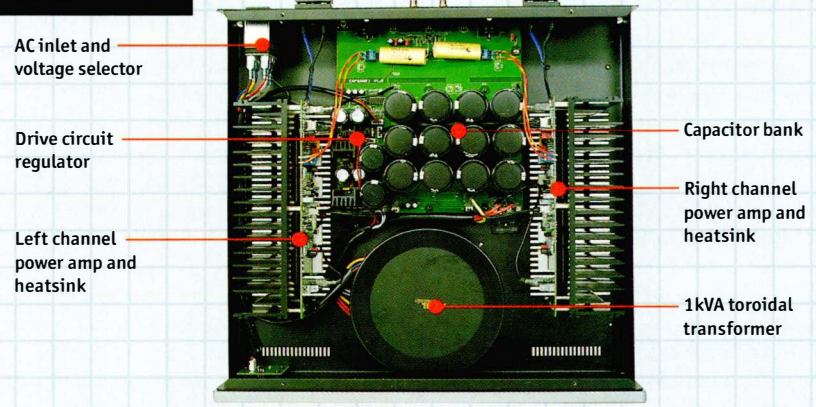
How do you view the future of the hi-fi industry?

Hi-fi will experience the hardest time ever in the history of audio. Hi-fi, in general, is too expensive for what is on offer, and this is a major reason why some music lovers end up dropping hi-fi and moving to home theatre – but I have absolutely no doubt that they will return someday.

Detail – DP200



Detail – S200



working hard, even when playing loud. The way they performed with the Lumley speakers, which can be difficult to suit, was especially good, and the understated authority and range of the electronics was particularly impressive, while any tendency to softness was suppressed – understatement and potential loss of timing and dynamics are qualities of this loudspeaker. At the same time, the Stello pair lack the hardnosed quality that some amplifiers betray when used with the B&W Nautilus, which is another speaker than can bring out the worst in an amplifier, if it has a mind to.

The D/A converter section of the DP200 is equally hard to fault. Starting at 16-bit/44.1kHz and ending at 24-bit/192kHz, the changes in sound are subtle and at times I could not discriminate between them. Over a period, however, a picture did build up of a sonic standard that became progressively more fine-grained as the data rates increased, but there was a certain body and a lack of artifice at the other end of the scale that was not otherwise available.

The long and the short is that the Stello pair delivers two qualities that have been largely missing from the audiophile market for some time. One is the versatility of a component that marries analogue and digital preamp functions in one box – in this case with the ability to handle a record player input and both balanced and single-ended connections, and

even deliver a digital output from analogue sources. The other is the kind of value for money that high-end hi-fi has been lacking from a good number of better known sources for a very long time. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



VERDICT

SOUND >> 88%

FEATURES >> 92%

BUILD >> 85%

VALUE >> 90%

CONCLUSION
If these components were made in the UK or the US, one might expect to pay at least double. Leaving value for money to one side, they also work very naturally in each other's company, almost as though they were made for each other.

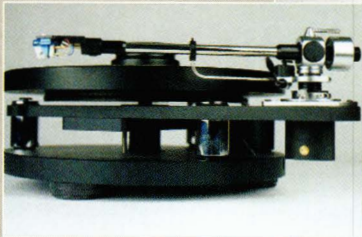
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 89%

PRO
The Stello pairing offers very strong all-round performance and flexibility at a very attractive price.

CON
Stello has no image in the UK yet – but this will probably change. Some may think the sound a little too cool.

the AUDIO CONSULTANTS

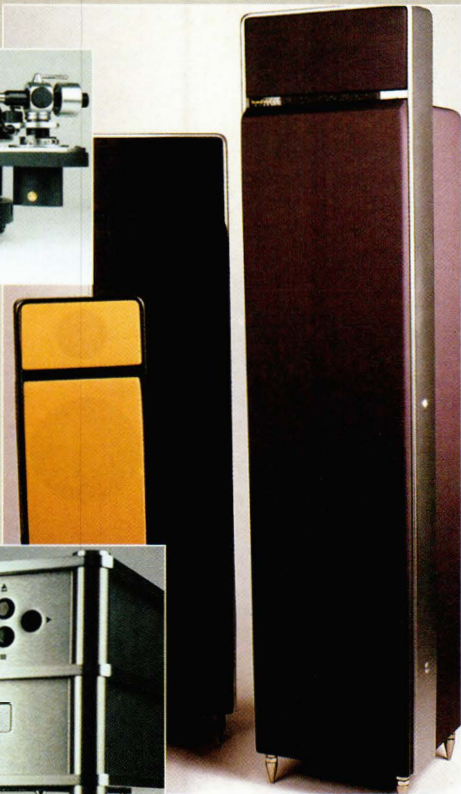
FINE TWO CHANNEL AUDIO SYSTEMS



SME Series M2 tonearm.
Wonderful engineering for this price. A much better sound than we expected at £613. Cartridge shown is the excellent new Lyra Argo at £849.



Sugden Bijou Series.
An exceptional high-end sound in a compact life-style design. CDMaster, Headmaster and Ampmaster £2647 in total. FMMaster tuner (not shown) £949



Mono Pulse. A new British range of loudspeakers with very precise imaging and a large soundstage not normally found at this price range. Contemporary looks, wide range of colour options, priced from £500 to £1000.



Unico. Hybrid integrated amplifier, 80wpc. Line only version £900, with phono stage £950.



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Pathos New Classic One. This valve hybrid amplifier has many of the qualities of the Logos but at an affordable price £1325.

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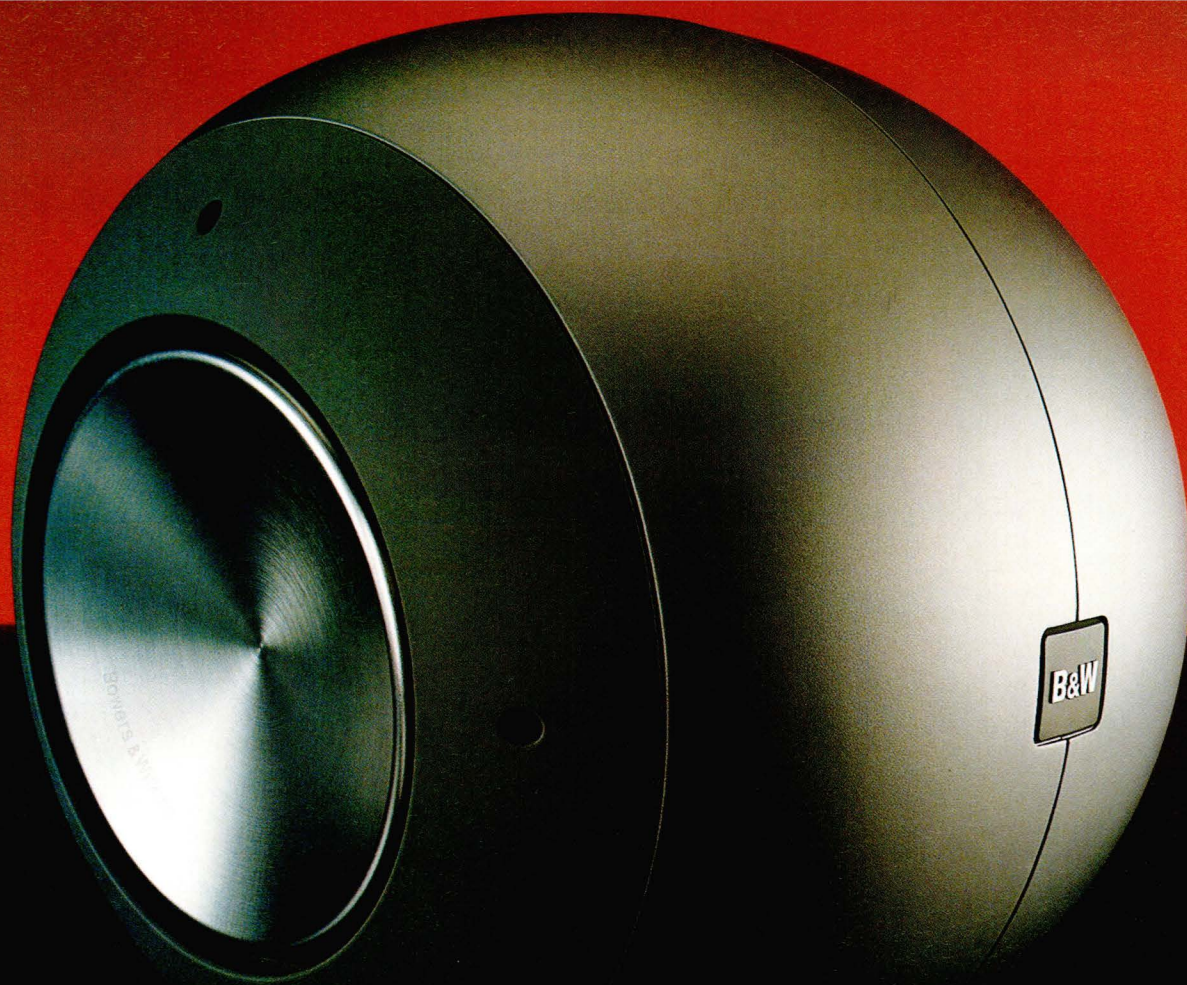
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Feel the pressure

B&W's Pressure Vessel looks set to revolutionise the way subwoofers are designed and built

PRODUCT B&W PV1

TYPE Active subwoofer

PRICE £950

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 29x34x35cm

- Weight: 20.5kg
- Spherical cast alloy enclosure
- Reaction-cancelling back-to-back 200mm drivers
- Built-in 500W digital power amplifier

CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500

🌐 www.bwspeakers.com

A fellow scribe once described how the powerful subwoofer he was testing started walking across the floor when pumped up with high-level sinewave drive. That was an extreme case of course, unlikely to occur in normal use, but it's also a scenario that simply wouldn't have been possible with this strikingly radical new subwoofer from B&W. That's because it operates in balanced mode –

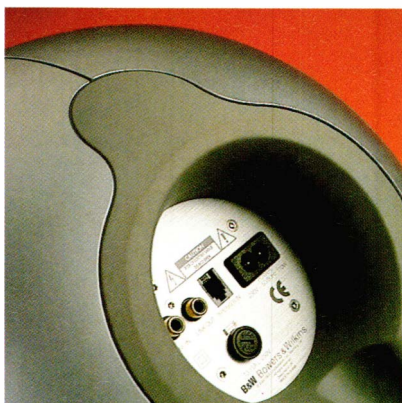
mechanically balanced, that is, not electrically. Which is just one of the clever tricks B&W has built into its new £950 subwoofer, codenamed The Pressure Vessel, or PV1.

The story started some years back in the company's Steyning Research Labs, when a couple of engineers decided to create the ultimate subwoofer. They wanted the most rigid enclosure they could get hold of, and someone came up with the idea of basing it on the bathysphere – the nearly spherical vessel built to withstand the enormous pressures encountered in exploring the ocean depths. They mounted a couple of 15-inch bass drivers back-to-back on the opposite faces of a large, curved 'pressure vessel' enclosure, which turned out much better than anyone had expected. The lessons learned with that prototype have now found their way into a

real-world product – the very cute, inescapably shiny and almost spherical PV1 subwoofer.

A triumph of clever industrial design based on a 35cm diameter sphere, subwoofers have never looked like this before. The PV1 combines a pair of 200mm (eight-inch) bass drivers, each with polished metal dish-shaped diaphragms 170mm in diameter. These are mounted from the inside, so that their diaphragms almost completely fill the holes in the opposite faces of the exceptionally tough, cast alloy enclosure, so any sound generated by the surrounds is minimised. The whole thing weighs an exceedingly hefty 20.5kg.

The magnets of the drivers are mechanically linked, so that any reaction forces, which will occur simultaneously and equally in both, will operate in direct opposition and cancel each other out. This is so effective, it is claimed, that



the very lowest bass frequencies. The inputs are a little more restrictive and clearly show that the home cinema user is the prime target, as the single phono input is only suited for connection to the LFE output of a home cinema processor, as it bypasses the low-pass filtering. For regular stereo music use it's necessary to use the supplied lead from the speaker output terminals of your amplifier, and because this is an all-in-one lead, there isn't really the option to connect up to the speaker rather than the amplifier terminals, which can sometimes be more convenient.

If this sounds a tad complicated, all is fully and comprehensively explained in a manual which should be an object lesson for all subwoofer makers. Getting the best from a sub is far from easy, even with the assistance of the test gear at this reviewer's disposal, so it's good to see that B&W has worked hard to give the customer the best possible advice.

The enclosure is claimed to "disperse air pressures evenly around its shell". The spherical shape means that any pressure exerted on the walls tends to exert a pull along rather than across the skin, where it's much more capable of resisting without flexing. And since there's no point in creating a rigid enclosure if the driver diaphragm is allowed to flex, those used here

room will substantially depend on where the sub is placed. Furthermore, a single point source on the floor is not the best place for even room drive.

In-room measurements confirmed that the PV1 was behaving exactly as its maker specified. It delivers genuinely deep bass without falling into the trap of thumping away with excessive mid-bass. The filtering (on the speaker input only) is very well chosen to suit any partnering speakers, with -6dB points (in-room) available anywhere between 40Hz and 140Hz – exactly as specified on the roll-off control, which measurement confirms is very accurately calibrated.

The high-class filtering made integrating the PV1 with a pair of small Rega Aras as satellites quite straightforward, and it was clear from the outset that this subwoofer sounds as good as it looks, delivering bass that's uncommonly clean and free from any audible distortion or coloration. Indeed, the thought did occur that it might be a little *too* clean for some tastes – such admirable discretion might please hi-fi purists more than movie lovers.

'Difficult' bass-oriented material such as that supplied by Massive Attack, the Chemical brothers and Basement Jaxx was handled with admirable aplomb, with a total lack of strain and a commendable freedom from overhang. Dynamics were well managed, with oodles of available headroom, yet also the ability to make a very subtle contribution when playing the music quietly. At the same time, it doesn't tend to take the lead or drive the music along in quite the same way that two large stereo speakers can, and acoustic bass instruments did seem to suffer a slight loss of texture and shape.

Ultimately, that's a reminder that two full-size, full-range speakers will usually do a better job than a single subwoofer underpinning a pair of miniature standmounts, musically at least. That said, few if any subwoofers have ever incorporated so much engineering innovation or such striking styling, so this may well turn out to be the shape of subwoofers to come. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

“It might be a little *too* clean for some tastes – such admirable discretion might please hi-fi purists more than movie lovers.”

virtually no mechanical vibration is generated in the enclosure, and no net vibration outside either, so spike coupling is therefore unnecessary and the subwoofer simply rests on a small rubber ring that surrounds a recessed and hidden terminal panel.

That claim was amply confirmed in practice, as even playing the sub on its own and at ludicrously high levels failed to generate any significant vibration in the adjacent (suspended) floorboards, even though a window at the other end of the room was enthusiastically rattling along with the music.

The connections are completely hidden from sight, and the shiny flattened sphere has very clean lines, with just a short row of five flush preset knobs providing necessary adjustments. These cover volume, low-pass roll-off frequency, +/- phase, high-pass roll-off, and on/auto/standby. A red/green status LED is almost hidden at top dead centre. Main power is supplied via a figure-8 two-pin connector, while signal inputs are provided on a phono socket and a multi-way telecoms-type RJ-11 socket, plus a phono output to link the phono-in on to an additional subwoofer if desired.

The controls all make sense, the high-pass equalisation pre-set allowing even higher levels to be achieved without overload, by restricting

have a thick sandwich, with a mica composite cone, a foam core and an outer aluminium skin. This is also quite effective at blocking unwanted internal sound from escaping.

The PV1 is a sealed enclosure, which has got to be the best subwoofery solution. The bottom end must be heavily equalised to give a deep extension from a compact enclosure, so lots of power is needed, but in this era of digital amps (which work well enough at low frequencies) this need not be an unduly costly proposition. B&W has opted for a high-efficiency 500-watt digital power amp from B&O's ICEpower subsidiary, the enclosure becoming slightly warm in use.

SOUND QUALITY

Fairly assessing the performance of a subwoofer is very difficult – some would say impossible. It's certainly much harder than dealing with a pair of full-range loudspeakers, for two reasons. In the first place the subwoofer makes no sense at all on its own, its only role being to augment and try to integrate with whatever the main speakers are doing. The augmentation is rarely the problem; it's the integration that provides the challenge. The further problem is that at subwoofer frequencies the room is as important as the source, and the net result of sub and

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 86% [Progress bar]	PRO Great looking, clean-sounding sub shakes the air, not the floor, with very well ordered and calibrated filtering to match any satellites.
FEATURES >> 80% [Progress bar]	CON Not the 'fastest' sounding sub and costly too, though you do get plenty of high-class engineering for your money. The stereo music input is restricted to speaker level.
BUILD >> 95% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 81% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION With its hi-tech styling and innovative force-cancelling arrangement, this sub delivers a clean sound with negligible coloration. Accurate filtering will match any satellites, but stereo music applications must use the speaker level input.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 85%	

Universal truth

Townshend takes a budget machine and turns it into arguably the best-sounding universal player yet

PRODUCT Townshend Audio TA 565

TYPE Universal disc player

PRICE £2,500

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 43x12x28cm (plus stand)

• Weight: 9kg • Upgraded Pioneer DV-565A chassis
• Dolby Digital/DTS decoding • PAL/NTSC progressive scan output • RGB Scart, S-video, component video outs

CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155

🌐 www.townshendaudio.com

Max Townshend is one of the hi-fi industry's real characters – inventor, engineer and Australian, Max has been pioneering radical solutions to hi-fi's problems for a good 25 years. He made his name with the aptly monickered Rock turntable in the 1980s (see p42 for our review of the Anniversary edition), but he has produced an example of pretty much every part of the

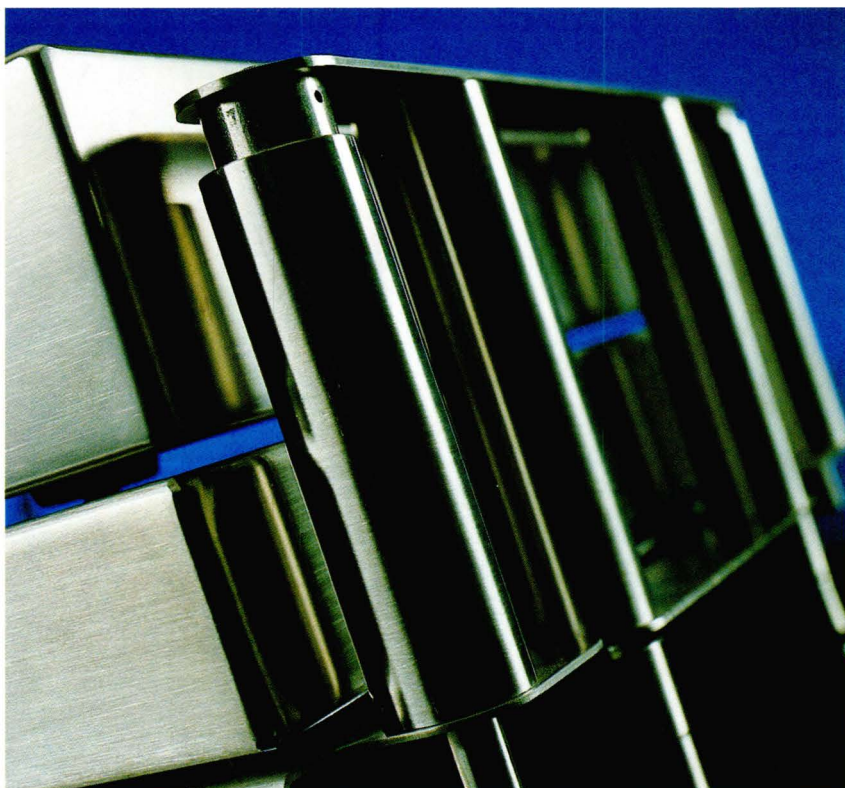
component chain and currently specialises in super-tweeters and impressively effective air-suspended equipment supports. The TA 565 is his second universal disc player and like the first, is based on a Pioneer machine. He revamps these base players because it is prohibitively expensive for small-scale companies to develop and licence DVD players, let alone multi-format ones. It also allows him to build on what is a fundamentally good design that has been built down to a price. An earlier example of this was the Acoustic Precision Eikos CD player (also based on a Pioneer). Tom Evans turned an unspectacular £500 starting block into a giant-slayer, and Max has done the same with the TA 565.

The player is based around the fundamental componentry of Pioneer's DV-565A universal DVD player, which at just £250 is very much a

budget machine (albeit an extremely good one), but it's well disguised thanks to a new stainless steel outer skin and the addition of a separate plinth unit that contains extra power supplies. There's also the distinctive new suspension base (which would cost £450 if purchased separately). Unlike Townshend's current range of equipment supports, this uses coil springs rather than air bladders to isolate the player – in practical terms this means no more reinflating every couple of months, but it does make using the slightly stiff front panel switches less easy than firmly anchored supports. Max suggests using the remote whenever possible.

One of the many advantages of using a mainstream machine as the basis of this player is that you get comprehensive facilities, with handy operational touches and high ease of use that owners of more esoteric disc players





“This is an extremely clean and smooth player that does a better job of playing it how it is than most of the competition.”

can only dream of. One drawback is the auto standby feature that turns the machine off when not in use, but the power supplies remain warm so they presumably maintain a reasonable operating temperature in the player itself.

The lower case contains a fairly conventional power supply that concentrates on high-frequency noise rejection and the supply of pure current to the Class A analogue circuitry. There is also a completely separate supply for the digital circuitry utilising laminated mains transformers rather than toroidal ones, the claim being that they offer superior noise rejection. Once inside the player, all DC supplies are further filtered and precision regulated by discrete component regulators utilising zero global feedback technology.

On the signal side, Townshend has retained the services of the Pioneer's Burr-Brown DAC but added its own Butterworth filtering using Ultra Precision 0.1 per cent metal film resistors. It has also replaced the two-channel analogue output stage with its own Class A stage. Max feels that the operational amplifiers that the majority of companies use for this purpose are seriously compromised, claiming they produce a 'grunge' distortion that veils the sound. The results he has achieved with this player would tend to back up this position, although it is of course impossible to assess this aspect alone.

While the external execution of Townshend products may leave a little to be desired in terms of detailing, the engineering is solid. What the company offers is megabucks sound for a price that doesn't cover megabucks casework. This used to be a popular approach in hi-fi but in an increasingly appearance-conscious age it has been replaced by beautiful boxes with often rather samey electronics. Having said that, this is a nicely finished case and if previous Townshend products are anything to go by, it will provide years of good service.

SOUND QUALITY

The TA 565 produces a superb result whatever format disc you stick in its drawer. It also figures out what type of disc it is rather more speedily

than some other universals we've tried, which can take a while to get a disc up and spinning. We kicked off with CD – a fine place to start given the format's continued dominance in most of our music collections – and we weren't disappointed. As a rule any machine that also plays DVDs tends to concede resolution when it comes to this format but the Townshend goes the other way and produces a result that more expensive single-format machines might envy. This seems to be partly due to an absence of grain or distortion – this is an extremely clean yet simultaneously smooth player that does a better job of playing it how it is, or convincing you that it is doing as much, than most of the competition. Its CD replay performance is good enough to warrant recommendation for that purpose alone, even if it didn't play SACD, DVD-Audio, DVD-Video and the rest. The power and speed of the bass pedals on Genesis' *Foxtrot* revealed a nimble yet fully extended bottom end, while Bugge Wesseltoft's *Somewhere In Between* upped the bass ante with power and shape that was almost too much for our medium-size room, but thankfully the control offered by ATC's SCM150ASL speakers kept it on the right side of overkill.

The finesse of Shostakovich's *Jazz Suites* revealed the quality of mid and high frequencies on offer, and here the lightness of the player's touch was clear – there was such a strong sense of rightness about the sound, the acoustic of the studio and the character of the recording that we were wholly convinced that this is correct. Our Resolution Audio Opus 21 reference CD player provided a richer result harmonically but not significantly more realistic as a result. Whichever way we switched between the two players we got a beautifully timed, convincing and thoroughly enjoyable result. Which can't be bad.

Moving over to the ascendant high-resolution format, SACD, allowed Norah Jones to deliver her sultry voice with greater clarity than we have previously encountered. As luck would have it, Linn's Unidisk 1.1 universal player was in the area at the same time as the TA 565 and to be frank didn't do much to warrant its doubling of the price – the Townshend offered more transparency and thus greater resolve of pretty well everything played. With a McCoy Tyner jazz album it sounded more natural, giving greater body to voices and instruments, producing ▶



Q & A

We spoke to Townshend Audio's founder and designer Max Townshend about his latest universal disc player



HFC: Why choose this particular player to upgrade so dramatically?

MT: It's the most advanced player on the planet I think. It's the same basic engine that Pioneer uses for all its universal players, and most of the other manufacturers use a Pioneer engine in their universal players. The transport is one of the best transports currently available on any player ever, probably one of the best transports ever made. If you use it with an external DAC it sounds better than most high-end CD transports.

Why did you choose such a basic player when you could have used something more fancy?

Because this is the core building block that forms the basis of Pioneer's most expensive players. If we had used a higher specced player we would have ended up throwing away most of what the manufacturer had done and replacing it with our own components.

You have not provided new output stages on the centre and surround channels, why not?

We made this as a stereo upgrade, it's for stereo sound which is what all of our customers are using. We are making a six-channel preamplifier and when that comes along if anyone wants to upgrade the other channels we will be able to do that as and when, but at the moment nobody seems the slightest bit interested in multichannel.

This is probably because we are selling players to music enthusiasts rather than home cinema users. People who are into hi-fi and music have mostly two-channel software. The irony is that most DVD players produce pretty appalling sound but home cinema users don't really notice because their attention is taken up by the picture. Our player transforms the sound of a decent surround set-up.

What sort of warranty do you intend to offer with this player?

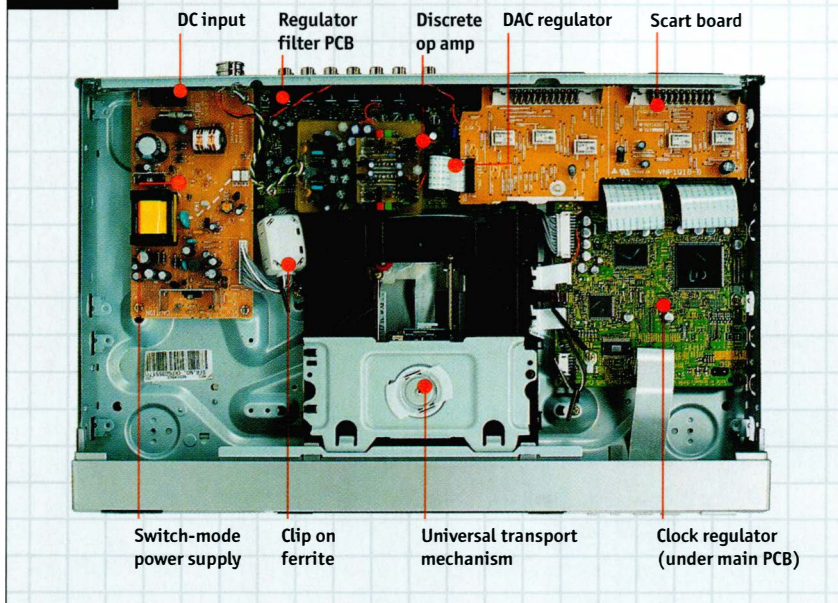
We give a two-year warranty.

You've moved from air to spring-isolated suspension, why?

Purely because you don't have to pump them up. It's more expensive to do but we wanted something you could set and forget. Both systems provide the same level of isolation.



Detail



FORMAT COMPATIBILITY			
DVD-AUDIO	✓	DVD+R	✓
DVD-VIDEO	✓	DVD-RAM	✗
SACD	✓	MP3 AUDIO	✓
CD	✓	WMA AUDIO	✗
HDCD	✗	AAC AUDIO	✓
CD-R/RW	✓	VIDEO CD	✓
DVD-R/RW	✓	JPEG PICTURES	✓



✗ a more three-dimensional stereo image and providing greater bass weight. Moving over to multichannel the result didn't change much, presumably because the main L/R channels dominate the mix.

With DVD-Audio the story was similar, though this format did sound better than usual – not better than SACD but not inherently worse, which makes a change! A Medeski Martin and Wood disc was delivered with superb depth of image and real presence, while Frank Zappa's *Halloween* disc revealed a super-charged atmosphere at what must have been an electric gig, the Townshend never once losing control.

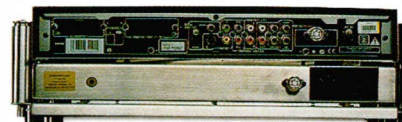
VIDEO PERFORMANCE

Picture quality also seems to benefit from the power supply work that Townshend has done, and this player provides notably less 'flare' on highly contrasting edges such as those you get around text. Skin tones are good too – on test, Scarlett Johansson's bone china complexion in *Girl With A Pearl Earring* was realised with all its natural, imperfect beauty intact.

The TA 565 lacks any of the new generation of digital video and audio connections (HDMI, i.Link et al), which may deter users of, say, HDMI-equipped projectors or plasma screens. But to dismiss it on that basis would be to entirely miss the point. This is a superb player

for use with top-quality amps and speakers, one which delivers a neutral, transparent and engaging sound across all disc-based music formats, and strong audio and video from DVD-Video discs to boot. In two-channel stereo especially, it's a revelation. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >>> 93%
 >> SUB RATINGS
 CD 92% SACD 94% DVD-A 94%

VISION >>> 85%

FEATURES >>> 86%

VALUE >>> 85%

PRO
 Transparent and engaging sound from all formats – makes the most of hi-res music discs (particularly in stereo) while also delivering excellent sound with CDs. Good with DVD-Video too.

CON
 Lacks the latest digital audio/video outputs. More oriented towards stereo playback than multichannel.

CONCLUSION
 Taking a £250 player and multiplying its price by 10 seems excessive, but Townshend's enhancement work has released the full potential of Pioneer's basic digital building blocks. In stereo, it's the best universal player we've heard to date.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >>> 89%



"Best New Analogue Component Award" Hi-Fi News, UK
"Best Buy" Hi-Fi Choice, UK
"Highly Recommended" Audio & Video, Brazil
"Brilliant" Hi-Fi World, UK
"Fantastic" Image Hifi, Germany
"Best New Record Player & Arm" Stereo Sound, Japan
"Excellent" Hi-Fi review, Hong Kong

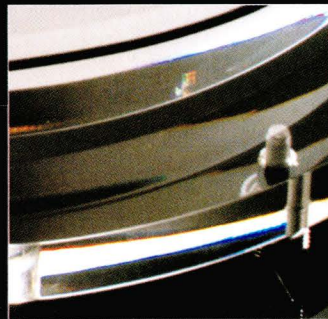
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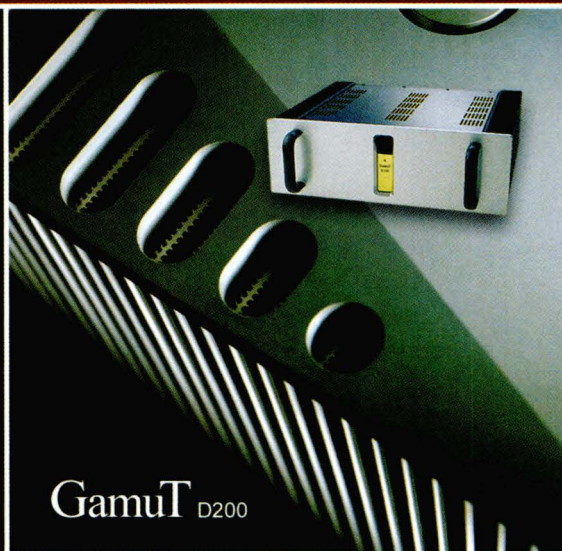
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hovland sapphire	6995	4499	boulder 1012	12950	7199
hovland hp100	5750	3795			

Cabasse

Iroise II
Kara





A very British Sony

Both the DAB front end and final sound tuning of Sony's baby originated in the UK, but does it sing?

PRODUCT Sony ST-SDB900
TYPE DAB/FM/AM radio tuner
PRICE £200
CONTACT ☎ 07805 111999 🌐 www.sony.co.uk

Sony was an early DAB adopter but hasn't been making a big thing about it. This new model is the first midrange unit from the firm and great claims are made for the designers' attention to engineering details with the aim of better sound – high quality capacitors, mechanical vibration damping and so on. The 'nonmagnetic heatsink' is a good one though – we can't remember ever seeing a magnetic one in any equipment!

There's also a 'UK sound tuned' badge on the front panel. Well, never mind just 'tuned'. Internal inspection shows that DAB reception and decoding is done by a Frontier Silicon module, as used by many other manufacturers, and Frontier Silicon is part of the Imagination Technologies group, a UK-based company which should be congratulated on a coals-to-Newcastle job in selling consumer electronics assemblies to the Japanese giant.

The FM and AM inputs are handled by another subassembly, from the ubiquitous Mitsumi, but there's still plenty of scope for Sony's contribution in power supply and output departments – evidently the 'UK tuned' bits. Not to mention ergonomics – as usual for Sony this tuner scores highly there, with well-thought-out controls that feel nice to operate and look good. The display is excellent, and

the range of features pretty comprehensive – dimmable display, DAB Dynamic Range Control (off/on), RDS on FM, various station sorting options and so on.

SOUND QUALITY

We've said it before – differences between DAB tuners are not that great in the big scheme of things, the dominant factor being the sound of the format. As experience of data compression systems – MP3, AAC, DTS etc – grows, it becomes ever more obvious that DAB is badly hamstrung by an outdated system which, moreover, is used in a decidedly suboptimal fashion by the majority of UK broadcasters. FM is hardly perfect, with various intrinsic drawbacks, but that's no excuse for the general standard of DAB being so grungy, spitty and devoid of musical niceties. Yes, it's listenable in the background but after even well-done MP3 it frequently seems aggressive and unpleasant.

Still, there are differences between tuners and this one has some character of its own. It's a little on the bright side tonally (confirmed by measurements) but apart from that it's well behaved and makes the most of DAB's virtues, such as the low noise floor which benefits classical music particularly. It can't do much about DAB's coarseness but it doesn't seem to add any more and when there is a bit of detail in the broadcast it makes the most of it.

FM reception is pretty good, though not stunning. Background noise seems a touch more intrusive than with some tuners, though it seems to measure up okay, and again the

balance is slightly bright. Performance holds up well as the signal fades, though this clearly isn't a tuner optimised for borderline reception conditions. Bass is pretty solid and voices seem consistently natural and believable, but overall music performance seems to vary a bit with music type. Simple voice and guitar and other uncomplicated styles are more communicative than densely scored classical or heavy-ish rock.

Sony has made some fine FM tuners over the years, one of which may still be a better answer for some than this unit. If you have digital TV (via Freeview or satellite) you can get most of the DAB stations in better sound, but if you really want a 'hi-fi' DAB radio, this does a decent job and looks smarter than most. **HFC**

Richard Black

VERDICT		
SOUND >> 80% □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	PRO	Smart-looking and a pleasure to use, with an overall sound quality that's generally a whisker ahead of most affordable DAB/FM solutions.
FEATURES >> 88% □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	CON	The slightly bright balance does DAB no favours. It also lacks the useful signal strength metering and switchable IF bandwidth of many Sony FM tuners.
BUILD >> 88% □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	CONCLUSION	
VALUE >> 84% □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	DAB continues to disappoint sonically, and for this sort of price a good FM tuner may suit many listeners better, especially if the often superior sound quality of digital radio via Freeview/satellite is an option. Nice design though...	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 83%		

Ariba Ariva

Compact and discreet, Naim has included an extra bass-only driver to add weight to its new Ariva

PRODUCT Naim Ariva

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £1,275 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 23x88x31cm

• Weight: 17kg • 19mm annular tweeter • Bass and bass/mid drivers have cast frames and 120mm pulp paper cones • Enclosure tripod-decoupled from spiked plinth

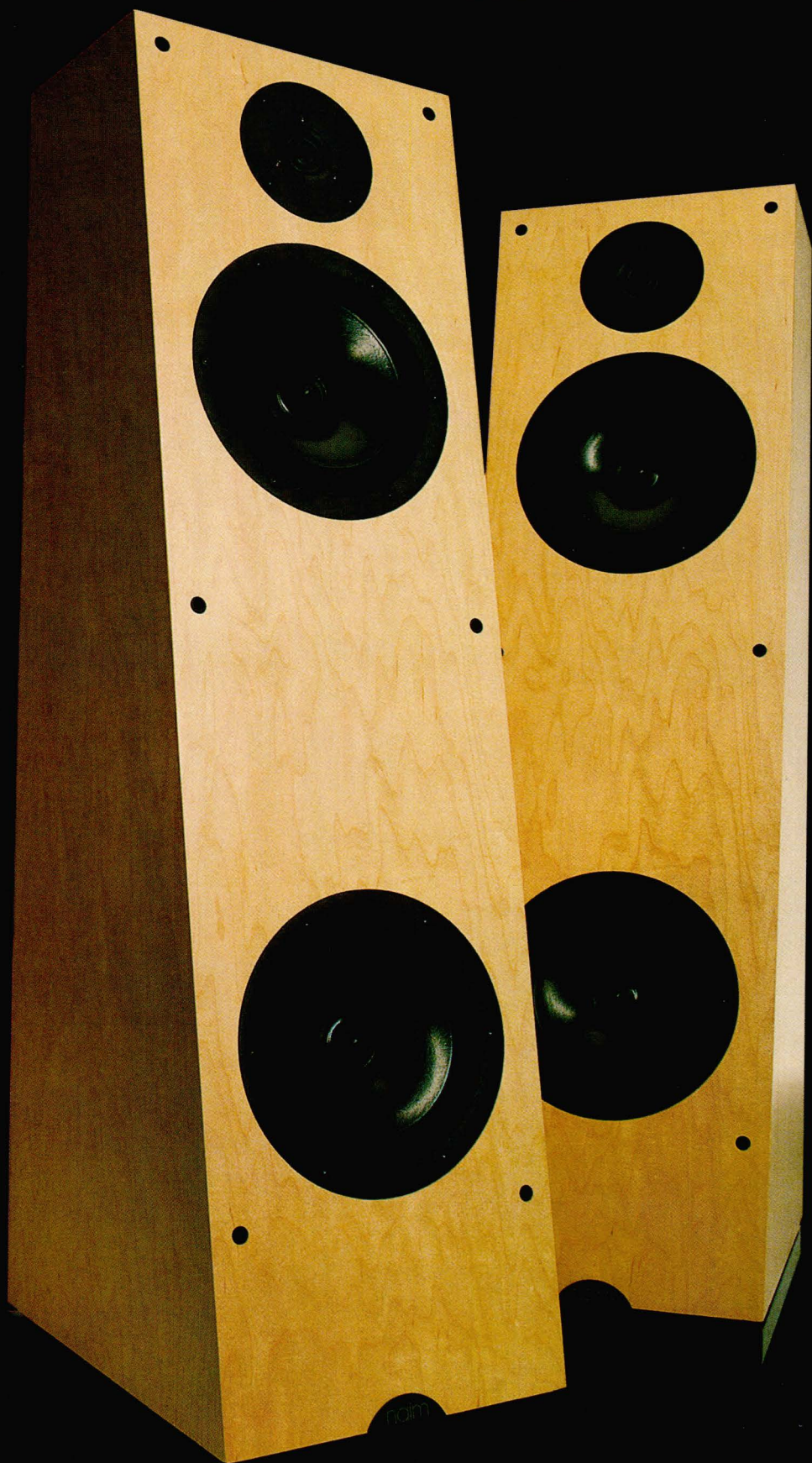
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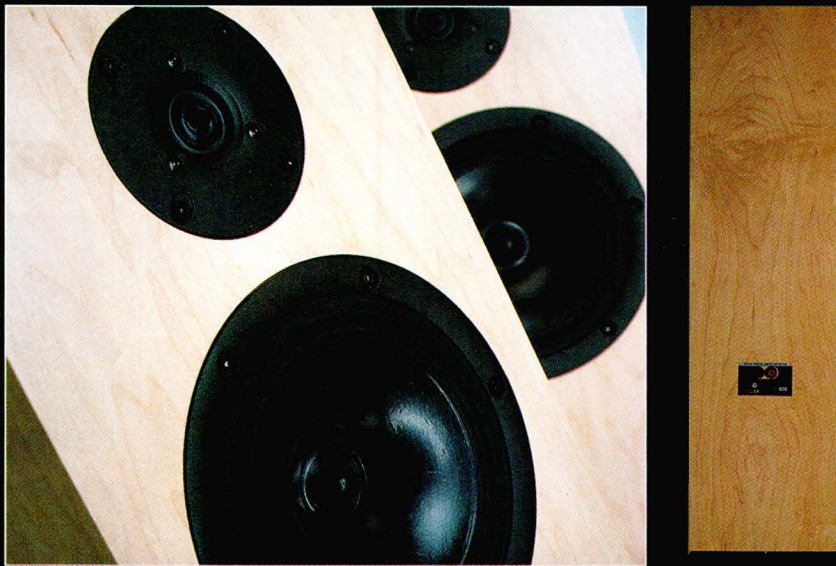
Naim Audio has been one of Britain's most consistently successful hi-fi electronics brands down the years, though it has struggled to repeat the same commercial success with its loudspeakers, despite nearly twenty years of trying. That may well be, at least in part, because all its speakers have been both radical and rather different from the norm, adopting a number of unusual design principles that very much reflect Naim's own ideas about speaker design.

All its speakers are floorstanders, all use sealed-box bass loading, and all are primarily intended for close-to-wall siting. Hitherto all have used a single driver for bass, in either two or three-way configurations, but this new model breaks with that tradition by adding an extra driver merely to augment the bass of what is fundamentally a two-way – a line-up commonly referred to as a two-and-a-half-way.

This is Naim's new entry-level model, succeeding the Intro and Credo and sitting below the Allae. And despite moving to a new basic configuration, the design still incorporates a number of solutions and techniques that have long characterised Naim's loudspeakers, while also making some economies in sourcing drive units from outside suppliers, and in simplifying the cabinet construction.

The net result is a very neat and compact floorstander, attractively all-over real wood veneer finished in either cherry, maple or black, and primarily intended to work when placed close to a wall (further reducing its intrusion into living room space). Height is a relatively modest 88cm, so the top surface of the speaker is actually visible when seated, but the whole front panel is tilted back several degrees, so that the forward axes of the top two drive units are aimed directly toward listeners. The backward tilt has two other bonuses. First, it helps to time-align those drivers – because the tweeter is set back slightly further than the bass/mid driver, the two voice-coils are more nearly equidistant from the listeners. Second, it ensures that front and back panels are not parallel, which helps spread out the internal standing wave frequencies.





“It has truly outstanding bass and a notably wide dynamic range, but few would accuse it of sounding either sweet or transparent.”

Naim’s speakers usually involve elaborate decoupling techniques to isolate the drivers mechanically from each other. That isn’t quite the case with this Ariva, as all three drivers are mounted solidly to the enclosure, but then the enclosure as a whole is decoupled from the room itself via an elaborate plinth arrangement. A thick, drilled-for-lightness, separate MDF plinth is fitted with four adjustable floor-spikes for secure placement. Its top surface has a tripod support consisting of three little upward-facing metal domes that fit into cup-shaped sockets scalloped into the underside of the enclosure, ensuring the enclosure is rigidly supported, yet also decoupled from the floor.

The two cone drivers have 180mm cast alloy frames and 120mm doped pulp paper cones, and look identical from the outside, even though only the upper one covers midrange as well as bass frequencies. Each is housed in its own separate sealed sub-enclosure, an arrangement that helps avoid interaction between the units and adds stiffness to the whole structure. Naim’s unusual mass-damping technique, consisting of compliantly mounted matched alloy masses, is incorporated to control and reduce resonance in relation to panels and components. The tweeter is a 19mm device with an annular diaphragm.

Unlike the external crossovers used with more costly Naim speakers (an arrangement that allows subsequent conversion to active drive) such an upgrade option is not available here. The Ariva’s signal input is achieved by two 4mm sockets fitted directly through the rear panel, partly for mechanical integrity and partly because Naim doesn’t believe in bi-wiring.

SOUND QUALITY

Naim’s rather sketchy specification claims a sensitivity of 88dB alongside a minimum impedance of four ohms, both of which are confirmed by our measurements. In fact, our rating for sensitivity is significantly higher, at closer to 91dB – comfortably above average.

The spec also claims an in-room frequency response of 30Hz-20kHz +/-3dB, which is a little harder to substantiate, as it depends very much on the room and its interaction with the speaker and the mike position. Under our far-field averaged regime +/-4dB limits are needed, but that still attests to a pretty good overall frequency balance. However, this was not achieved without quite a lot of experimentation with siting, and if the balance is pretty good overall, it isn’t entirely smooth or neutral.

Initial listening was done with the speakers sited close to the wall, as Naim recommends, but this didn’t prove particularly satisfactory, as the bass end sounded rather thick and lumpy, and midband coloration was rather obvious too. Things weren’t a whole lot better with the speakers in free space (around a metre from the wall), as the bass proper was now a little too lean and the lower midband rather too strong.

Happily, things were much more satisfactory with the speakers sited around the mid position, about half a metre out from the wall. Here the bass and midband seemed properly balanced with respect to each other, and coloration consequently seemed rather less noticeable too.

To be frank, the Ariva is something of a mixed bag. It has truly outstanding bass delivery and a notably wide dynamic range, but coloration remains a significant limitation,

and few would accuse it of sounding either sweet or transparent. Rather it delivers a somewhat matter-of-fact performance, that is very capable of telling you precisely what’s going on in any performance, but which makes little or no attempt to sugar the pill. One could fairly accuse it of lacking romance.

However, few can match its considerable powers of bass analysis. It delivers an exceptional combination of tight timing with superior dynamic range and shading, making it much easier than usual to sort out the tonal, dynamic and percussive qualities of the most complex mixes. An album like Massive Attack’s *Mezzanine* is full of dark, brooding menace, and on tracks like *Inertia Creeps*, the bass instruments effectively take on the lead role. With the Arivas this took on a driving urgency that gave the music real direction and tension, expounding the musical argument with great zest, a fine sense of purpose, and plenty of weight and authority, albeit with some thickening of lower midband textures.

Further up into the midband things are less happy, as voices have a slightly ‘cuppy’ or ‘shouty’ quality, and yet are also a trifle shut-in, with a fair hint of nasality. There’s decent enough expression – low-level subtleties are very well conserved and portrayed, the sound is rich in harmonic textures, and audience applause was notably convincing and believable. However, there’s also some lack of presence projection, which robs the sound of some openness and transparency, especially when playing at low, late-at-night levels. On the plus side, by way of compensation one might say, the Ariva has little tendency to sound aggressive when the volume is turned up high, and indeed its character seems best suited for those who like their music loud.

By adding an extra bass drive unit, Naim has come up with a speaker that is likely to have a wider appeal than most of its predecessors. But it is still very much a Naim speaker at heart, and as such has a character and priorities that are rather different from the norm, yet no less valid for that. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 79% [Progress bar]	PRO This neat, discreet and nicely finished floorstander delivers exceptional bass analysis, drive and enthusiasm, while a superior dynamic range gives loads of low level information.
EASE OF DRIVE >> 87% [Progress bar]	CON Its rather matter-of-fact presentation plus a fair measure of midband coloration may well alienate some listeners.
BUILD >> 90% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 83% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION Take great care positioning this speaker for best bass-to-mid balance. There is some midband coloration, and the speaker likes to play loud, but its real strengths lie in its notably wide dynamic range and exceptional bass speed and analysis.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 81%	

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HI-FI CHOICE

READERS' AWARDS

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2003/04



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Mole power

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PRODUCT Flying Mole DAD-M100pro HT

TYPE Mono digital power amplifier

PRICE £340 (each)

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Moles are not pretty. Flying Moles especially. This Japanese newcomer makes bluff little power amps in bluff little aluminium boxes that will never win points for aesthetic beauty. But who cares? Imported by PMC, these boxes are designed to be power pack modules that can bolt together as an amplifier group, screw into the back of a speaker or be used anywhere thanks to their diminutive, cool-running casework. Expect to see (or rather not to see) Flying Moles gracing the crawl spaces of high-spec multiroom systems soon.

It's an exceptionally simple design. The front panel has an on switch, an LED and a rudimentary level control for fine-tuning gain; the back has a tinplate phono socket, basic 4mm sockets and a three-pin IEC connector.

But you can also buy brackets – the L-shaped M100-1L, at £42 a pair, will bolt your Mole to the back of any speaker.

This is essentially a digital amplifier, albeit a hugely powerful one. Knocking out a healthy 160 watts (albeit in practice 50 watts into eight ohms at 0.03% THD) and weighing in at 650g essentially gives this product the sort of power to weight ratio that drag racers dream of (100W/lb, or in size terms, 2.5W/inch²). The design also runs at about 85 per cent efficiency, thanks to the patented 'Bi-Phase Fusion' tech, so it requires about 30 per cent less heating than a conventional analogue amplifier design.

Of course, making an amp this small, this powerful and this energy-efficient means only one thing – it's based around power chips, not discrete components. And that 'Bi-Phase Fusion' concept basically means integrating the input and power amp stages. It also means you get an amp module that is pretty much indestructible; the only way you can get these things to really misbehave is if you try to drown them.

If you are fundamentalist about the term hi-fi, adhering to the concept of electronics that deliver sound without any character at all, the Flying Moles will make you shout 'heresy' a lot. Anything played through the DAD-M100pro HT has a very moley flavour to it. On the other hand, those who are less zealous about their sound may find a lot in the Mole's favour, as they are hugely powerful and hugely fun sounding.

SOUND QUALITY

Don't expect any of that delicate upper register or mid-band smoothness that we have come to expect from that thing we call hi-fi. Instead, think solid, no-nonsense, grain-free grunt. It's strange – without prompting, two entirely separate non-hi-fi type people said the same thing of the Mole presentation. They heard a sleeves-rolled-up, belt-and-braces sound; slightly hard and unrefined, but honest and not afraid of hard work.

Moles will play loud without adding any more hardness than originally comes with the sound at lower levels. They present a good, well-constructed soundstage between the speaker boxes. They will also deliver plenty of coherent detail and seemingly boundless dynamic energy. This makes them ideal for multichannel, especially home cinema, systems. If all of this reminds you of an audio scaffolder, join the club.

It's this workmanlike presentation that brings up the fun stuff. All that power and dynamic energy in the bottom end gives the Moles a wicked sense of rhythm, enough to raise Celia Cruz from the dead and even make Radiohead cheer up. For a minute or two anyway.

In purely sonic terms, if the sophistication and refinement of much hi-fi strikes you as artificial and genteel, the DAD-M100pro HTs are for you. You'd have to spend plenty more moolah to get anything that's demonstrably better, not to mention so small and practical. On the other hand, if you crave midband openness and extended fillgree high frequencies, you need to dig deeper than a Mole. **HFC**

Alan Sircom

VERDICT

SOUND >> 66%



FEATURES >> 65%



BUILD >> 75%



VALUE >> 71%



CONCLUSION

Not for everyone, but those who think amps should be heard and not seen – particularly in discreet multiroom systems – will find this to be one of the most effective compact digital solutions yet, especially in terms of sonic heft per square-inch.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 69%



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Garden of delights?

Tivoli's smart little radio/CD 'mini system' proves to be a game of two halves

PRODUCT Tivoli Radioworks

TYPE FM/AM radio and CD 'mini system'

PRICE £360 (individual prices: radio £170, CD £200)

CONTACT ☎ 01702 601410 🌐 www.ruark.co.uk

The Tivoli Model One was and is a class leader among table radio, but it's mono. Tivoli later released a stereo variant, the Model Two, with a single remote speaker matching the main radio/speaker unit. Now this is joined by the Model CD, an add-on CD player that connects to the auxiliary input of the Model Two, the whole caboodle going under the name of Radioworks. It's a stylish and flexible alternative to the conventional micro hi-fi or upmarket ghetto blaster that does music duty in bedrooms, kitchens and studies up and down the country.

The radio itself retains the features of the original Model One, notably the all-analogue tuning arrangement which offers fabulous selectivity and ease of tuning. There's an internal FM antenna which barely suffices, but with the supplied wire antenna reception is really amazingly good and the simple LED tuning indicator plus a pair of ears does a perfectly adequate job of tuning in. AM reception is better than on most hi-fi tuners (not hard, admittedly) and volume is enough for rooms of up to about 15 square metres or so.

At the rear are sockets for the remote speaker, headphones, auxiliary input, subwoofer output, record output and 'mix in' – karaoke radio

anyone? All audio connections use minijack sockets. Power is via mains or a 12DC supply. The CD player, meanwhile, offers its output on phono plugs or headphone minijack and is powered by an external 12DC supply (included). The mechanism is a slot loader that's brisk and trouble-free. A credit-card-size remote control adds a few features, including programming, direct track access and volume control.

SOUND QUALITY

As ever, Tivoli so completely blows away the competition on radio sound that it's not even funny any more. To be fair, there are other radios out there, but this one really does produce such a civilised, comprehensible and sheerly musical sound that unless you're an avowed penny-pincher, there's really no choice to make. The mono models are good, the stereo one no less so, just – obviously – more dimensional. Music, speech, sound effects – all benefit, and indeed, given the compromises that are engineered into many programmes at the studio (the broadcasters know a large part of their audience is listening on portable radios of various kinds and often trim the sound accordingly) you can sometimes end up getting better sound via a Tivoli than via any amount of fancy hi-fi. That's not true of top-quality music broadcasts, sure, but speech often sounds more natural.

But if the radio is the biz, the CD player is the pits. The exact nature of its woes was not initially apparent, but from the outset it

sounded both confused and woolly. It was only with a solo piano disc that the cause became blindingly obvious – it suffers from a high level of modulation noise, a nasty, coarse and grainy kind of noise that comes and goes with the signal. It's worst at low volume settings (the unit powers up at a setting of seven out of 14) but even at maximum doesn't quite go away and there's also quite a lot of constant noise too, which hardly helps. As a reality check, a £30 portable contributed plenty of constant noise, though slightly less than the Tivoli, but no immediately obvious modulation noise.

This kind of thing just shouldn't happen in 2004. We can only hope Tivoli revises the Model CD and fixes this problem, because the concept is very attractive and connecting a better external CD player proved that good sound can be achieved. Buy the radio, then, but play discs on something else. **HFC**

Richard Black

VERDICT – Model Two radio

SOUND >> 90%



FEATURES >> 82%



BUILD >> 80%



VALUE >> 90%



CONCLUSION

Some of the best radio sounds around with speech and scarcely less impressive with music, clear, open, dynamic and extended, belying its size.

HI-FI CHOICE
>> 90%

VERDICT – Model CD player

SOUND >> 38%



FEATURES >> 75%



BUILD >> 85%



VALUE >> 50%



CONCLUSION

This neat little unit is a great idea, but regrettably our sample was hamstrung by high levels of noise that significantly interfere with listening pleasure.

HI-FI CHOICE
>> 50%



GROUP TEST: ALVIN GOLD LAB REPORTS: PAUL MARCHANT

CD PLAYERS

Under threat from do-it-all universal players, the dedicated CD spinner has fought back. But can it really be worth investing in a device that plays just one type of disc?

ON TEST



Inca Design Katana
£600



Meridian G07
£1,595



Naim Audio CD5i
£825



Orelle CD100evo2
£1,299



Quad 99 CD-P
£1,000



Roksan Kandy MkIIID
£650

For some time the number of new CD players has been shrinking. This has coincided with the explosion of interest in DVD and other methods of delivering musical content, most obviously compressed music over the internet and DAB radio – proof if it were needed that digital does not necessarily mean better. DVD players, however, are a particular threat to compact disc replay standards precisely because they always play compact discs by default, so there is no obvious reason why anyone should need a dedicated CD player as well. After all, DVD players do much more, and the economics of the situation mean that DVD manufacturers can sell their products for much less than the cost of almost any CD player, often at the friendly neighbourhood supermarket.

Of course there is another angle to this, and it should hardly need spelling out to readers of *HFC*. But just in case... DVD players are full of electrically noisy digital and video hardware, and for a variety of theoretical and practical reasons it is very difficult for such a player to shine in the CD playing role. Yet for most of us, compact disc remains the most viable, widespread source of high-quality recorded music. And there's a whole bunch of reasons why its dominance in the shops and in our music collections (as a high-quality medium) isn't about to change for a goodly number of years.

Any CD player design engineer can explain why CD replay from most DVD hardware is so nondescript (though progress has been made by the more exacting brands), but unfortunately the subtleties involved are well beyond the capabilities of the average high street multiples to explain or to demonstrate,

even if they were interested in the first place. Happily, the six players tested this month are all available from specialist dealers who will be more than able to demonstrate just how exciting CD replay can be when it's done right.

Which in effect brings us full circle. In this test we explore the capabilities of a group of six new or recently introduced CD players that conveniently fall into two subgroups of three, from Inca Designs, Roksan and Naim between £600-£825, and from Quad, Meridian and Orelle between £1,000-£1,600. Now read how they got on, with the odd surprise in store, starting over the page... **HFC**

EQUIPMENT USED

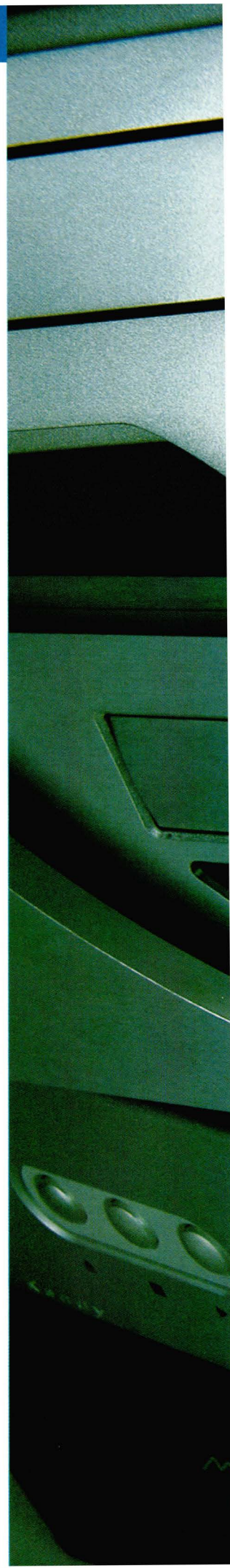
- Ⓢ Arcam FMJ A32 amplifier
- Ⓢ Audio Flight One amplifier
- Ⓢ Audio Note Ongaku amplifier
- Ⓢ B&W Nautilus 800 loudspeakers
- Ⓢ Lumley Lampros 500AB loudspeakers
- Ⓢ Quad 989 electrostatic loudspeakers
- Ⓢ Nordost Valhalla & Valkyrja cables (various). The Chord Co DIN-to-phono phono-to-phono interconnects, Orelle mains cable

MUSIC USED

- Ⓢ Ryusuke Numayiri (conductor), Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra
Takemitsu: Twill by Twilight
- Ⓢ Antony Michaelson (clarinet), Michaelangelo Orchestra
Mozart: Clarinet concerto
- Ⓢ Jolie Holland *Scordita*
- Ⓢ Steve Davis *Quality of Silence* (SACD/CD hybrid)

EARS USED

- Ⓢ John Bamford (Pioneer)
- Ⓢ Keith Haddock (Monitor Audio, REL, Screenplay and others)
- Ⓢ Rubin Klein (ECS)





STRUCTURED LAB & LISTENING TESTS

Each of these CD players was subject to a penetrating series of lab and listening tests which provide a unique insight into their performance and compatibility. The equipment was thoroughly analysed using a broad range of state-of-the-art measuring instruments, all of which are highly regarded within the hi-fi, recording and broadcast industries. Analogue level and distortion measurements were taken with an Audio Precision System One, digital filter artefacts were measured on a Hewlett Packard 3561A Dynamic Signal Analyser, and digital measurements were shared between a Neutrik Digilyser and a Kikusui KJM6135 Jitter Analyser.

Our comprehensive listening tests were no less rigorous, being conducted under blind, level-matched conditions with some of the industry's most experienced hi-fi panellists. The high-grade panel system included an Audia amplifier, Quad 989 speakers and Nordost Valhalla cables. In addition, there were extended sighted listening tests by the author, using a wider variety of equipment and music.

No other magazine offers an equivalent test and listening programme for comparative tests.

LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the products compare across five key technical measurements. In each case, a percentage is given that falls above or below the group average.

1] Total harmonic distortion: The purity of reproduction of various test tones across the whole audio spectrum at differing levels.

2] Jitter: The accuracy of the digital clock, in terms of its consistency of timing. Inaccuracy here can give rise to peculiar forms of 'digital' distortion. Above-average bar graphs mean low jitter.

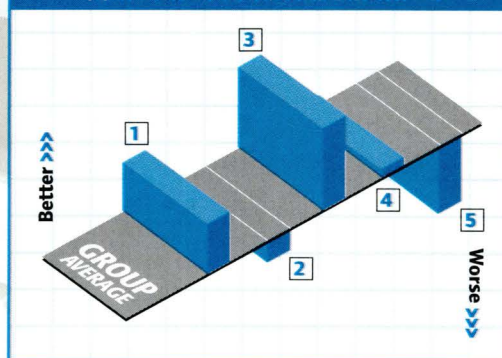
3] Linearity: A measurement of how accurately lower-level (quieter) parts of the musical information are reproduced – the quieter details and subtleties, and their level with respect to the louder parts.

4] Dynamic range: Again, this reflects several tests at various volume control settings, taking into account noise generated by both the preamp and power amp.

5] Digital filtering: How well the DAC suppresses the inevitable artifacts that are inherent to the D-to-A conversion process. We measure this by reproducing a 0dBfs (full-level) 20kHz test tone, and quantifying any other signals that are erroneously reproduced with it.



OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





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INCA DESIGN KATANA

Inca Tech becomes Inca Design with this distinctively styled player

Some may remember Inca Tech from the 1980s, with the well-respected Claymore integrated amp. Sadly things went wrong later, and the company has only recently resurfaced, this time with UK designs built in China to constrain costs.

The Inca Design (the new name for the company) Katana is fabricated from elaborately engineered alloy panels, with a dual-layer aluminium and copper base. The glitzy casework is not just bling, and is surprisingly heavy, thanks to a 3mm lid, 4mm-thick sidecheeks and an 8mm front panel. The copper acts as an RFI/EMI shield, and the truncated pyramid shape helps discourage structural resonances.

The mechanism is the Philips VAM1202, which is mounted on a hefty copper slab to help control resonances. The power supply is built around a large, shielded, R-core transformer feeding separate power supplies for the analogue and the digital/transport circuits. A single Burr-Brown PCM1732 18-bit delta sigma DAC upsamples the audio data to 24-bit/96kHz and includes an HDCD filter. The output stage is Class A and the heavily integrated digital electronics help reduce RFI (radio frequency interference).

Outputs include balanced XLR analogue, electrical and optical digital, and a single fixed voltage analogue output pair. Last but not least, the remote control is made from an unspecified solid wood, which looks rather like teak – a nice touch that will attract anyone with an eye for apparent luxury. The internally lit main controls are on top of the player, which discourages stacking with other Inca Design components, and the mains switch is under the front lip, Primare style.

Unfortunately, the Katana did not escape the panel tests without receiving something of a mauling. It wasn't thoroughly disliked, but some inconsistencies in its character, which one listener described as an upper midband peak, and which another characterised as some



hardness and as a coarse overlay, led to comments that in essence boiled down to a loss of resolving power with some coloration and a 'shut in' quality. A "lack of hall ambience" was identified in the excellent Mozart recording, while the Jolie Holland recording was described as "dry and hard" and the bass registers as "not well defined", a comment directly mirrored in similar terms by the other panellists. Another listener commented that the sound was "nice – but a bit pudgy". Whatever that means!

What the panel did not know during the blind listening sessions was that this is the least expensive player in the group. But the loss of resolution and articulation, and its inability to time with the drive and precision of some of the other players in this test, led to a performance that was somewhat uneven and – ultimately – rather unconvincing.

But the player tested here is no dead end. It can be upgraded to so-called 'SE' specification, which features a rebuilt, higher quality power supply and other upgrades (if purchased at the outset, the Katana SE will set you back £1,000). A further version with a DAC upgrade is also envisaged, and a matching integrated amp is in preparation for forthcoming release. **HFC**

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 70%	The Katana offers very good build quality and great styling for the money, but its sound is a little bland and leaden in the context of this highly competitive group – reasonable at the price, but not exceptional.
FEATURES >> 80%	
BUILD >> 88%	
VALUE >> 83%	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 77%	

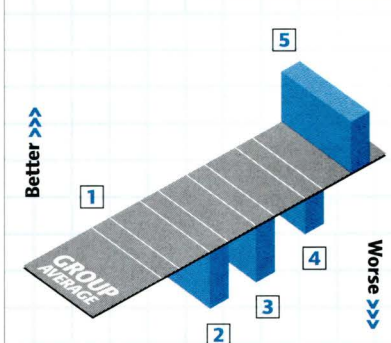


LAB REPORT

Inca Design's choice of a Burr-Brown DAC with up-sampling to 24-bit/96kHz and HDCD has allowed the Katana to produce a respectable sound. Distortion measurements are very reasonable, creeping up only slightly at higher frequencies. The noise floor is a respectable 105dB down, and cross-talk measures in at better than 120dB. Clock accuracy is good, at only +2.884ppm.

The only real flies in the ointment are the linearity measurements, with a 2dB error at -70dB, and a rather larger 8dB error at -80dB, possibly giving rise to clouding of detail at the very lowest levels, and distortion figures creeping up at lower levels. Frequency response measures as very flat, with some rolling-off at 16kHz and above. This hints towards a very business-like digital filter, and indeed, no matter what we did, the stop-band rejection of this machine remained very good indeed, with the lowest levels of any player in this group test.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> 0%
- 2] Jitter >> -50%
- 3] Linearity >> -50%
- 4] Dynamic range >> -30%
- 5] Digital filter >> +45%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2.1V	2.377V
Distortion (1kHz @ 0dBFS)	0.005%	0.03%
Signal-to-noise ratio	>100dB	105.993dB



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MERIDIAN GO7

Careful system matching is essential with this striking newcomer

Plucked from the entry-level end of Meridian's new G Series, the GO7 is comfortably the most visually polished player tested this month. Its standard-width case is made from black-finished alloy die-castings (sourced in the Far East, unlike the electronics) and is beautifully detailed, with a black glass-like panel let into the top surface. The vertical control buttons have illuminated labels in the fluorescent display that are assigned dynamically according to context, with the current assignment shown by fluorescent indicators, while the 'home' button takes the player back to its default control assignment. The strong user interface is further enhanced by the supplied MSR+, an impressive tabletop backlit remote control that can operate all G Series components.

Although it uses a Philips VAM series mechanism, the GO7 is heavily modified with a custom-designed metal case to improve damping. The end result is said to cope well with Meridian's collection of horror discs – a real rogue's gallery by all accounts. The DAC is Analog Devices' 1852 Delta Sigma which is 192kHz-capable, but the audio signal is not oversampled, and is run at CD's native 44.1kHz, the D/A driving a low output impedance Class A output stage. The master clock is used to relock the digital output with higher precision, and is said to have a beneficial effect on the D/A converter. In total there are six independent power supplies.

Rear panel furniture includes the standard set of analogue, coaxial and optical digital sockets, and Meridian-specific communications sockets consisting of two DIN sockets, a BNC, an RS232 which can be used for firmware upgrades and a 3.5mm input for an external IR repeater. A rear panel mains power switch is supplemented by front panel standby switching, while the loading drawer is smooth acting, if a little slow in responding to input.

The GO7 is a player with a fairly strong personality, but unfortunately it is one that



didn't chime with the blind listening test system. In this portion of the test programme it simply failed to inject adrenalin into the music, and in the absence of positive musical cues, attention was drawn to the negative aspects. The panel complained of "hard edged" vocals (Jolie Holland), of "congestion" and "veiling" (Takemitsu) and of "blandness" (Mozart), as well as consistent complaints of a bloated bass.

In the hands-on tests, with an Arcam FMJ 32R amp and in a surreal few hours with a £30,000 Audio Note Ongaku driving Lumley Lampros 500AB loudspeakers, the Meridian improved to an extent that was not mirrored by the other players. The previously rather lazy, plodding quality was replaced by a sound that was still quite relaxed, which was still smooth, refined and laid back, but not to excess, and with subtle, low-level detail now very clearly presented. The midrange positively glowed and the soundstage was reproduced with a much better defined sense of image scale.

Dynamically this is still not the most extravert of players, but in a suitably transparent system context, and with an amplifier with the right sense of positive drive, it can sound sublime. The snag, however, is that system matching is rather more critical than usual. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 87%

FEATURES >>> 93%

BUILD >>> 90%

VALUE >>> 80%

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE **84%**

With a superb user interface and powerful system features, the GO7 disappointed with the panel test equipment, but it came satisfyingly alive with other hardware – so careful system matching is needed.

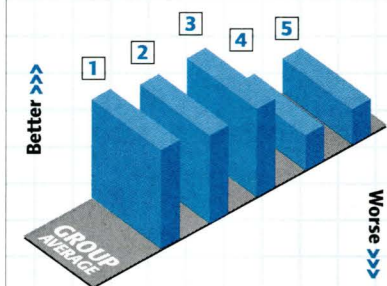


LAB REPORT

From the outset, this machine performed almost flawlessly in the lab. Distortion measurements were as low as 0.00370% at low to midrange frequencies, creeping up only slightly as we approached the 20kHz upper limit. The noise floor on the Meridian was better than 127dB below peak level, allowing inky-black silences where needed. The DAC clock is also exceptionally good, showing jitter levels well below 100psec, as well as a clock accuracy of -0.21Hz, equivalent to 0.047ppm, demonstrating how good modern clock circuitry can be.

Low-level linearity is excellent, with the greatest error measured less than 0.4dB at -80dBfs. The digital filter in this machine is among the best of this group – the worst we could provoke it to was better than 64dB below signal level. Frequency response was maintained to significantly better than 0.1dB error at worst – an indication of a well designed stop-band filter. Excellent, all-in-all.

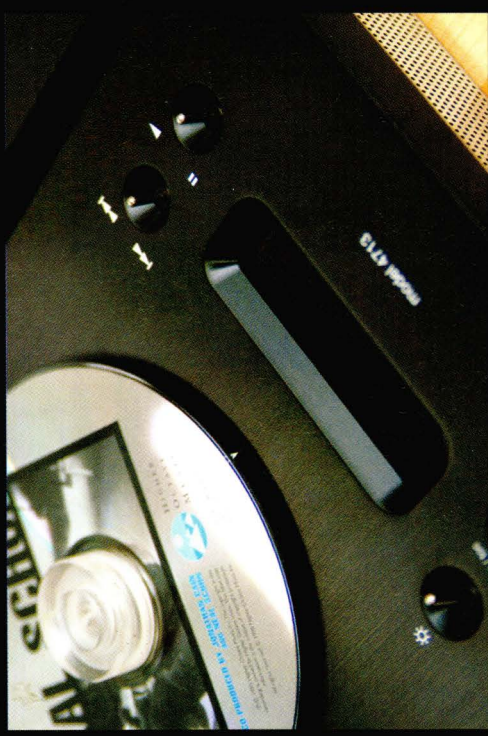
HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> +90%
- 2] Jitter >>> +80%
- 3] Linearity >>> +80%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +30%
- 5] Digital filter >>> +30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2V	2.382V
Distortion (1KHz @ 0dBfs)	0.002%	0.004%
Signal-to-noise ratio	93dB	127.792dB



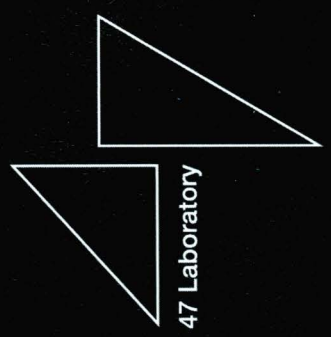
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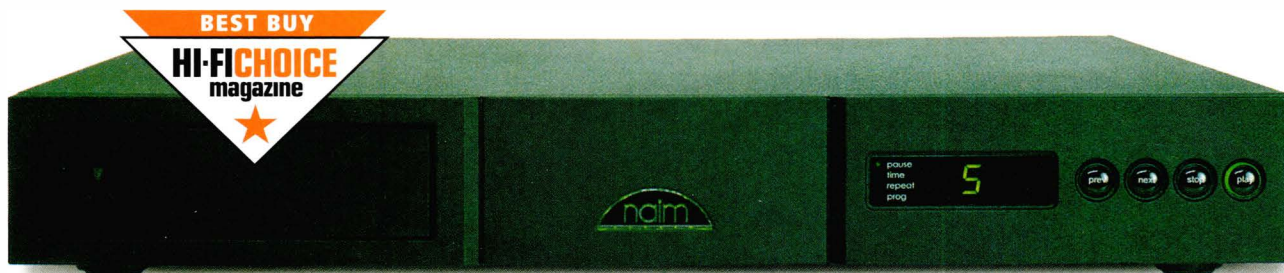
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NAIM CD5i

Stonking entry-level player from the Salisbury sorcerers

The new CD5 replacement springs few surprises, except perhaps how little seems to have changed in the time that has elapsed since Naim started producing CD players. The only obvious distinguishing feature is that the CD5i includes a standard phono output in addition to Naim's favoured DIN signal connections, which makes it a little easier to integrate into non-Naim host systems. The player can be programmed to play through either output or both simultaneously, but our advice is to ignore the third option, which (depending on the rest of your system) causes a disproportionate quality hit. However, the CD5i has no other outputs – if you want to make digital recordings or even add an outboard DAC, tough cheese.

The CD5i retains the crude and uninformative three-digit fluorescent display seen on its predecessors, along with the idiosyncratic swing-out transport for disc loading, but it's a solidly engineered and smooth operating assembly that avoids the cheap and cheerful tray that's normally a part of the Philips VAM1202/12 mechanism. Compared to the CD5, the player has an improved power supply, and the DAC (sited with the transport in the swing-out loader) is a Philips UDA1330 Bitstream chip – not an exotic option, but Naim suggests that the choice of DAC at this price level is secondary to the power supply, the transport and the way the transport is mounted, which controls microphony. The same mechanism is also used in the much more costly CDX2, and the replay and control firmware – which is critical to sound quality – comes from the flagship CDS3. The feature set now includes display off and delete programming, and the player is supplied with a remote control.

The utilitarian case is made from die-cast zinc and extruded aluminium, and is described as inert and resistant to external vibration, but it doesn't look any better than previous models from the past few years. Presumably it has to match existing Naim components, but it still



looks rather austere and, well, a little crude. Then again, that's arguably part of the charm.

Whatever... In all the important areas, the Naim excels, and it does so consistently. It was the only player to be identified explicitly sight unseen, and then identified correctly on a repeat presentation. It was also the only player to be greeted in terms like these: "big sound, instruments well separated – quite refined, strong speed and dynamics, a sound with more bass". Then finally, from one listener (but closely echoed by the others) "this is the one I would choose". Given that the CD5i fits neatly into the lower price subgroup, albeit the most expensive of the three, this is especially gratifying, and overall it has to be said that it was the only player of the six to really show what the Quad Electrostatic speakers can do. But then this is one of a small number of speakers with a midband transparent and lucid enough to show what the Naim is best at.

The hands-on tests reinforced all the typical Naim qualities: in underscoring its dynamics, expressiveness and an architectural quality that unerringly brings the music to life. There's a rich, musical quality with this player that's an object lesson of its kind. What did surprise, however, was what appears to be a new-found finesse that this reviewer for one had not previously associated with the marque. **HFC**

VERDICT

<p>SOUND >>> 89%</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 10px; background: linear-gradient(to right, black 89%, white 89%);"></div>	<p>An exceptional player at the price with impressive dynamics, timing acuity and subtlety. You may love or you may loath the practical idiosyncrasies of a Naim player, but the sound here is simply excellent.</p>
<p>FEATURES >>> 55%</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 10px; background: linear-gradient(to right, black 55%, white 55%);"></div>	
<p>BUILD >>> 84%</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 10px; background: linear-gradient(to right, black 84%, white 84%);"></div>	
<p>VALUE >>> 93%</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 10px; background: linear-gradient(to right, black 93%, white 93%);"></div>	<p>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 91%</p>

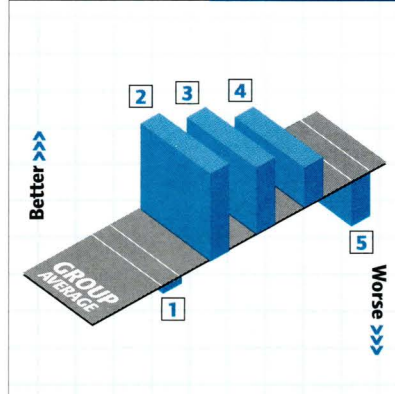


LAB REPORT

This Naim player offered a mixture of very good and slightly disappointing measurements. The frequency response was absolutely flat to 10kHz, and then a slight (about 1dB) drop as the testing approached 20kHz. Distortion measurements pointed to a very clean performance in the lower and mid-frequencies, but crept up to 1.6% at 20kHz at the peak levels.

Linearity measurements proved extremely positive, with a worst-case error of only 0.7dB at -80dBFS, showing Naim's custom integrated transport/DAC arrangement to be effective. Testing of noise performance reflected well, suggesting better than 127dB signal-to-noise ratio. The only serious issue found during testing was that under some circumstances the digital filter could induce quite high-level artefacts in the output, with our worst stress-test producing side-bands which were only 26dB below programme level when producing peak-level 20kHz tones.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> -5%
- 2] Jitter >>> +80%
- 3] Linearity >>> +60%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +35%
- 5] Digital filter >>> -40%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2.0V	1.99V
Distortion (1 KHz @ 0dBFS)	<0.1%	0.033%
Signal-to-noise ratio	95dB	128.23dB

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ORELLE CD100EVO2

New version reverts to earlier digital hardware for inspiration

Firmly in the upper price echelon in this group, the CD100evo2 is in a clear line of descent from last year's CD100evo. It's built into the same smart casework, which features two fully machined end caps, with lightweight flat aluminium top and base panels. The fascia is well finished, and although the controls are a little cramped, they're functional enough. The player's loader responds quickly, though almost too quickly for proper decorum.

The internal design is something of a return to roots, with an older CD7 chipset substituted for the CD10 of the last version with twin multi-bit DACs, and the Philips VAM1202/12, a dedicated CD audio mechanism replacing a more recent type. The designer, Chris Bryant, who has worked on Naim and Exposure in the past, is convinced that the performance of the CD7 is superior, even though it is a less integrated chipset. The digital clock is run at half its normal 16.3MHz frequency, and repositioned adjacent to the digital filter, which runs cooler at the new clock rate.

A great deal of attention has gone into power supply design, the player featuring two transformers, one each for the digital and the analogue circuits. The master clock and the digital filter have their own power supplies, and the player makes extensive use of regulated supplies elsewhere too. Other design highlights include a discrete analogue current-to-voltage converter followed by a passive L-C filter. The circuit is DC-coupled, with servo control to prevent DC appearing on the output. Output muting is by relay rather than transistor, again a choice dictated by listening tests. Special high-frequency capacitors made by BHC in the UK have been specified for this model. Regulator and decoupling caps are specially selected high-frequency, low-ESR types.

The display can be turned off, and sound quality improves perceptibly as a result, with more spacious imagery and a greater sense of depth. Even so, this player was criticised by the



panel for being – as two of them put it in *après* listening discussion – as “a bit of a lush” Overall, however, the panel comments were positive. “This player is really smooth – but not syrupy” and the instruments were “clearly delineated” with the Takemitsu disc, while the player was consistently described as having a clean but dry bass, with a trace of a midband vacuum, which pulls the image slightly further away than is ideal. It was also marked as being “refined and cultured” with the Mozart concerto recording, and “polite” with the Steve Davis.

The stature of the Orelle grew in hands-on listening, a factor here being its rather relaxed and sometimes distant quality which in a competitive head-to-head with other players tended to hide its virtues. The Orelle is a player that is easy and rewarding to listen to, and which lacks the unwanted signature qualities of some digital players – that is to say, it does not sound overtly 'digital'. There is no obvious grain, and the player always left the music sounding well formed and firmly controlled – perhaps a little too much of the latter at times. It can rock and roll with the best, but it is really at its most effective with acoustic material – chamber, classical, jazz or folk, for example – where its evident discipline and ability to avoid sounding obvious or mechanical aids musical resolution and transparency. **HFC**

VERDICT	
SOUND >>> 85% 	The voicing adopted for this player is consistent with earlier Orelle 100 series players, but the sound is both more refined and more transparent, if slightly distant and lean in balance by the highest standards.
FEATURES >>> 80% 	
BUILD >>> 87% 	
VALUE >>> 78% 	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 82%	

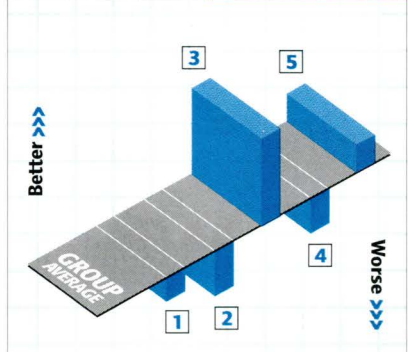


LAB REPORT

The CD100evo2 certainly showed its performance strengths in the measurement lab. Frequency response was found to be very respectable, with the worst deviation from perfection just 0.004dB, and only at the 16-20kHz region. Furthermore, distortion was consistently on the low side, at about 0.05%-0.06% for the majority of the testing, rising to a still-respectable 0.09% at 20kHz.

Linearity measurements also showed the CD100 to be a strong performer, managing to stay within the 0.05dB band throughout its dynamic range, demonstrating the competence of the 24-bit DAC. This contributed to very low distortion figures at lower levels, showing only 0.24% at 40dBfs – quite an achievement when you consider there's only about 9.5 bits (of 16) in use at those levels. Also, no matter how harshly we pushed the digital filtering, the very worst artefact we could produce was nearly 55dB down from our test signals.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1) Distortion >>> -20%
- 2) Jitter >>> -40%
- 3) Linearity >>> +80%
- 4) Dynamic range >>> -30%
- 5) Digital filter >>> +25%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2.2V	2.134V
Distortion (1KHz @ 0dBfs)	0.1%	0.05%
Signal-to-noise ratio	100dB	104.633dB

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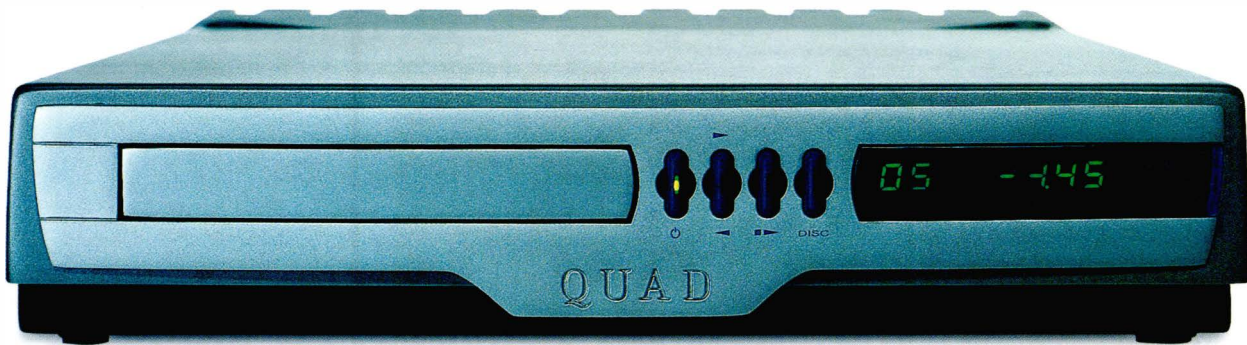
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QUAD 99 CD-P

Revamped CD-P is freed from the constraints of the 99 system bus

Avenerable and highly respected brand, Quad has a longer history than most readers of this magazine – not forgetting most of its contributors! The company has had its bad times, such as the period of apparent stasis following its takeover by the Chinese-headed IAG group, and on the whole the earlier Quad 99 series CD player was not well received, and in any case was locked into the Quad 99 bus system which supplied mains power and communications, and a signal path to the preamplifier.

Not so the 99 CD-P. It has the same petite presentation as its predecessors, and is built using the familiar substantial die-casting with an extended base to accommodate a new mechanism, giving the player considerable mechanical integrity. But the player has its own on-board power supply like the other players on test. It is still equipped with the male and female Quadlink parallel connectors for use with the 99 system bus, but this is now an option, not a requirement.

Of greater interest for many will be the bank of digital inputs – three optical, three coaxial – which can be selected individually and fed through the volume control that supplies one of the two sets of analogue outputs. These inputs can be used to feed through an external digital source – like a personal digital player, a DAB tuner, a computer sound card or perhaps a SKY+ box, the performance of which improves remarkably when given a helping hand by the Quad. The only omission is a coaxial digital output to accompany the solitary optical output. Surely one coaxial input could have been sacrificed for the purpose?

The mechanism is a three-beam laser Philips VAM1250, which is designed specifically for audio CD applications. A Crystal 24-bit/192kHz upsampling DAC is used in conjunction with a Class A output op-amp of Quad's own design. The volume control is an analogue potentiometer, albeit digitally controlled, and is the same design used in the



99 preamp. The remote, though conventional at first glance apart from its source selector and volume control, has an excellent control layout and the buttons have a light feel.

The Quad is a good performer too, though not top of the group. It doesn't quite rock and roll like the Naim for example, and it is neither as refined nor as transparent as the Orelle. But it still times well, and sounds clean and well controlled, without the rather pedestrian quality of its predecessor. The panel was clearly enamoured of its "warmth" and "fulsome" qualities. One listener, who was a little less enthusiastic than the others, described the Jolie Holland track as sounding "smooth though not syrupy", and noted some congestion, effectively a loss of transparency and low-level resolution in the complex Takemitsu piece. Others used such terms as "sweet and civilised" and "a strong sense of space" to characterise the same music.

Our own hands-on results came to the same broad conclusions. The Quad is a clean, full and largely dynamic sounding player, if not especially sprightly; a civilised choice that works well with the broadest range of material, and whose particular strengths are refinement and clarity without edge or grain. Ultimately, however, it lacks the resolving power and clarity of the very best in this test group. **HFC**

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 82% [Progress bar]	This flexible, well-specified CD player is great in all-Quad systems, but don't disregard it for use with other gear too – though not quite a class leader, its smooth approach should win plenty of admirers.
FEATURES >> 90% [Progress bar]	
BUILD >> 88% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 80% [Progress bar]	
HI-FI CHOICE 82% OVERALL SCORE	

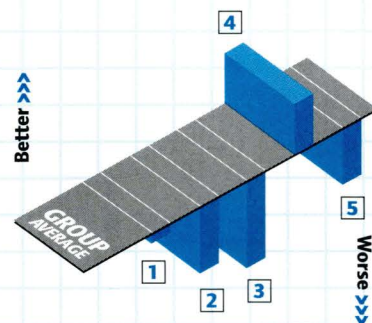


LAB REPORT

The latest CD player from Quad offers a very respectable frequency response indeed, being one of the rare machines that doesn't roll-off at all as testing approaches the 20kHz upper limit – in fact, it shows a very slight rise in response. This appears to be largely due to a fairly gentle digital filter in the DAC stage, which trades frequency response against digital artefacts, the worst of which we found to be only 33dB below the level of our 20kHz stress test.

The noise floor of the Quad 99 CD-P is exceptionally low, measuring a stunning 132dB below the highest signal levels, which would hint at an impressive dynamic range. Low-level linearity, however, was by no means the best of the models tested here, showing an 8dB error at -80dBFS, indicating that perhaps the most subtle details at low levels might not be as well preserved as those of some of the other models in this test.

HOW IT COMPARES



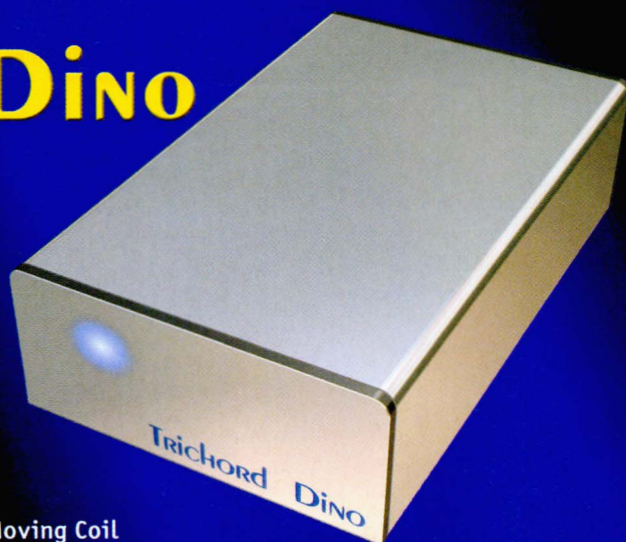
- 1] Distortion >> -10%
- 2] Jitter >> -60%
- 3] Linearity >> -80%
- 4] Dynamic range >> +45%
- 5] Digital filter >> -50%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2.4V	2.297V
Distortion (1 KHz @ 0dBFS)	0.002%	0.04%
Signal-to-noise ratio	95dB	100dB

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Pro Ac Studio 200 - yew - nice - vgc	£900	£2150
Pro Ac Supertower - big bruiser - black. At least 10 years old, very loved and dog-sared. Great sounding den/party speaker - good working order	£300	
Quad 989 Electrostatics - 2 pairs - less than 12 months old - perfect - boxed	£3500	£4500
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Tom Evans micro Groove - moving coil [1K]	£300	£400
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Revolver R33 bookshelf speakers - new - boxed	£300	£600
Roksan Xerxes Cognoscenti turntable - SME cutout - needs service and hard wiring - lovely. New and boxed	£200	
Eastern Electric Mini-Max - super cute line pre-amp with valve rectification	£500	£800
Border Patrol 300B SE - ash - 8 watt purist power amp - boxed - a steal	£2250	£4500
SJS Phono Stage - 2 box, hard wired with choke input power supply. Rare and very good. Moving magnet input.	£1000	
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ROKSAN KANDY MKIIID

Entry-level player gets a new transport mechanism and more

Roksan has two levels of its mainstream electronic hi-fi components – Caspian, the more ambitious and costly range, and the entry-level Kandy. The Kandy CD player, now in MkIIID guise, first appeared several years ago, and it has scarcely changed in appearance through the various versions. It lacks the overt personality of Roksan's record players, but it's built solidly enough and has a businesslike feel, with good controls and a smooth-acting loader. A 'display' button now replaces the second 'play' button once sported by earlier Kandy players (though the early sample reviewed here still has the old front panel with the original control assignments).

The MkIII Kandy was first introduced last year, and this latest 'D' version sports a new self-calibrating mechanism, which has also led to a completely new motherboard. Benefits include superior handling of imperfect discs, and CD-RWs are now fully compatible. In addition, stop band rejection and the noise floor are claimed to be much better – typically by as much as 10dB. D/A conversion is via a TD1305T BCC-DAC2 Bitstream continuous calibration DAC with newly designed filters. Individual power supplies are included for the mechanism and servo, the digital processing, the display electronics and the analogue part of the D/A board. The mechanism is also mechanically decoupled internally, a feature of many Roksan designs, and digital outputs are available in both optical and electrical form.

The Kandy MkIIID is supplied with a bright silver plastic system remote control, which is no beauty, but it's functional. The original Kandy player was available in various different colours, but for reasons of practicality this option has now been dropped, though it remains available in brushed aluminium and black.

On test, there were a few mild but persistent criticisms from the panel of a "thin and scratchy" sound, but overall the player was well liked, the midband receiving especially strong notices. The Steve Davis recording was described as



"rhythmic... polite yet clear, with a well defined and extended bass" by one panellist, while another described the guitar sound as "realistic", though he also commented on a rather two-dimensional soundstage in the normally spacious Mozart clarinet concerto recording.

In the hands-on testing, the Kandy MkIIID came across as a good to excellent affordable player, one that clearly outperforms all but the very best (and most expensive) DVD players in the CD playing role, and almost certainly most similarly priced dedicated CD players too. Timing is a strong point, and although imagery is a little flat by the best standards, and the Kandy just sounds slightly foreshortened in the depth plane, in other respects it sounds highly credible. It's also even-handed in its dealings with different musical genres, managing to make the soundstage appear open and airy, and the overall balance satisfyingly powerful when the occasion demands. Complex material is handled with strong articulation and definition, and without the opacity or the granularity that afflicts some players at the price.

Overall, the MkIIID Kandy is a significant improvement on earlier versions, with a tidier and more expressive outcome, and with superior resolution and better timing, if not the warmth and richness of the best. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >> 84%

FEATURES >> 75%

BUILD >> 83%

VALUE >> 90%

Here's a player that offers lots of sonic entertainment for the money. Its balance isn't the smoothest or fullest, but its musical expression, transparency and all-round virtues earn it a Best Buy at its price point.

HI-FI CHOICE 87%
OVERALL SCORE

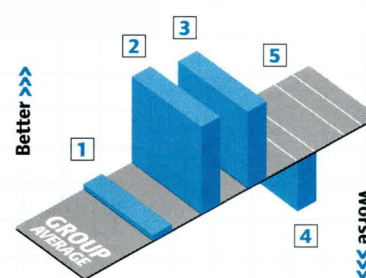


LAB REPORT

This latest model to emerge from Roksan's stable of CD players demonstrated consistently good performance on the test bench. The linearity measurements show precision at lower levels, with the worst error we could produce only about 0.5dB, significantly better than some other players tested. Frequency response is good too, rolling off only slightly approaching 20kHz by no more than 0.5dB. Distortion measurements also reflect well on this machine, with an uncharacteristically low error at higher frequencies, and staying low at lower levels.

The output levels were measured at about 2.29V, a shade higher than the quoted 2.2V, but not out of keeping with the competition. The digital filter performed well in our stress-testing, with the worst-case figure we could produce being side-bands about 53dB down from our test signals. Jitter levels are very low, measuring well under the 100psec mark, with a clock-accuracy of about 0.02Hz.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> +5%
- 2] Jitter >> +80%
- 3] Linearity >> +70%
- 4] Dynamic range >> -45%
- 5] Digital filter >> 0%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max Output Level	2V	2.29V
Distortion (1 KHz @ 0dBfs)	0.004%	0.029%
Signal-to-noise ratio	100dB	100dB

CONCLUSIONS

Price is not always an accurate indicator of performance, as our in-depth group test confirms

It was gratifying to discover that all of the players in this test lined up musically in a fairly unambiguous way, with the panel tests and the author's hands-on testing reaching close agreement on the whole, with the emphasis on the last three words.

There was one exception to this pattern, however, the reasons for which are still not entirely clear. The Meridian G07 fared relatively poorly in the unsighted panel tests, but later hands-on work proved much more fruitful, with the deck of matching hardware being shuffled

to account for its particular personality. But whatever the reasons, which appear to be related at least in part to the Meridian's rather soft-spoken personality overall, the differences were real enough (the author was also party to the panel tests, and heard the same things), and the G07 remains a somewhat perplexing choice, and one to be considered on an individual suck-it-and-see basis.

The Naim CD5i was a clear front-runner through the whole of the listening programme, with a characteristically bold, architectural

quality, and greater refinement than some might be used to from this marque. Naim suggests that D/A converter technology is secondary to other factors, including mechanical construction, and the way this player performed, with its solid build but relatively lowly Bitstream processor, would tend to lend credence to this. And mention must be made at this point of the Quad 99 CD-P, which includes a (bypassable) volume control and a number of digital inputs, which makes a preamp-less system a distinct possibility.

One distinct trend evidenced by this test is that, not only do dedicated CD players tend to sound better with their native format than DVD players do – the ones that use mechanisms and associated digital hardware designed specifically for CD replay often perform better than those using newer, more commonly available DVD-oriented technology. Note also that price is not always a reliable indicator of performance – in this test, the Naim and Roksan players were consistently at or near the top of the pile throughout our panel sessions. **HFC**

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HINTS AND TIPS

- >> Some players settle into a groove quite early, while others need a week or more before they deliver the goods.
- >> Once it's run in, give the CD player a good 30 minutes or so to warm up before making a critical judgement.
- >> If you intend to use your CD player with a passive, rather than active,

- preamp, then check that its output impedance is 100 ohms or less.
- >> Higher output impedances may cause audible changes in response.
- >> The uninitiated would be amazed how sound quality can be influenced by cables. Choose with care but don't spend over the odds.

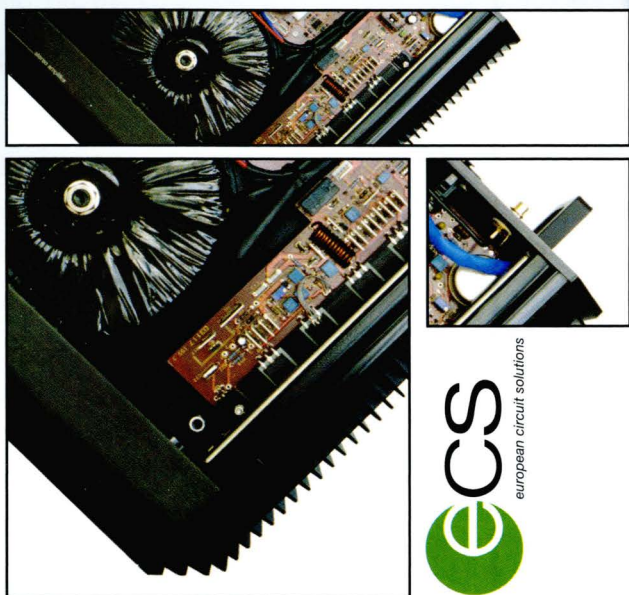
CD PLAYERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Inca Design Katana	Meridian G07	Naim Audio CD5i	Orelle CD100evo2	Quad 99 CD-P	Roksan Kandy MkIIID
PRICE	£600	£1,595	£825	£1,299	£1,000	£650
SOUND						
FEATURES						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	One of the most distinctive looking players around, though its sound is a little less attention grabbing.	Not an overtly exciting player, but in the right setting its delicacy is delicious. Partner with great care.	Nondescript looks offset by brilliant audio manners. Capable of teaching more costly players a thing or two.	Not as upfront as many, but refinement and transparency more than carry it through. Best with acoustic styles of music.	Legendary Quad heritage and external digital inputs plus impressive audio manners make for good value.	Very well balanced sound and excellent value for money from Roksan's much improved entry-level model.
KEY FEATURES						
ELEC DIG O/P	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
OPT DIG O/P	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
CD-RW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CD TEXT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
BAL AN O/P	No	No	No	No	No	No
LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
DISTORTION	0.03% A	0.004% E	0.033% A	0.05% P	0.04% A	0.029% A
JITTER	800psec P	100psec E	100psec E	700psec P	1100psec P	100psec E
LINEARITY	8dB P	0.37dB G	0.6dB G	0.03dB E	13dB P	0.4dB G
S/N RATIO	105dB A	128dB E	128dB E	105dB A	132dB E	100dB P
STOPBAND REJECTION	76dB G	69dB G	25dB P	64dB G	33.3dB P	53dB A

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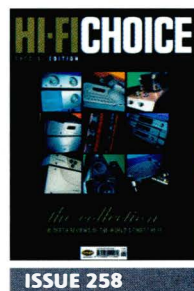
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The *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* is the best way to make a shortlist of components for your system. Pick the ones that best suit your taste and budget, then use our *Dealer Classified* section to find specialist outlets where you can audition these components with your favourite discs.

Products that score more than 80 per cent overall are automatically featured in the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible*. Any Best Buy or Editor's Choice Badges awarded are also displayed.

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CD PLAYERS

Audio disc players for music only



Despite the emergence of new formats and the resurgence of an old one (vinyl), CD is still the king of formats if you require breadth of choice. And despite the fact that other sources will play CDs, if you want to hear your discs at their best there's little substitute for a dedicated CD player.

It's also the most enduring format on the market. Despite high-resolution contenders like SACD and DVD-Audio, nothing has been able to undermine this universally popular format.

CD players work by reading a stream of 1s and 0s off a disc that spins at a constantly changing speed (to counteract the increasing length of 'groove'). This bitstream is then digitally filtered before undergoing digital-to-analogue conversion in the DAC (D-to-A convertor). Thereafter, the signal is filtered



again before being amplified and sent to the output sockets.

The processes of reading the disc and converting the data are sometimes split between a CD transport and separate DAC in so-called two-box players. A popular approach with very high-end kit, this separates the electronically noisy elements from the sensitive analogue stages, but can introduce timing errors known as jitter, therefore one-box players usually offer best results where budget is a consideration.

SUPER AUDIO CD

SACD or Super Audio CD is a relatively new audio-only format introduced by Sony and Philips. It offers higher resolution than CD in the form of considerably greater bandwidth and improved dynamic range. It also has



the potential for uncompressed surround sound using up to six channels, and most new discs take advantage of this. SACD discs are usually hybrids and will play on normal CD players, but you won't be able to appreciate their highest quality or their multichannel capability without an SACD-compatible player. Some SACD players also play DVD and even DVD-Audio – these are listed in our DVD section.

Q&A

WHAT'S A DAC?

A DAC or digital-to-analogue convertor is a fundamental part of any CD player and converts the digits read from the disc into an analogue music waveform which is amplified to line level.

WHY HAVE SEPARATE TRANSPORTS & DACS?

Discs are read by a transport or disc drive, which creates radio frequency 'noise'. Separating the DAC means the conversion can be done with less interference.

CAN I USE AN OUTBOARD DAC WITH MY INTEGRATED CD PLAYER?

Yes, if it has a digital output – and most do.

DO I NEED DIGITAL CABLES FOR A CD PLAYER?

No. All analogue cables are suitable for connecting a CD player to an amp. Digital specific cables with 75ohms impedance are useful when connecting the player to a digital recorder or DAC.

WHAT IS OVERSAMPLING/UPSAMPLING?

Oversampling involves multiplying the sampling frequency by a whole number, usually between four and 32, but sometimes higher, and is designed let the DAC to work in a more linear fashion.

Upsampling is where the data stream is stretched out by interpolation and is typically used to refer to large changes in sampling rate such as from 44.1 kHz to 192kHz.

CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NORMAL CD PLAYER?

Yes. The vast majority of SACD discs are hybrids, with a CD layer that all CD players can read.

CAN I PLAY DVDS ON A CD PLAYER?

No, the same applies to DVD-As. But you can play CDs and DVD-As on normal DVD players.

TOP BUYS



Marantz CD7300 £350

The latest in a long line of highly successful sub-£500 CD players from Marantz is an absolute beauty. Engaging and sonically refined, there's little to touch it at the price.



Arcam DiVA CD93T £950

Few CD players under a grand can match the accomplishment of Arcam's latest beauty. Its sound is neutral but always musical – delicate or vigorous, whatever the disc requires.

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

CD PLAYERS

Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS								ISSUE NUMBER
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	
UP TO £1,000												
BB	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems		●	●	●	●				247
BB	Arcam DIVA CD93T	950	The CD33 may technically be Arcam's ultimate CD player, but it's the little brother that really won our hearts		●	●	●	●				252
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 640C	250	This elegant little player can hold its own in very elevated company – a budget system will barely do it justice		●	●	●					249
BB	Cyrus CD8	1,000	A truly cracking player, particularly when partnered with the optional PSX-R off-board power supply (£350)		●	●	●					252
	Exposure 2010	600	A smooth and substantial-sounding player, a little lacking in refinement but musical all the same		●	●	●	●				231
	Heart CD6000 OSE LE	750	Valved-up Marantz makes an entertaining and colourful player that will inspire you to listen longer		●	●	●	●		●	●	245
BB	Inca Design Katana	600	Stylish design combined with stunning build make this something of a bargain. It sounds good too		●	●	●			●		256
	Marantz CD5400 OSE	200	Nicely thought out player with useful features and good sound, though some mechanical noise		●	●	●	●		●		256
BB	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages		●	●	●	●		●		250
BB	Musical Fidelity X-Ray ^{v3}	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money		●	●	●					255
BB	Naim CD5i	825	Taut and rhythmic, Naim's starter CD player will win many fans. A particularly fine partner for the Nait 5i amp				●					252
	Rotel RCD-02	375	Against some strong competition in the same price area, this Rotel generally holds up well		●		●					231
BB	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound	●	●	●	●	●	●			248
ABOVE £1,000												
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable		●		●			●		257
EC	Audionet ART V2	2,300	Built to last forever, this CD has a dark natural sound with excellent bass and would be cheap at twice the price!		●		●					231
EC	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency		●		●					251
EC	BAT VK-D5SE CD Player	5,495	Superb valve CD player that is smooth and refined but with real guts that doesn't conform to valve stereotypes		●	●	●			●		251
EC	Copland CDA 822	1,598	Well built and carefully thought out, if you go for the more sophisticated musical forms it is superb value		●		●			●		241
	Exposure 3010	1,195	What this player lacks in immediacy and punch is offset by its sparkling sense of occasion and musical tension		●	●	●	●				246
	Exposure XXII	1,395	Natural sounding player, great with voices and acoustic instruments and makes for engaging listening		●	●	●					238
	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing		●		●			●		252
EC	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SCD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	●	●	●	●			●		251
BB	Meridian 507	1,195	Unusually precise and considered performer that sounds as different as the discs you stick in the drawer		●	●	●					238
EC	Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista	4,000	Limited edition stereo-only SACD/CD player that is simply the best player MF has ever made	●	●	●	●	●				237
EC	Naim CDX2	2,650	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●					238
BB	Primare D30.2	1,499	Superb high-resolution player gives a strong taste of musical structure and physicality		●		●			●		226
BB	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed 0and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source				●			●		244
	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,100	An enjoyably dynamic-sounding player featuring a positively unique choice of digital components		●		●					252
EC	Sony SCD-XA9000ES	2,400	State-of-the-art CD and SACD player with full SACD bass management and i.Link-encrypted digital output	●	●		●	●	●	●		253
EC	Wadia 302	3,995	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits		●	●	●			●	●	253
EC	Wadia 861se	9,999	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night		●	●	●			●	●	256

SPECS KEY **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD discs in multichannel and/or two-channel mode. **ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT** Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **DPT DIGITAL OUTPUT** Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **CD-RW COMPATIBLE** Will play CD-RW (rewritable) discs, most CD players can cope with CD-Rs. **CD TEXT** Will display album and track titles from inserted disc. **BAL ANALOGUE OUT** Balanced XLR output connections for similarly equipped amplifiers. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the CD player. **VARIABLE OUTPUT** Player features both fixed level and variable, volume adjustable outputs.



Cyrus CD8/PSX-R £1,350

Taken on its own, Cyrus's CD8 is a highly articulate £1,000 CD player. Add a PSX-R power supply and it really takes off – detailed and dynamic, with musical poise and panache.



Naim CDX2 £2,650

A superb player that mixes rhythm and timing with precision and poise. Add the £2,300 XPS power supply (pictured) to make one of the best CD players in the world.

DVD PLAYERS

Disc players for audio and video



DVD has proved a phenomenal success in commercial terms and has virtually extinguished the market for budget CD players – you can't really beat a multiformat player when it comes to features. Early DVD players were not particularly good CD spinners because of the enormous amount of RF interference produced by video circuits, but as this problem has been identified manufacturers have begun to tackle it. Nowadays, most DVD players are competent CD players and a few are very good – often as not they are the ones that play DVD-Audio discs as well.

The great advantage of DVD is that it offers sufficient capacity to hold a feature length movie or music concert *and* discrete multichannel sound on a disc the size of a CD. In the case of plain DVD-Video discs, the audio is encoded in either the Dolby Digital or DTS format, both of which use 'lossy' compression to fit the audio onto the disc alongside the video data. You can use



a DVD player with your stereo system by connecting the stereo outputs, though this won't give the surround sound benefits that the format specialises in.

DVD-AUDIO

DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

While offering similar benefits to SACD, it has the advantage of on-screen display for information – lyrics, images and so on. To save

you having to decide which format to go for, a few brands are bringing out universal players to cover SACD and DVD-A, alongside CD and DVD-Video – a neat and relatively future proof route into high-resolution multichannel music. Higher-end models featuring high-bandwidth compatible digital audio links are now also appearing, enhancing DVD-A/SACD sound when used with similarly equipped amps.



Q&A

WHICH AUDIO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

Use the analogue outputs for CD, DVD-A and SACD, and the coaxial digital output for DTS and Dolby Digital movie soundtracks.

WHICH VIDEO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

The best connection is component video closely followed by RGB Scart, which is clearly superior to S-video and the basic composite video option.

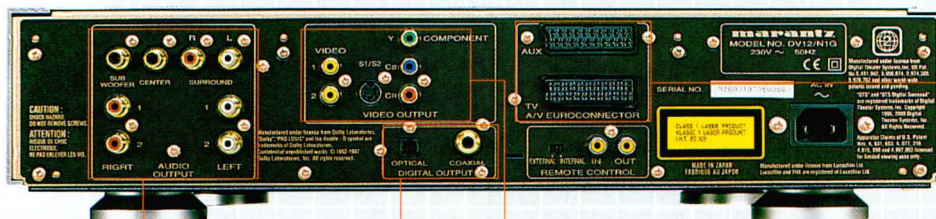
DO I NEED A MULTICHANNEL AMP TO USE A DVD PLAYER?

Only if you want to hear music and movie soundtracks in multichannel surround. DVD players can be used with stereo amps and just two speakers to great effect, but you'll only get stereo, not surround sound.

DO I NEED PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO?

It's worthwhile for the very best picture quality, but make sure your DVD player and display device support PAL progressive.

CONNECTIONS



ANALOGUE AUDIO OUTPUTS: For stereo and multichannel connections, use these for best results with DVD-Audio, SACD and CD.

DIGITAL OUTPUTS: For Dolby Digital, DTS and PCM audio bitstreams.

VIDEO CONNECTIONS: Yellow sockets are composite; red, green and blue sockets are for component which gives best results, while the black multipin socket is S-video, which sits qualitatively between the two.

SCART

SCART CONNECTIONS: These are a good-quality option for video, especially ones that output RGB.

Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

BB BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
BB	Arcam DIVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money			●	●		254
	Cambridge Audio Azur 540D	230	Respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price	●		●	●		257
BB	Denon DVD-1400	400	Denon's entry point to universal disc playback and a remarkably good one too. Excellent CD replay for a universal player	●	●	●	●		249
BB	Denon DVD-2900	850	A beautifully built universal player that delivers a strong performance across all formats, all at a remarkable price	●	●	●	●		248
	Marantz DV6400	500	Good starter universal player with decent CD replay quality, but slightly disappointing SACD performance	●	●	●	●		254
BB	Pioneer DV-565A	250	Do-it-all 'universal' player is a decent performer with all disc types, and superb value for money considering its range	●	●	●	●		248
BB	Pioneer DV-668AV	600	HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price	●	●	●	●		252
BB	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●		252
	Primare V25	1,000	Bold pictures on screen are matched to easy, likeable sound quality and a huge range of outputs			●	●		237
ABOVE £1,000									
	Arcam DIVA DV89	1,300	No SACD playback, but CD sounds strong, DVD-Audio is highly engaging and video performance is excellent too	●		●	●		248
EC	Arcam FMJ DV27A	1,900	Very accomplished, clean sounding player with CD, DVD and DVD-Audio alike. Picture quality is equally top-notch	●		●	●		246
	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			●	●		238
EC	Denon DVD-A11	1,700	Refinement and clarity are hallmarks of this player, which is also as close to being future-proof as they come	●		●	●		250
EC	Denon DVD-A1	2,500	A convincing case for the DVD-A format, battleship construction combined with sonic and visual finesse	●		●	●		230
EC	Marantz DV-12S2	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles, with top-notch video playback too. Sonically refined and enjoyably understated	●	●	●	●		255
EC	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	●		●	●	●	230
EC	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too	●		●	●		253

SPECS KEY **DVD-A COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution DVD-A discs in two and multichannel modes. **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD discs in two and multichannel modes. **ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT** Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver. **OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT** Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the DVD player.

TOP BUYS

BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Pioneer DV-565A £250
A universal player with respectable performance across all formats, at a remarkable price.

BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Denon DVD-2900 £850
A universal player that's good with CD and great with DVD-V, DVD-A and SACD alike.

EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Pioneer DV-868AVi £1,000
Pioneer's HDMI/i.Link-equipped universal flagship packs an amazing hi-tech punch.

EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Denon DVD-A11 £1,700
A superb universal player, made even better with i.Link/Denon Link/DVI digital outputs.

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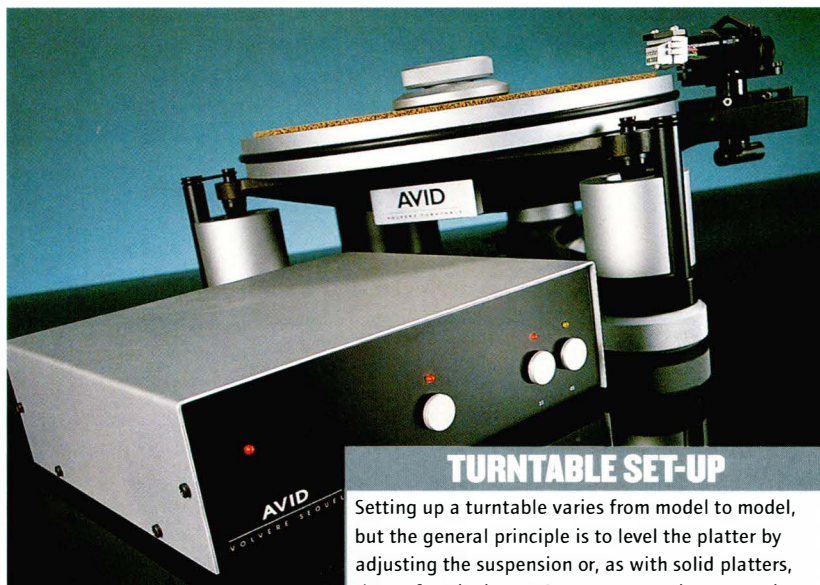
Turntables, cartridges and phono stages



Record players or turntables offer the digital revolution serious competition when it comes to sound quality. Even a modest model can turn musical tricks that most CD players struggle with. Some call it vinyl warmth, but in reality it's a lack of digital hardness that makes the format so engaging. True, the software requires a bit more care, but even a knackered LP is more playable than a scratched CD.

Record players are made of three, perhaps four, fundamental parts. The turntable is the plinth and platter, usually also containing the motor and any suspension system. A tonearm sits on the plinth and allows the cartridge to trace the vinyl groove by pivoting or parallel tracking over the record. The cartridge contains the means of turning the mechanical movement of the groove wall into an electrical signal.

A fourth element is an amp dedicated to the delicate job of amplifying and equalising the cartridge's insubstantial output. This is called a phono stage and can be found in some integrated amplifiers and preamps, but is increasingly purchased separately for use with line-only amps.



TURNTABLE SET-UP

Setting up a turntable varies from model to model, but the general principle is to level the platter by adjusting the suspension or, as with solid platters, the surface it sits on. Sprung suspensions sometimes require a bit of fine-tuning to sound their best, but the principle is to achieve a smooth, pistonic bounce. Cartridge set-up is even more critical, as the angles at which the stylus traces the groove affects its tonal balance and levels of distortion. A good alignment protractor is essential if you are intending to set up your own cartridge, as is a degree of patience. In essence, there are two angles you need to get right: the tracing angle as the cartridge crosses the record if you are looking from above, and the vertical tracking angle (VTA), which is adjusted by raising or lowering the arm base to bring the arm parallel with the record surface.

There are two types of phono cartridge: moving magnet (MM) and moving coil (MC), and with a few exceptions the latter outperforms the former. But MCs produce a lower output and require better-quality amplification to be heard at their best. As a general rule, MCs offer a broader bandwidth, greater dynamics and more detail, but the better moving magnets do most things well enough to distract you from your CD collection.

TOP BUYS



Pro-Ject
 1 Xpression £210

The latest model from Czech turntable specialist Pro-Ject is remarkable value for money – an Ortofon OM10 cartridge and carbon fibre arm are included in the price.



Rega
 P5 £698

Rega's latest is a non-suspended design with a highly entertaining sound and a great sense of musical 'timing'. The new RB700 arm is included in the price.



Roksan
 Radius 5 £850

A beautiful mid-price turntable with an impressively well-sorted sound from low bass to high treble. Price includes matching Nima tonearm.



Michell
 Orbe SE £1,825

A fine example of the turntable art, the stripped down SE version of Michell's flagship now features a DC motor. Does justice to the best arms and cartridges.

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

TURNTABLES

Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
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
EC	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●	●			247
EC	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●			229
EC	Avid Acutus	5,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●			194
	Clearaudio Emotion	655	An engaging turntable offering plenty of audiophile credibility for the money (price includes arm and cartridge)	33/45			●	●	251
	Clearaudio Champion Level 2	1,955	Neutral balance, great looks, but only so-so detail. Benefits greatly from isolation	33/45			●	●	223
EC	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45		●	●	●	256
BB	Goldring GR1	140	The best value 'Rega' yet and a new benchmark for budget turntables. Vinyl nirvana on a shoestring	33/45			●	●	252
BB	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●		239
EC	Michell Orbe SE	1,825	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●				235
BB	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45			●		253
BB	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			●	●	248
BB	Pro-Ject RPM 6	500	Basic, very neutral turntable and arm combination that can take a very expensive cartridge. A high-end bargain	33/45			●		236
	Rega P2	198	Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away	33/45			●		214
	Rega P3	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●		214
BB	Rega P5	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			●	opt	257
BB	Rega P7	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			●	opt	257
EC	Rega P9	2,248	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●		228
BB	Roksan Radius 5	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation	33/45	●		●		248
EC	Roksan TMS2	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●			246
EC	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design with Series V/309 hybrid arm, superbly built	33/45	●	●	●		195
EC	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●		186

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO CARTRIDGES

MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
	Goldring Elite	250	A remarkably subtle and persuasive design that should tempt anyone		●		235
	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		●	214
BB	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
EC	Linn Akiva	1,800	With fine dynamic expression and a wide bandwidth, what you hear sounds very close to master tape		●	●	242
EC	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality		●		215
BB	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300		●		192
BB	Van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●		235
EC	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage		●		244
EC	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●		253

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO STAGES

Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AOL GAIN	AOL IMPEDANCE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Musical Fidelity X-LPS ^{v3}	249	Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved	●	●			248
BB	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●			245
BB	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●			234
EC	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP		●			201
BB	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●	234

TURNTABLE SPECS KEY **SPEEDS** Speeds offered in rpm. **SUSP SUBCHASSIS** Turntables with a sprung or suspended support for the platter and arm. **SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE** Some decks require manual lifting of the belt from one pulley to another to change speed, but not these ones. **SUPPLIED WITH ARM** Deck is supplied complete with tonearm – some require a separate purchase in this department, but the dealer will fit it for you.

SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE Some decks are supplied with a starter cartridge and this is included in the price shown.

CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

REPLACEABLE STYLUS Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.



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RADIO TUNERS

FM and DAB hi-fi separates



Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

DAB or FM?

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is said to be available to 80 per cent of the population and the long-term plan is to switch public broadcasting over to digital, but hardware prices have yet to come down to a point where this would be acceptable. Its advantages over FM include hiss-free reception, the potential for a wider range of stations and the ability to display comprehensive programming information. FM's RDS system means that station name and occasionally track titles are displayed, but the range of information is fairly limited.

Where FM scores over DAB is in the lower cost of hardware and the greater reception

area. It can also provide higher sound quality if reception conditions are favourable. Absolute sound quality judgements are muddled by the fact that you are listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

What is clear, however, is that there are more and more radio stations broadcasting on DAB that aren't available on FM. So if it's variety of programming you're after, they have a lot to offer.

RECEPTION

The quality of signal you feed a tuner will dictate its sound quality. So serious FM listeners should get a decent external aerial and connect it with as few junctions and splits as possible. Every time you split the cable (ie take a feed for another tuner) you halve signal strength! With DAB the same applies but get a DAB-specific aerial. See www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio for details.

TOP BUYS



Denon TU260L II £130

The benchmark for all other budget AM/FM tuners, with great sound and features.



Cambridge DAB500 £150

A low-cost DAB radio that gets very close to much more expensive digital models.



Rega Radio 3 £374

An excellent sound-first FM/MW tuner – low on features but big on sound.



Magnum Dynalab MD 102 £2,200

If you're serious about radio this superb FM tuner is about as good as it gets.

Our favourite TUNERS

FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
FM TUNERS										
	Cambridge Audio T500	180	Very capable tuner suited to good and less good reception conditions	FM,M,L	64					193
BB	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,ML	128					251
	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
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD-90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt			257
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5					241
BB	Marantz ST6000	180	Another budget killer from Marantz, with sound well above its class and useful features	FM, M, L	90					211
BB	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30					250
BB	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30					230
BB	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30					230
BB	Rega Radio 3	374	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20					242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30					242
DAB TUNERS										
	Arcam DIVA DT81	650	A very smart and polished DAB performer	DAB	16					221
BB	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10					248
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded	DAB	99					234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99					242

SPECS KEY WAVEBANDS Which bands are supported: FM, M – medium wave, L – long wave, DAB – digital audio broadcasting. PRESETS How many stations can be stored in memory. RDS Radio Data System – station names and program titles can be displayed among other facilities (FM only, DAB has more comprehensive display potential). REMOTE CONTROL For the couch potato. SIGNAL STRENGTH METER Useful for setting up an aerial. ROTARY TUNING KNOB An ergonomic alternative to buttons.

DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



MiniDisc

MD's strength is versatility. You can record and then re-record many times over. Editing facilities are second to none – you can erase mistakes, name tracks and re-order a disc's contents with a few simple button pushes, making it ideal for building compilations. They're pretty robust too.

Sound quality is below that of CD-R/CD-RW. The format uses a Sony-developed compression technology called ATRAC, which discards part of the data in order to squeeze it on the disc. If you're copying from CD to MD, the result tends to sound a little cold in comparison, lacking a degree of detail and ambience. But to most people it still sounds light years ahead of cassette – clean and hiss-free.

Recordable CD

With recordable CD you have a choice of two disc types: CD-R discs are the cheapest, but you can only record once; and CD-RW discs are a little more costly, but you can re-record on them *ad infinitum*.

Though the latest machines incorporate some useful editing facilities, CD-R/RW is not as flexible as MD. However, sound

quality is higher – if you're recording from a CD, the best models will give you a copy that is very close to the original. In terms of compatibility, most CD players will play back a CD-R disc, but older models might have trouble with CD-RW (though you can, of course, play the disc back on your own recorder). If you want to play a CD-R/RW on a DVD player, check for compatibility.

Hard drive

The latest contender on the digital recording scene is also the most flexible. Some HDD (hard disk drive) recorders can store whole music collections if you use a compression format such as MP3. HDD recorders are taking over from multidisc CD changers as sound servers in multiroom installations, where their ability to play more than one piece of music at a time is a great boon. HDD also offers impressive editing facilities on a par with MD, and they can also record from CD (or to CD-R/RW) at high speed.

At present, sound quality isn't the driving force behind the format – flexibility and storage capacity being bigger issues – and a plain CD-R/RW machine will outperform an HDD recorder in fidelity terms.

TOP BUYS



Philips CDR802 £300

Multidisc recorder that's slick and capable, albeit with a slightly flaky build.



Marantz DR6000 £400

Quality in a box – it eschews gimmickry, but it does a simple job very well.



Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

Combining hard disk with CD-R makes CD recording a whole lot more flexible.



Imerge S2000 £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multi-room applications.

Our favourite DIGITAL RECORDERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	ISSUE NUMBER
CD-R/RW RECORDERS							
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		● ●	218
	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1		● ●	233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2		● ●	243
	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2		● ●	233
	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		● ●	205
	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1		● ●	243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1		● ●	218
MD RECORDERS							
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price	1		● ●	205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1		●	233
HDD RECORDERS							
	Imerge S2000	1,599	Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound	2	80	● ●	243
	Yamaha CDR-HD1300	600	Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording	2	80	● ●	243

SPECS KEY **DECKS** Amount of drive mechanisms on board – twin-deck recorders use one to play while the other records. **HD CAPACITY** Amount of gigabytes of storage capacity, for HD only. **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS** Optical Toslink in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC. **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS** Electrical coaxial in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC.

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



Sevenoaks Sound & Vision stocks a wide range of Hi-Fi separates, DVD players, amplifiers, speakers, plasma screens, LCD televisions and projection systems from all the leading manufacturers.

From starter systems to custom designed multi-room and home cinema installations, our friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle. If you're interested in home entertainment and want to avoid the confusion, contact your local Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store and **experience more.**

0% interest free option[^] is available on most products.

[^]Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.



CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Modern home entertainment doesn't have to be intrusive.

A carefully considered installation of home cinema with distributed audio and video and easy lighting control can give you all the sound and vision performance you could ever dream of - enhancing your lifestyle and your home.

Our custom install services range from the most simple, affordable solutions to the most grandiose. We can help transform every room and every home, whatever your needs and budget.

Want to know more? Why not pay us a visit and pick up a copy of our FREE Custom

Installation Guide, available now, from your local store.



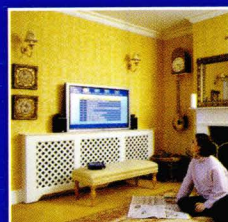
Enjoy the freedom to listen to the music of your choice or watch TV independently from other rooms in the home



Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards and will continue to support you and your equipment long after your first visit to one of our nationwide stores



Flush-mounted in-wall speakers can give you all the sound you can handle, but won't eat into your floor space or clash with your decor



NEWSNEWSNEWS

B&W PV1 SUB-WOOFER

Bowers & Wilkins proudly announce the introduction of the new PV1 subwoofer. About the size of a basketball, this spherical subwoofer utilises technology developed over 5 years and proves that big bass can be achieved using a small box.

Although its primary use is home cinema, the PV1 is also perfectly suited to 2-Channel hi-fi systems. The PV1 includes both speaker level and line level inputs and is available in silver or gloss black.



MUSICAL FIDELITY kW500 SUPER INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

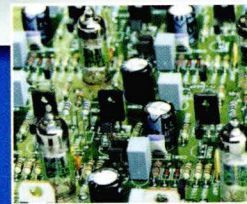


Musical Fidelity has introduced a new, super integrated amplifier - the kW500. Musical Fidelity's tradition of making superb integrated amplifiers dates back to the early 1990s when they launched the A1000 and, more recently, the Nu-Vista M³ and Tri-Vista 300.

This latest model, a limited edition of 500 pieces, features exclusive Mu-Vista tubes. Originally, these were used by the US military for crucial low noise and other missile functions and, like the trivista tube it replaces, promises to offer 'bomb-proof' reliability.

The kW500 is rated at 500+ watts per channel and about 100 amps peak. The extrusions for the front panel are custom made and all the fitments are machined from the highest quality material.

THE kW500 IS AVAILABLE AT SELECTED SEVENOAKS STORES • £3999.95
ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 22/09/04, E&OE.



THE MU-VISTA TUBES IN SITU

- ABERDEEN (NEW)
- BEDFORD
- BIRMINGHAM
- BRIGHTON
- BRISTOL
- BROMLEY
- CAMBRIDGE
- CARDIFF
- CHELSEA
- CHELTENHAM
- CRAWLEY
- CROYDON
- EALING (NEW)
- EDINBURGH
- EPSOM
- EXETER
- GLASGOW
- GUILDFORD
- HOLBORN
- HULL
- IPSWICH
- KINGSTON
- LEICESTER
- LEEDS
- LINCOLN
- LIVERPOOL
- MAIDSTONE
- MANCHESTER
- NEWCASTLE
- NORWICH
- NOTTINGHAM
- OXFORD
- PETERBOROUGH
- PLYMOUTH
- POOLE
- PRESTON
- READING
- SEVENOAKS
- SHEFFIELD
- SOLIHULL
- SOUTHAMPTON
- SOUTHGATE
- STAINES
- SWISS COTTAGE
- TUNBRIDGE WELLS
- WATFORD
- WEYBRIDGE
- WITHAM (ESSEX)
- WOLVERHAMPTON

PLEASE SEE PAGE 7
FOR ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE
NUMBER DETAILS

www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk



HI-FI SEPARATES

Michell Gyro SE Turntable / RB300 Tonearm £1049.95



WHAT IS IT?
Best Buy
2003

"The Gyrodec SE sounds great, combining the best sonic characteristics of rivals... Quite simply, the Michell Gyrodec SE is terrific. Nothing compares at this price point - it's well deserving another Best Buy."

CLAIM £50

TOWARDS THE GOLDRING
CARTRIDGE OF YOUR CHOICE*

Arcam DiVA CD192 CD Player £849.95

NEW



FREE GRADO SR60 HEADPHONES WORTH £90 WHEN YOU PURCHASE AN AMP AND CD TOGETHER FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MANUFACTURERS - ARCAM, CYRUS & ROKSAN*

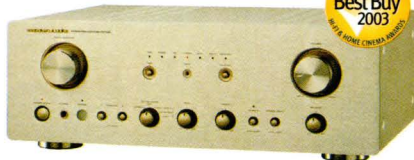
NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



SAVE
£30

Marantz CD5400 CD Player £119.95

WHAT IS IT?
Best Buy
2003



SAVE
£80

Marantz PM7200 Amplifier £249.95

"This is one of the most powerful amps in its class, at 95w per channel, and it sounds it with anything from dance to a big orchestral work, offering a delicious combination of poise and impact. Stick with fast, dynamic speakers such as B&W DM601 S3s or KEF's equally capable Q1s and the results will amaze."

NEW

Musical Fidelity X-80 Amplifier £599.95 X-150 Amplifier £799.95 X-Ray³ CD Player £899.95

Musical Fidelity has unveiled two integrated amplifiers and a CD player as part of its revamped X-series. The 40 wpc, X-80 and the 80wpc X-150 amplifiers feature a

dual-gang analogue volume control and high-output transistors for each channel.

The X-150 also includes a high quality phono stage.



The X-Ray³ CD player, is the replacement for the legendary X-Ray and uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD player. From a technical standpoint, the X-Ray³ is equal of some of the most expensive players on the market.



Pro-ject 1 Xpression Turntable (Black) £209.95

WHAT IS IT?
Best Buy
2003

"Compared with a £200 CD player this deck sounds remarkable: dig out your vinyl and give the Xpression a spin."

Pro-ject 1 Debut II Turntable (Black) £119.95

WHAT IS IT?
Best Buy
2002

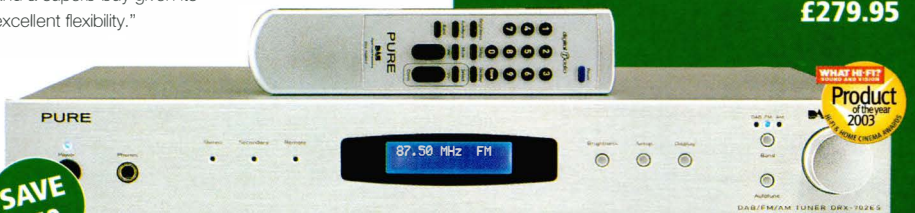


THE PROJECT RANGE
STARTS AT ONLY £119.95

"So do you buy a digital tuner? Or an analogue one? Now you don't have to pick: just buy Pure Digital's DRX-702ES! Whether on FM or DAB, this tuner sounds superb... The overall balance is powerful, clean and crisp, making this a fine tuner by any standards, and a superb buy given its excellent flexibility."

DAB RADIO

Pure Digital DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB Tuner £279.95



SAVE
£50

WHAT IS IT?
Product
of the year
2003

experience more

experience more
experience more



Cyrus
CD8 CD Player £999.95
8 Amplifier £799.95

Cyrus has been developing high performance hi-fi systems for over 20 years. Today their upgradeable, modular product range includes multi-room systems, home cinema and some of the world's finest hi-fi systems. Cyrus products are hand finished, half size die-cast enclosures and include a hidden digital command system that allows simple operation of any size system.



WHAT HI-FI? Product of the Year 2003

WHAT HI-FI? Best Buy 2003

SEE FREE GRADO SR60 HEADPHONE OFFER*

Mission
780 SE Speakers £349.95

"The revamped Mission 780s are hugely enjoyable: anyone with up to £400 to spend should consider these standmounters. Mission's clever move has paid off."



WHAT HI-FI? May 03

FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60*

FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60*

Ruark Epilogue II Speakers £344.95

"...Then there are the classy Ruark Epilogue IIs. They're the priciest here, but with plenty to justify that price tag. They have a seamless sound that draws the listener into the music and keeps the senses captivated."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • AUGUST 2002



FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60*

NEW

KEF Q4
Speakers £399.95

The Q4 is one of the latest additions to KEF's acclaimed Q Series. At the heart of this floorstander lies the Uni-Q driver array - a 130mm die-cast chassis housing a long throw cone and coincident mounted 19mm aluminium dome HF unit. This driver arrangement makes the speaker much easier to place in the room and alleviates the 'sweet spot' found on 'ordinary' speakers. This has been combined with a dedicated 130mm LF unit for extended bass output which belies the size of its diminutive cabinet.

FREE QED	SPEAKER CABLE WITH ALL HI-FI SPEAKER PAIRS OVER £299*	WORTH
		£60 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £299
		£80 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £499
		£120 WITH SPEAKERS OVER £999

B&W
DM602 S3 Speakers £299.95

"These solidly made standmounters perform well across the whole range of musical styles... Add these speakers to your hi-fi system and you're guaranteed magnificent integration between the drivers and an even tonal balance."

FREE QED CABLE WORTH £60*



WHAT HI-FI? Best Buy 2002

Roksan Kandy
KD1/III CD Player £649.95
KA1/III Amplifier £649.95

"Timing and rhythm are excellent. DJ Shadow is delivered with clarity and a tight bass, while at the other extreme the treble is sweet and detailed, getting the most from Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. The result is a breathtaking Best Buy amplifier that betters its competition with ease." KANDY KA1/III AMPLIFIER - AWARDS 2003



WHAT HI-FI? Best Buy 2003

"The Kandy KD1/III CD player offers a great array of talents - team it with its amp stablemate and you have something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination."

WHAT HI-FI? Dec 03

FREE GRADO SR60 HEADPHONES WORTH £90 WHEN YOU PURCHASE AN AMP AND CD TOGETHER FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MANUFACTURERS - ARCAM, CYRUS & ROKSAN* NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

PRICING POLICY
We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention.

0% FINANCE OPTION*
Spread the cost of buying. 0% finance option is available on the vast majority of products we stock. *Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.
*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 22/09/04, E&OE.

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



Rotel 10 Series RA-1062 Amplifier £594.95 RCD-1072 CD Player £594.95

"At the heart of the 60-watt **RA-1062** is a toroidal transformer and a power supply, which Rotel claims, helps the amp maintain performance even at high volumes... Crank up the volume and, as promised, the Rotel keeps its composure and balance... If you want a £600 integrated, be sure to audition the RA-1062.

First impressions of the **RCD-1072** are excellent. This is the slickest machine in this group: the casework feels solid and the finish exceptional at the price... On its own terms it remains an enjoyable and informative CD player."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • SEPTEMBER 2003

COMPACT SYSTEMS



Linn Classik Music System £799.95

When purchased with speakers over £299*
When purchased on its own £849.95

"The Classik sounds simply marvellous... It offers the performance you'd expect from high quality separates in one lovely package - this is a very superior product."



Denon DM31 UD-M31 CD Receiver £189.95

When purchased with speakers over £99*
When purchased on its own £199.95

"The D-M30 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The D-M31 is even better, making it phenomenal value for money."

NB - DENON DM31 & LINN CLASSIK PRICES EXCLUDE SPEAKERS

NEW

Acoustic Energy Aelite Three Speakers £749.95

"Acoustic Energy's new Aelite Threes weigh in at a hefty 18kg a piece, and their curved, real wood finished cabinets both look handsome and make good acoustic sense... So how do they perform... Give them a big room and position them in free space and they'll deliver great things... If you want a big sound for sensible money, don't hesitate to audition the Aelite Threes."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
Sept 04

Pioneer PDR-609 CD Recorder £169.95

"This is the third time Pioneer has won Product of the Year in the recorders section. First with the PDR-509, and then last year with the PDR-609.

Features include 24-bit/96kHz digital-analogue-conversion, backed up by Pioneer's Legato Link filtering and manual recording level controls, ideal when making compilations to standardise levels. All this means you get great copies from the Pioneer... and remarkable value."



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION
Product of the year 2002
RECORDERS
Pioneer PDR-609

MUSIC ALL AROUND THE HOME

You've heard of hi-fi - now welcome to the world of wi-fi! Wi-fi devices allow you to network a range of devices together - from your music system to your PC - without the wires. For example, a multiroom server like Yamaha's MusicCAST can wirelessly send music to up to five 'client' playback systems dotted around your home. That music could be stored on the MusicCAST server device or other sources - existing hi-fi kit, maybe, or an internet radio station or MP3 files from your PC; plug-in adapters make it easy to wi-fi-enable products.



YAMAHA MusicCAST

MCX A10£599.95
(MusicCAST Client)

MCX 1000.....£1799.95
(MusicCAST Server)

CYRUSLINK

Linkserver 160£2999.95
(Four Zone HD Server 160Gb Drive)

Linkserver 250£3499.95
(Four Zone HD Server 250Gb Drive)

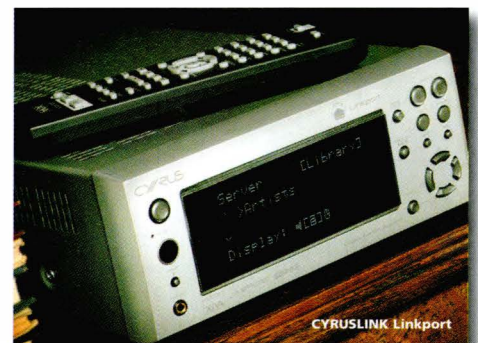
Linkport£649.95

Linkwand.....£199.95



Cyruslink

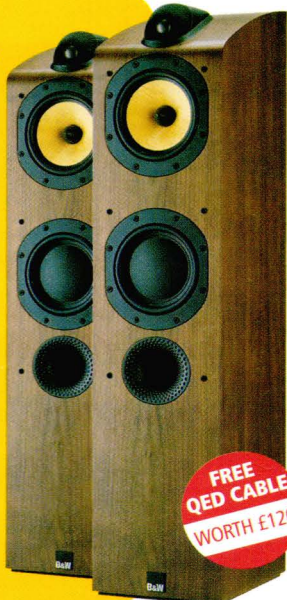
AVAILABLE AT SELECTED
SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION STORES



YAMAHA'S MusicCAST
MCX-1000 DIGITAL SERVER
& MCX-A10 CLIENT

B&W 704 Speakers £1399.95

The 704 speakers are part of B&W's new 700 series. These floorstanding, two-and-a-half-way, vented box speakers are available in a variety of attractive finishes. In a recent What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision group test the 704 offered "Remarkable openness and clarity that is unrivalled at this price."



FREE
QED CABLE
WORTH £120

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION
★★★★★
Mar 04

PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.

*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 22/09/04, E&OE.

experience more

experience more
experience more



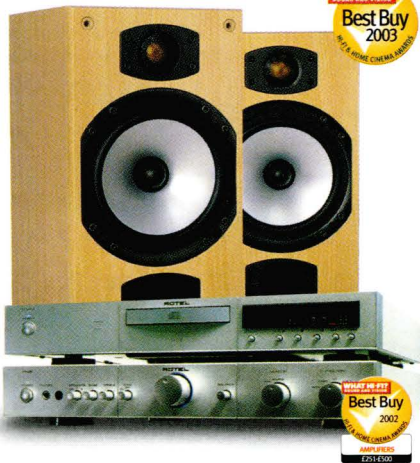
SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Rotel
RCD-02 CD Player
RA-02 Amplifier



Monitor Audio
Bronze B2 Speakers

For this recommended Hi-Fi System we have combined Rotel's highly rated RCD-02 CD player and RA-02 amplifier with Monitor Audio's beautifully balanced Bronze B2 speakers. This package gives a powerful, fresh and vibrant sound. The compact 'B2' speakers, available in a variety of finishes, were awarded 'Best Buy' by What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, with the sound being described as "Superb... Speakers don't get much better than the B2's".



The RA-02 amplifier features remote control and a phono input. The RCD-02 (★★★★★ - What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision - August 2003) is HDCD compatible and includes a digital output for connecting to a digital recorder.

SYSTEM PRICE | SAVE
£799.95 | **£129**
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 1 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS



Arcam
CD73T CD Player
A65 Plus Amplifier

KEF
Q4 Speakers

Arcam and KEF both have an enviable reputation for producing great sounding kit without breaking the bank. This system shows why with a well balanced sound that's both musically involving and enjoyable.

At the front of this package is Arcam's upgradeable CD73T CD player - a What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision 'Product of the Year 2003'. We've coupled this with Arcam's complementary A65 Plus integrated amplifier and KEF's new Q4 floostanding speakers featuring KEF's unique Uni-Q technology for easier room placement.

SYSTEM PRICE | SAVE
£999.95 | **£149**
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 2 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION



SEPARATE HI-FI SYSTEMS

Roksan Kandy
KD1/III CD Player
KA1/III Amplifier



Monitor Audio
Silver S6 Speakers



The combination of Roksan's Kandy MK3 CD and amplifier is, according to What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, "Something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination" (December 2003). We have partnered these with the Silver S6 floostanding speakers from British

speaker specialists, Monitor Audio. The combination of Roksan's excellent rhythm and timing, with its tight bass and sweet detailed treble coupled with the 'S6's' ability to stay unruffled even when the music is at its most complex, makes this a remarkable system.

SYSTEM PRICE | SAVE
£1889.95 | **£300***
PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS



HI-FI SYSTEM 3 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



PRODUCT RANGE

An outstanding selection of products are on display and available for demonstration at all Sevenoaks Sound & Vision stores.

However, some products may not be available at all stores. Please call to check availability before travelling.

TURNTABLES

Goldring GR1	£139.95
Michell Gyro SE/RB300 E50 GOLDRING CARTRIDGE*	£1049.95
Michell TechnoDec (Ex Arm)	£574.95
Project Debut Phono SB	£169.95
Project Debut II (Black)	£119.95
Project Debut II (Colours)	£134.95
Project 1 Xpression	£209.95

TUNERS

Arcam DIVA T61	£199.95
Cyrus FM X	£499.95
Denon TU260L MKII	£99.95
Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/AM/FM	£299.95
Marantz ST4000	£99.95
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£199.95
Pure DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB	£279.95
Roksan Kandy KT1 MKIII	£549.95

CD PLAYERS

Arcam DIVA CD73T	£399.95
Arcam DIVA CD192	£849.95
Arcam FMJ CD33T	£1299.95
Cyrus CD6	£599.95
Cyrus CD8	£999.95
Cyrus DAC-X	£1099.95
Denon DCD485	£119.95
Linn Genki	£1099.95
Linn Ikemi	£2199.95
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Musical Fidelity X-Ray 9i	£899.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2	£999.95
Musical Fidelity A308P	£1999.95
Quad 99 CD-P	£999.95
Roksan Kandy KD1 MKIII	£649.95
Roksan Caspian M	£1099.95
Rotel RCD02	£379.95
Rotel RCD1072	£594.95

CD RECORDERS

Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW	£169.95
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AMPLIFIERS

Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	£ CALL
Arcam DIVA A80	£599.95
Arcam DIVA A90	£849.95
Arcam FMJ A32	£1149.95
Cyrus 6	£599.95
Cyrus 8	£799.95
Cyrus Pre X Pre	£999.95
Cyrus Mono X Power	(Each) £1199.95
Denon PMA355	£179.95
Linn Kolektor Pre	£574.95
Linn UK85 Power	£544.95
Marantz PM4400	£149.95
Marantz PM7200	£249.95

Musical Fidelity X-80	£599.95
Musical Fidelity X-150	£799.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2	£979.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Pre	£999.95
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Power	£999.95
Musical Fidelity A308	£1999.95
Quad 99 Power	£549.95
Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII	£649.95
Roksan Caspian M	£999.95
Rotel RA-01	£249.95
Rotel RA-02	£349.95
Rotel RA-1062	£594.95

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Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£279.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Two	£449.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Three	£749.95
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII (From)	£1699.95
B&W DM601 S3	£249.95
B&W DM602 S3	£299.95
B&W 704	£1399.95
B&W 705	£899.95
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KEF Q4	£399.95
KEF XQ1	£749.95
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Mission 782SE	£899.95
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Monitor Audio Silver S1	£299.95
Monitor Audio Silver S6	£599.95
Monitor Audio Silver S8	£799.95
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Monitor Audio Gold Reference 20	£1499.95
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Quad 12L	£499.95
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HI-FI SYSTEMS

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Denon DM31 Ex Speakers	£199.95
Linn Classic Music Ex Speakers	£849.95
Teac Legacy 600 Ex Speakers	£199.95

Denon ADV-M71 Inc SC-M51 Speakers	£499.95
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Denon DVD-770SD/AVR-770SD Ex Speakers	£599.95
Jamo DVS90/A305PDD Inc Speakers	£649.95
Jamo DVS90/A355PDD Inc Speakers	£899.95
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£1199.95
Linn Classic Movie Di Ex Speakers	£2299.95
Teac Legacy 700/LS-L800 Inc Speakers	£799.95

MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

Cyrus Linkserver 160	£2999.95
Cyrus Linkserver 250	£3499.95
Cyrus Linkport	£649.95
Cyrus Linkwand	£199.95
Yamaha MusicCast MCX A10	£599.95
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DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam DIVA DV78	£699.95	£699.95
Arcam DIVA DV79	£999.95	£999.95
Cyrus DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1710	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2200 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2900 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-AT1	£1599.95	£1599.95
Harman Kardon DVD22	£299.95	£299.95
Harman Kardon DVD31	£399.95	£399.95
Pioneer DV370	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV575A Universal	£149.95	£179.95

Pioneer DV668Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV868Avi Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Toshiba SD240E	£ CALL	£ CALL
Toshiba SD340E	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S540	£119.95	£119.95
Yamaha DVD-S1500	£399.95	£399.95

DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-E55 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E65 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E65 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E95 DVD-RAM	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR3100S DVD-R/RW	£379.95	£399.95
Pioneer DVR1100HS DVD-R/RW	£469.95	£499.95
Pioneer DVR-520H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-720H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-920H HDD/DVD-RW	£ CALL	£ CALL

A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

Arcam AVR200 A/V Receiver	£599.95
Arcam AVR300 A/V Receiver	£1299.95
Arcam AV8/P7 A/V Pre/Processor/Power	£5499.95
Cyrus AV8 A/V Processor	£1099.95
Denon AVC-A1SRA A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
Denon AVC-A1SRA A/V Amplifier	£2199.95
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Denon AVR1804 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
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Denon AVR3805 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR330 A/V Receiver	£599.95
Harman Kardon AVR630 A/V Receiver	£999.95
Harman Kardon DPR2005 A/V Receiver	£1299.95
Onkyo TX-NR801E A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-C501 A/V Receiver	£329.95
Pioneer VSX-DB12 A/V Receiver	£319.95
Pioneer VSX-AX3 A/V Receiver	£649.95
Pioneer VSX-AX51 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
Rotel RSX1067 A/V Receiver	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1066/RMB1075 A/V Pre/Power	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1098 A/V Processor	£2294.95
Yamaha DSP-AX750SE A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha DSP-AX640SE A/V Amplifier	£299.95
Yamaha DSP-Z9 A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V650 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V650 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V1400RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V2400RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL

A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

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B&W DM300 AV	£899.95
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Infinity TSS750	£499.95
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KEF KHT5005 £200 FREE QED CABLE*	£1199.95
KEF Q7 AV £300 FREE QED CABLE*	£2199.95
M&K K5 £250 FREE QED CABLE*	£1699.95
M&K K3	£1894.95
M&K Xenon 25	£2249.95
M&K 850/CS35/AV850	£3899.95
Mission M30 AV Pack	£449.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
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Monitor Audio Radius 5.1	£999.95

SUBWOOFERS

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Sharp Aquos LC-30AD1E 30"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-30H4E 30"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-32GD1 32"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-37AD1 37"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-37H4E 37"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-37GD1 37"	£ CALL
Toshiba 26WL36P 26"	£ CALL
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Screenplay SP4805 DLP	£1299.95
Screenplay SP5700 DLP	£2699.95
Screenplay SP7205 DLP	£4999.95
Sharp XV-Z91E DLP	£1799.95
Sharp XV-Z200 DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Dominio 20 DLP	£3499.95
Sim 2 Dominio 20 HDMI DLP	£3999.95
Sim 2 HT300 Xtra DLP	£799.95
Sim 2 HT300 Xtra HDMI DLP	£7999.95
Sim 2 HT500 Link DLP	£2499.95
ThemeScene H30 Cinema DLP	£1199.95
ThemeScene H56 Cinema DLP	£1999.95
ThemeScene H77 Cinema DLP	£3499.95

REMOTE CONTROLS

Marantz RC5400	£399.95
Marantz RC9200	£799.95
Philips i-Pronto RU1000	£1399.95

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Founded in 1972, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is one of the largest and most successful hi-fi and home cinema retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD players, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems, all at highly competitive prices.

Friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

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STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated and pre/power amps



Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp combinations. Integrated simply means that both pre and power sections are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the low level, delicate signals in the preamp from the radiations of a power amp, so the more ambitious designs come in two or more cases. In some cases, each channel has its own power amp called a monoblock.

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves – aka tubes – live on owing to aspects of sound quality that transistors can't replicate. If you want to play your music loud, use transistors; if you appreciate acoustic music, try valves.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a ten watt valve amp, but it takes a 200W behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. As a rule, you can't have too much power.

How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or three-dimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room.

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

HOME CINEMA STEREO

Stereo amps can be used in home cinema set-ups as well. You don't get the surround and centre channels, but well set-up stereo speakers do a remarkably good job of creating atmosphere for movies. Stereo amps

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noise-inducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

Q&A

SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON ALL THE TIME FOR BEST RESULTS?

All audio electronics perform better when they are warmed up, and this is particularly the case when it comes to amplifiers. If there's no way that you can leave it on all the time, make an effort to switch it on at least 20 minutes before listening.

WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPLING?

Bi-wiring is when you run separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on the speaker. In most instances, this improves sound quality so long as identical cables are used. Bi-amping is using two stereo amps to drive one pair of speakers, using one amp to drive the treble and the other for the bass/mid sections of the speakers.

WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE SO LITTLE POWER?

Valve amps are inherently low powered in absolute terms – at least when you compare them to their transistor-based cousins. But when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.

TOP BUYS



Marantz PM7200 £330

A true budget belter from Marantz – power and finesse in equal measure, plus the ability to switch between Class A and Class AB operation. Giant killing amps are back!



Roksan Caspian M Series £1,000

The latest version of Roksan's long-running mid-market amp is a truly expressive performer, good enough to pick up a gong in our 2003 Awards.



Quad 99 Pre/909 £1,650

This neat pre/power combo is much more engaging than stereotypical Quads of old, yet retains their purposeful, no-nonsense appeal. A great value two-box option.



Primare PRE30/A30.2 £2,400

Beautifully made and with a sound to match, this Scandinavian pre/power combines warmth and body with energy and detail – a truly musical performer.

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EB EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
<small>BB</small>	Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price	5	●	●	●	40	232
<small>BB</small>	Arcam DIVA A75 Plus	470	Quick, lively and well-presented amplifier, bass is sharper and more tuneful than its predecessor	5	●	●	●	50	224
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	Arcam's most successful mid-range amp to date – sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
<small>BB</small>	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Enhanced replacement for A85, convertible to 7.1 sound with the addition of an add-on module and extra P90 power amps	6	opt	●	●	90	250
<small>BB</small>	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt	●		70	255
<small>BB</small>	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	●	●	50	255
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640A	250	Cambridge has a powerful weapon in the battle for budget amp supremacy, it's a lot of musical entertainment for the money	5	opt	●		65	250
	Cyrus 8	800	Impressive at low to medium volumes, and a clear improvement on its predecessor, but deteriorates at high power levels	7		●	●	70	239
<small>BB</small>	Exposure 3010 Integrated	1,000	A mix of old and new, combining greater power with Exposure's traditionally sweet and enthralling sound	6	●	●	●	120	244
	Icon Audio Stereo 40i	900	Stylish and very sharply priced valve amp is a good all-rounder	4				37	254
<small>BB</small>	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
<small>BB</small>	Marantz PM7200	330	High power, plenty of features, and remarkably clear and informative sound with lots of impact	6	●	●	●	105	248
<small>BB</small>	Marantz PM7200Ki	500	Even more refined version of basic amp, with notably improved bass purity	6	●	●	●	95	254
<small>BB</small>	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
<small>BB</small>	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		●	●	80	253
<small>BB</small>	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grunty, musical manner	4		●		50	252
<small>BB</small>	Primare I20	750	An amplifier with attitude: punchy fast and secure sounding, with excellent build quality for the money	4		●		70	239
<small>BB</small>	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,000	Improved mid-range model from Roksan is a fine, expressive amplifier – right at the top of its class	6		●		85	248
<small>BB</small>	Rotel RA-02	349	Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music	4	●	●	●	40	232
<small>BB</small>	Rotel RA-1062	595	A great value amp with a detailed and engaging sound, and the ability to drive almost any speaker in its path	5	●	●		95	251
<small>BB</small>	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
<small>BB</small>	Thule IA60B SE	895	An amp that's so faithful to the spirit and detail of the source material and costs less than £1,000 is hard to fault	5		●		75	253
ABOVE £1,000									
<small>BB</small>	Arcam FMJ A32	1,150	Remarkably flexible and well-featured, with excellent sound quality for the price	7	●	●	●	100	228
<small>BB</small>	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
<small>BB</small>	Audio Analogue Maestro Setanta	1,750	Beautifully made Italian amp sounds fast, deep and very smooth, though perhaps not the most dynamic	5	●	●		70	257
<small>BB</small>	Audio Research VS155	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
<small>EB</small>	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
<small>BB</small>	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
	Hegel H1	1,500	A rich and responsive amp that revels in great music with a warmth that encourages non-stop listening	6		●		120	254
<small>EB</small>	Karan KA-i180	3,900	Lean, sharp and articulate, this impressively constructed heavyweight is almost up there with the audiophile pre/power elite	4		●		180	236
<small>EB</small>	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
<small>BB</small>	Primare A30.1	1,500	Smooth, detailed singing quality, elegant appearance and a healthy power yield	6		●		100	214

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EB EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £2,000										
<small>BB</small>	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	●	●	7	●	●	100	227
<small>BB</small>	Croft Vitali/Series 5C	2,000	Oddball retro style and ergonomics, but truly magical voice coherence and projection, great transparency	●	●	3	●		30	216
	Densen Beat 200/300	1,985	Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote £300 extra)	●	●	6	opt	opt	100	216
<small>BB</small>	Exposure 3010 Integrated/Power	1,800	Simple units with various connection options which give very satisfying sound in all areas	●	●	6	opt	●	116	256
<small>BB</small>	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
ABOVE £2,000										
<small>EB</small>	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B P-P design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	●	●	8	opt	●	300	241
<small>EB</small>	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6		●	300	249

SPECS KEY **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **PHONO INPUT** Input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge. Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. **REMOTE CONTROL** A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** To drive your cans with. **POWER OUTPUT** Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE
STEREO AMPLIFIERS continued

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●		50	254
■	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection		●				180	253
BEST BUY	Exposure XXIII/XXVIII	2,790	Highly natural and dynamic amplifier that offers the fluidity and energy of valves via transistors	●	●	6	opt	●	70	241
■	Garnut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●				200	247
■	Halcro dm10/dm68	75,900	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	●	225	243
■	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt		125	250
■	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●				700	234
■	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●		4		●		238
	Naim NAC202/NAP200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8		●	70	241
■	Naim NAP500	10,995	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●				140	208
■	Naim NAC552	11,750	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●		6		●		233
BEST BUY	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer	●	●	7		●	128	256
■	Quad QC-24/II-40	4,007	Big, muscular valve sound that's smooth and easy on the ears, plus solid engineering with good power delivery	●	●	7			40	254
	Roksan Caspian M Series pre/pwr	2,050	Confident and highly enjoyable sound with lively music, perhaps a little less sure with subtler, complex scores	●	●	6		●	78	256
■	Sugden Masterclass AA	5,600	Yorkshire's finest class A kit. Dynamic and tonally rich, this gives even valve amps a run for their money	●	●	7		●	35	246
■	Unison Research Unico Pre/DM	2,590	Hybrid designs with a rich powerful performance that makes a fine balance between valve and solid state sound	●	●	3	●	●	150	242

AV AMPLIFIERS

Surround sound amps for music and movies

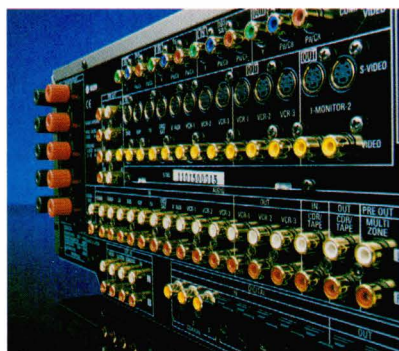


The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or receiver (an amp with a radio tuner built in).

So if you fancy hearing what DVD-Audio, SACD or even music DVD-Video can do, then check out a multichannel amp and speaker set-up – they're stunning with movies and none too shabby with music.

AV amps are usually designed primarily for movies and come with digital processing for the various soundtrack formats – Dolby Pro-Logic (analogue), Dolby Digital and DTS, which offer discrete surround sound in 5.1 and 7.1 channel formats. More ambitious designs also offer THX post processing, designed to emulate the sound of the mixing theatre at home.

Processing in AV amps is needed because the surround formats on DVD-Vs are compressed, limiting their high-fidelity



potential. This is why new formats SACD and DVD-A, which don't use 'lossy' compression, were created for music.

All this processing power can take its toll on analogue formats. The best multichannel amps for music are often the simplest, but any that offer a complete bypass option with six-channel input are suitable. It's also worth looking at real power – five or seven channels of amplification are not easy to produce with a feeble power supply, and the cheaper amps in particular often fail to live up to the claims.

Q&A

HOW MANY CHANNELS?

Depends on how many speakers you want. Multichannel music discs come with six or 5.1 channels, but for new movies, 7.1 systems are where it's at. 7.1 set-ups also mean you have speakers directly behind you – preferable for music discs.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PROCESSOR AND AN AV AMP?

Processors don't have amplification on board and you need separate power amps. AV amps and receivers have processing and amps in the same box.

WHAT DOES THE .1 IN 5.1 STAND FOR?

This is the LFE (low frequency effects) or bass channel that is reproduced by a subwoofer.

HI-FI MEETS SURROUND SOUND

With DVD-Audio and SACD offering high-quality multichannel music, surround sound is no longer just a home cinema thing. An increasing number of people want to build a multichannel system that will do their music as well as their movie

DVDs justice, and the number of AV products delivering sufficient quality is on the increase. But most aren't cheap – building a top-quality system with five or more channels is inevitably more expensive than sticking with stereo. There

are some very decent integrated options below £1,000, though the best (and most costly) route is to buy a separate processor and power amp(s). Or you can add AV amplification to a stereo model you can't bear to part with.

TOP BUYS



Sony
STR-DB790 £300
It used to be the rule that you had to spend close to a grand to get an AV amp that shines with music. Not any more.



Denon
AVR-3805 £1,000
Combines admirable sound across all music and movie formats with features like full auto set-up, i.Link and the latest surround formats – a class act at £1,000.



Denon
AVC-A1SR £3,000
Despite hot competition from Pioneer and Sony, this amp (now upgraded to the AVC-A1SR 'A') remains our favourite top-end integrated multichannel amp solution.



Arcam
AV8/P7 £5,498
A fantastic achievement from this respected UK brand – a top-ranking AV processor and seven-channel power amp.

Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS								
	Arcam AVR200	800	Upgraded AVR100 with Dolby Pro-Logic II and some bass management. Great for stereo, a bit bass-light for multichannel	●	6	●	70	229
BEST BUY	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	●	130	251
BEST BUY	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	●	●	●	120	256
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Denon AVC-A1SR	3,000	An AV amp with genuine high-res hi-fi credentials. Includes a ground-breaking 'wide bandwidth' digital audio link	●	8	●	170	232
	Marantz SR9300	2,000	Not a high flyer, just a thoroughly enjoyable, warm and attractive sounding receiver with music and film soundtracks alike	●	8	●	105	252
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry	●	3	●	160	255
BEST BUY	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	●	100	248
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Pioneer VSA-AX10i	2,700	Seven channel tour de force with automatic speaker set up and EQ, excellent with music, movies and DVD-A/SACD	●	11	●	150	229
BEST BUY	Sony STR-DB790	300	No six channel amplifier has any right to be able to sound this good at such a ridiculously affordable price	●	7	●	112	251
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	●	200	253
	Yamaha RX-V1400	800	Equipped for every occasion, this is a capable receiver with stereo music and better yet with DVD-A/SACD and movie sources	●	9	●	175	251
MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS								
BEST BUY	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1	●	8	●	90	250
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Arcam AV8/P7	5,498	State-of-the-art processor (£2,999) and seven-channel power amp (£2,499). An excellent fusion of stereo and surround sound	●	7	●	180	235
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art	●	5	●	125	236
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound	●	3	●	105	238
EDITOR'S CHOICE	EAD TheaterMaster 8000 Pro	5,200	Arguably the most 'musical' sounding AV processor to date – tested with the PowerMaster 8300 multichannel power amp	●	9	●	●	242
BEST BUY	Marantz PS-17/2x SM-17	3,400	Classy and capable system, great steering, warm solid sound and high detail resolution, and some great gadgets	●	10	●	60	238
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration	●	6	●	●	230
	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering	●	5	●	50	238
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Parasound Halo C1/A51	8,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen	●	11	●	250	243
BEST BUY	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world	●	5	●	120	238

SPECS KEY **RECEIVER** Integrated multichannel amp with built-in radio tuner. **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **7.1 CHANNEL COMPATIBLE** The amp either has seven-channel in and outputs or in some instances is equipped with seven channels of amplification. **5-CHANNEL POWER (W)** Power output in watts per channel of all channels driven by the amp.

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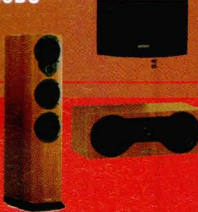
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- RGB SCART INPUT FOR EASY CONNECTION
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PANASONIC PRODUCT LISTINGS

MAKE	MODEL	MAKE	MODEL	MAKE	MODEL
PANA	TX-47PT10	PANA	TX-32DT4	PANA	DMR-HS2EBS
PANA	TX-42PT12	PANA	NV-VP30EBS	PANA	NV-SV120EBS
PANA	TX-32PS1	PANA	DVD-S35EBS	PANA	DMC-LC40B
PANA	TX-28PS5	PANA	DVD-S35EBS	PANA	NV-HV60EBS
PANA	TX-28DK2	PANA	DVD-LV65EBS	PANA	NV-HS800
PANA	TX-28DK2			PANA	DMC-LC5B
PANA	TX-24PS1				

Panasonic

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Panasonic TX-28PS5 INC CAB

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- LEFT & RIGHT 10W X 2 • LEFT & RIGHT TWEETERS 10W X 2 • SUBWOOFER 12W • QLINK

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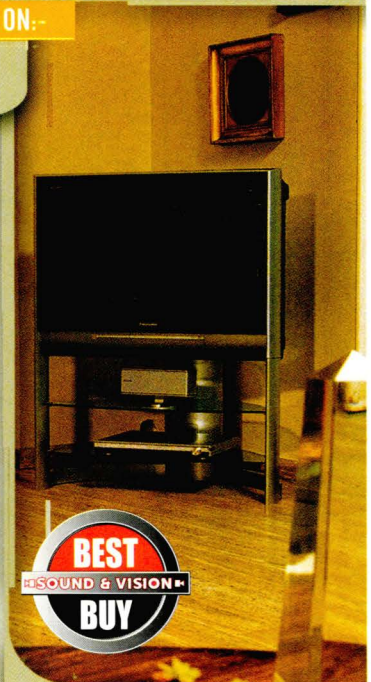
Panasonic

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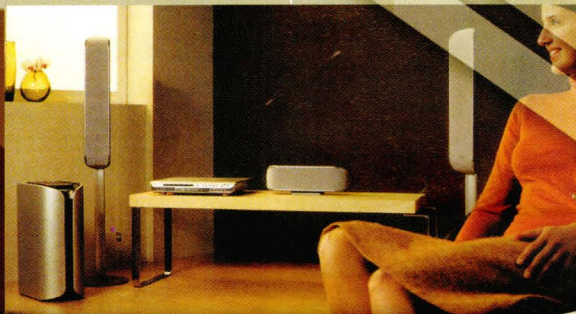
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SONY KV-36FS76

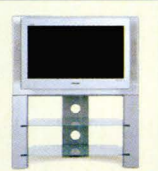
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- CABINET INCLUDED



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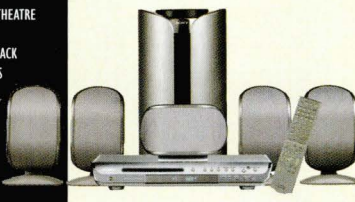


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DAV-SC5



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SONY

KV-32FQ70 WITH STAND

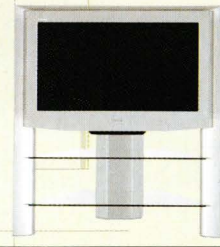
- 32" VISIBLE FD TRINITRON WEGA SCREEN (32" TUBE) • 100HZ DIGITAL PLUS (ABAB)
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- DIGITAL NOISE REDUCTION (DNR)
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KD-32DX50 WITH STAND



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SONY PRODUCT LISTINGS

MAKE	MODEL	MAKE	MODEL	MAKE	MODEL
SONY	VPL-W12HT	SONY	KD-32NX200	SONY	DVP-NS330
SONY	KV-32LS36	SONY	KD-36NX300	SONY	DVP-NS330
SONY	KV-28LS36	SONY	KE-32TS2E	SONY	OSC-VI
SONY	KP-44PX2	SONY	SLV-0950GS	SONY	OSC-U50
SONY	KV-17HR	SONY	RDR-GX3	SONY	OSC-U30
SONY	KF-60SX300	SONY	HTP310D		
SONY	KE-50MR1	SONY	DVP-NS999ESN		



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STEREO SPEAKERS

Speaker pairs for stereo sound



While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

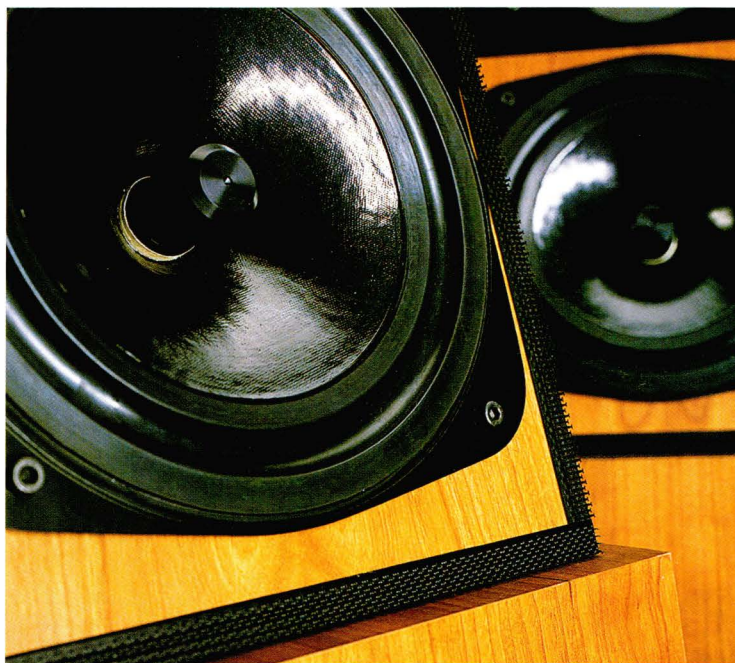
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.



Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

POWER

Though some speakers have a power rating, this isn't as informative as a rating for how difficult they are to drive, nor does it indicate wattage extremes for the partnering amp. In practice, an amplifier cannot be too powerful. Our listings quote ease of drive to indicate how much power

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

Q&A

IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.

TOP BUYS



Tannoy
Sensys DC1 £449

A new dual-concentric main driver plus super-tweeter in a solid standmount box results in a neutral yet expressive speaker at a very tempting price.



PMC
GB1 £995

An attractively compact floorstander with a beautifully articulate sound and remarkable freedom from boxiness. A great buy if you've just under a grand to spend.



B&W
703 £2,000

A hi-tech, three-way floorstander sporting a 'surroundless' midrange driver. Delivers a thoroughly engaging sound with great bass and an expressive midrange.



Focal-JMLab
Micro Utopia Be £3,500

The smallest model in the top-end Utopia Be range is a remarkable piece of speaker engineering, complete with beryllium tweeter and a highly revealing sound.

Our favourite STEREO SPEAKERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

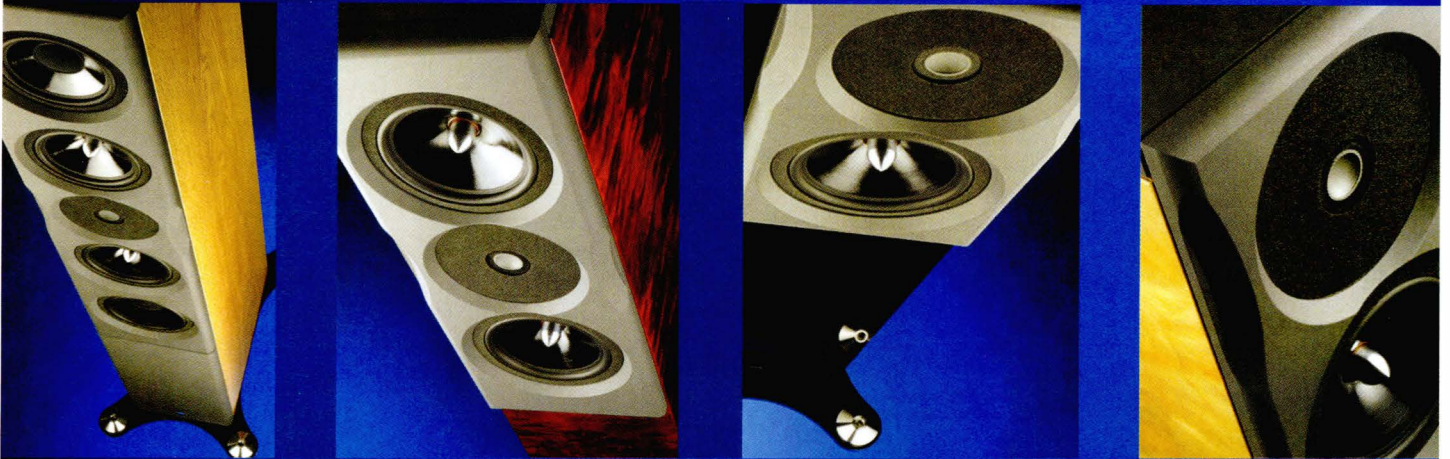
Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000										
EB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24	A	30	●			226
EB	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A-	55		●		253
EB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23	A	23			●	226
EB	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29	A	25	●			234
	B&W DM309	330	Much of the grace and punch of the smaller DM303 – a superb floorstander for the money	20,91,30	●	A	60	●		235
EB	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	●	A-	25	●		231
EB	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29	A	35	●			253
	Castle Durham 3	399	A very attractive near-miniature wallmount with a lively and communicative disposition – lots of fun	19,37,22	A	45	●			227
EB	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	●	A+	30	●		237
EB	Castle Harlech S2	1,000	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too	20,96,33	●	A	50	●		219
EB	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price	17,29,24	A	40	●			215
	Dynaudio Audience 52	557	Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested – £647)	20,33,26	A-	30	●			250
	Dynaudio Audience 62	729	Pricy but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically – lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	●	A	30	●		231
EB	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A-	60	●			241
EB	Focal-JMLab Chorus 707 S	350	The size and shape might be unfashionable, but this is an outstanding all-round performer at a very sharp price	24,49,30	A	25	●			251
EB	Focal-JMLab Chorus 716 S	550	Not the smoothest around, but combines coherent voicing with fine dynamic expression and real authority	22,95,30	●	A	20	●		250
	Focal-JMLab Chorus 726 S	780	Big generous sound with good dynamic freedom, hampered by some voice-band congestion	22,100,32	●	A+	55	●		253
EB	Focal-JMLab Cobalt 816 S	999	Great all-rounder – lively and dynamic, smooth and neutral, marred only by a slight treble 'sting'	22,98,31	●	A-	25	●		242
	KEF Q1	250	Stylish if slightly small-sounding stand-mount with fine midband coherence; works well close to a wall	22,35,30	A	30			●	234
	KEF Q4	400	Beautiful, bijou three-way floorstander lacks some bass weight but has a lovely midband with low coloration	18,82,25	●	A	38		●	255
	Leema Xen	1,000	A true micro-mini-monitor with remarkable powers of analysis and great musical insight, if a touch forward	14,22,23	A-	50			●	245
	Mission m35	400	Very good material value – a big speaker with ample bass and a notably open yet also rather bright top end	26,103,37	●	A	23	●		255
	Monitor Audio Bronze B2	200	A lively and entertaining speaker with tight controlled bass and pronounced midband	19,35,25	A	42			●	238
EB	Monitor Audio Bronze B4	350	A beautifully balanced loudspeaker with fine overall dynamic range and good imaging	19,85,26	●	A	23	●		255
	Monitor Audio Silver S1	300	Super-quick sonics thanks to the C-CAM metalised drivers. Resolution and speed – a great value box	18,30,24	A	45			●	236
	Monitor Audio Silver S8	800	A thoroughly impressive all-rounder, notable for its wide dynamic range, excellent imaging and fine neutrality	19,90,27	●	A	20	●		237
	Monitor Audio Silver S10	1,000	Timing might be less than the best, but the full balance and fine dynamic range deliver plenty of detail	20,100,27	●	A+	20	●		242
EB	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906	350	Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems	18,85,27	●	A	45	●		254
	Neat Petite III	845	The treble is peaky, but this is still one of the most coherent and communicative miniatures around	20,31,20	A	30			●	211
EB	PMC GB1	995	Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end	16,92,24	●	A+	30	●		257
	Quad 22L	895	Lovely lacquer finish over birds-eye maple veneer, with a sound that's more open and forward than usual	21,87,28	●	A	25	●		257
EB	Rega Ela	749	Might have more grunt, but few can match its impressive agility, delicacy, and superior musical communication	23,89,30	●	A	28		●	250

SPECS KEY SIZE WxHxD (CM) Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **FLOORSTANDER** Speakers that don't require stands. **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively. **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus **ACT** Active – the speaker has its own in-built amplifier. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes – the smaller the number the deeper the bass. **FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

"...the Ultimatum is an exceptional achievement in every respect."

Hi Fi Choice



Ultimatum

by neat acoustics

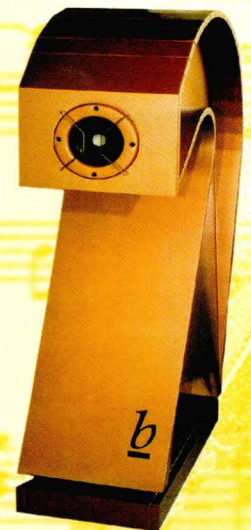
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Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS continued

Stereo speakers				SPECIFICATIONS							
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD)	FLOORSTANDER	FACE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER	
	Spendor SR5	1,000	This wall-mount very cleverly avoids the usual colorations, delivering a very dynamic if rather dry sound	31,31,18		A+	50	●	●	240	
	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appolito twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	●	255	
	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29	●	A	40	●	●	245	
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricy but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+			●	227	
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	●	250	
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●	●	231	
	Triangle Cellius 202	1,225	Looks rather bland and uninteresting, but this tall, high sensitivity speaker has a classy and dynamic midband	22,113,30	●	A-	27	●	●	257	
	Triangle Antal 202	925	Ugly duckling with the voice of a lark, thanks to its magical midband with plenty of dynamic brio	22,108,30	●	A+	30	●	●	253	
ABOVE £1,000											
EC	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●	●	251	
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MkII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●	●	251	
	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●	●	257	
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	●	●	221	
	ATC SCM35	1,999	If you want to hear the uncoloured truth about your record collection in all its glory, this is a speaker to treasure	23,88,30	●	A-	48	●	●	250	
EC	ATC Active 20	2,538	30k + 300W equals resolution and bass that most amp/speaker combinations dream about – a bargain	56,28,36		act	45	●	●	240	
EC	ATC SCM50 ASL	7,255	350W of power combine with superb drive units and a 48kg cabinet to provide alarming resolution	35,72,48		act	38	●	●	218	
	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	●	A+	22		●	256	
EC	B&O Beolab 5	10,000	Radical, environmentally independent active speaker has exceptional bass, neutrality, and imaging	49,97,49	●	act	<20	●	●	244	
	B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A small-sounding loudspeaker dynamically, but very stylish, clean and 'unboxy', delivering loads of detail	24,42,31		A	28	●	●	199	
	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	●	A	20	●	●	257	
	B&W 703	2,000	Elegant floorstander with excellent bass drive and mid dynamic range, but slightly strong and obvious top end	23,101,36	●	A-	20	●	●	247	
EC	B&W Signature 805	2,500	Gorgeous standmount sounds delicately transparent and laid back with very superior resolution and imaging	24,42,34		A	30		●	247	
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	●	A-	34	●	●	183	
EC	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	●	A-	34	●	●	186	
EC	B&W Nautilus 800	11,000	Unequivocal challenge for world domination. One of the most revealing speakers around	45,120,65	●	A-	<20	●	●	231	
	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	●	A+	25	●	●	257	
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80		●	244	
	Castle Howard S3	1,350	A solid all-rounder with uniquely spacious imaging, bit pricey compared to some though	21,99,32	●	A+	38	●	●	229	
	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●	●	229	
	Eclipse TD Lulét 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●	●	247	
EC	Ferguson Hill FH001	6,853	Looks and sounds wonderful, with realistic dynamic expression, but needs careful amp matching and sub(s)	90,166,80	●	A+	180		●	242	
EC	Focal-JMLab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42,5,38		A	50	●	●	245	
EC	Focal-JMLab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	●	A+	30	●	●	255	
EC	Focal-JMLab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53	●	A-	20	●	●	248	
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●	●	233	
	KEF Reference Model 205	4,000	Great looking speaker with a smooth, neutral and slightly 'cool' sound that could be tauter and more exciting	29,116,43	●	A-	20	●	●	245	
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28	●	A-	30	●	●	247	
EC	Living Voice Avatar	2,700	Dynamic and highly resolved, yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance	22,104,27	●	A+	40	●	●	218	
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	●	A+	35	●	●	244	

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Arcam CD82T CD Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	£599.00	£499.00	Loewe Aconda 32" Flat widescreen TV (1Yr G/tee)	£1800.00	£799.00
Arcam CD93 CD Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	£979.00	£699.00	Naim CDS2/XPS Player & Power Sup (2Yr G/tee)	£6265.00	£3495.00
Arcam DV88 Plus DVD Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	£999.00	£499.00	Naim Nait 5 Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)	£890.00	£659.00
Arcam DV89* DVD-A Player - New (2Yr G/tee)	£1299.00	£739.00	Naim NAC 112 Preamp (2Yr G/tee)	£660.00	£499.00
Arcam A65+ Amplifier (2Yr G/tee)	£369.00	£249.00	Naim NAP 150 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	£785.00	£595.00
Arcam A85* Amplifier Black - New (2Yr G/tee)	£799.00	£549.00	Naim NAP 180 Power Amp S/H - (1Yr G/tee)	£1225.00	£795.00
Arcam A85* Amp inc Phono- Blk (2Yr G/tee)	£909.00	£599.00	Naim Hi-Cap 2 P/S - old casework (2Yr G/tee)	£930.00	£695.00
AVI Pro 9 Plus Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)	£799.00	£569.00	Naim NBL Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee)	£7700.00	£4995.00
Linn Kolektor Preamp (2Yr G/tee)	£575.00	£375.00	Pioneer DVD656S Multiplayer (1Yr G/tee)	£349.00	£249.00
Linn Kairn Pro Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee)	£1400.00	£599.00	PMC TB2 Speakers - Black (2Yr G/tee)	£740.00	£539.00
Linn Numerik Dac S/H (1Yr G/tee)	£1100.00	£349.00	PMC DB1 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)	£555.00	£399.00
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee)	£549.00	£349.00	Yamaha DVD 530* DVD Player (1Yr G/tee)	£199.00	£79.00
Linn LP12/Ekos/Arkive Boron (2Yr G/tee)	£5350.00	£2675.00	Yamaha RXV 630 RDS A.V. Amp (1Yr G/tee)	£459.00	£299.00
Linn Keilidh Speakers R/nut inc stands S/H	£995.00	£375.00	Vibe Zeta Subwoofer (2Yr G/tee)	£600.00	£475.00

LOUDSPEAKERS

Our favourite  BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICESTEREO SPEAKERS *continued*

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (W/H/D) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FREQ (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●	257
	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●	245
	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	●	A-	44	●	257
	Naim Allae	1,990	Chunky little floorstander has a 'cold' overall balance, but remarkable powers of musical analysis	24,94,28	●	A	40	●	229
	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33	●	A-	20	●	232
	Naim NBL	6,925	Elegant, large floorstander is exceptionally informative, with an awesome dynamic range and dry, forward balance	29,116,47	●	A-	20	●	200
	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative, if a little bright	22,38,37	●	A+	25	●	241
	Neat Ultimatum MF9	8,500	Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality	22,150,40	●	A-	20	●	226
	PMC LB1	1,150	Still fully competitive eight years after our original review, this genuine compact monitor is now a modern classic	18,53,26	●	A-	40	●	199
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33	●	A	20	●	243
	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47	●	A-	25	●	237
	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●	254
	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	20	●	256
	Sonus Faber Cremona A	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32	●	A	48	●	246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	●	A+	23	●	257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	●	A+	40	●	256
	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●	240
	Tannoy Dimension TD10	5,000	Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for	35,101,37	●	A-	38	●	215
	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41	●	A-	23	●	225
	Tannoy Yorkminster	9,000	Deliciously delicate and expressive at low listening levels, it still has massive headroom when your in the mood	62x102x45	●	A+	20	●	255
	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27	●	A	25	●	247
	Triangle Zays 222	1,295	Wonderful freedom from time-smear gives invigorating and realistic dynamics, but colorations are also obvious	26,116,32	●	A	22	●	242
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32	●	A-	25	●	247
	Vandersteen 2Ce Sig	1,990	Very superior midband neutrality, impressive freedom from boxiness and splendid stereophony. A classic	41,109,26	●	A-	30	●	229
	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●	254
	Wilson benesch Discovery	5,500	Innovative three-way with built-in stand, combines great subtlety with weight and headroom	23,47,38	●	A-	45	●	212
	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,37	●	A	20	●	252
	Wilson Benesch Chimera	15,000	Elegant with lovely sonic delicacy and plenty of weight too. Works best at low levels, but a difficult load to drive	24,145,55	●	A-	20	●	234

AV SPEAKERS

Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound

Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.

TOP BUYS



B&W
600 S3 package £900
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



KEF
Q AV7 £1,300
With the latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value.



ATC
Concept 3 £4,877
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



Linn
Akurate package £13,750
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

Our favourite AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	●	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	A	6	27	●		241
BB	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures	A	5	22	●		224
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard	A	5	28		●	224
	Dynaudio Audience 42 package	1,142	Multichannel package for hi-fi purists with real authority and imaging, but needs subwoofer for full-bore movie sound	A-	5	53	●		241
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20	●		251
	Focal-JMlab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer	A	5	50	●		232
BB	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35	●		232
EC	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	●		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30	●		232
BB	Mission m5 package	1,450	Main m52 is a clean, attractive full-range stereo speaker, while the m5as sub does big bass for movie fans	A	6	28	●		241
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected	A	5	25		●	210
	PMC FB1/TB2	2,485	Classy, if bulky and pricey, package has good transparency, coherence and weight	A	5	20		●	210
	Rega Jura/Ara/Senta	938	Classy real wood package does a good all-round job, but sounds bright and might have more surround weight	A	5	25		●	210

SPECS KEY **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus. **NUMBER OF SPEAKERS** The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass. **FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners)

Our favourite SUBWOOFERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSUE NUMBER
EC	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
BB	REL Q150E	500	Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering	29,32,33	150	20	239
BB	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
BB	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
EC	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
BB	Ruark CL300	2,000	Shows what a good subwoofer can do: controlled, detailed and dynamic. A delight with music and movies alike	60,52,5,40	300	30	225
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

SPECS KEY **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **POWER (W)** How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers. **BASS FROM** How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

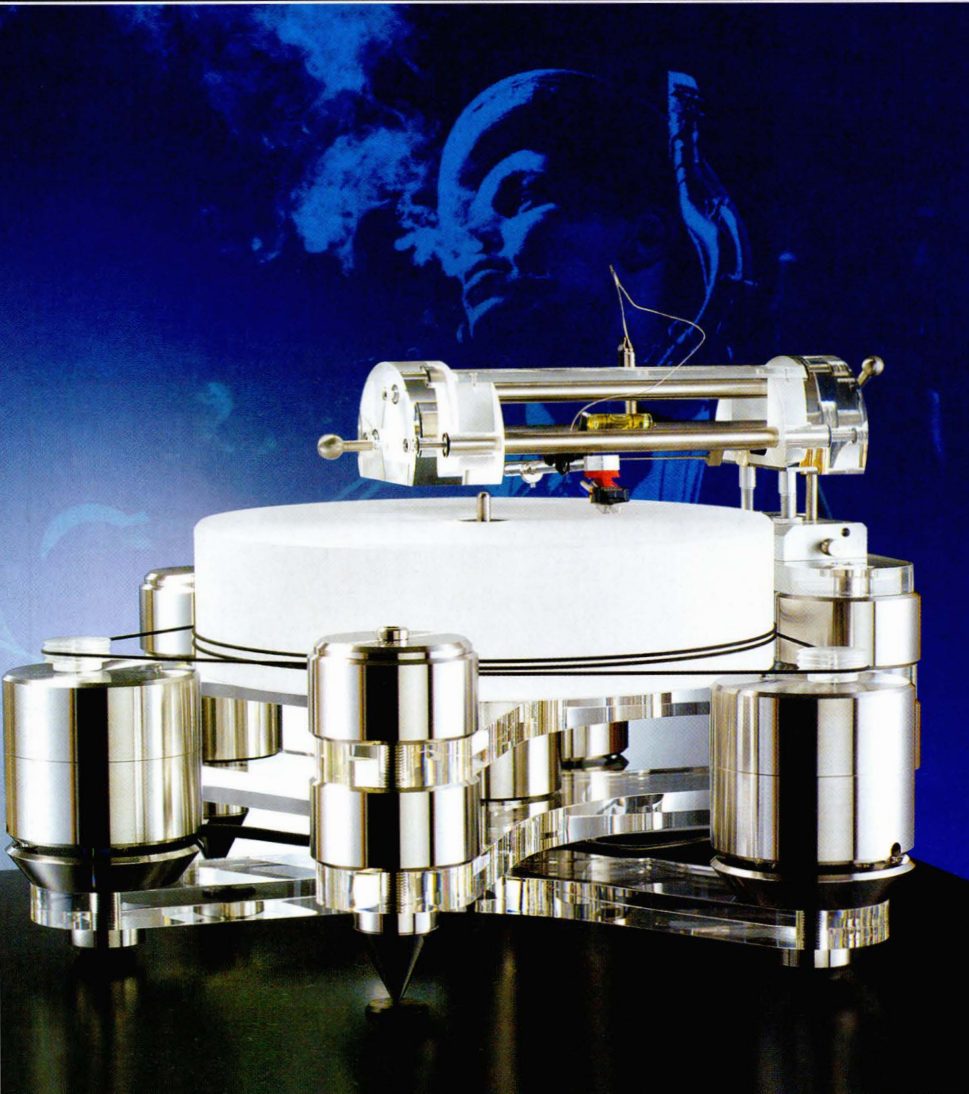
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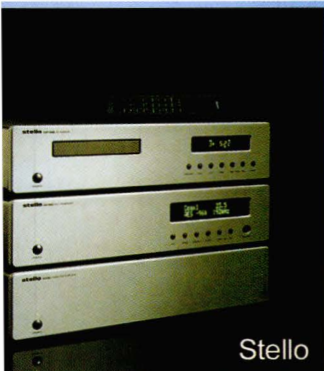
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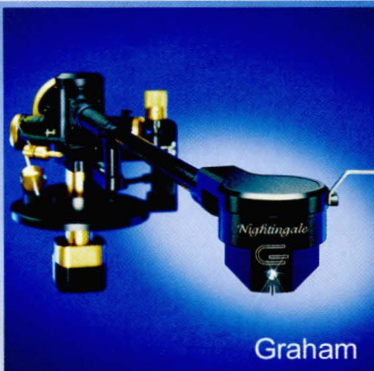
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HEADPHONES

For your ears only



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on

the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

Our favourite HEADPHONES

BB BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●		●	190	●	219
BB	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material			●		●	270	●	230
EC	AKG K1000	550	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only				●		270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			●		●	250		194
BB	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250	●	245
BB	Grado SR60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●			●	200	●	194
BB	Grado SR80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise		●			●	200	●	230
	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			●	●		330	●	219
BB	Sennheiser HD590	160	Assured and confident headphone with very low coloration and great comfort			●	●		270	●	205
EC	Sennheiser HD650	299	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			●	●		260	●	252
	Sony MDR-CD480	40	Generally neutral and nicely detailed – comfortable too			●	●		250	●	219
EC	Stax System II	400	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	●		●	●		295	●	205

SPECS KEY **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** Sealed capsules. **WEIGHT** In grams. **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR** Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc



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DEMONSTRATIONS SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

CABLES



Wires to hook your system together



Hi-fi cables come in two varieties: interconnects and speaker cables.

Interconnects come in preset lengths, generally with RCA phono plugs attached, though some equipment uses XLR connectors for balanced connection. Speaker cable is sold by the metre and can be used without plugs or can be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing the best cables is not quite as

straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford.

Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances

electrical varieties sound better than optical, but if you are after a smoother sound the light carriers have the advantage, as they do if long lengths are needed (10m+). Optical outputs tend to have Toslink connectors (around 99 per cent), but some electrical digital outputs are of the superior BNC type, which uses a bayonet-type socket. Check which type your digital component has before buying a digital interconnect.

Our favourite CABLES

BB BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				STRAINED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS									
EC	Avid Black Reference SCT	700	Rich, slightly dark sound that is beguiling and highly informative		●				256
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
	Chord Company Signature	499	Silver plated, triple screened. Some granularity but great resolving ability, a good match for Chord Signature loudspeaker cable		●	●			255
BB	Ecosse The Composer	30	A high degree of realism and delicacy, and a fantastic price (0.8m)	●		●			211
	Ecosse Reference Diva	100	Very good performance in all areas, with particularly fine, tuneful, bass (0.8m)	●		●			224
	Kimber Silver Streak	242	Not the cheapest around, but more than justifies itself with terrific poise and balance of virtues	●		●			241
BB	Kimber Timbre	72	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
BB	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound	●		●			224
	PM Dragon Tails	600	Targeted at valve equipment, but its virtues, including superb imaging, apply to solid-state duties too	●			●		249
	QED Qunex 1	20	Well balanced and easily rivals more expensive cables	●		●			211
BB	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
EC	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
BB	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
BB	van den Hul The Well	65	Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance	●		●			241
BB	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS									
BB	QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced				●	E	207
BB	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price		●		●	E	234
BB	Supra Trico	40	Very well made digital/video cable which noticeably improves the sound of a cheap DAC		●		●	E	241
BB	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O	234
SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE									
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll		●		●		241
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable		●		●		255
	Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life		●		●		227
EC	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available			●	●		241
BB	Kimber 4PR	5	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right		●		●		192
BB	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board. Price for 1m terminated pair		●		●		227
	Kimber 8PR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable		●		●		241
BB	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair		●		●		203
BB	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price		●		●		192
BB	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems			●	●		234
	QED X-Tube XT400	20	A practical cable with a liking for lively music, but slightly less assured with subtle classical grooves		●		●		248
	Supra Ply 3.4/S	9	Good in all areas, with rich bass and just a touch of treble roughness		●		●		203
EC	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round			●	●		241
BB	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight		●		●		248

SPECS KEY **STRAINED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal.

COPPER Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical.

Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated

WHY ON EARTH

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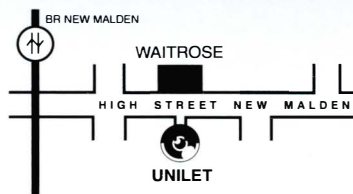
Constant deliveries of new models tend to clutter up our main showroom and our staff are often too busy demonstrating equipment in one of our many demo rooms to get the feather dusters out.

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The Hidden Hi-Fi Store



STANDS AND SUPPORTS

Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

Our favourite BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Aavik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47		4	MDF	193
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail	80	66,46		5	Glass	247
	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
	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
BB	Clearlight Audio RDC Aspekt	550	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53,5,45		4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46	●	4	Glass	206
BB	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab appearance, but good sound and efficient use of space	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
	Isoblu 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye	47	48,40		4	MDF	247
EC	Naim Fram	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte; a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
BB	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
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
EC	Townshend Seismic Stand II	1,140	multi-shelf air-suspension support which isolates like few others. Recommended	92	58, 45		5	MDF	240

Our favourite BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE SPEAKER STANDS

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14,5,18	●		3	202
	Custom Design R/S300 MKII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16,5,18	●		2	202
	hne Cableway	399	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material	63	17,20	●		1	220
BB	Kudos S50	115	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15, 20	●		1	220
	Partington ANSA 60	90	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	●		4	232
BB	Partington Dreadnought	100	Fully welded high-class engineering gives a very clean, open sound at a sharp price	61	17,15	●	●	5	220
	Sound Organisation Z522	95	Very hefty build for the price helps to deliver a solid sound with good authority and drive	60	16	●		4	220
	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48			0	202

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS SPECS KEY HEIGHT Of complete stand. TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). Single figures indicate a square platform.

WELDED As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF SHELVES** To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). **SHELF TYPE** Material that shelves are made of.

SPEAKER STANDS SPECS KEY HEIGHT Of each stand, not including spikes. TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) Width by depth of platform. Single figures indicate a square platform. Speakers generally overhang top plates.

FILLABLE The stand can be mass-loaded with sand and/or lead to stop ringing. **WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF LEGS** That support the stand.

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Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

Amplifiers: Arcam/FMJ, **Bryston**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, **Lexicon**, **Naim**, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and **Yamaha**. Televisions/LCD: Loewe.

Projectors: **Barco(CRT/DLP)**, **Sim (DLP)**, **Yamaha(DLP/LCD)** Screens: **Stewart/Draper/Vutec** ,

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GLOSSARY

TECHNICAL TERMS

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 The 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 have the advantage of offering lower distortion while Class B tends to generate less heat

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. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

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.

DAB (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the band 217.5 - 230MHz. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming.

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 A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear 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.

DSD (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB, it has over four times the data capacity of CD.

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 41 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

DVD-AUDIO High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz 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.

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.

KBPS (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality.

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 are 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.

MP3 (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables

PCM (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

PRESENCE BAND 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 (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

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 is more stringent than THX 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, ie above 3kHz

TWEETER Treble driver.

TWO/THREE-WAY Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-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.

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

AGGRESSIVE Forward and bright sonic character.

AMBIENCE The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made.

ANALYTICAL Highly detailed.

ARTICULATE Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

ATTACK The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

BALANCE Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels.

BODY Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin.

BOXY The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances.

BRIGHT A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble.

DARK A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

DECAY The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

DEFINITION (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

DEPTH (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

DETAIL The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment.

DRY A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

DYNAMIC The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

EUPHONIC An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

FAST Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

FOCUS A strong, precise sense of image projection.

FORWARD(NESS) Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

GRAINY A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

GRIP A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass.

GRUNT See grip.

HARD Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge.

HARSH Grating, abrasive.

IMAGING (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

JUICY Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

LOW-LEVEL DETAIL The quietest sounds in a recording.

MUSICAL or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

NATURALNESS Realism.

OPAQUE Unclear, lacking transparency.

OPEN Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

PACE Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

PRESENCE A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room.

PRESENCE RANGE The upper midrange.

SEISMIC Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

SIBILANCE An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

SNAP A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

SPEED A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

STURDY Solid, powerful, robust sound.

THICK A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

THIN Bass light.

TIMBRE The tonal character of an instrument.

TIMING A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

TRANSIENT The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

TWEAK To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

TWEAKER Someone who enjoys this process.

VEILED Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

WARM A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

WEIGHT A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.

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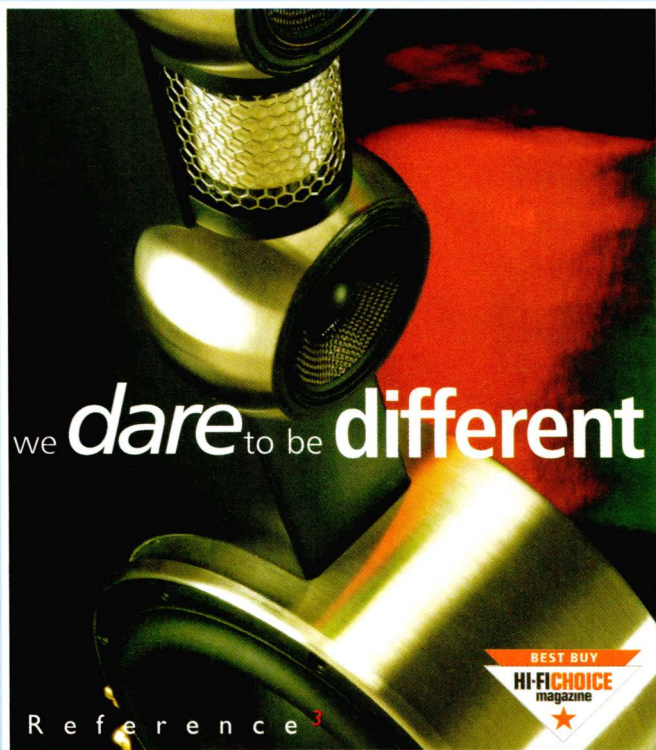


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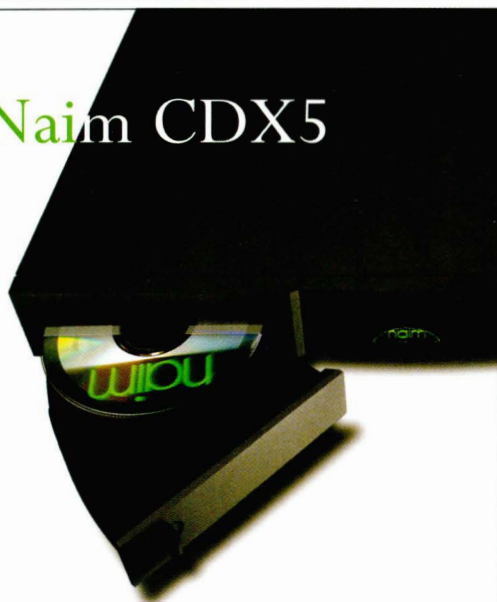
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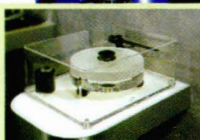
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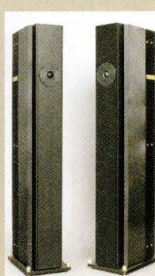
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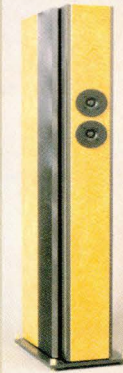


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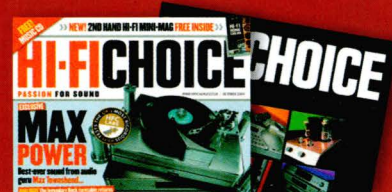
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A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

#01 ARCAM

Arcam's range has varied over the years from the deeply sensible to the truly bizarre. One thing is for sure though, as it has always sold well, and is generally well built, there's plenty of the stuff about. Any audiophile on a tight budget would do well to consider the Arcam Alpha amplifier. During its 15-year lifespan it sold by the bucketload and, with around 13 integrated varieties, often proves to be an excellent second-hand buy. Very early Alphas can be had for as little as £30, but could be sounding a bit ropery by now. Much better to seek out an Alpha 2 – it was much less plasticky, almost bullet-proof in build, and sounded super-sweet to boot. These can be had for anything from £45 to £95 tops. Interestingly, the following Alpha 3 wasn't actually as good, and is probably the one model worth avoiding.

Later 5 and 6 MOSFET models are decent enough, but lost out in sound quality terms to the super amps of the time, such as the Pioneer A400 and Marantz PM40SE. If you can afford £100+ then it's better to set your sights on a 7 or 8. The 8 is the better amp, but the 7 does a fine job with sensitive speakers. Later models with the "R" designation are worth seeking out, as they offered much improved dynamics.

Arcam CD players are equally well regarded in the trade, but more care is needed. I would avoid any of the earlier players, as laser failure could be imminent and cost as much as the machine did in the first place to put right (£80+). The Alpha 7SE, 8 and 8SE are the pick

of the bunch. Don't pay any more than £150 for a 7SE and around £225 for an 8. Ideally, both should be available for a lot less. The Alpha 9 is much rarer but, even now, a stonkingly good player thanks to its Ring DAC. The top price is £350, but you might get lucky.

Worth considering is the £850 Delta 100 cassette deck. During the 90s it was the only domestic UK-built tape deck around, and had a specification to match Nakamichi. Dolby S, 3 heads and dual capstans were all standard, and the sound was excellent. However, it's a bit of an ugly beast, and it never really drew the cassette glitterati away from their beloved Naks. Some Arcam dealers still have parts, but who knows for how much longer. Tough to price as they very rarely come up, but if it's over £200, get a Nakamichi instead.

Arcam have made speakers and DACs, but both should be avoided for different reasons. The speakers were never up to much and the

DACs are simply behind the times. An original Black Box might be interesting for historical value, but don't spend any more than £40.

Finally, one of the best Arcam buys has to be the older radio tuners. The manual-tuning

“Since Arcam gear has always sold well, and is generally well built, there's plenty of the stuff about.”

Alpha 2 is so basic it should last you out. It also sounds silky smooth and can be picked up for a pitiful £25 or so. Better still is the Delta. A fine tuner of its day, and now available for £50-80: just check its digital display lights up in full before you hand over any cash. **HFC**

*Dominic Todd
Next month – B&W*

Below: Arcam Alpha 7SE – pick of Arcam's CD player legacy



DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 1 Rolling your own speakers can be rewarding...

Back in the 1950s, when hi-fi was a hobby rather than a pre-packaged consumer durable, 'loudspeaker' referred to a raw drive unit, not a complete system with drivers and crossover network in a wooden box. You bought your woofer, tweeter and crossover from one of just a handful of specialist shops, took them home, and built the box in which to mount them.

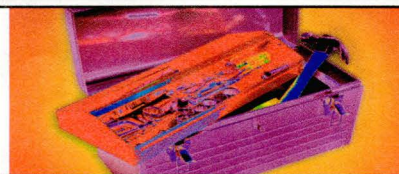
There have been lots of changes since then, yet things have also stayed the same. Though most speakers today come as finished units, it's still possible to buy the components and put them together yourself. More sensibly, perhaps, there are packaged kits, which

should at least ensure woofer and tweeter will match up properly together. Some just consist of the drivers and crossover, but others come with pre-cut cabinetwork.

Rolling your own drive units is clearly impractical, but most people can turn their hand to a bit of carpentry, even if the finish might be unpredictable. Whether you'll save serious money is debatable, such are the economies of scale in modern mass production methods, but some satisfaction can be derived from getting involved in the building, and there are opportunities to make a rather better quality enclosure than is usually found in commercial models.

Birch-ply tends to sound better than MDF, for example, and complex bracing can also bring significant improvements over the run of the commercial speaker mill. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



DIY CONTACTS

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REVOX A77 2 track (Reel to reel)	£750	£378
REVOX B77 2 track	£1000	£498
REVOX PR9911 2 track (7.5/15ips)	£1500	£595
REVOX B910 Pro cassette deck	£1500	£548
ROGERS Ravensbrook Tuner	£150	£ 95
SHUM MOOK SUPPORTS		POA
SILTECH HF-9G3 S.E.DIG. (1M)	£230	£158
SONY STS 555ES (call)	£495	£198
SONY STS730ES	£300	£295
SONY JA 20ES Mini Disc Recorder	£350	£178
SONY WMD60 Pro. Walkman	£250	£128
STAX 3030 Basic L/Phones	£550	£376
STAX ELECTROSTATIC HEADPHONES INC		
T11 VALVE ENERIZER	1950	798
TEAC A1500 (Reel to reel - 7" spools)	£400	£198
TEAC 3340S		£795
TRANSPARENT Ref Spkr (0.75M)	£2250	£1495
TRANSPARENT Ref XL SE (3M)	£4611	£2875
TRANSPARENT Ref XL SE (1M)	£3915	£2295

Amplifiers valve

AUDIO INNOVATIONS 800 Monos	£1200	£598
AUDIO INNOVATIONS 800 Mk11	£1500	£688
AUDIO Premier Pre + HCP5 (Gold)£1250		£ 498
AUDION Sterling Monoblocks		£698
AUDIONOTE 'ANKORU' (70 Watt S.E. Triode)	£14995	£6998
AUDIO RESEARCH LS25MKII	5795	3998
AUDIO RESEARCH VS110 (EX DEMO)	3999	3396
AUDIO RESEARCH VT60	1995	1395
AUDIO RESEARCH Classic 60	£3300	£1795
AUDIO RESEARCH VT100 Mk1 Pwr	£5500	£2996
BEARD M70 Monoblocks	£1800	£996
CARY CAD300SE Monoblocks	£5000	£2998
CONRAD JOHNSON PV10 Pre	£1600	£845
CONRAD JOHNSON PVII Pre	£1950	£998
CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 7B		
ZBOX PRE	10000	5698
CONRAD JOHNSON Prem 8 Monos	£26,000	£8995
CONRAD JOHNSON PV14L (Remote)	£1600	£1596
CONRAD JOHNSON PV12L	£2000	£1296
COPLAND 301 Pre	£1250	£798
COPLAND 504 Power	£1995	£995
CR DEVELOPMENTS Carmelo (Pre)	£900	£298
HOVLAND HP 100 + MC Phono	£3596	£495
JADIS D430 Integrated	£1746	£5750
JADIS Dely 7 Power	£1998	
LAMM L12 PRE	4000	2198
LUMILEY Ref V20 Monoblocks	£3500	£1998
MANLEY REF 12L MONOBLOCKS	6000	2898
McINTOSH MC2200 Gold (New)	5500	2898
McINTOSH MC2000 Limited Edition	12500	9998
PAPWORTH TVASO	£2000	£998
FM COMPONENTS 845 mono,s	£3000	£1295
QUAD 22 Pre	£145	£145
TRILogy Vt Integrated	£2500	£1398
UNISON Mystery One	£1750	£998
UNISON SR1	£1250	£895
UNISON Research 300b Monos	£4200	£2995
YAMAHA TC800 GL (classic)	£300	£ 95

Tuners Tape Misc

ACOUSTIC RESEARCH RD-06	£200	£ 48
BEYER DT990 Headphones	£200	£ 98
DBX 118 noise reduction unit	£250	£ 65
DENON DRM 22	£200	£55
DENON TU450L	£150	£ 65
DENON DR-M07	£150	£65
DENON D250 Mini System	£1000	£295
Dynalab FT101A Tuner	1400	698
LEAK FM Stereophonic Tuner	£150	£75
Linn Pekin	545	376
LUXMAN ST50 (Rare)	£900	£555
LUXMAN T210	£295	£145
LUXMAN T50A	£695	£395
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M.L.I. 330 1m pair Phono	£475	£338
M.L.I. 330 1.5m pair Phono	£520	£358
M.L.I. 750 3m pair speaker / Spade£1000		£678
MYRIAD T300 tuner	£250	£128
NAD 402 Tuner	£125	£ 68
NAD 5325	200	65
NAIM NAT 01	£2500	£1298
NAIM NAT 03		£498

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SPECIALS

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GAMUT D-200 POWER AMP (E3950).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£2995
AUDIO RESEARCH 100 2 (E3700+).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£2995
AUDIO RESEARCH VT-50 (E3650 RETAIL).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£2750
ROGUE AUDIO TEMPEST SILVER MAGNUM (E2700).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£995
PERP TECH PA-3/PA-1SIG-2 & MODRIGHT PSU.....	BRAND NEW BOXED.....	£1995
CELESTION A-2 SANTOS ROSEWOOD (E1500+).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£1150
PRIMARE PRE-30 & A-302 PRE POWER AMPS (E2700?).....	EX.DISPLAY/BOXED.....	£1750
PRIMARE A-20 INT AMP.....	EX.DISPLAY/BOXED.....	£450
PRIMARE D-20 CD PLAYER.....	EX.DISPLAY/BOXED.....	£525
PRIMARE V-25 DVD (E1000).....	EX.DISPLAY/BOXED.....	£695
LEHMAN BLACK CUBE SE (RETAIL E650?).....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£450
SOUNDLAB MIL-3 BI-WIRE (E9300).....	EX.DEM.....	£5750
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MARK LEVINSON NO.38 PRE AMP.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1995
CONRAD JOHNSON PFR-PRE.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1795
ALOA PST11 01 PRE-PSU.....	MINT.....	£1695
CONRAD JOHNSON PF-1.....	REDUCED.....	£995
PLINIUS ODEAN (E7500).....	4 MONTHS OLD.....	£4750
KRELL HTS PRE-PRO (E7000).....	REDUCED.....	£2250
GRYPHON S-100 POWER AMP.....	MINT.....	£2895
PLINIUS SA-102 POWER AMP.....	MINT.....	£2790
JEFF ROWLAND MODEL-5B.....	EXCLT.....	£2895
MARK LEVINSON, NO 23.....	EACH.....	£2795
MARK LEVINSON NO 27.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£2250
COUNTERPOINT SA-20.....	REDUCED.....	£895
AVI-2000 MONOS.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£795
THORENS TA-2000.....	MINT.....	£450
ROTEL RB-993 THX AMP.....	MINT.....	£995
MARANTZ SC-22/MA-22.....	REDUCED.....	£1100
PINK TRIANGLE INTEGRAL.....	3 MONTHS USE.....	£2495

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AUDION 300B MONO S & PREMIER 2 BOX PRE ALL GOLD/RE-VALVED.....	EXCLT.....	£2250
UNISON RESEARCH S-6.....	EX DEM.....	£1275
ART AUDIO QUINTET.....	MINT.....	£795
GRAFF GRAFFII (E2250).....	REDUCED.....	£795
GOLDEN TUBE SE1-50 MK11.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£950
CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 140.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£4750
JADIS DEFY 7 POWER AMP.....	EXCLT.....	£3200
AUDIO RESEARCH D-115.....	EXCLT.....	£1650
V.R.R. ADUR MONOBLOCS.....	REDUCED.....	£895
AUDIONOTE P2-SE.....	MINT.....	£650
JADIS JPS-2 (WAS E8000).....	EXCLT.....	£3450
AUDIO RESEARCH LS-22.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£2795
AUDIO RESEARCH SP-9 MKII.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£995
UNISON RESEARCH CSP PRE.....	REDUCED.....	£995
CONRAD JOHNSON PV-4 PRE.....	REDUCED.....	£395

CD

CEC TL-51/DX-51 TRANS.8DAC(E3000).....	3 MONTHS OLD.....	£2295
PERP TECH SIG-2 PA-3/PA-1 MOD PSU.....	EX.DEM.....	£1595
CHORD D5C-1500E/1600E(2 DACS)PRE.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£2950
MICROMEGA CD-3/DUO-PRO COMBO.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1250
MICROMEGA SOLO.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£995
THORENSTCD PLAYER/TRANSPORT.....	MINT.....	£495
WADA WT-3200/DHX-32 DAC.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1795
TECHNICS SL-1100/SH-X1000.....	REDUCED.....	£1995
THETA CARMAN CD/DVD TRAN.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1795
THETA PEARL TRANSPORT.....	REDUCED.....	£795
MARANTZ CDA-94 TRAN AT&T.....	REDUCED.....	£575
THETA DS PRO GEN III AT&T.....	REDUCED.....	£1995
THETA PRE GEN III.....	EXCLT/BOXED.....	£1995
THETA DS PRO BASIC-11 DAC.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1275

VINYL

CONRAD JOHNSON EF-1.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1095
DENSEN DRIVE MC.....	MINT.....	£275
DENSEN DRIVE M,C XS-PSU.....	MINT.....	£325

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APOGEE CALLIERS.....	EXCLT.....	£1250
APOGEE CALLIERS REBUILT.....	PHONE.....	PHONE
DYNAUDIO CONTOUR 1.3 STANDS.....	1 MONTHS USE MINT/BOXED.....	£995
ALR JORDAN NOTE-5 (BOBINGA).....	EX DEM.....	£1395
WILSON 5.1 BLACK.....	CRATED.....	£6995
BKS 107 MK II SUPREME.....	EX DEM.....	£1375
BEAUHORN B-2/VIBRAPLINTHS.....	EX DEM.....	£2450
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L. VOICE AUDITORIUM.....	EX DEM.....	£1075
CELESTION A-2.....	REDUCED.....	£595
REGA XEL (WALNUT).....	REDUCED.....	£550
KELLY KT3 (95 DB).....	MINT/BOXED.....	£750
EPOS ES-11 STANDS.....	MINT.....	£375
A ENERGY ASW FB-110 SUB.....	AS NEW.....	£350
REL STORM-1 SUB.....	VGC.....	£450
TARGET R-2 STANDS.....	EXCLT.....	£250

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

XLO 7.1 SIG.7 FT PAIR X 2.....	BRAND NEW PACKAGED.....	(EACH PAIR) £1200
TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEET BI-WIRE.....	.....	£795
PS AUDIO X-STREAM 3METRE PAIR.....	.....	£750
DIAMOND HI SILVER CABLES 2X 3METRES EX.DIS MIT MH-750 12 FT PAIR BI-WIRE.....	.....	£795
REDUCED.....	EX DEM.....	£525
NIRVANA SL- 2.3 METRE.....	EX DEM.....	£500
YOH. REVELATION 2 METRE.....	EX DEM.....	£500
OED GENESIS 3 METRE AIRFLOCS.....	.....	£295
XLO REFERENCE 6 FT. PAIR.....	.....	£275
AUDIONOTE AN-L 4 METRE.....	.....	£225
AUDIONOTE AN-L 3 METRE.....	.....	£225
MFID NU-VISTA 2 METR.....	.....	£200

INTERCONNECT

SILVER ARROW 1 METRE XLR (E1200).....	EX DEM.....	£595
ACOUSTIC ZEN SILVER SIG. 3.5 METRE XLR.....	.....	£1450
ACOUSTIC ZEN SILVER SIGNATURE.....	.....	£495
XLO 3 METRE PAIR EX DEM.....	.....	£225
MUS.FID NU VISTA 2.4 METRE PAIR.....	BRAND NEW.....	£250
AUDIOQUEST LAPIS 4 METRE PAIR.....	.....	£450
VAN DEN HUL 0.8 MC GOLD XLR.....	BOXED.....	£200
NEOTECH PROFESSIONAL CABLE 0.5 METRE.....	ANEW.....	£225
BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 0.5 METRE/1 METRE.....	BRAND NEW.....	£50/85
BLACK RHODIUM CONCERTO 0.5/1 METRE.....	BRAND NEW.....	£90/100
BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIA.....	BRAND NEW PLEASE RING.....	.....

DIGITAL

MADRIGAL MDC-1 AES-EBU 1 METRE.....	BRAND NEW/BOXED.....	£225
XLO 4.1.....	BRAND NEW.....	ONE METRE £175 2 METRE £225
NIRVANA 1.5 METRE.....	NEW.....	£225

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ATC SCM 50 SL PASSIVES (As New - Rosewood)	P/E	£6,000	£3,000
ATC SCM 20 SL (Perfect - A.Walnut) + Stands	P/E	£2,500	£1,300
INFINITY PRELUDE MTS (Tower + Sub) - Oak	X	£8,000	£5,600
ALON LOTUS ELITE (As New - Cherry)	X	£4,400	£3,500
RUARK SOLSTICE (Large - Double Cabinet) - Oak	X	£4,000	£2,250
ALON LOTUS SE (Black - For Valve Amps)	P/E	£3,000	£1,400
TRIANGLE ZAYS (Black/Walnut Trim - As New)	X	£1,200	£600
IAS BEAULIEU SPEAKERS (3 Way - Large - Efficient)	P/E	N/A	£500
RUARK BROADSWORDS (Rosewood - Some Damage)	P/E	£750	£200
RUARK CLIO SPEAKERS (As New - Cherry)	P/E	£1,200	£600
TRIANGLE ZEPHRE XS (New - Black/Walnut)	X	£700	£350
HEYBROOK HEYSTAK (New)	X	£500	£250
ELECTROCOMPANET AW60FTT POWER AMP	X	£1,000	£600
ECA VISTA (pre) + LECTERN - S POWER	P/E	£1,600	£800
CHORD 800 POWER AMP	P/E	£2,000	£900
NEAT PETITE SPEAKERS	P/E	£795	£400
HEYBROOK INTEGRA AMP (75W/CH + MM/MC)	X	£555	£250
DPA 50A POWER AMP + SPEAKER CABLES	P/E	N/A	OFFER
SHEARNE 2.5 INTEGRATED AMP	X	£480	£250
AVI BIGATRON (Cherry - Original Version)	X	£600	£400
ALON PETITE (Walnut) SPEAKERS	X	£1,200	£600
ALON RASCAL (Black)	X	£500	£300
SD ACOUSTICS SD3 SPEAKERS	X	N/A	£200
DALQUIST DQ12 (Rare) - Black	P/E	£1,350	£600

(OFFERS CONSIDERED ON SOME ITEMS)

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HICAM

	WAS	NOW		WAS	NOW
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ALDIA ST15.01 POWER AMP 60WPC		2600	TOTEM MANI 2 STAND MOUNTS/SPKS CHERRY FINISH USED	3200	1400
ALPHASON AKROS 2 SPEAKER STANDS BOXED MINT	60	30	TRANSFIGURATION ARIA MC CARTRIDGE 0.36 MV		690
AUDIONOTE MEISHU LINE INTEGRATED AMP NEW		3350	TRANSFIGURATION TEMPER MC CARTRIDGE 0.38 MV		2250
AUDIONOTE 070 SE INT AMP LINE LEVEL NEW	1599	1599	MICHELL GYRO DECK PLATE RARE COIRO CLAMP NO SPINDLE	125	50
AURUM CANTOS MUSIC GODDESS FLOORSTANDING SPKS NEW		2500	STELLO P200 PRE AMP RCA/BALANCED		1195
AURUM CANTOS LEISURE 2SE SPEAKERS NEW		900	STELLO AI320 INTERGRATED AMP		1568
AUDIONOTE M3 LINE PRE AMP NEW		3550	STELLO DP 200 DAC/PRE AMP RCA/BALANCED		1495
AUDIONOTE M2 LINE PRE AMP	1499	1499	STELLO S200 STEREO POWER AMP 200WPC		1495
AUDIONOTE CONQUEROR SINGLE ENDED CLASS A NEW		1999	NAIM SBL ROSEWOOD FINISH USED		650
AUDIONOTE 2.1X SIGNITURE DAC NEW		1999	NAIM M32 SPRE USED		125
AUDIONOTE MEISHU LINE INT AMP	3300	3000	ORELLE CIA 100/SP 100PRE POWER NEW		1998
AUDIONOTE 070 PHONO INT AMP NEW	1899	1899	ORELLESS SPEAKER SYSTEM - SUB NEW		975
AUDIONOTE P2 PP POWER AMP AS NEW			ORELLE 100EVO CD PLAYER NEW		1499
*AUDIONOTE ARM 3 9" INCH TONE ARM NEW	599	599	ORELLE SA 100EVO INT AMP 80WPC/R/C NEW		1199
ACCUSTICS ARTS PRE AMP 1 INC REMOTE		2350	ORIGIN LIVE AURORA GOLD TURNTABLE NEW		1470
ACCUSTICS ARTS POWER 1 INTERGRATED AMP 130WPC		3690	ORIGIN LIVE ENCOUNTER TONE ARM NEW		970
ACCUSTICS ARTS PLAYER 1 2496		2855	ORIGIN LIVE ILLUSTRIOUS TONE ARM NEW		1570
AVI LAB SERIES NEW POWER AMP 200WPC		1299	ORIGIN LIVE RESOLUTION TURNTABLE NEW		1970
AUDISAEUPEN POWER CABLES FULL RANGE		POA	PLINIUS 9100 INT AMP 240WPC/4OHMS NEW		1700
AVI NEW LAB SERIES PRE AMP OPTIONAL PHONO/DAC		1399	PLINIUS P8 POWER AMP 200WPC/8 OHMS		2250
AVI LAB SERIES CD PLAYER SUPERB NEW	1399	1399	PLINIUS M8 PREAMP INC REMOTE CONTROL		2250
AVI LAB SERIES INTEGRATED AMP 200 WPC NEW STUNNING	1499	1499	PRIMARE A10 INT AMP EXCELLENT CONDITION BOXED		275
AUDIO LAB 8000T TUNER BOXED PRE OWNED	800	425	PSR ALPHA 6 ACTIVE SUBWOOFER AS NEW		500
AUDIO LAB 8000 DAX/COM DAC TRANSPORT BOXED	2500	750	RUARK PROLOGUE ONE SPK RW FINISH BOXED USED		995
BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 1 MTR PR INTERCONNECTS	95	70	RUARK VITA 100S 1 SPK SYSTEM INC RUARK ACTIVE SUB		1695
BLACK RHODIUM CONCERTO 1 MTR PAIR NEW	135	95	RUARK VITA 120 5.1 SYSTEM NEW		1685
BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 2 MTR PAIR	150	135	RUARK PRELUDE 11 NEW		900
BLACK RHODIUM HARMONY 1 MTR PAIR NEW	60	37	QUAD 707 POWER AMP BOXED PRE OWNED		750
BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE PAIR NEW	597	375	QED FULL RANGE		POA
BLACK RHODIUM REQUIEM 1 1 METRE PAIR NEW	1247	800	RUARK PROLOGUE 11 LOUDSPEAKERS NEW		1250
DENSON D30 POWER AMP 200WPC/8 OHMS STUNNING	1500	750	RUARK VITA 120 5.1 SPEAKER SYSTEM NEW		
BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE DIGITAL NEW		297	RUARK VITA 120 5.1 SYSTEM NEW		
CLEARAUDIO CHAMPION TURNTABLE		810	SENNHEISER RS85 WIRELESS HEADPHONES NEW		159
CLEARAUDIO MATRIX REC CD CLEANER MACHINE		1490	SME MODEL 10 TURNTABLE NEW	2643	2643
CLEARAUDIO MC CROBAS PHONO STAGE MM MC		230	SME SERIES IV ARM BOXED UNUSED		1126
EAR 324 TRANSISTOR PREAMP NEW	2400	2400	SME SERIES V ARM NEVER USED MINT		1615
EAR 509 ANNIVE RSARY WIND BLOCKS GOLD OR CHROME			SME 202A TURNTABLE INC SERIES V ARM	5273	5273
EAR 834 INT AMP BOXED NEW	2440	2440	WIREWORLD ECLIPSE REFERENCE INT 1 MTR NEW		499
EAR 834P CHROME DELUXE MM MC PHONO NEW	975	975	WIREWORLD ALANTIS 5 IMTR INTERCONNECTS NEW		149
EAR 834P MM MC PHONO STAGE NEW	715	715	SOUND ORGANISATION FULL RANGE		POA
EAR 890 POWER AMP 70 WPC CLASS A NEW	3075	3075	WIREWORLD EUDINOX 5 FOR NAIM OWNERS DIV/DIV		109
EAR 899 INT PRE AMP 70 WPC CLASS A NEW	3250	3250	STAKS R 007 - SRM007 EAR SPEAKERS NEW		2495
EAR 8L6 INTERGRATED PRE MAIN AMP NEW	2690	2690	STAX SRS 2020 MK2 EAR SPEAKERS NEW		349
EAR HEADPHONE AMP HP4 NEW	2275	2275	STAX SRS 4040 SYSTEM SIGNATURE 2 NEW		995
EAR 864 PREAMP NEW	1850	1850	SUMIKO BLACKBIRD MC CARTRIDGE NEW		589
ELACL 310.2 JETSPEAKERS NEW		799	SUMIKO PEARL MM CARTRIDGE NEW		65
ELAC 203 ESP ACTIVE SUBWOFER NEW		799	SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL MC NEW		
ELAC 555 CENTRE 3 WAY CENTR SPK CHERRY FINISH		599	T+A 2471 92 CD PLAYER AMAZING NEW		
ELACL 330 JETTING STANDS NEW		2499	SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL PVD 111 MC NEW		239
ELAC F20 CINEMA SPEAKERS FREESTANDING GLASS BASE		499	TALKELECTRONIC THUNDER 1 COPLAYER		
GAMUT C2 R PRE AMP BALANCED		1950	WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 51 MTR INTERCONNECT NEW		69
GAMUT D200 POWER AMP NEW		3990	WIREWORLD FULL RANGE OF AWARD WINNING CABLES		
GAMUT M200 MONOBLOCKS 200WPC		6100	WIREWORLD STARLIGHT 5 HOMI 1 MTR CABLE		199
GRADO RS 1 HEADPHONES NEW		750	TRICHORD 1000 POWERBLOCK NEW		475
HALCRO DM8 PRE AMP RCA/BALANCED		9480	TRICHORD DELPHINIMK2 NEVER CONNECTED PSUNEW		1270
HALCRO DM 38 STEREO AMP 180WPC		13550	TRICHORD DINO PSU NEW		299
KRELL 300 INT AMP BOXED REMOTE PRE OWNED	2700	1395	TRICHORD ORCA PRE/LARGE PSU MINT		
LYRA ARGONIC CARTRIDGE NEW		795	TRICHORD RESEARCH 500 POWERBLOCK NEW		315
LYRA HELIKON MC CARTRIDGE NEW		1145	TRICORD RESEARCH DELPHINIMK2 PHONO - LARGE PSUNEW		995
LYRA HELIKON SL MC CARTRIDGE NEW		1249	TUBE TECHNOLOGY PROHET PREAMP USED		1400
LYRADORIAN MC CARTRIDGE NEW		495	VDH PPS 8 MTR INTERCONNECT NEW		35
MICHELL CC PSU NEW		440	VDH THE SOURCE HB 0.8 METRE NEW		65
MICHELL ALLECTO MONOBLOCK USED		2100	VIVANACO DX 400 HEADPHONES NEW		29
MICHELL GYROSERB 300 ARM		1083	VIVANACO FMH800 FM HEADPHONES NEW		99
MICHELL ORBE SME BOARD NEW		2298	WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 5 SPK CABLE AWARD WINNER	FROM £132	
MICHELL ORCAPRE AMP - PSU USED		1600	WIREWORLD EUDINOX 5 INTERCONNECT 1 MTR PR		219
MICHELL TECHNODE WITH RB 300 ARM NEW		700	WIREWORLD RAINBOW 5 INTERCONNECT		149

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Much copied and maligned by rivals, the designer who seeks anonymity and modest return, approached the Audio Salon in 1999 with a design for the world's best wire, phono plugs and solder. The result is the Stratos interconnect which no cable can exceed in terms of cost of materials, build quality, although they can and do cost ten times more.

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Stratos stereo interconnects cost £99 for 0.6 metre; £125 for 1.2 metres, plus £36 per additional 0.6 metres (all prices per pair; RCA or Neutrik balanced). We suggest these multiples for analogue signals. Digital cords cost 50%, SP/DIF or AES/EBU balanced.

The full material and construction specification is available on leaflet, or from our website. As with Petros, we await cheap copies and unfavourable comment from the vested interests.



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DEMONSTRATOR AND USED ITEMS

FRONT END/PLAYBACK

Audio Analogue Paganini CD X-dem	899	599
dCS Purcell Upsampler Non Firewire S/H	2999	1695
dCS Delius 24/192 DAC Non Firewire S/H	5999	2995
Mark Levinson No 360s x-dem	7495	3999
Rega Jupiter CD Silver x-dem	998	699
Rega Planet CD Black x-dem	498	349
Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	1195
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	2499
Unison Research Unico Valve CD x-dem	1195	895

Clearaudio Solution/RB300 x-dem	1595	999
Clearaudio Unify Unipivot Tonearm New & Boxed	795	599
Clearaudio Accurate MC x-demo 2800	2800	1699
Clearaudio Victory MC New & Boxed 1030	1030	699
Kuzma Stabi/Stogi S Turntable New & Boxed	N/A	1399
Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE New & Boxed	650	449
McCormack Phono Stage New & Boxed	650	399
Rega Planar 3/Heed PSU/Bias S/H	630	269
Transfiguration Aria MC10 hours use	690	479

AMPLIFICATION

Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamplifier x-dem	625	499
Krell PAM7 2 Box Preamplifier + Phono MM/MC S/H	N/A	599
Audio Analogue Corelli Stereo Power Amplifier x-dem	695	479
Audio Analogue Donizetti Mono Power Amplifiers x-dem	1050	729
Audio Analogue Puccini Integrated x-dem	525	399
EAR 509 Anniversary Balanced Valve Mono New & Boxed	5998	3999
Nagra VPA Mono 845 Valve Amplifiers S/H	10000	7499
Primare A30.1 Integrated B stock New & Boxed	1500	995
Red Rose Sprit Integrated x-dem	1000	649

SPEAKERS

Martin Logan CLSII Anniversary Electrostatics 7 mths S/H	6700	4295
Martin Logan Aeries I Hybrid Electrostatics Oak S/H	2389	1299
Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H	875	499
Rel Acoustics Strata III Grittex S/H	695	450
Rega Jura Floorstanding Black Ash S/H	450	199
Rega ELA Cherry X-dem	749	579
Verity Audio Fidelio Piano Lacquer x-dem	7995	3999

CABLES

Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
Madrigal CZ Gel 1.5m Balanced New & Boxed	599	299
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable New & Boxed	319	159
Madrigal MDC 2 0.5m Fatboy Digital cable New & Boxed	279	139
Nordost SPM 1m RCA-RCA S/H	650	479
QED QNEXII 1m RCA-RCA Interconnect S/H	N/A	22
Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect x-dem	2370	1499
Siltech Signature G5 1m AES/EBU 110ohm Digital S/H	625	449
Siltech SPX10 0.5m mains cable New & Boxed	105	55
Siltech LS 25 2x 2.5m speaker cable x-dem	499	249
Spectral MH-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-dem	800	499
Spectral MH-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-dem	1400	799
Spectral MI-350 20 ft Speaker cable x-dem	2100	1199

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Turntableworld - A selection from our stock
Most of our turntable combinations come fitted with free cartridge

Linn LP12/Lingo/Ekos/Troika - nr mint, black, boxed	1499
Linn LP12/Lingo/Ittok/LVII/Saska - nr mint, rosenut, boxed	1199
Linn LP12/Valhalla/Ittok/LVII - nr mint, black, boxed	699
Linn LP12/Armageddon/Aro - ex, afromosia	1799
Linn LP12/Valhalla/Akito - vgc, black	599
Linn LP12/Valhalla/LVX - vgc, black	479
Linn Basik, LVX - vgc, black	199
Linn Axis, Basik plus - vgc, black	249
Michell Gyrodec/RB300 - vgc, gyropower ps, Orbe plater, smoked case	999
Michell Gyrodec SE/RB300 - ex, brand ne w arm	699
Michell Orbe/RB300 - ex/ex, boxed	1399
Michell Orbe - ex, smoked	1199
Michell Orbe/SME30 - ex/ex, boxed	1699
Michell Orbe/Wilson Benesch Act 2 - nr mint, boxed...Stunning!	1949

Michell All Models - Best trade ins
Origin Live Rega Arm mods - Best Trade ins
Pink Triangle LPT/RB250/Reson - ex/ex
Project Debut - ex display, black, boxed
Project Classic - ex display, cherrywood plinth, boxed
Rega Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex
Rega Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex
Roksan Nima - nearly new, boxed
SME 309 - nr mint, boxed
Trichord Dino / Plus - Best Trade ins
Voyd Valdi - vgc, mahogany, fab twin motor deck

Digital - CD, DVD etc
Many more *inexpensive CD players in stock*

Arcam Alpha 8 - nr mint, remote	199
Arcam Alpha OSE - nr mint, remote	349
Arcam CD72 - nr mint, silver, remote	279
Cyrus Dad7 - nr mint, black, remote	399
Cyrus PSX-R - nr mint, black	249
Krell CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoked lids, remote, stunning	1499
Marantz CD63SE - nr mint, remote	99
Marantz DV4100 - nr mint, remote, boxed	88
Marantz DV4100 OSE - nr mint, remote, boxed	129
Meridian 200 transport and matching dac - ex, superb combination	449
Meridian 200 transport - ex, Trichord mod, excellent	349
Micromega Stage 2 - ex, smooth sound on a budget	199
Micromega T-drive and T-dac - vgc, boxed, remote, superb sound, £1000s new	799
Musical Fidelity X10D - nr mint	119
Myryad T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	249
Naim CD1 - ex, remote	699
NVA The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, remote... ultimate NVA	1749
Roksan Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote	449
Teac CDP4500 - ex, remote	99

Amplifiers

Arcam Alpha 7R - ex, as above with remote	149
Arcam Alpha 10 power - nr mint, boxed	349
Arcam A65 - nr mint, boxed, remote, silver	179
Arcam A65+ - ex display, boxed, remote, silver	179
Arcam A85 - ex, remote, silver	425
Arcam P75 - ex display, remote, silver	199
Audiolab 8000A - ex, black, boxed	249
Audiolab 8000S - nr mint	329
Marantz PM66SE Ki - nr mint, boxed	149
Marantz PM6010 Ki Sig - nr mint boxed, black	199
Marantz 1072 - vgc, champagne finish	99
Marantz SR4200 - ex display, boxed black av amp	149
Meridian 605s - ex pair boxed monoblocks	795
Meridian 505s - ex, pair monoblocks	949
Mission Cyrus Two and PSX - gc, nextel finish	229
NAD 352 - ex display, boxed, titanium	249
NAD 304 - nr mint, great value	99
Pioneer A400 - ex, phono	119
Primare A30.1 - nr mint, boxed	799
Primare A20 - nr mint integrated	379
Quad 405/2 - good, brown	225
Quad 405 - nr mint, early brass heatsink version	199
Roksan Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote	399
Rotel RB03 power - ex display, boxed silver	199
Shearne Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marble styling	279
Sony STR-DB940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc	199
Sugden AU41 pre/power - ex, black	499
Trio 2x L-05M - ex, with free preamp - call for details	749

Speakers

Acoustic Energy AE505 - ex display, superb floorstander	249
Acoustic Energy AE505 - new sealed box, superb floorstander, were £800!!!	299
Acoustic Energy AE1 - new tweeters, scruffy grilles	279
Acoustic Energy AE1 mk2 - vgc, rosewood	379
Castle Howard - ex, mid oak	549
Castle Kendal - nr mint, new model in light ash	195
Dynaudio Audience 10 - ex, boxed, black	149
Epos M15 - nr mint, light cherry, boxed	449
Epos ES11 - fair, 80s classic	99
Epos ES14 - nr mint, boxed 80s classic c/w dedicated stands	325
Gallo 5.1 - ex display, boxed, gorgeous!	999
Linn Keilidh - ex, black, full boxed with hi-stone stands	249
Mission 763i - ex, black floorstander, boxed	119
Mission 70 centre - ex display, boxed	69
Mission 77ci - ex display, boxed	99
Mission Cyrus 781 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Monitor Audio M5 - nr mint, boxed	299
Monitor Audio Studio Centre - ex display, boxed	299
Monitor Audio R700MD - nr mint, black	149
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 - nr mint cherry, boxed	129
Mordaunt Short 912 - ex display, boxed	149
Mordaunt Short 914 - ex display, boxed	199
Musical Technology Kestrel SE - ex, very pretty floorstander	149
NEAT Critique - ex, walnut, boxed	299

Petite - Best trade ins
ON DEM

QED Aria - ex display, boxed mini surrounds	99
QUAD ESL63 - nr mint, unused since Quad service with new boxes	1499
Rega Klye - ex, wood finish	119
Rega EL8 - fair, wood floorstander	119
Ruark Templar - ex, medium sized quality floorstander	199
Tannoy R2 - good, boxed, slim cherry floorstander	199
Wharfedale Evc 8 - ex display, boxed	149
Wharfedale Diamond 70th anniversary - rosewood Quad box, the only pair in the world!	199
Wharfedale Pacific Pi30 - nr mint boxed, light cherry, excellent	299

Turners and Tape

Arcam Alpha 7 - ex, black	99
Arcam T61 - ex display, boxed, rare black	149
Cyrus FM7 tuner - black, digital, presets, nr mint	229
Denon TU260L tuner - ex, black, digital, presets	49
Marantz ST4000 - ex display, boxed, black	99
Marantz SD4050 - ex display, boxed, twin cassette, black	89
Rotel RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	199
TAG McLaren T20 - ex display, boxed	699
Teac TX3000 tuner - ex, digital, presets	69
Teac V1010 cassette - ex, 3 head	75

Systems, cables and miscellaneous
Equipment supports - Your kit deserves them!
ON DEM

Beyer DT231 galactic - new	30
ixos 1014 - new 1m interconnect	15
ixos 1014 - new 5m interconnect	25
Mission Slance - ex display, silver	49
Stax Lambda Nova Signature - nr mint, superlative quality	699

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FOR SALE

AIWA LCX7 micro hi-fi, good cond, £50. 0191 4170346 (Tyne & Wear).

ARCAM A65 amp, three years old, original packaging, perfect cond, £225. Stephen 020 8699 9691 (South London).

ARCAM A85 amp with phono, silver, mint £550. P85 power amp, silver mint £350. 01493 665761 (Gt Yarmouth).

ARCAM A85/ P85 amps, superb cond, black (£1,350) £850. Can dem 0117 9498117 (Bristol)

ARCAM ALPHA 9 CD player, excellent condition, superb sound, £325. 01689 608925 or 0794 1107141 (Kent).

ARCAM CD82T (£600). Arcam A85 (£800). Both mint and boxed, sell both for £400. 0118 3750406 (Reading).

ARCAM DELTA tuner, black, presets, remote. Excellent cond £90. Creek CAS3140 tuner, black ash. Fantastic sound £30. Mr Barker 01322 529581 (Bexleyheath, Kent).

ARCAM FMJ CD33 CD player, boxed, one year old, silver, £850. Ben 07790 907718 (London).

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI amp, mint, boxed with manual £320 ono. Rega Planar 2 turntable with Linn K9 cartridge, excellent cond, with manual, £190 ono. 07746 948559 (Southampton).

AUDIO RESEARCH LSS, full balanced in/out, (£5,290) Excellent cond, hardly used, offers invited. Theta Pro Basic II, (£2,299) excellent cond also, hardly used, offers. 020 8504 1638 or 07812 465326 (London)

AUDIOLAB 8000A amp, black model, very little use and in mint cond. Still boxed, £200. 01992 572098 (Essex).

AVONDALE AUDIO amplifiers. Pre (brown), power supply, 50W monoblocks (black), £200. 01905 770810 or e-mail andrew.chandler@dsl.pipex.com (Worcester).

B&W CDM 1NT cherry speakers, new, boxed with quality cables, £495. Apollo Mezzo rack, as new £95. 07932 577226 (Essex).

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 640C CD player. As new, one year guarantee, £150. Van den Hul D102 MkIII phono leads, 1.2m pair, £50. 02380 274494 (Southants).

CASTLE HARLECH S2 speakers, mahogany, superb £500. Arcam Alpha 7SE CD, £150. NAD C370 amp £200. All little used, email raybettle@hotmail.com (Scotland).

COPLAND CDA 266 CD player (£1,100) £400. Rega Mira Amp (£450) £220. Rega Radio R (£350) £150. Castle Harlech S1 in oak (£900) £380. All vgc with boxes and instructions, can demo. Andy 01604 517780 (Northampton).

DENON AVC-A1SR amplifier £1,590. Warranty ends in August. Free upgrade to AVC-A1SRA. Just back from a precautionary service, like new. 01923 267434 (Watford).

EPOS ES14 speakers in black ash incl. stands. 15 years old but lovely cond, bargain at £125. John 0115 9736820 (Nottingham).

EPOS ES22 floorstanding speakers in walnut. Superb sound and cond, original packaging (£1,250) £475 ono. Stephen 01707 652985 (Hatfield).

EXPOSURE XV integrated amp £225. Trichord Genesis CD player with Clock 3 upgrade £230. All excellent cond. Terry 01634 712164 (Rochester, Kent).

EXPOSURE XXIII/ XXVIII pre/ power amps, (£2,800) £1,500. HFC Best Buy. 15 months old, good cond. 020 7609 2764 or email robinhull@macunlimited.net (N London)

FOCAL-JMLAB COBALT 826 Signature, 12 months old, as new (£1,480) £950 ono. 0161 827 9500 (Manchester).

HI-FI CHOICE and What Hi-Fi? Magazines from 1994 to early 2001. Mint cond £30. 07980 363127 (Tyne & Wear)

JECKLIN FLOAT TWO headphones complete with ribbon lead, £25 including post. Blues CDs varied selection £3 each, all very good cond. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

JMLAB 907BE speakers £1,250. Orelle SP100 power amplifier £650. XTC Pre 2 preamplifier £600. 07791 361620 or email praju108@hotmail.com (London).

KEF Q35.2S floorstanding speakers, dark apple, excellent cond, three years old, boxed (£350) £175. Roy 01933 626185 (Northants).

KEF Q4 speakers, dark apple finish, boxed, as new, £200. 01279 651860 (Herts).

KEF REFERENCE MODEL 1 floorstanders, black ash finish. KEF

WANTED

AKAI CR80 DSS eight-track cartridge player. 020 8281 0029 (Essex)

AUDIOLAB 8000 DAX digital to analogue converter, AES/ EBU digital cable and 8000RC remote control. 07714 246756 or email lesong@blueyonder.co.uk (London).

KEF 1319 flat piston bass drivers or any Lentek monitor internals and complete drivers. 07719 155368 Dave (Skegness).

TARGET HI-FI RACK, five-tier in black and Mission 701 speakers also in black. Must be mint and in South East only. Anthony 01323 487460 (Sussex).

100 centre speaker, video grey finish. KEF 65 DS Dipole surround speakers in black finish, all in very good cond and boxed, £500. Neil 01780 480624 (Lincs)

LINN CD12 with handset and manual £6,000. Klimax 500 Solos (pair) £6,000. Linn processor AV5103 £2,000. All as new. 01256 782931 (Basingstoke). ▣

BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand 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 if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!

FOR SALE

❑ **MARANTZ CD600KI**, NAD 370 amplifier, B&W 602 S2, Sound Organisation stand, Atacama stands, Yamaha KX493 cassette deck, £550. Bill 01827 251282 (Tamworth).

MARANTZ PM4000 amplifier £75. Sony STS570ES tuner £70. Pioneer PDS701 CD player £70. All immaculate cond, boxed with manuals. Julian 01442 384346 (Herts)

MARANTZ PM7200KI amplifier, unwanted gift. As new, full UK warranty, £300. 02380 274494 (Southants).

MARTIN LOGAN ASCENT I latest spec only three months old, mint, £3,450. Vincent SA93 pre/SP991 mono blocks, 300 watts, three months old, mint, superb build and sound £2,000. 02380 224003 (Southampton).

MONITOR AUDIO Silver S8 speakers. In rosemah finish. Excellent cond, eight months old with eight-metre QED Silver Anniversary bi-wire cable £430. Steve Clarke 01928 716035 (Runcorn).

MORDAUNT SHORT MS908 loudspeakers purchased March 2004, excellent condition, black, £250. Nick 01676 533394 (Midlands)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3 amplifier, mint cond, upgrade sale. Boxed with instructions and remote control £450. 01577 850228 (Perth)

MUSICAL FIDELITY E600 £175, E50 £100. Rega EL8 £95. Dali SWA12 £225. Systemdek IIX/Moth/Ringmat/Ortofon £125. LAT six-way distribution

block £125. LAT AC2 3x1 metre, £40 each. Yello 2x1 metre, £20 each. Sonic Link 1 metre, £40. Nordost Solar Wind 1 metre £40. Nordost Flatline 2x5 metres, £50. Andrew 020 7663 1264 (Romford).

MUSICAL FIDELITY NU-VISTA 3D and M3 (valve/transistor hybrid CD and integrated). Both boxed and in good cond, (£6,000) £5,000 ono. John 07931 538619 (Forfar)

MUSICAL FIDELITY XLP-S MM/ MC phono amp. As new, boxed (£150) £85. Mr Smith 01903 247779 (Sussex).

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-P100 preamplifier, boxed, as new, excellent cond, £400. 020 8670 4384 (London)

NAD S100 preamp, two C370 power amps, S400 tuner, Tannoy S10 speakers. One year old, mint, boxes and instructions, £1,700. May split. Mick 01707 377090 (Welwyn Garden City).

NAIM AUDIO NAPS £50. NAC 62 m/c phono £100. NAP90/1 £150. NAP90/2 £175. Rega Planar 3/RB250/LinnK9 £125. All immaculate, call Paul (01702) 617274 (Essex).

NAKAMICHI DR-1 cassette deck. Semi-Pro, three-head, azimuth tuning control. Perfect working cond. Never used, £300. Steve 07973 334623 (West Mids)

PATHOS TWIN towers, pure Class A, single-ended, zero NFB hybrid integrated with remote. As new (£3,250) £2,150. 01202 767873 (Dorset).

PIONEER 505 Precision CD player with Tom Evans upgrade.

Acoustic Precision mains conder, mint cond, £440 ono. 01633 680525 or email richard. james@mailbox.tv (Newport, S Wales).

QUAD 44 preamp, grey, phono, mint £250. Quad 405-2 vgc £200. Mike 01758 613790 (N Wales).

REVOLVER R33 speakers, brand new, unwanted prize (£499) £300. 01905 610628 (Worcs)

ROGERS LS7 speakers, red mahogany, upgrading, can demo. Includes Sound Organisation stands £2,000, no offers or timewasters. Bill 01268 561108 (Essex).

ROKSAN CASPIAN CD player. Hardly used, two years old, as new £350. Clive 01473 682909 (Ipswich).

ROKSAN Caspian integrated amp £275. Power amp £150. CD Player £275. Monitor Audio studio 20 SE Speakers £650. Ernest 020 8303 4699 (London).

ROTEL RCD-950 CD player, remote. £50. Technics SLBD20D turntable £25. Both boxed, buyer collects. 01635 34971 (Newbury).

RUARK EQUINOX speakers with dedicated stands. Rare chance to buy these lovely speakers. Mint cond in makers' boxes, £750 ono. 023 8073 8935 (Southants).

SONNETEER SEDLEY MM/MC phono amp, silver, vgc. Box and manual £210. 01903 247779 (Sussex)

SONY APM-22ES classic diaphragm speakers, in walnut. Large standmounts on low stands, fair cond, offers around £50. Mr Coffey 01268 415017 (Basildon).

SONY SCD1 SACD/CD player, Sony's ultimate statement. Digital filters, pristine cond, 11-month Sony guarantee, £2,099. 07979 903989 (Bristol).

SONY SCD-777ES SACD player, excellent cond but has a slight fault £350. Clive 01792 410242 (Swansea).

SONY TC- K611S tape deck, vgc, little used, (£300) £60 ono to a good home. George 01277 264936 (Essex).

TAG MCLAREN 601 amp, black finish, excellent cond and performance, original box and manual, £249. Tony 01908 376684 (Milton Keynes).

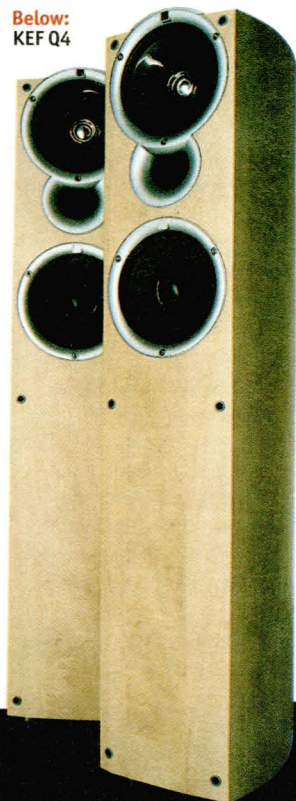
VDH D102 II 0.8M (£90) £40. **ISOPLUGS** (£60) £35. Three Art Q-Rings (£60) £25. Four Ferrite clamps (£25) £10. Stuart 01384 394441 (West Mids)

WADIA 271X DAC, Wadia 270 transport £10,750. Krell FPB600C amplifier £8,800. Krell KCT preamp £7,300. Marantz CD7 CD player (champagne) £2,800. 07860 620921 (Derbyshire).

WHARFEDALE PACIFIC EVO30 floorstanding speakers (rosewood), good cond and one year old £400 ono. Colin 0161 303 8859 or 07985 781177 (Stalybridge).

YAMAHA CDX-530E CD player, classic equipment, wonderful sound, black, with remote. £40 no offers. 01268 415017 (Essex).

Below: KEF Q4



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MARTIN LOGAN

EYE TO EAR CO-ORDINATION

ABSOLUTE SOUNDS' commitment to Martin Logan has been rewarded with a line of hybrid electrostatic speakers so comprehensive that it now encompasses every permutation of home theatre and audiophile performance, and a price band from entry-level to cutting edge. Because of their sheer beauty - both aural and visual - the Statement Evolution 2, Prodigy, Odyssey, Ascent i, Aeon i and Clarity have established hybrid electrostatic technology as the obvious choice for those who want state-of-the-art sound without suffering a profusion of ugly boxes.

All of the speakers are immediately recognisable as Martin Logan products because of the peerless, oft-imitated, room-friendly appearance, with the captivating see-through panels and furniture grade finish. Best of all, the sound is as clear as the panels themselves. This year, in recognition of its astonishing performance and sensible price, the Clarity - the 'baby' of the line - won the coveted EISA award, proving that the Martin Logan look and the sound are acknowledged across Europe.

For the new season, Martin Logan has applied its years of experience to even smaller, room-friendlier systems suitable for a wider range of applications, by launching a second hybrid technology called ATF. Martin Logan had already demonstrated its skills with home theatre applications with the Theater i and Cinema i centre-channel models, the Script i main and surround speakers, the awesome Descent self-powered subwoofer and its baby sister, the Depth.

Thanks to ATF, an even wider audience can savor the Martin Logan experience. The ultra-compact Fresco hybrids can be used horizontally or vertically, wall- or shelf-mounted above or to the sides of plasma or other flat-screen display, while the Mosaic and Montage floor-standing models have the look of a 'baby Clarity'. Even the subwoofer's size has been addressed: the new ATF designs work wonderfully with the Grotto, literally a miniature Depth!



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