

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

JANUARY 2000

hi-fi World



**THE
BEST
HI-FI OF
1999**

World Radio History



FREE CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT

WORLD'S BEST AMPLIFIER UNDER £1,000?



MVL INTEGRAL A2

FEATURES

- **GREATER CLARITY AND REALISM** achieved through patented circuitry and extremely low distortion. All instruments and voices sound real and whatever warmth or coldness was originally recorded is revealed.
- **3 DIMENSIONAL SOUND STAGE** brings every performance into the room.
- **CONSISTENT SOUND QUALITY** regardless of volume quality remains constant, whether at 0.5 Watt or at maximum rated output.
- **CONSTANT CONTROL** speaker drivers are both pushed and pulled, never allowed to float, minimising back EMF effect.
- **EASY COMPONENT MATCHING** due to high tolerance to source components, leads, speaker impedance and sensitivity.
- **NO 'BURN IN' OR WARM UP REQUIRED** sound is correct from first turn on, with no degradation of sound for the life of the unit.
- **5 YEAR WARRANTY** provided free of charge.
- **100 Watts per channel RMS** (8 ohms, both channels driven).
- **SS² FREQUENCY CONTROL.** Improves speaker performance by adjustable matching of frequency response.
- **SS³ PHONO STAGE.** Improves sound quality from Vinyl whilst reducing surface noise and rumble.
- **NINE LINE INPUTS.** Five record outputs. (All switchable)

"If you're after a genuinely transparent, natural and effortless performer, the A2+ is currently at the top of the pile."

JON MARKS, HI-FI WORLD

INTEGRAL A2

WORLD VERDICT

An excellent performer with any music. At present, it would be hard to imagine the A2 being beaten at the price.

HI-FI WORLD MAY 1999

INTEGRAL A2+

WORLD VERDICT

Seamless, natural and very open, the A2+ sets the pace at the price.

HI-FI WORLD JUNE 1999



PLUS A RANGE OF OPTIONAL FEATURES NOT AVAILABLE ON ANY OTHER AMPLIFIER

SS² OPTION PACK

- **SS¹ TAPE** Eliminates tape hiss on analogue cassette/tape whilst increasing frequency range.
- **SS⁵ CD** Enhances playback quality of CD by removing 'digital edge' yet retaining original attack.
- **SS⁶ CD** Enhances playback from and recording to CD. Improves recordings, particularly from vinyl records.
- **SS⁷ MINIDISC** Improves quality of record / playback on MD from all sources.
- **SS⁸ FM** Improves quality of FM / AM receivers.
- **SS¹⁰ DAB** Improves quality of Digital Radio.
- **SS¹³ NICAM** Improves quality of NICAM receivers.
- **SS¹⁵ DAT** Improves quality of record / playback on DAT.

Now with designer casework

MVL A2: £970 inc. VAT Option Pack: £415 inc. VAT. In silver or black, plus £75 for stainless steel

For more information or your nearest dealer ring 01953 850800

Made in England

MVL Technology Limited, Northfield Mill, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0DF Tel: +44 (0)1953 850800 Fax: +44 (0)1953 851022

Sound Sentinel[®] manufactured under licence from Sound Sentinel Systems. Sound Sentinel[®] is a registered trade mark.

World Radio History

MVL



SOUND SENTINEL
SYSTEMS

CONTENTS



<i>Category</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Page</i>
Accessories		
One Thing Stereo Decoder	June	9
Compact Disc		
Audio Analogue Paganini	April	4
DAC		
Midiman Flying Calf	February	4
CD-R, Minidisc		
Kenwood DMF 9020 MiniDisc	August	5
Marantz DR-700	October	
Integrated Amplifiers		
Musical Fidelity A300	October	10
MVL A2+	June	
Loudspeakers		
Acoustic Energy Aegis One	September	11
Klipsch Heresy II	May	
Magneplanar MG12/QR	May	13
Tannoy Mercury M2.5	September	
Cartridge		
Music Maker	February	7
Turntable		
Clearaudio Solution	February	7
Tuner		
Denon TU-260L MkII	June	9
Quiz		
		14



QUIZ ANSWERS

[1] b [2] c [3] a [4] c [5] a [6] c [7] c [8] a
 [9] a [10] c [11] a [12] a [13] c [14] b [15] c



Hi-Fi World

1999 World Winners



MIDIMAN FLYING CALF DAC

The word 'professional' can cover a multitude of sins. However, when it comes to

audio equipment, the self-same tag sometimes comes attached to a component that could be easily relocated in the home, but is just too expensive, large or heavy. No such obstacles stand in the way of either the £300 Flying Cow DA/AD reviewed back in June 1998, or its £130 offspring, The Flying Calf 20-bit digital to analogue converter.

audio equipment, the self-same tag sometimes comes attached to a component that could be easily relocated in the home, but is just too expensive,

Digital source input to the Calf is via an S/PDIF socket, for which you use a phono plug; the unbalanced analogue outputs use 1/4in. jacks. Many manufacturers will knock up a phono-to-jack lead, so this won't prove a problem. The front panel consists of a power switch and two LEDs, one for Power status, the other labelled Data Valid, which confirms that digital information is being received.

Midiman Flying Calf £109
Midiman
Hubberts Bridge House
Hubberts Bridge
Boston, Lincs.
PE20 3QU
Tel: 01205 290680

AUDIO ANALOGUE PAGANINI CD PLAYER

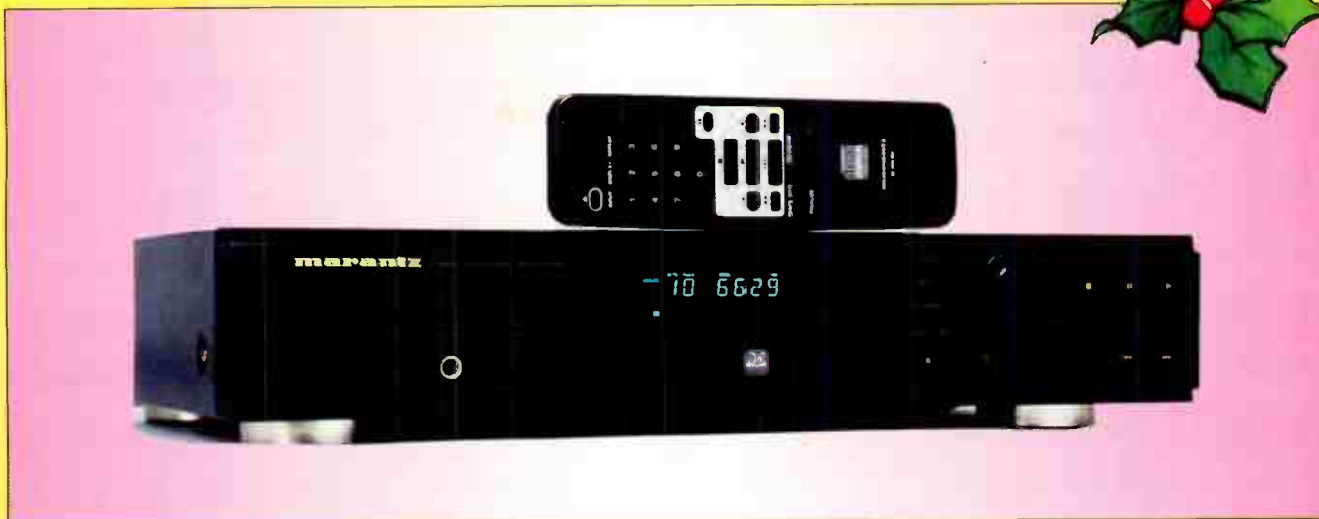
The world of hi-fi sometimes operates in strange ways. In a manner reminiscent of the quantum leaps made in LP's reproduction as CD started to take over, with DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD now starting to appear, the mind boggles at how the boffins in the white coats continue to devise new means of squeezing ever higher performance from CD. Cue the Dons at Audio Analogue with their first CD player, the Paganini. After the recommended 100-hour burn-in, the Paganini faced up to Led Zeppelin's Houses Of The Holy. Capturing intact the acoustic guitar opening to the track 'Over The Hills And Far Away', it was happy to show off the speed and intensity of Jimmy Page's strumming. Treble was smooth, sweet and free from grain or smear but not rolled off, as a real



sense of air and space confirmed. When things really kicked off, the Paganini's deep, tuneful bass lifted this track into overdrive, with John Bonham's drumming fuelling an already infectious, foot-tapping rhythm. The real acid test for the Paganini came in the form of Kate Bush's 'Rocket's Tail' (from her Sensual World album). The haunting vocals of Trio Bulgarka competed with Dave Gilmour's guitar onslaught

to bring on the goosebumps. The sibilance and brightness inherent in this song's production can have you leaping for the volume control, but the Paganini remained controlled and neutral. The Dons at Audio Analogue have produced a class-leader in the Paganini. Saving the best till last, this piece of delectable digitalia sits the right side of £1000 at £750. In terms of sheer musicality the Paganini leaves competitors looking worried, and is bound to bring a wide grin to many an audiophile's face.

Audio Analogue Paganini £749
UKD
23 Richings Way,
Ivor,
Bucks. SL0 9DA
Tel: 01753 652669



MARANTZ DR700 CD RECORDER

The moment we lifted the Marantz out of its packing case, our expectations were high - it looks like a seriously expensive piece of equipment, with a sturdy construction that includes a thick, aluminium front panel. Marantz, as befits the specialist hi-fi wing of the Philips empire, have taken the standard transport mechanism from their parent company and tweaked a bit here and there inside the chassis to lift performance levels. Knowing that Ken Ishiwata was involved here only whetted

our appetites further. The under-bonnet alterations have worked too - they produced digital recordings that were as clear as a bell and as clean as a freshly-powdered baby's bottom. As a result, there was no audible difference between original and copy. Goldie, Kraftwerk and an unaccompanied choral piece by Purcell all sounded spacious and detailed. Listening to my vinyl library almost had me tempted to opt for the CD-R instead of the turntable because it was so convenient. Talvin Singh's 'OK' had meaty, smooth bass and an impressive soundstage depth. The same went for Anne-

Sophie Mutter's violin, which was full-toned and rich, the orchestral strings matching the sound note for note. In purely playback terms, the DR700 sounds genuinely like a good £400-£450 machine - it possesses a fast, enjoyable presentation with tight, controlled bass and unfatiguing treble. All of which means this recorder is happy to handle any genre you can throw at it. A solid all-round performer.

Marantz DR700 £599.90
Marantz
575-583 Bath Road,
Longford, Middx. UB7 0EH
Tel: 01753 680868

KENWOOD DMF-9020 MINIDISC RECORDER



As we enter the new millennium, MD continues to pull ahead of cassette sonically and ergonomically. The £500 DMF-9020 boasts a choice of manual or pre-set automatic recording levels, balance control and handy options for things like adjustable fade times and level limiting. In short, the whole get-up is reminiscent of a well-endowed tape deck without the complications. Although not unique to MD, the precision with which edits can be made and sections of the recording cut, moved and spliced is a dream. I spent a little time editing a song down to about a third of its original length by removing repeats and so on. No recording of a real performance will suffer this sort of thing entirely seamlessly, but the results remained listenable, without any of the "wrrps" and "k'donks" which dogged my attempts to do the same on cassette. We have in previous issues remarked on MiniDisc's sonic inferiority to CD-R. Now



that the ATRAC compression system is in its capable 4.5 version and the '9020 possesses 24-bit processing, the gap is certainly closing. Previous acid tests, such as recording from vinyl, no longer produced evidence of squashed dynamics and flat sound staging, proving the Kenwood's pedigree. CD-R remained out in front when it came to digital-to-digital recordings, of course, as there is no need to reduce the amount of data from a CD to fit it onto a blank CD-Recordable. MD is developing so fast that the names and numbers of the top components change almost monthly. For the time being, the

DMF-9020 is a definite class-leader. It combines the best features of cassette with those of MD in such a way that home recording fans like myself are left feeling that they've lost very little in the recording process. If you've been on the fence thus far, unable to choose between cassette, MiniDisc and CD-R, maybe now is the time to come down and give MD another listen.

Kenwood DMF-9020 £499.90
Kenwood Dwight Road,
Watford, Herts. WD1 8EB
Tel: 01923 816444



Special Winter Offers for Hi-Fi World readers



Flying Calf A/D 20bit was £149.00 now £109.00 inc VAT

Discontinued model - Limited Stocks !!!

Flying Calf A/D 24bit was £179.00 now £129.00 inc VAT



Flying Calf D/A 24bit was £149.00 now £129.00 inc VAT

Flying Calf A/D specifications:

20 or 24 bit stereo A/D delta-sigma converter with 128x oversampling. Selectable sample rates of 44.1 or 48kHz S/PDIF digital output on RCA phono connector, analogue in on 1/4in jacks. Dynamic range 100dB (20bit), 102dB (24 bit) A-weighted

Flying Calf D/A 24 specifications:

20 or 24 bit stereo D/A delta-sigma converter with 128x oversampling. Automatic sample rate detection, will lock to any sample rate under 50kHz S/PDIF digital in on RCA phono connector, analogue out on 1/4in jacks. Dynamic range 106dB, SNR 112dB A-weighted

24 hour delivery!

- to order with Visa or Mastercard

Call Midiman UK on 01423



Midiman UK
22 Freemans Way
Harrogate Business Park
Harrogate HG3 1DH
Tel: 01423 886692
Fax: 01423 886693

*...I was very impressed. Remembering the price I was gobsmacked.
...Midiman have enough confidence in their technology and build to guarantee it for life.
...classical music - sounded lucid and accomplished...clarity was the keyword.
It produces a detailed and neutral sound that is the trademark of affordable professional kit.
...It takes hold of music that you have heard many times previously and revitalises it. Tasty!*
extracts from the Flying Calf D/A 20 review in the Feb 99 issue of Hi-Fi World

Don't forget - the Midiman CO2 bi-directional optical to coax S/PDIF converter - only £45.00 inc VAT!!
(if buying a Flying Calf converter you can buy the CO2 for only £40.00)

email:
midimanuk@compuserve.com



CLEARAUDIO SOLUTION TURNTABLE

'Guess The Price' is an easy game to play with your average component. As far as turntables go, it's either weight or finish that provide the gauge of pedigree. These rules of thumb come a cropper when it's Clearaudio's Solution turntable on the podium, though. The skeletal construction

yields a relatively low-mass deck, while the polished perspex wouldn't be out of place on a £2000 record player. Spinning one of my favourite setting-up records (Heaven 17's *The Luxury Gap*), the Solution showed that it had promise with an airy, open sound. However, a slight fizz to the treble and lack of speed in the bottom-end hinted at the need for a few tweaks. After a bout of set-up fiddling, though, the Solution sounded much more comfortable.

Now, sampling Lou Reed's *Transformer*, I was able to sit back and bask in the glory of an all-analogue pressing, its funky rhythms, vocal clarity and natural detailing unpolluted by their passage from groove to loudspeaker. Tracks like

'Vicious' and 'Walk On The Wild Side' had a weight and imaging precision that made for some very convincing replay. Next, a spot of Classical took up residence on the Clearaudio's platter in the form of Britten's *A Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra*. A trait which seems to be shared by almost all decks of the perspex persuasion is a tonal neutrality and richness that suit orchestral work to a tee. Strings and brass were both incisive and crisp, set within a sound stage of commendable size. Long after the prophets of doom predicted the demise of vinyl, sub-£1000 record players that sound as good as they look are still being made. Clearaudio's Solution is a worthy addition to the turntable hall of fame. Set it up on a solid platform with a decent arm and cartridge and you won't be disappointed.

Clearaudio Solution £750

Audio Reference

Unit 8 & 9 Enterprise Park

Skyfield Industrial Estate

Guildford

Surrey GU1 1RB



THE CARTRIDGE MAN 'MUSIC MAKER CARTRIDGE'

'A cartridge from The Cartridge Man' has a certain ring to it, rather like a bat from Batman. However, the Music Maker owes its existence to Leonard Gregory, the man behind the Cartridge Man mask, who pursues his quest for vinyl quality with raw materials from Grado. After a few evenings' worth of the fiddling that comes with an addiction to black plastic discs, if there was one thing that marked the Music Maker out, it was that it has genuinely glued-to-the-groove tracking abilities. In the course of assembling a collection of records there are always going to be a few which simply will not track. According to the Music Maker, these are so few as to be almost negligible. For instance, a would-be treasure of mine, a double-LP of Bach's violin and harpsichord sonatas, has been unplayable since the day I found it - a suicide attack on a cats' home combined with emery polishing a dustbin would sound musical by contrast. I'm happy to report this cartridge didn't agree. Given the horrifying noises which had originally consigned the disc

to the land of Never Again, the Music Maker somehow managed to dig out the musical remains in an eminently listenable way.

Record after record succumbed to the treatment of the aptly-named Music Maker. Whether it was the filigree of transients found in baroque harpsichords or the flam of the drums on latter-day Be-Bop, this cartridge was content to take everything in its stride. Whatever the technical reasons, subjectively Len Gregory's Music Maker will have a lot of sub-£1000 MCs quaking in their generators. It has a speed, power and sheer listenability that few competitors combine in the same small plastic or metal body.



The Cartridge Man 'Music Maker' £575

The Cartridge Man

88 Southbridge Road,

Croydon,

Surrey, CR0 1AF

Tel: 0181 688 6565

Classique Sounds (Leicester)

Vintage Hifi specialist.

One Thing



Stereo decoder

New Mk2 Version.
Only £175.00

Awarded 4 globes. Hifi World. January 1999
"lets a tuner speak for itself"
Richard White.

Troughline tuners.
Service & realignment.
From only £75.00



*Repairs & servicing on Quad
ESL57
speakers also undertaken.*

Tel 0116 2835821 or 0802 213740
61 Aylestone Drive, Aylestone, Leicester, LE2 8QE

REAL PERFORMANCE

from Hot Tubes & Cool Transistors



H
E
R
E
S
Y

£995 Pr for self finish

55cm x 40cm x 34cm fills
THEATRES - STUDIOS
CLUBS - CHURCHES -
HOME AV & HIFI

Klipsch
HIGH EFFICIENCY
LOUDSPEAKERS
0121 430 7817

AUDIO ANALOGUE



In just a short while, Audio Analogue has won plenty of admirers. When Hi Fi World tested the *Puccini* Special Edition, they gave it their top star rating with the words "Excellent sound quality ensures the *Puccini* S.E. outstrips the competition at up to £1,000". And the influential USA magazine *Stereophile* (Dec.98) praised its "harmonic richness, stunning purity of tone and sheer musicality". To top that, the basic £475 *Puccini* won Hi Fi Choice's Best Buy for amplifiers in an up-to £1,000 group test (Feb. '98).

In their words:

"This is a first-rate budget amplifier that looks and sounds like analtogether more costly model. Check it out". The *BELLINI* preampand *DONIZETTI* power amp fared equally well. Ken

Kessler in Hi Fi News (Jan. '98) had this to say. "A new benchmark in the value for money stakes". Now, we're proud to introduce you to the latest member of the family: the *PAGANINI*. It's a real music-lover's CD-player. For more

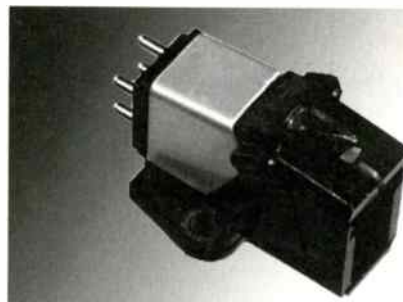
details contact:

UKD

23 Richings Way, Iver, Buckinghamshire
SL0 9DA, England

Telephone: 01753 652669 - Telephone: 07000 UKD
HIFI (853 443) - Fax: 01753 654531
Or visit our website:www.uk.co.uk

The Cartridge Man



You've read about it - so if you're seriously considering a cartridge change, why not change for the better? Change to the Music Maker by the cartridge Man. Also available are our stylus gauge and Test record.

0181 688 6565 'phone & fax

Also agents for;
Croft, E.A.R. Hadcock, Moth, and others

PLUS CARTRIDGE RETIPPING SERVICE



DENON TU-260L MKII TUNER

Over the years, a few budget tuners have become audiophile household names, one of them Denon's long-lived TU-260L (1990-1999, RIP). Replacing such a popular component is always a headache, so Denon have put a great deal of thought into the innards (rather than the name) of its successor, the TU-260L MkII. Hooked up to the outside world, I duly hit the airwaves and tuned into Radios 3 and 4. An interview interspersed with music from the Labeque sisters (pianists) was on 3, the close mic'd voices very clean and unpoluted by boom or excessive chestiness. In a Mozart concerto that followed, the pianos which opened the piece had a smoothness easily on a par with the MkII's

predecessor. The TU-260L MkII rendered Radio 4 in a similarly detailed and transparent manner. An interview with three 'throat singing' Eskimos (!) gave the Denon the opportunity to show off its separation. With bizarre sounds emerging from the Eskimos seated far left to far right, what came out of Heybrook's Optima loudspeakers was altogether very

mandatory with these sorts of broadcasts. On both AM and LW as well, the Denon maintained its control and clarity, with stations tuning in precisely without added birdie effects. The TU-260L MkII does everything a well-engineered budget tuner should. It has all the best traits of the MkI plus superior separation, detailing and facilities. There are fuller sounding tuners about, such as the function-starved Cambridge T500 at £50 more, but at £130 it would be hard to better the Denon.



weird and very life-like. It was on more commercial and processed stations such as Capital that the Denon's slight top and bottom roll-offs worked best. Bass was bouncy and tight whilst the relaxed treble reduced the sibilance and sizzle

Denon TU-260L MkII £129.99
Hayden Laboratories, Chiltern Hill,
Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 9UG
Tel: 01753 888447

ONE THING FM DECODER



The Leak Troughline tuner is excellent; its stereo decoder is not. Solve this problem and any high-quality mono tuner (Leak; Rogers; Pye; Quad) can enjoy a whole new lease of life. Not only but also, many stereo tuners have 'standard' decoders fitted almost as an afterthought. These too can benefit hugely from a better-specified modern decoder. One Thing's Stereo Demodulator sustains an honourable line and is available in an outboard version as illustrated, in kit form for DIY, or as a 'factory-fitted' upgrade to your own tuner. One Thing's decoder is unusual inasmuch as it does not amplify the incoming signal before decoding it, so the overall gain is less than unity (or 1x). The manufacturer says that this hasn't been an issue so far: most tuners are capable of pushing out the requisite 320mV multiplex signal



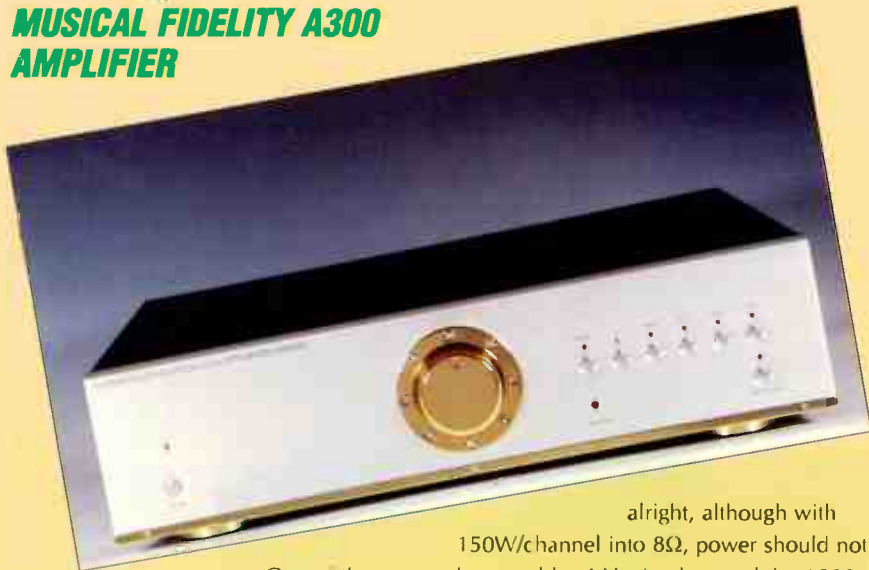
without needing an additional amplifying stage and the effect it can have on the sound. If there is insufficient signal for decent stereo, the beacon fails to light and you have the options of switching to mono for lower noise or maybe using the handy Blend control to pick an optimum in-between point. Tuning in to Radio 3 for what is probably the least meddled-with

signal on the dial, I was astonished at how good the broadcast was. Everything from chamber works to full orchestra to plays to news leapt into new life. A gloriously rich spread of crisp, clear stereo sound wafted forth whichever way the dial was pointed. Even the ultra-compressed commercial stations sounded vaguely human for a change. In use, I found that I simply forgot about the One Thing - ungrateful I know! My admiration tended to settle on the tuner and the programmes. Given the steady improvements in stereo broadcasting over the last 30 years, I don't think my tuner has sounded better in its life.

One Thing Stereo Demodulator £150
One Thing, Classique House,
61 Aylestone Drive, Aylestone,
Leicester LE2 8QE
Tel: 0116 2835821



MUSICAL FIDELITY A300 AMPLIFIER



One of the greatest pleasures in my life is reviewing a powerful integrated amplifier. Musical Fidelity's latest amp is certainly on the weighty side but it carries it very well. The new 'A' series look combine rampant monumentalism with a goodly dose of pure style, but costs less than £1500. Looks aren't everything, of course. If you're going to shell out £1399 for an amplifier, it has to sound more than just

alright, although with 150W/channel into 8Ω, power should not be a problem! Having humped the A300 into place and connected all the bits, I certainly felt that I deserved some music. For a light but satisfying snack on CD, I turned first to Dvorak's 'American' string quartet. One of this amp's strengths which was truly apparent immediately was the sense of effortlessness to the sound. There's not a lot of power needing to be shifted with a string quartet, but the gains were felt in speed and sparkle. Wandering

among the air-waves, I stumbled across Radio 1, which happened to be plugging 'Central Reservation' when I arrived. This featured something rather interesting in the mandolin line - or it may have been a plucked fiddle. What's certain is the true booty verve which the A300 was applying to my loudspeakers, not just in the bass but all over. By now you will realise that I have formed an extremely high opinion of the A300. For one thing, I was able to 'fit and forget': once the simple process of plumbing it in was accomplished, I just listened to music, pure and simple. If you've ever wondered what high-enders get out of spending untold thousands on their kit, £1399 spent on a Musical Fidelity A300 integrated will give you a pretty heavy hint.

Musical Fidelity A300 £1399
Musical Fidelity 15/16, Olympic Trading Est.,
Fulton Road,
Wembley, Middx.
HA9 0TF
Tel: 0181 900 2866



MVL A2+ INTEGRATED AMP

MVL's A2 basic integrated left the right impression on everyone who heard it. The question now was, could that amp with the addition of the whole range of Sound Sentinel 'input improvers' rise to the challenge of its £1250? Turning to Natacha Atlas' Gedida proved an enjoyable experience - 'Ezzay' had a spaciousness, vibrancy and drive which had me prodding the Repeat button on the Kenwood DP-X9010 transport's remote a fair few times. Image focus was also well up there with the best

at this price, each strand of the mix clear in itself but woven homogeneously into the whole within a sound-stage which was properly layered front to back. And in spite of the overall electronically-processed feel of this album, the A2+ demonstrated a winning way with harmonics as it did an excellent job of allowing through those of strings plucked and bowed. Whistler found the A2+ in equally fine form. Despite a measured performance for the MVL which suggested loads of distortion and a commensurately hard, sharp sound, it had a natural smoothness and lucidity that made this disc an addictive listen. The sweetly-sung but bitter lyrics never suffered any undue sibilance or harshness, and there was an almost tangible sense of space between images that set up the sort of warehouse sound

staging you'd expect from pricier integrations or pre/powers. This theme continued into the Palladian Ensemble and Elgar, where strings were incisive but not excessively brash. And the 3-D presentation of both orchestra and quartet proved the MVL was just as competent with depth perspectives as width, not a combination solid-state is renowned for. It's hardly a budget amp, but then the A2+ sounds anything but inexpensive. Thanks to its drive, transparency, smoothness and genuine musicality, it currently heads the pack at the price.

MVL Technology £1,250
Northfield Mill,
Wymondham,
Norfolk,
NR18 0DF
Tel: 01953 850800



TANNOY MERCURY M2.5

These are big boys amongst the stand mount line-up with their hefty cabinets. Tannoy haven't skimped on the mid/bass unit either, so we were looking forward to

meaty, punchy bass. On Radiohead's 'Lucky', the Mercuries delivered, especially on the bass guitarline. What's more, there was a commendable lack of cabinet coloration. On Rock, the m2.5s endowed music with real impact and scale. Admittedly, at times the results could be a bit 'shouty' and none too subtle, but having said that, this was power under control - there was little evidence of any boom in the lower frequencies. Imaging was also fine: smooth vocals hung nicely in the space-between the 'speakers and the anthemic guitar chords panned left and right to create a grandeur that belied the Tannoys' modest dimensions. Investigating the

bass regions further, we lined up the opening double-bass figures of Diana Krall's 'All Or Nothing'. This pizzicato pyrotechnic display covers over an octave and does a good job of catching out pur-

veyors of one-note bass. The Tannoys played every note individually, which almost made up for a smidgen of harshness in the vocals. As was fast becoming evident, the Mercuries were easily able to rustle up a very large sound which went down a storm on Stravinsky's Firebird. The orchestral big guns remained coherent and seamlessly integrated within the sound stage, the only fly in the ointment the slightly recessed acoustic. It's not just at the bottom where the Tannoys deliver the goods. At the top-end, violins managed a pleasant clarity and sweetness joined by a woodwind section that was airy and light. At full stretch there was just a little brittleness in the upper midrange, but the Tannoys' virtues outweighed their faults many times over.

Tannoy Mercury m2.5 £160
Tannoy Rosehall Ind. Estate,
Coatbridge, Strathclyde,
ML5 4TF
Tel: 01236 420199

KLIPSCH HERESY II LOUD-SPEAKERS

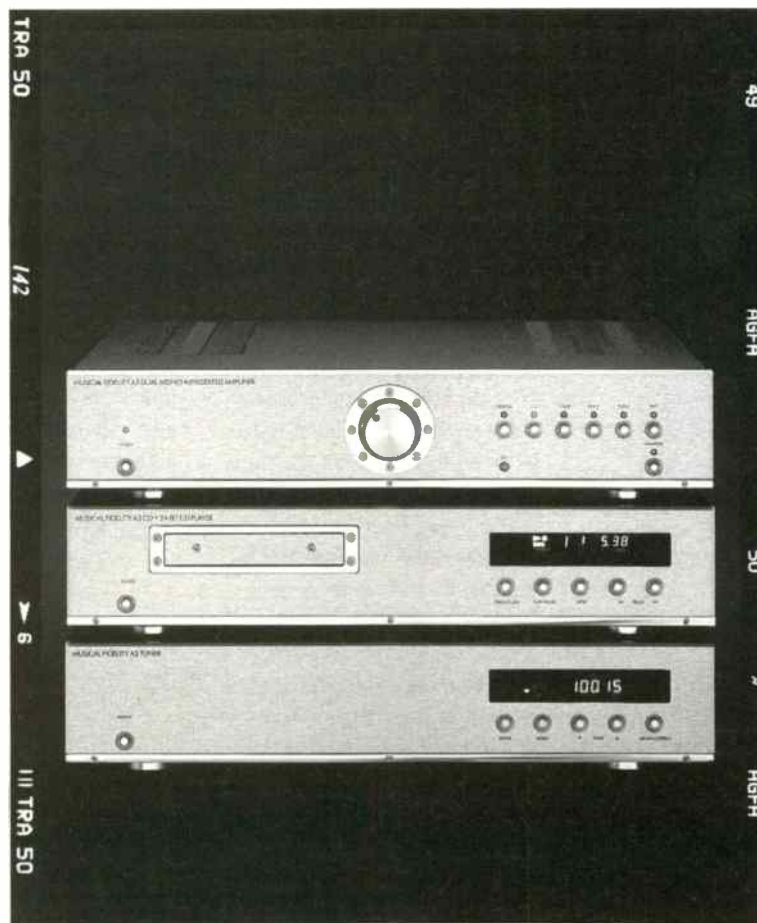
Paul Klipsch patented his earliest bass horn in 1942 and went from strength to strength with the famous Klipschorn and a select band of other designs thereafter. The Heresy owes its existence to the popularity of the Klipschorn for monitoring. Because of the requirement for corner placement, stereo pairs could find themselves over 30 feet apart. Not unexpectedly there was a touch of the hole-in-the-middle effect with this arrangement! A treble horn 'filler' had been duly produced to obviate this problem when a local church approached Klipsch to exorcise some pressing public-building PA problems. By marrying the new treble unit to a fully-enclosed bass driver, the appropriately-dubbed Heresy was born. Plumbing the depths with the opening to Stravinsky's Firebird, the effect was genuinely disquieting. Although the opening is pianissimo, the impressive sensitivity of the Heresies ensured that bass didn't fall by the wayside. There may be tauter bass out there, but there were none of the true crimes that your average reflex design is guilty of. There was also a good deal to be said for the detail which the treble



tremendous power and impact. Individualistic the Heresies may be; they are also 96dB/W/m loud! Considering that the main raison d'être with the Heresy IIs is massive sensitivity, I can see a lot of people using low-wattage valve amplifiers with them. These normally have a sweet, smooth character which would gel nicely with the Klipsches' midrange and treble, which can be forward if it's solid-state in the driving seat. But whatever the electronics, you'll never find music played through these 'speakers boring.

department was pushing out. Similarly expressive were some of Joe Beard's R 'n' B numbers. For a nice change, the kick drum had its own note, rather than that of the loudspeaker. And when the going got complex the overall result had

Klipsch Heresy II £1,150
Midland Radio Supplies
Maypole Wks,
Maypole Lane,
Birmingham,
B14 4PE
Tel: 0121 430 7817



A3 RANGE.
MACHINED, MIL-SPEC ALUMINIUM
FRONT PANEL.

TWENTY-FOUR CARAT GOLD
PLATED FITTINGS.

REMOTE CONTROLLED.

PHONO STAGE.

POWERFUL, ROBUST, BUILT.

MUSICAL FIDELITY

A3 RANGE: INTEGRATED AMPS, PREAMPS, POWER AMPS, TUNER, CD PLAYER AND HOME CINEMA DECODER. FOR DETAILS OF YOUR NEAREST STOCKIST RING 020 8900 2866.



catching combination. Round the back, they may not be bi-wire ready, but these big-sounding 'speakers had a winning way from the word go. Skunk Anansie's aural onslaught, especially the hardcore Rap/Metal of 'Milk Is My Sugar', powered out impressively. The price to pay came in vocals that were occasionally sibilant and hard, but at least the heavy guitar lines drove along in real Rock 'n' Roll fashion. Diana Krall's dulcet tones, on the other hand, showed precious little sign of overstepping the mark on 's' sounds. Indeed, Miss Krall's sometimes too-serious

beautifully portrayed and made listening a genuine pleasure, not something which can be said with many budget transducers. A spot of Stravinsky left us in no doubt that the AEs couldn't resist a bit of rhythm and percussion. The bass drum was taut and focused, and that metal mid/bass picked up some low frequencies that are well beyond other hopefuls at this sort of price. Less of a success was imaging, which could have done with some extra precision, and again the treble could harden upon trumpets and percussion. The Aegis Ones are weighty, powerful performers with plenty of character to their presentation. They may not be the smoothest performers around, but they handle scale like few other stand mounters. The AEs are exceptional value for money and deserve serious consideration.

**ACOUSTIC ENERGY
AEGIS ONE LOUDSPEAKERS**

The Aegis One has a solid front baffle which houses a silk-dome tweeter and a white, alloy mid/bass unit in an eye-

approach came across as cheeky and endearing, a much more satisfying overall result! Benny Waters and his Jazz pals in Stockholm allowed the Aegises to show off their prowess when it came to acoustic music. The old master's breathy tone was-

Acoustic Energy Aegis One £199.99
Acoustic Energy,
16 Bridge Road
Cirencester, Glos. GL7 1PO
Tel: 01285 654432

**MAGNEPLANAR MG12/QR
LOUDSPEAKERS**



It's strange how pets, and cats more than any others, can be accurate barometers as to the sonic prowess of components. Set up a system with harsh treble and an artificial tonal balance and they'll show their disapproval by getting up and walking out of the room.

Magneplanar evidently has a strong following amongst felines to judge from section 7B of the MG12s' manual: "For owners of cats, we recommend cat repellent around the base of the 'speakers." One talent which distinguishes transducers whose diaphragms have a low moving mass is an addictive speed, delicacy and musicality which breathes life into recordings. This much was obvious immediately after firing up the Maggies even without having paid any special attention to placement or cabling. The overture from Tchaikovsky's Romeo And Juliet had a real sense of ebb and flow to it as the MG12s allowed through unfettered dynamics, both large and small. Thanks to a fleet-footed transparency, the emotional content of this composition was

also more strongly portrayed. Where a lot of box 'speakers have a habit of flattening out the highs and lows written into a score, these dipoles imposed themselves less on the signal, capturing the mix of menace and sorrow in a compelling manner which kept me happily pinned to the listening hot-spot. Showcasing the MG12s' tonal purity and sheer enjoyability were Nathan And The Zydeco Cha Chas. Accordion on this album was more harmonically convincing than cone-and-dome loudspeakers such as Jamo's Concert 8s managed, and there was an irrepressible joie de vivre to tracks like 'Outside People' beyond the reach of more sluggish performers. For their lightness of touch, dynamics, clarity and expression, the MG12/QRs have much to recommend them.

Magneplanar MG12/QR £1200
RT Services
118 Mendip Heights
Didcot, Oxon
OX11 7TG
Tel: 01235 810455





Hi-Fi World

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

[1] Which Frenchman designed Naim's ill-fated FL-1 electrostatic loudspeaker?
[a] Jacques Cousteau
[b] Guy Lamotte
[c] Françoise Truffaut

[2] What is MP3?
[a] A boy band
[b] A non-stick coating
[c] A computer file format

[3] What's the name of the man behind Musical Fidelity?
[a] Anthony Michaelson
[b] Michael Barrymore
[c] Anthony Blair

[4] Which two specialist British hi-fi companies merged this year?
[a] Linn and Naim
[b] Garrard and Gradiante
[c] Michell Engineering and Trichord Research

[5] Who sang an ode to '2 turntables and a microphone'?
[a] Beck
[b] David Beckham
[c] David Bellamy

[6] What does SACD stand for?
[a] Such A Complete Disaster
[b] Something Always Comes Down
[c] Super Audio Compact Disc

[7] Who is Noburu Tominara?
[a] The boss of the Sony Corporation
[b] The leader of Japan's infamous Omu Shinri Kyo religious cult

[c] Dynavector's cartridge designer
[8] Which dynamic duo was responsible for the 'totally outta sight' Lecson range of

electronics from the mid seventies?
[a] Bob Stuart and Allan Boothroyd
[b] Noel Keywood and Dave Praker
[c] John Bamford and Andy Giles

[9] Danish company VIFA make what?
[a] Loudspeaker drive units
[b] Streaky bacon
[c] Amplifiers with big knobs on

[10] Wilson Benesch are what?
[a] An American girl group featuring the siblings of sixties popular beat combo The Mamas and Papas
[b] Designers of the famous Dyson vacuum cleaner, originally found in swanky Islington pads but now available at Comet
[c] Manufacturers of beautiful analogue replay equipment

[11] Who designed Linn's superb Archiv II moving coil cartridge?
[a] Lyrax's Jonathon Carr
[b] EAR's Tim De Paravicini
[c] World Audio Design's Nick Lucas

[12] What is Digital Audio Extraction?
[a] The computer audio equivalent of direct digital recording on to hard drive
[b] An HDCD mastering term
[c] Police slang for the theft of Compact Disc players and MiniDisc recorders

[13] Who designed Epos's classic ES14 loudspeaker?
[a] Marshall Jefferson
[b] Batman and Robin
[c] Robin Marshall

[14] What was Arthur Koubessarian's first big seller?
[a] The Satanic Verses

[b] The Pink Triangle
[c] The Blair Witch Project

[15] What does Marantz's top audio tweaker Ken Ishiwata's surname mean in English?
[a] Glass
[b] Prune
[c] Stone

Check your answers on page 3, pals . . .



TIGER WOODS



NOTHING ROARS LIKE THE NEW TANNOY R1. REAL WOOD. UNDER £200.

The beauty of the Tannoy R1 is more than just skin-deep. Beneath the real wood exterior you'll see updated drivers built to closer tolerances, redesigned higher-spec crossovers, tunable bass ports and bi-wiring. The result is a startling sound quality unheard of at this price. Call 01753 680868, or visit your local hi-fi specialist to judge the new Tannoy R1 for yourself.

TANNOY

marantz®

I like my cars fast,
my beer cold,
my women exciting,
and my music played
on Marantz



Telephone: 01753 680868 Internet: www.marantz.com