

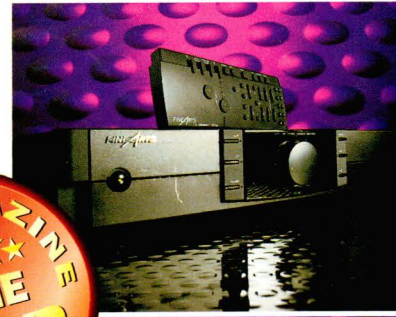
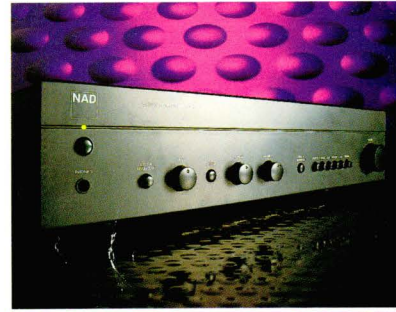
HI-FI CHOICE

WIN!
Rogers Hi-Fi
Worth Over £2,500

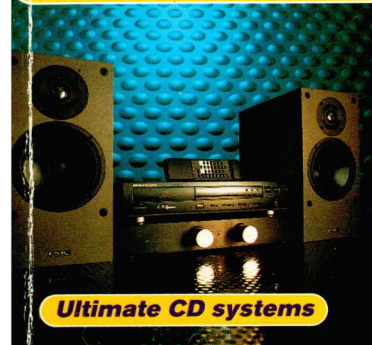
THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

TOP AMPS

We choose the Best Buys up to £350!



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Ultimate CD systems

Hot phones up to £150

Terrific tuners under £700

Best budget speaker cables

Buyer's Guide

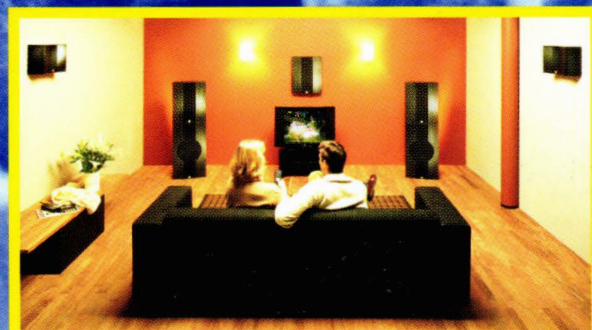
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SEPTMBER 1996 £2.99

HERE'S SOMEONE WHO KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT CINEMA SOUND

YODA

THX is the trademark of LUCASFILM Limited



You will not believe your ears when you experience the Jamo THX Home Cinema System – the exciting new dimension in family audio visual home entertainment.

The THX standard has been developed by Lucas Films Limited of America, giving you every subtlety and sensation to place you right in the midst of all the action, all the drama, all the atmosphere and your greatest feelings.

Audition Jamo THX Home Cinema System at your nearest discerning dealer and – *“may the force be with you!”*

Jamo[®]
“THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE”

Editor's Notebook

Enough gadgets and gizmos already! **Stan Vincent** unravels the tangled mess that is consumer electronics in the '90s.



PHOTO BY SCAM BLONDINOFF

These are strange times for consumer electronics. Never, it seems, have there been so many gadgets and gizmos available. Even within the field of audio, there is always something new on the horizon. At the same time, the road to tomorrow has never been so cluttered with broken-down inventions of yesterday that failed to fulfil their promise.

Just recently, I discussed with an independent London hi-fi dealer the malaise affecting sales of separate hi-fi components, which no longer resemble the cash cow they were ten years ago. The conversation turned, inevitably, to DVD, the new CD-sized video replay format. Even before the first player has been sold, this new format is being heralded as the saviour of the hi-fi industry, a golden product that will finally convince ordinary people not to spend all their money on computers and Caribbean holidays. However, I recall similar expectations being heaped on the shoulders of 'the home cinema revolution' three years ago. To date, in the UK at least, only manufacturers of TV sets and packaged audio systems have profited handsomely from surround-sound—premium home cinema components have yet to describe an elliptical sales curve.

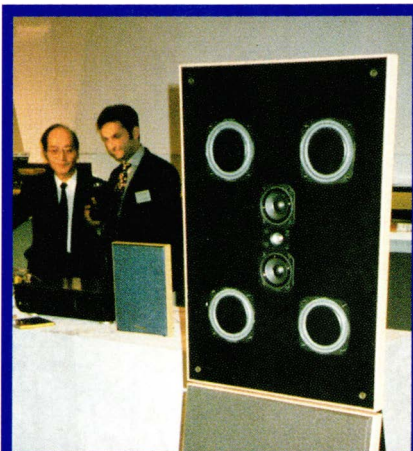
Here's a puzzler for you. Suppose people do spend money on computers and holidays because they've given up trying to figure out what's happening next in consumer electronics? This might generate more traffic through the hi-fi retailer's door, as people rediscover their music collections. Pure hi-fi will never die out, but it will become more of an eclectic pursuit.

What they think we want, is not...

However, what if these other commodities are more popular because they are better tailored to consumers' needs? Sometimes it seems as if the hi-fi industry has trouble taking this concept on board. The quality of audiophile hi-fi equipment is manifest, and the modular nature of hi-fi separates means they are much more upgradeable, and therefore better value, than numerous other electronic devices, that nonetheless seem to hold much greater sway with the buying public.

Alas, the public is a fickle beast, and does not respond to reason. You cannot compel people to buy things purely because it makes log-

JEAN SPWATSCHE



Revealed at Technics' recent Editor's Seminar in Barcelona... non-electrostatic flat speakers! These prototypes' drive units operate on the dynamic principle, but have been made especially thin. Driven by an experimental PDM amplifier, they sounded fast, and had commendable bass. Also on display were an A4-size pair (just 3 cm thick, blue grilles, above) to partner future micro systems.

ical and practical sense to do so. You have to find out what they think they want to buy, and tailor your products accordingly. And these days, in an age of massive media consumption and lightning-fast trends, manufacturers must ascertain with greater and greater regularity what it is that tickles the public fancy.

In June I attended a presentation given by Iomega, a company that manufactures removable storage media for computers. Iomega has been massively successful with two simple products: the *Zip* drive, which uses a 100 Megabyte removable disc that resembles a MiniDisc; and the *Jaz* drive, a one gigabyte removable hard disk, on which you could, if so inclined, store up to eight hours of CD-quality audio. The concepts involved are not ground-breaking, but the novelty lies in the way these technologies have been tailored to vast tracts of customer research data.

For years, computer industry product-planning was predicated on what a company wanted to offer, with prices based on cost of manufacture. Nowadays, customers expect

to determine both price and product features. Could the consumer electronics industry learn something from Iomega's example? Aiwa, which recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary in the UK (and a year of manufacturing in Wales), has achieved great commercial success through focusing on customers. None of Aiwa's key products today are what we would call hi-fi, but their prices and features are just what the customer ordered. Can more specialist hi-fi manufacturers learn from this experience, and thus draw new enthusiasts into the hi-fi fold?

...What we really want!

I'm sure that Joe Public will leap from his couch on news of a truly affordable (ie, sub-£1,000) CD recorder. I am also convinced that if the new DVD format is to succeed, it must offer recording facilities. (Who wants a glorified LaserDisc player? Everyone wants a digital, disc-based replacement for their VCRs!) Now, I hear that the cost of blank CD-R discs for Pioneer's £1,300 *PDR-05* recorder (reviewed in issue 148), will soon be halved. Great! Computer users still have the CD-R advantage, however—recently I read of a dual-speed recorder cum quad-speed reader, retailing for just £540, with £800 worth of mastering software thrown in. Naturally, it needs a computer to operate, and has none of the *PDR-05*'s convenience features, nor the ability to record from analogue sources, but it does indicate a general trend of falling prices and greater availability. Recordable CD for the people!

In this month's issue we have reviews on amplifiers, tuners, headphones and speaker cables, so there's plenty to get your teeth into. Whatever else the pundits tell you, hi-fi is alive and well in the '90s, and will continue to be the pursuit of choice for connoisseurs everywhere. So enjoy your music this month, safe in the knowledge that your biggest worry will be deciding which album to play next...

Stan Vincent



We were honoured to be voted Hi-Fi Magazine Of The Year at the CETI Industry Awards, Harrogate, May 1996. Cheers!



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Pick a system... shuffle, shuffle, shuffle... now that's magic!



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Next time your CD player jumps – we'd like to suggest a four letter word



The unique TEAC VRDS mechanism really gets a grip on the sound. Unlike ordinary players, TEAC's VRDS design clamps the entire disc, thus eliminating errors caused by mechanical and physical factors.

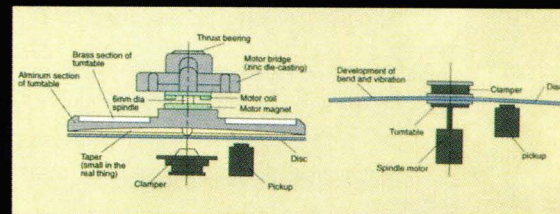
The VRDS-25 tracks discs with awesome precision and delivers data to the DAC with absolute accuracy.

The result is a wonderful level of detail and

musicality combined with rock-solid timing.

All this, a build quality second to none plus unbelievable ease of use - and you have a CD player that would grace any system.

Before you buy, you owe it to yourself to check out the new VRDS-25. Simply ask your dealer for TEAC - it should be the only four letter word you'll ever need.



TEAC UK Limited, 5 Marlin House, The Croxley Centre, Watford, Herts WD1 8YA
Brochure Hotline 01923 819630 Monday-Friday 9am to 5.30pm

TEAC[®]

The gold units featured in this photograph are available as a special order option

Update

FEAST UPON MULTIPLE SERVINGS OF HOT NEWS, PREPARED FOR YOU BY HUNGRY REPORTERS IN THE CHOICE KITCHENS



Tannoy's new Profile

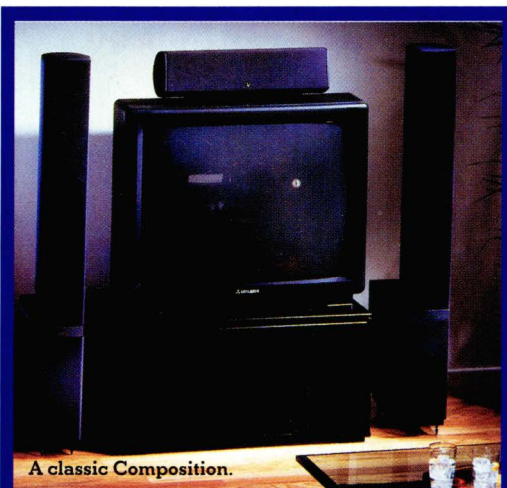


Tannoy has upgraded its entry-level *Profile* and up-market *Definition* series. The new *Profile Plus* range differs from its predecessor by virtue of better crossovers, improved cabinets and MDF tops. There is a new £450 *Profile Plus 635*, which uses a single 203mm dual-concentric driver in a floor-standing cabinet, while the *625ALF* subwoofer now has improved electronics and a new name — *ALFi*.

Tannoy's *Definition* series has a new finish — American Cherry — and three new models in the range. The *D300* is the baby, with a single 165mm cast chassis dual concentric driver, while the top-of-the-range *D900* sports a huge 305mm cast chassis dual concentric with a 305mm auxiliary bass driver.

For home cinema enthusiasts, the *D750* is a centre channel speaker with attitude — and a 203mm cast-chassis, dual-concentric main driver with two auxiliary 203mm bass units. Prices are yet to be announced. Last, but not least, Tannoy will have a new flagship model in its *Prestige* range. Price and specifications have not been confirmed yet, but expect this *Westminster Royal*-beater to be huge, horn-loaded and somewhere near the £20,000 mark. Wahay! ☎ (01236) 420199

High Definition: D900 and D300.



A classic Composition.

Infinite composition

Infinity has called upon the talents of ex-KEF engineer Laurie Fincham to design the new, five-piece *Compositions* home theatre package.

The system consists of two front towers, a voice-matched centre channel, and two quadrapole speakers for rear surround.

Each of the front towers houses eight drive units (all magnetically shielded) and each includes an integral 300mm powered subwoofer.

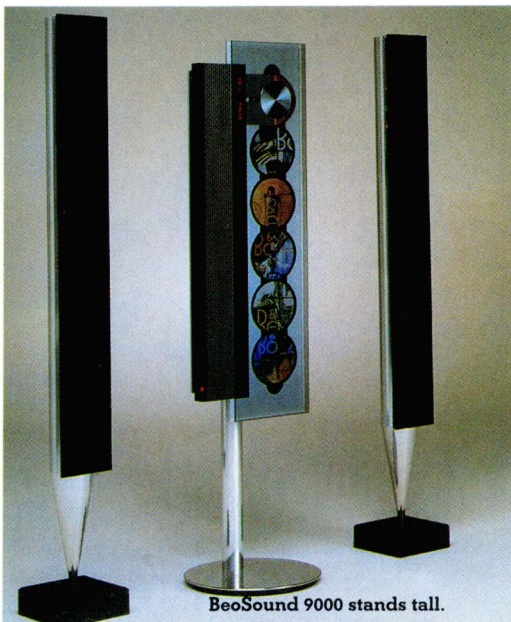
The three-way, voice-matched centre-channel contains five high-efficiency, long-throw drivers covering the low, mid and high frequencies. Complete with magnetic shielding, this speaker has an adjustable vertical tilt range of 25 degrees for optimum sound dispersion.

Each quadrapole speaker contains five high-output drive units, to provide a suitably non-specific sound source. Price is £3,995. ☎ (01908) 317707

Multidisc appeal

Bang & Olufsen has unveiled one of its most radical products to date. The *BeoSound 9000* is a six-disc CD changer, tuner and preamplifier-cum-control centre. Described by chief designer David Lewis as "a revolt against indifference and black boxes" the *9000* is visually and ergonomically a striking product. It can be used both vertically or horizontally, on a table or a wall, and its display alters to suit the chosen orientation. It's also the only multi-disc player where you can see all your discs!

Other novelties include a motorised glass lid, with light-beam cut-out to avoid small fingers being scythed by the high speed laser mechanism. You can also use its 200 disc memory to store the orientation and names of your CD collection. The *9000* costs £2,500 and is designed to be used with Bang & Olufsen's range of active speakers. ☎ (01734) 692288



BeoSound 9000 stands tall.

In brief

In a ground-breaking move, Pioneer is to use ex Trichord designer Tom Evans to modify some of its components. First product to receive the *Omega* treatment will be the A-300R amp, which will be tweaked at Pioneer's Yorkshire factory, and looks to retail for around £400. ☎ (01753) 789789

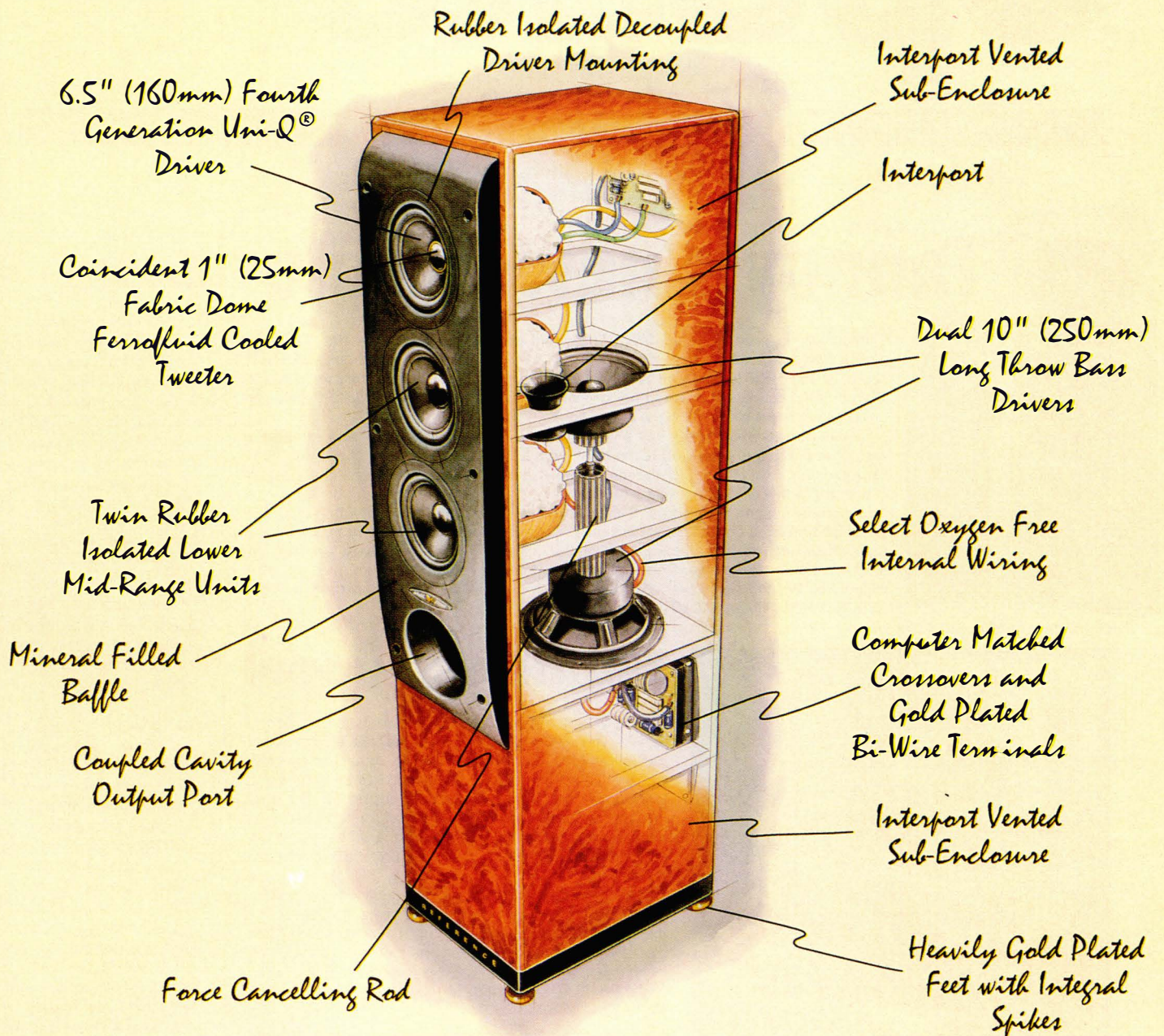
Tom Evans, meanwhile has formed Acoustic Precision with Paddy Hanscombe of Electrofluidics. They will produce the *Black Box* mains conditioner, and are developing a range of polymer concrete damping products. ☎ (01443) 816856

Mission is launching a flagship loudspeaker called the *754 Freedom 5*, and is updating the *75* series. The *754 Freedom 5* will retail at an estimated £1,300, for which you get a metre tall, 50-litre cabinet with a 25mm silk tweeter, 180mm aerogel midrange unit and a 200mm bass unit. The latter is mounted internally in a band-pass arrangement firing downwards. The *751*, *752* and *753* will be modified and appended with the *Freedom* name. All three receive silk tweeters and the two larger models will undergo construction mods. ☎ (01480) 451777

Richer Sounds and its manufacturing arm, Audio Partnership, has upgraded its relationship with Audio Components, manufacturers of the Audio Innovations hi-fi range. AP has moved from providing financial support to taking full control of manufacturing and R&D. This will allow Audio Partnership to expand the *Alto* system with a range of new products such as a tuner, a more powerful amplifier, and possibly a pre/power combination. ☎ (0171) 403 1310

KEF REFERENCE SERIES MODEL FOUR

The Inside Story



Look inside the new KEF Reference Series Model Four and you'll understand why it has been hailed as one of the finest loudspeakers in the world. You'll find brilliantly innovative design, bristling with advanced features found on no other speaker. No wonder it has met with such critical acclaim.

"...KEF's best yet, showing that musicality and neutral balance can result from the high-tech and deeply researched designs that KEF is famous for..."

"...It'll play loud throughout the range, holding onto its fundamental inner balance, one which is recognisably truthful to the programme input..."

"...This speaker has a degree of slam and overall dynamic range associated with the best at two or three times the price..."

Martin Colloms, Hi-Fi News



The experience
of sound

Yamaha in full effect

Yamaha has jumped into the digital home theatre arena with the *DSP-3090 AC-3* surround-sound amplifier. This £1,700 integrated design combines Yamaha's Cinema DSP with Dolby Labs' digital AC-3 system, to feed up to seven channels and a subwoofer. This combination of the established US format for digital surround, with Yamaha's battery of digital signal processing options, has been dubbed Tri-field, and makes for a dazzling array of soundfield options with appropriately encoded software.

The main five channels used for AC-3 are driven by 80 Watt amps, while the front left and right surround channels used for DSP modes draw on 60 Watts each. There are five optical inputs and one coaxial digital input (which means future-proofing for DVD), and a complete set of audio and



DSP-3090: few knobs, many features.

video socketry, not to mention digital and analogue outputs.

The *DSP-3090* can do virtually anything with a surround encoded signal — the brochure illustrates 24 different sound field settings. All you've got to do is master the remote! ☎ (01923) 233166

MA's PMC

Monitor Audio has a new range of speakers equipped with a PMC (profile monitor cone). The *Reference Series 700 PMC* is made up of three models, starting with the *700 PMC* bookshelf (£600), continuing through the *703 PMC* (£800) and *705 PMC* floorstanders (£1,400). All prices are for black oak finish; rosemah is available for an extra £100.

All models share a 170mm ceralloy-coned mid/bass drive unit, as used in MA's top flight *Studio 50* model. The tweeter is MA's favourite gold-dome unit. The *700* and *703* PMCs are reflex designs, the latter reaching 5Hz further down and offering a dB more sensitivity. The *705 PMC* is an infinite baffle affair with a pair of midbass drivers. ☎ (01223) 242898



705 PMC

703 PMC

702 PMC

700 PMC

I've known rivers

Castle Acoustics has replaced the *Durham 900* loudspeaker with the *Castle Tay*. This two-way, reflex-loaded design has a polyamide-laminated soft dome tweeter, and a 130mm midbass unit built on a diecast chassis. Its injection-moulded diaphragm is driven by a 30mm voice coil through a second-order crossover.

Finished to Castle's usual high standards, the *Tay's* cabinet is built from 18mm MDF, and comes in a choice of veneers. Dimensions are 42x19x24cm, and sensitivity 87dB. Price is £239 for standard finishes, and £379 for rosewood and yew. ☎ (01756) 795333

Out with the old (Marantz)

Marantz is to introduce eight new products into its standard range. These include two integrated amplifiers, a new three-band, RDS-equipped receiver and tuner, a five-disc CD changer, and a new twin cassette deck. It will also introduce the £270 *CD-67*. This player is based on the *CD-63II* and features an improved decoder, servo and drive chips, plus better transformer-core material with OFC wiring. Also on the digital side is the new *DR-12* CD Recorder. Little is known about this machine, save that it is expected to cost under £1,700 and uses the 60-minute domestic CD-R blank.

Marantz will soon announce new AV products, too. Two AV receivers are expected, as is a larger version of the tiny LCD video projector. Of greatest interest to aspiring videophiles is the £600 *DP870 AC-3* decoder. There are also rumblings in Marantz Design range, with a sexy black version of the *Arch* system, new *Slim* series packages named after planets, and one or two wholly new systems for '97.

Ken Ishiwata is busy with a *KI Signature* amplifier to complement the *CD63 KI Signature*, but we can't tell you much more than that. Finally, there are two new Special Edition products, the £230 *PM-66SE* and a *CD-67SE*. ☎ (01753) 680868

The new Sonic Frontier

Sonic Frontiers has produced its first integrated CD player, the £3,495 *SFCD-1*.

Combining many attributes of Sonic Frontier's transport and Digital Processor products into a single package, *SFCD-1* offers 'unsurpassed' jitter performance.

It boasts a number of technological firsts which, claims the manufacturer, will elevate the level of musicality available from the CD medium. These developments include analogue servo circuitry to eliminate output coupling capacitors, UltraAnalog *D20400A* D/A conversion, and three customised toroidal transformers. 12 separate voltage regulation stages are claimed to give complete isolation between motor, optics, digital clock, analogue circuitry and AC line voltage. In keeping with the Sonic Frontiers range, the *SFCD-1* has a vacuum-tube output stage. ☎ (01483) 454993

SFCD-1: tube-powered digits.



In brief

Rega will shortly be introducing the *Planet* CD player. Due to retail for £400, the deck has an unusual parallelogram-style lid for its top-mounted transport. The name harks back to Rega's first turntable from 1982! ☎ (01702) 333071

Arion has produced a valve amplifier kit called *Adonis*. It is a triode-configured 20W design and retails for £495 in black or £595 in stainless steel and chrome. ☎ (01868) 748281

Interconnect manufacturer Connections UK has moved to 1 Manor Drive, Sawtry, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 5UU. ☎ (01487) 832424

Silverado now has a Web page at <http://www.ibmpcug.co.uk/~raider/> where you can find out all about its loudspeakers and more. Send e-mail to silverado@skt.win-uk.net

Acoustica in Chester is planning a series of musical evenings in October. These coincide with the launch of the long-awaited Rega CD player, new loudspeakers from Naim Audio and Ruark, and the new Arcam range. For details call Acoustica on (01244) 344227.

If you were a customer of the late Chichester Hi-Fi during its BADA membership, and need service and support, call local BADA dealers Jeffries in Portsmouth — (01705) 663604 — or Phase 3 in Worthing — (01903) 245577.

Grundig has signed a sponsorship deal worth over £1m with the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA). The company will contribute towards the day-to-day running costs and concentrate on attracting young talent from across Europe.

Harman-Kardon and JBL products are now being distributed by Rotel importer Gamepath. The AKG and REL brands remain with Harman Audio. ☎ (01908) 317707

Sony and Philips have agreed to add text functions to the CD audio Red Book specification. This means that album and track titles, along with an artist's name and lyrics, can be encoded onto discs and dis-

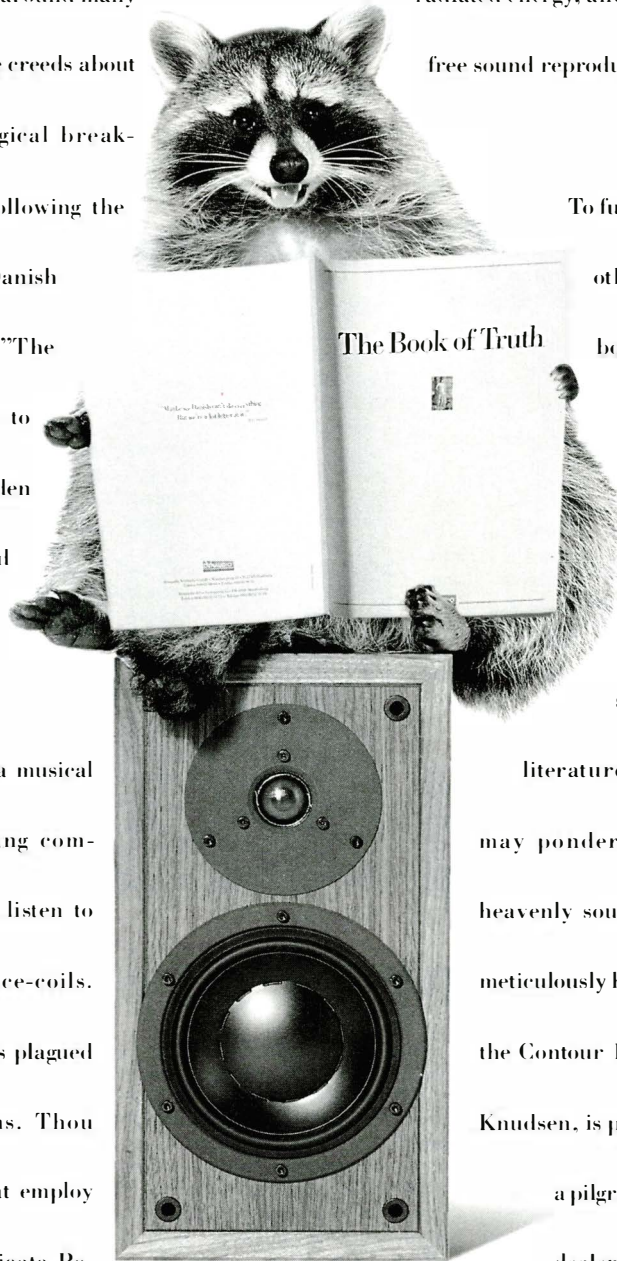
MOST SALES LITERATURE ON SPEAKERS GETS RECYCLED. OURS JUST GETS REREAD.

As you may have noticed, the "high-end" audio world tends to congregate in small sects around many "gurus" who preach unbelievable creeds about wholly unbelievable technological breakthroughs. True to our tenet, following the teachings of our first official Danish Holyman, chief tester St.Erik "The Ear" Nielsen, we feel compelled to prevent further adoration of Golden Calves, comparable idols, and other profane fallacies.

Hence, "The Book of Truth", a musical bible containing such towering commandments as: Thou shalt not listen to speakers with undersized voice-coils. Thou shalt not listen to speakers plagued with phase response problems. Thou shalt only listen to speakers that employ one-piece MSP (Magnesium Silicate Polymer) woofer cones. Thou shalt only listen to speakers

that utilize complete absorption of evil, backwards-radiated energy, and allow for virtuous, echo-free sound reproduction.

To further indulge in these and other truths from Skanderborg, Denmark, please call +49-40-858-066 or fax us at +49-40-859-035, to receive a missionary copy of our small masterpiece of true audiophile literature. In the meantime, you may ponder seeking refuge in the heavenly sounds emanating from our meticulously handcrafted speakers (like the Contour 1.3 our company raccoon, Knudsen, is preaching from), whilst on a pilgrimage to one of our few true dealers. Consequently, you may even consider recycling your former speakers as well.



DYNAUDIO
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

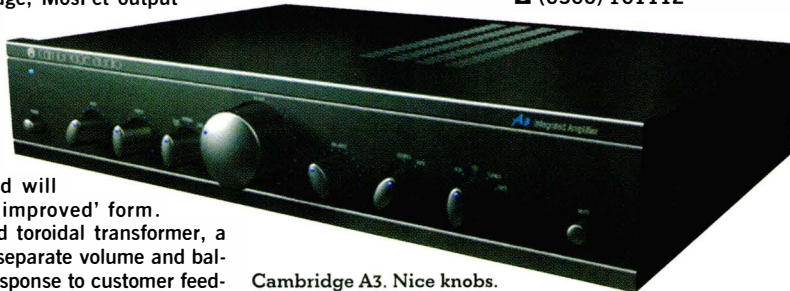
DANES DON'T LIE.™

Cambridge conjures cachet

Cambridge Audio has revamped its *A1* amplifier and added the *A3* to its range. The *A3* looks set to retail for just under £200, for which you get 50 British-designed Watts of power, a discrete phono stage, MosFet output transistors and an R-core transformer. These features, coupled with 'CD direct' (to override the tone controls) and 'innovative protection circuitry', make the *A3* a competitive looking package.

The existing *A1* integrated will shortly be available in 'new improved' form. Updates include a close-wound toroidal transformer, a 'radical new output stage' and separate volume and balance controls. The latter is in response to customer feed-

back on the dual concentric volume/balance pot of old. Just so you know which *A1* is which, the fascia has been subtly re-styled as well. Price remains at £99.95. ☎ (0500) 101112



Cambridge A3. Nice knobs.

Hot pastry

Danish loudspeaker giant Jamo is aiming at the high-end with its new *Concert* range. This comprises two stereo models and a centre-channel unit.

Both the two-way *Concert 8* and three-way *Concert 11* feature custom SEAS treble and bass units. The 25mm dome tweeter uses a four-layer Sonotex membrane with silver-coil wiring. The 165mm midbass unit sports a die-cast magnesium alloy cone and a distinctive copper phase plug. These drivers are joined by a conventional 165mm bass unit in the floorstanding *Concert 11*.

The *Concert Centre* bristles with drive units. It uses a 25mm dome tweeter with a 38mm dome midrange and a pair of the 165mm bass units used in the *Concert 11*.

All speakers use 25mm MDF cabinets with sand/epoxy filled front baffles, and are available in a choice of mahogany or cherry wood veneers. Prices are expected to be £1,500 or less for the stand-mounted *Concert 8*, under £2,000 for the *Concert 11*, and under £500 for the *Concert Centre*.

☎ (01327) 301300

Concert 8 in the area.



Welsh speakers slated

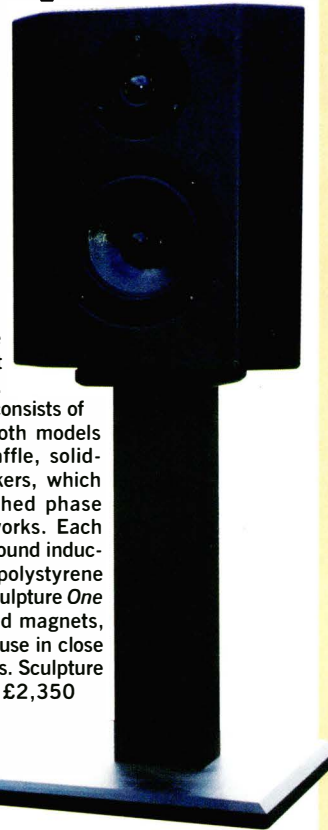
An innovative Welsh slate purveyor has teamed up with a music technology expert, to create the Sculpture Series of loudspeakers using slate for the cabinets.

John Lloyd and Bryn Jones claim that slate is more inert and rigid than wood, and eliminates the kind of vibration that plagues speaker cabinets.

The Sculpture Series consists of models *One* and *Two*. Both models are two-way, infinite baffle, solid-slate enclosed loudspeakers, which use electronically-matched phase coherent crossover networks. Each model employs custom-wound inductors and audio-friendly polystyrene capacitors. In addition, Sculpture *One* drive units have screened magnets, making them suitable for use in close proximity to video monitors. Sculpture Series speakers sell for £2,350 and £2,938 a pair.

☎ (01286) 830242

Sculpture Two: fine quarry!



In brief

played by appropriately equipped players. Other applications include automatic broadcasting of the same info.

Canon has launched an outdoor version of its V-100 'utility' loudspeaker. This corner-mounting, wide-dispersion design is called the *V-100EX* and retails for £240 per pair. Canon has also added a corner bracket to its *SV-15* speaker package. ☎ (01256) 841300

Bag End subwoofers are now available in the UK. The De-Regle Group is importing this range of widely-advocated American subs, and prices start at £1,500. Endorsed by Disney Studios, Herbie Hancock and panel speaker users, the Bag End range offers a multitude of options. Fax (01945) 588533

conrad-johnson has announced the first remote control preamplifier in its *Premier* range. The £3,995 *Premier Fourteen* is a line-only design with zero-feedback and all-triode circuitry. An all-valve phono equaliser is also expected soon: dubbed the *Premier Fifteen*, it is expected to cost £3,995. The new £1,990 *D/A-2b DAC* features Bitstream digital conversion, allied with a tube output stage. ☎ (0181) 948 4153

Electrocompaniet has introduced the *EC-4-1/2*, a remote-control product that's designed to sit between pre and power amps and facilitate translation from single-ended to balanced connections. Its price is £1,000. *EC-K2* is new high-purity loudspeaker cable, priced for terminated pairs, with a three-metre set coming in at £177. ☎ (01243) 533030

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Choice sessions

AUDIO BODHISATTVA JASON KENNEDY GETS FLEXISTENTIAL WITH A FUNKTASTICAL BAG OF NEW GOODIES

JVC F1 System

Pretty little matched separates system baffles tubologically unchallenged hi-fi hack. Or, real world kit that works!

£899 (SX-F1 speakers £249 extra)

Weird bit of kit: no spikes, can't use hawser cables, it's small, pretty, easy to use, and fully remote controllable. Something was clearly amiss. Then it clicked. This be one o' them new-fangled mini systems!

In fact it's a mini with pretensions to audiophilia: all separate boxes, individual mains leads, and proper phono-plugged leads. The amp has tone controls and a phase distorter called 'presence', which does no favours to radio but splashes the sound around amusingly with CD and tape. The remote doesn't cover everything (you have to tune the radio on the facia) and only the basic amp functions are included, which keeps it relatively clean and easy to use.

The F1 has the usual triad of sources: CD, cassette and radio. The latter is an AM/FM affair featuring that household essential (not), RDS, and a clock. The tape recorder is a single-deck, auto-reverse unit with Dolby B and C, an LED counter, and

a decent music-search capability. The CD is the most down-to-earth of the lot, with nary a frippery in sight.

The speakers are probably the most serious part of the kit, being of decent scale with a sensible-looking pair of drive units on a chamfered baffle.

For an inveterate hi-fi snob like yours truly, it is not easy to calibrate the potential of an entire system that costs less than the cable in my regular outfit. (Yeah, I hear you. Get real.) However, I found the F1 a quite rewarding box of tricks. It has perfect manners, and refuses to utter an unpleasant sound, even at decent volume levels, remaining musical and faithful to the material throughout. It doesn't seem to fatigue either, which you might interpret as a suggestion that it's boring, but that's not the case. There's plenty to keep the foot tapping and the spirit amused.

The F1 appears to be not only a good-looking and user-friendly system, but one that warrants close listening as well. Hurrah!

JVC ☎ (0181) 450 3282

Grade-making Grado: the Prestige Black.



Grado Prestige Black

Grado once again proves that you don't need to spend a fortune to get great sound from your records.

£49

Grado is a Brooklyn, New York-based company that's been in the business of producing headphones and cartridges for some time. Consequently, both types of their transducer have gained an enviable but low-profile reputation over here. The cartridges use a principle of moving iron, which as far as output and compatibility are concerned, is very much like the more familiar moving-magnet (MM) system deployed in most budget cartridges. Grado's Prestige Black is the base model in a new range of mostly plastic-bodied, replaceable-stylus cartridges being distributed by British 'needle' purveyors, Goldring.

The Black is pretty straightforward to set up, just so long as you've got a stylus pressure gauge and an alignment protractor to hand. If not, get the dealer to do it for you, as it can be a frustrating business. The only suitable MM phono stage to hand was on board the Rogers valve amp, and the only tonearm I felt inclined to fiddle with was on the Systemdek turntable, so these were the ancillaries I used for auditioning.

JVC F1: looks good, sounds good.



Initially, the *Black* sounded a bit thin and wiry, but after a bit of VTA adjustment, and a few hundred warm-up laps of a lead-out groove later, the cartridge was cooking. It responded very positively, turning in a bit of acoustic jazz with all the sophistication and resonance one expects, pulling out plenty of detail without letting go of the musical flow. More energetic material also fared well, with the *Black* putting in a very assured performance for such a reasonably priced design. You get civilised MMs at this price but they're usually a little lacking in pizzazz, and you get a few lively ones too, but they seem to take an age before they sound balanced.

Goldring Products Int'l (01284) 701101

Bandor Trident

Metal cones and coffee tables might seem like an odd combination, but together they make great music!

£789.60

Bandor is run by Doreen Bance Jordan, who was formerly married to metal-cone maestro Ted Jordan, but in herself is a bit of an aluminium diaphragm wiz. Much of Bandor's output has been used by other companies such as Pentachord, but the company also has a small range of its own.

The *Trident* is a satellite and subwoofer system that comprises a glass-topped table-cum-sub, from which you can remove the glass and place alternative materials beneath. It stands 18 inches high, and is not too fussy about sitting, although if possible, it should sit between its sats. It contains an eight-inch aluminium-coned bass driver, with dual-voice coils for the two channels. The sats are tiny, five-inch-high, sloping-front cubes, which look very neat. They feature a two-inch cone that operates from 120Hz up, which is a pretty impressive bandwidth for any single drive unit.

Getting the little sats up high enough is tricky — they are clearly designed for shelf rather than stand mounting — but a way was found and the results were worth it. This system is very quick on its feet and yet not bright in the way that some fast speakers are inclined to be. The bass is solid and tactile, and I reckon that the sub, being very lithe, could pass itself off as an active design in many circumstances. The combination makes for coherent, dynamic and engaging music.

You get plenty of differences between recordings, and I don't blame the speakers for the fact



that one LP sounded harder than usual — it has done in the past.

The system's limitations appear to be in absolute loudness and an inclination to highlight bells and other metallic instruments. However, these failings are disguised by on-the-button timing and the sense of spaciousness extracted from recordings. The *Trident* is a very coherent sub/sat system, which does a lot to further the reputation of the genre.

Bandor (01494) 714058

Technics SU-A800D

Despite its brash muscular appearance, this pre/power combo has some finely honed capabilities.

£400

This Technics pre/power amp combo has a touch of the mug's eye-ful about it. You get two boxes for the sort of money that would usually only stretch to one, you get lights, remote control and plenty of knobs and buttons, and all for £400.

The *SU-C800U* preamplifier has

five line inputs, MM phono and two tape loops, not to mention defeatable tone controls and Technics' Virtual Battery Operation. It is dependent on the *SE-A800S* power amp for its juice, so the two aren't inclined to be used separately. The power amp has fan cooling, orange lights and a headphone output. There's no doubt that these two offer maximum features for your money.

The supplied interconnect would have benefited from more charisma. This is your usual innocuous, thin, black-sleeved affair, but it had a drastically soporific effect on the *SU-A800D*'s performance. Initial listening suggested that the amps had a reasonable sense of timing but a rather flat soundstage and an old-fashioned tonal balance. There was plenty of bass welly, albeit without much subtlety. It went for beef rather than feel.

However, substituting a pair of DNM *TCC75* interconnects perked things up a bit. They added colour and space to the musical proceedings, putting sparkle into the treble and tightening up the enthusiastic bass. Quite a turnaround for a £35 cable! I compared the pairing to an Audio

Innovations *Alto*, which outshone the Technics in the midrange, but revealed it to be a truly rockin' combo with sufficient grunt to get things really kickin'.

The *SU-A800D* gives you quite a lot of box (and, for that matter, bang for your buck), but it's unlikely to give established £400 integrateds much cause for concern. So if power and flexibility are high on your list, by all means give this Technics powerhouse a try. But

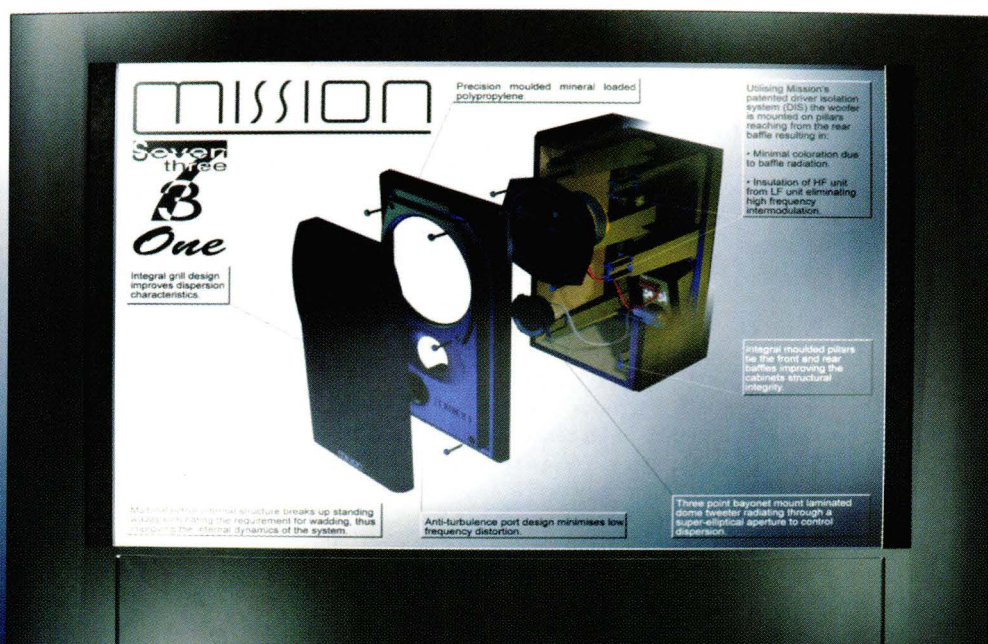
I'd counsel against using that supplied interconnect.

Technics (0990) 357357

Technics SU-A800D: look at the quality of those fins.



MISSION



Rogers E20a - dances this mesh around.

To Win This Product Turn To Page 58

Rogers E20a

Not content with a successful speaker range, Rogers has revived its amplifier line with a tube-tastic integrated.

£1,090

Surely Rogers is a speaker company? I hear you cry. What's this about an amplifier, and a valve amplifier, at that? Have they gone completely hat stand? Well, no. For a start, this isn't the first valve amp that Rogers has produced, just the first one for about 35 years. However, the *E20a*'s origins don't lie with the *Cadets* of the late '50s, but with designer Andy Whittle. He designs speakers for Rogers, and is a self-confessed tube maniac. Andy has been using an exotic Audio Note *SE* for quite some time, so it has come as no surprise to discover that the *E20a* was co-designed and manufactured by Audio Note UK.

Enough history. The *E20a* is a push-pull pentode design that puts out a sensible 18W via alternative four and eight Ohm taps. It has four line inputs and an MM phono stage which, if you use an MC cartridge, can be augmented with a step-up transformer. It has more controls than your average tube amp, with such luxuries as tape monitoring and balance.

Booting up this model, I was reminded of the first decent amp I ever used, an Audio Innovations *Series 500*. That didn't have a perforated stainless tube guard, but it had that same right-to-the-heart-of-the-music character that turns tube users into the fanatics they appear to be. There are plenty of hi-fi characteristics to be found — decent bandwidth, dynamics, resolution and what have you — but with an amp like this, you find yourself distracted by the music. With a sympathetic speaker pair, such as Audio Note *AN-Es*, this amp proved a fine diversion with material as diverse as Schumann and Rush. I can see myself abandoning the purity

of phase linearity and going back to the joy of hot bottles if this carries on.

The *E20a* is an organic and musical amp, which does more than merely compensate for its relative lack of power. A musically transparent character just lets you enjoy music.

Rogers ☎ (0181) 683 2101

AVI Neutron

Like Rogers in reverse, electronics specialist AVI has made its first foray into the world of tiny speakers.

£500

When AVI recently unveiled a loudspeaker to complement its hi-fi electronics range, the initiative was no doubt engendered by the arrival of Ashley James from AVI's long-term cohort ATC. Like the rest of AVI's products, *Neutron* was designed by Martin Grindrod, and is said to be the forerunner of a complete speaker range from the company.

The *Neutron* is tiny, and looks more like a satellite than a full-range speaker. Its diminutive four-litre frame (25cm x 13.5cm x 19.5cm, HxWxD) is designed to stand alone. Well suited to bookshelf and wall mounting, the *Neutron* has a front-facing, slot-shaped port beneath a 4.5-inch doped-paper mid/bass cone and 19mm fabric dome tweeter. Flouting convention, this combination crosses over at a stratospheric 10kHz, so for the most part you are listening to a single-drive unit.

Bass extension and loudness are limiting factors in a design like this, but neither are totally absent. With most material, the *Neutrons* went plenty loud, and with acoustic music bass was quite sufficient.

AVI's positively-charged Neutrons.



Sony SS-86E

Is the budget speaker arena still the sole preserve of British manufacturers? This design seeks to prove otherwise.

£100

If it seems unlikely for Sony to be competing in the killing fields of the British budget loudspeaker market, it's even more implausible that the *SS-86E* was designed over here and has won the accolade of being exported to 'the home country', Japan.

The *SS-86E* is fairly typical of speakers at this price. Its internal volume is about seven litres, its finish the ubiquitous black vinyl wrap. It differs from most by being a sealed-box, infinite-baffle design, which should suit it to wall placement. However, I found that pulling it away about four inches gave the most balanced response.

Perched on Atacama stands and hooked up to a system way beyond their means, the little Sonys put in a most enjoyable performance. Whilst imaging did not compare with the dearer designs this month, the Sonys had a decent sense of timing and adequate bass weight to carry the tune without too much

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◀ fuss. Little Axe trucked along nicely, with the speakers finding the groove and holding on tight throughout.

Switching to the more appropriately-priced *Alto* amplifier, it became clear that the bass was getting a little overblown, but a little repositioning seemed to sort things out. More dense material revealed that the speaker's enthusiasm can sometimes be greater than its ability to resolve detail in a coherent manner; some excessive percussion work, for instance, got rather messy on one track.

Nonetheless, this is a very interesting design at the price, on which we will pronounce more definitively once it's proved its worth behind the blind-listening curtain. For now, you'll have to draw your own conclusions, but you could do a lot worse than find time to audition it.

Sony ☎ (0181) 784 1144

Systemdek 2X2

Scots budget turntable maestro Systemdek has revitalised its classic IIX with a bit of simple arithmetic.

£499

This new model from Systemdek marks the end of an era, and hopefully, the beginning of a new one. The 2X2 replaces the *IIX* model that has served both Systemdek and its customers so well for so long. Essentially the 2X2 is a refinement of its classic forebear, the result being a deck that looks a good deal nicer than those that came before it.

Modifications to this suspended-subchassis design include decent suspension for the motor, and an acrylic sub-platter/platter. The aluminium armboard and MDF top plate are finished in Nextel, a hard-wearing matt-grey paint. The cabinet work is superb, too, with the joint between plinth surround (available in cherry, walnut, black ash, light ash and rosewood) and top plate, being a particular delight.

Adjusting the aluminium sub-chassis is a cinch. Just rotate the Allen bolt heads that are flush with the top plate, until the platter is level and

5mm above the deck. This is one of the only plinth-enclosed designs where subchassis adjustment is so straightforward.

Systemdek supplied this turntable with a Roksan *Tabriz* arm and an old Audio Technica *AT-F5* cartridge. The company recommends the Rega *RB300* arm, but it didn't have one available. It needn't have worried, though, as the deck performed well enough with these ancillaries for its potential to be clear.

I used to have a *IIX* with acrylic platter and an *SME IV* (yes, it worked), and this new combo took me back to those days. The deck is essentially a junior *Voyd*, being dynamic, assured and relaxed with a decent sense of timing into the bargain. It's very good at showing you the differences between records, which makes it dangerous to apprise on the basis of spinning just a few platters. Each one sounds so different that you can't assess the deck quickly, and while it was thin and wiry with *Living Colour*, it was dynamic and expansive with *Chick Corea*. The latter's version of a *Coltrane* track came across with considerable verve and energy.

The 2X2 is a worthy successor to the venerable *IIX*. It plays tunes, and offers degrees of solidity and composure that elude most budget turntables. It's good to see a first-class model back in the just-about-affordable fold. Systemdek ☎ (01294) 271251

Sony MDR-CD1700

Sony's headphone division has been busy restyling and tuning up its range. Here's one of the serious models.

£200

It's quite a while since I listened to a pair of Sony headphones, but I recall that the last range was rather good, especially for closed-back designs. The new range has changed quite a lot, and the headband system is now a sprung, auto-adjust affair with twin bars atop, much like the *AKG K340s* I use as a reference. The capsule attachment has changed as well, and allows for more vertical tilt

than previously. The result is a very comfortable pair of cans with a single lead on the left-hand capsule. The circumaural ear pads have a velvety covering that doesn't get sweaty in warm weather, and the fit is not too tight, at least not for me.

The *MDR-CD1700* is an efficient design, that could be used with a personal stereo if one had the gall to wear a pair in the 'Hood. I listened to these cans fed from a lone CD player and *JVC's F1* system — two sources the *MDR-CD1700s* had little difficulty differentiating. As with most closed-back designs, their sound is a little 'in-head', but they extract plenty of air and space from most material.

This type of headphone's plus point is usually its bass weight, which was certainly in evidence here, together with an even, dynamic character that invites further listening. My *Paolo Conte* disc, used for this entire Sessions session, still seemed fresh when played through these cans, even after eight spins.

It would seem Sony's bio-cellulose-engrossed headphone division has not been idle since my last listen. The *MDR-CD1700* is a fine design that should keep the European competition on its toes.

Sony ☎ (0181) 784 1144

The Systemdek equation: 2x2 equals classy vinyl replay at a reasonable price.

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Ear Waxings

Jason Kennedy looks back to the '80s... that era's most fashionable and minimal preamp is still one of the best today!

Some hi-fi is a pain to use, some ain't exactly pretty and some is just plain weird. The DNM 3B preamp fits all three categories, and if that wasn't enough, the sample I've been using this month was set up for balanced operation and hummed like a good un'.

However, I persevered with this inconvenient little acrylic preamp because I'm a slave to sound quality. Why else would one tolerate a preamp with too much gain for its independent volume pots to be used with any ease, not to mention confusing source labels such as 'disc' for phono and 'direct' for CD? And then there are the input sockets designed to accept locking DIN plugs. But it works, and does so significantly better than anything else I've used of late. You'd hope for this state of affairs after glancing at its £3,500 price tag, but you wouldn't expect a guarantee.

The DNM preamps, with their alternative power supply options, were quite fashionable in the latter half of the '80s. I've read many a page of Jimmy Hughes singing their praises. But fashions change, and such out and out hair-shirt designs have slipped from the limelight — but not, in this case at least, from production.

The 3B is now made in Switzerland, alongside the rest of the DNM and Reson ranges, but its designer, Dennis Moorecroft, now works for Mission. The 3B is shortly to

be replaced with the — wait for it — 3C. But the B will be available for a while yet and I'm too excited to hang on for a successor.

I first realised the calibre of this preamp during an evening listening session with some friends, using Audio Note AN-Es. On these occasions we play a lot of vinyl (and air guitar), but in this instance we had switched our homage to the composers and producers on the other side of the glass. The extraordinarily polished and fine results attained with the chosen equipment were like nothing we'd heard before — albums like *Crime of the Century* (Supertramp), *Hejira* (Joni Mitchell) and *Aja* (Steely Dan) took on whole new dimensions. It was a very rich and rewarding session.

It wasn't just the DNM preamp, of course. The Voyd with the Wilson benesch ACT Two arm and Carbon cartridge was extracting the information in the first place. I suspect that the four-tier Mana support helped too, but that DNM 3B has an uncannily fine phono stage. Another clever trick was the way it made the Trichord *Genesis* CD player sound almost as good as the Trichord transport and *Pulsar* DAC auditioned through ECA's *Vista* preamp. The *Genesis* is good, but no match for its three-box sibling.

The next step was to wheel in the mighty *Sonolith 2.2xi* speakers — not a job to take lightly or perform too often. These turned out

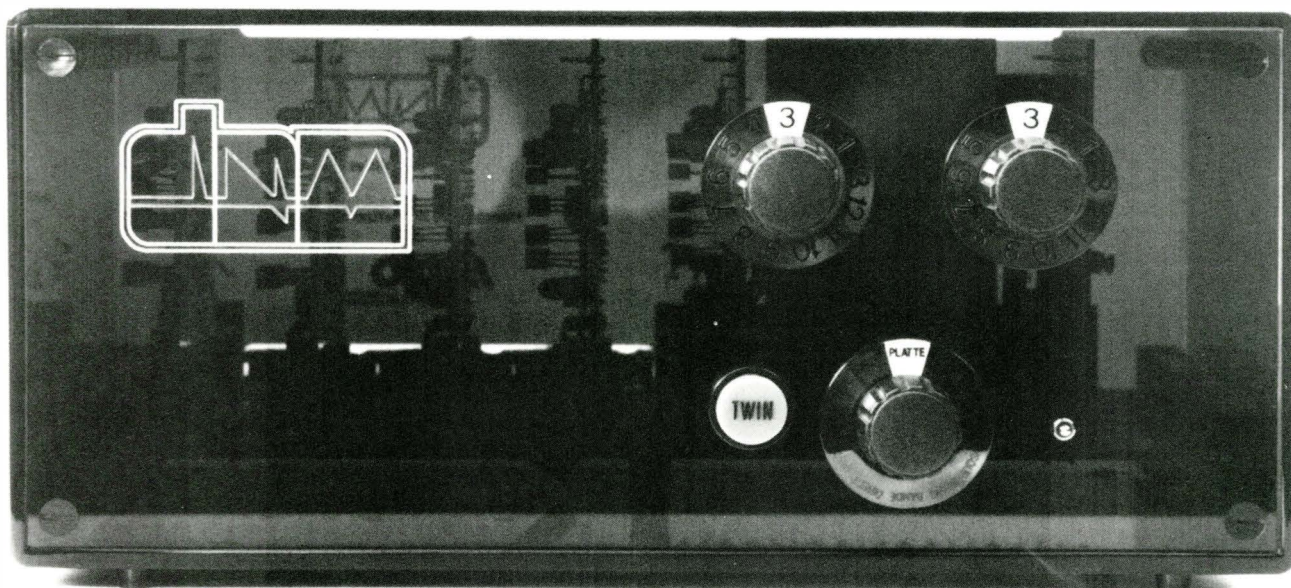
to be even better suited to the 3B than the AN-Es. Their coherence and resolution revealed extreme degrees of texture, contrast and spatial precision. Jimmy Hughes has been experimenting with a centre speaker to achieve image solidity for off-axis listeners, but if he had a pair of these metal-coned, cone-tweetered marvels, I'd wager he could junk that dialogue box.

I've always found the *Sonoliths* very convincing off-axis, but with the 3B in the chain they turned into rock-solid precision generators, with image depth and scale that reflected each disc perfectly. I'll be organising another session soon with these speakers in tow, just to see which musical path — if any — they encourage us to follow.

Ultimately, a music reproduction system should not influence which music you play on it, but rather too many do. The question is: does the system make you excited about the music, or the way it sounds? If it's the latter, you have a bad case of *audiophilia nervosa*, and should take steps to avoid forgetting your record collection.

The best hi-fi steers you away from itself, letting the style and content of music carry you away, but not distracting with overkill bass. The DNM 3B in *Twin* form does this better than any other transistorised preamp I've heard — just thought you'd like to know!

DNM ☎ (01277) 227355 ▲



DNM's plastic fantastic 3B preamp has Jason under its spell.

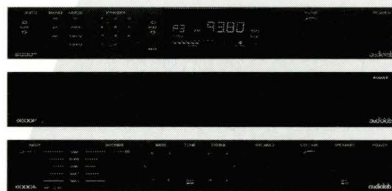
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- 8000CDM Compact Disc Transport
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Personal AV is the biggest challenge for hi-fi fans since stereo supplanted mono. Paul Messenger offers wisdom.

Messages

Whether we like it or not, hi-fi is in the throes of having an AV dimension added. Even those who hate movies or sport, and plan to stick resolutely to two-channel stereo sound, must find it increasingly difficult to ignore the wide range of high-quality stereo music programming now screened on TV — from Jools Holland to serious opera, with MTV and *TOTP* on the side.

I have some sympathy with music lovers who are trying to resist the TV invasion, but I suspect it's ultimately a lost cause, and that all of us have to come to terms with the thing eventually. As a domestic hi-fi source, TV must now rival radio in importance, and there's no disputing that most non-music programming also benefits enormously from sound reproduction through a proper hi-fi system, stereo or surround.

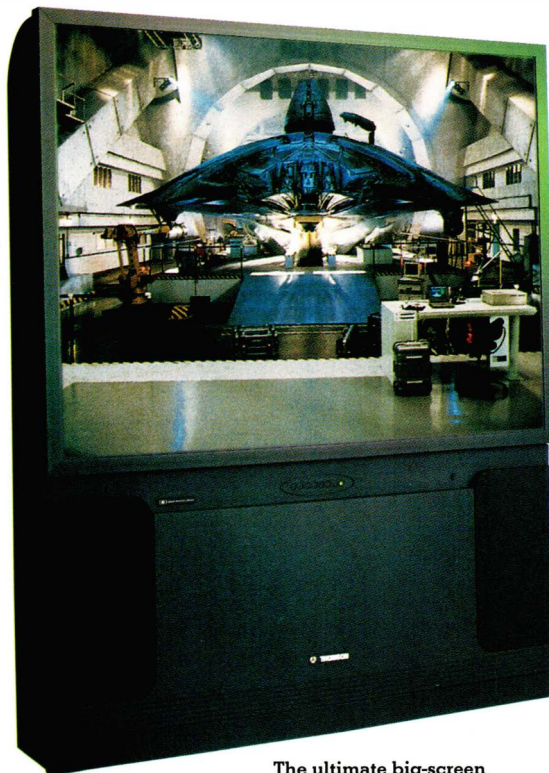
It's less appreciated that this AV transition is the biggest thing to happen to hi-fi since the introduction of the stereo LP some forty years ago. There have been many other new sound sources since — FM radio, compact cassette and compact disc, to name just the most obvious successes — but each of these has retained the same basic stereo-amp-plus-speakers at the heart of the system.

The move towards AV is a double revolution, adding a visual element as well as offering various alternative surround sound configurations, and both of these represent a substantial re-writing of the rule-books.

Today we take stereo for granted completely. Even I was still in short trousers and winding up the ancestral gramophone when it was first introduced. But a look back though the history books makes it abundantly clear that the transition from mono was far from easy or straightforward.

Requiring stylus and cartridge to read and interpret vertical as well as horizontal motion brought a host of mechanical problems, many still being unravelled three decades later (when CD arrived on the scene).

Getting to grips with stereo loudspeakers and image perception has proved even more complicated and difficult. Paradoxes abound. 'Real' stereo could theoretically give us surround sound from two speakers, if hardware and software were up to the job. In practice, however, recording engineers



The ultimate big-screen TV picture... you don't want to do it like that!

have stuck to pan-potted multi-mono rather than the real stereophonic thing, while question-marks remain over true mono/stereo compatibility. Few now remember that our current two-channel stereo emerged from a 'format war' with a US three-channel 'centre-fill' approach. Klipsch, for one, stayed loyal to what is now the spiritual ancestor of Dolby Pro-Logic's 3-Stereo variant.

If it pays to stay open-minded about stereo sound, we're still in nappies as far as the vision thing is concerned. An old friend and long-standing audiophile made the switch to video twenty-five years ago, at least as far as his professional life was concerned. Time and again he's found audiophile parallels in the paradoxical ways our eyes respond to visual stimuli.

I ran into just such a surprise a couple of months ago. I've been reviewing TV displays for a long time now, and making value judgements about picture quality isn't too difficult, providing one compares like with like. But things get a lot more complicated when trying to compare images of different sizes.

Until quite recently I had assumed that the size of a TV image was of little importance, in the mistaken belief that you could com-

pensate for a small screen simply by choosing to sit closer to it. (The moon and sun look the same size from Earth, but one is 400 times bigger and 390 times further away.)

What holds for distant objects, however, doesn't operate when you get close up. It's back to mono/stereo again, though here we're talking monocular/binocular — the latter incorporating a stereoscopic dimension. The monocular model works fine for things a long way away, like sun and moon. It also works close up, but only if you cover up one eye!

With both eyes operating stereoscopically, the brain takes over and reinterprets the results. Try it for yourself, if you're interested. Take a closed newspaper and set it upright three feet away. Then take another paper, open it, turn it round and set it up six feet away. Both occupy the same field of view and do indeed look the same size with one eye shut, but with both eyes the most distant object is clearly the larger.

Curiously, the monocular model still seems to be relevant in determining where you should place a TV set. Somewhere from four to six times the screen height is about right for a standard 625-line picture — get any closer and you start to notice the structure, the lines and the noise.

The upshot of all this is a double whammy in favour of very large screen TVs — for anyone who wants a very large picture, of course. You not only get the big picture subjectively, most probably you can also park the set as far away as the room boundaries permit. (Minimum viewing distance from a 33inch 4x3 set is around 7ft.)

Audiophiles will blanch at the acoustic consequences of placing a large glass-and-plastic chunk between the speakers. For them, the tiny telly viewed up close might be the better option. But anyone intending to take AV sources seriously should certainly check out the biggest TVs around, not only for reasons outlined above, but also to make the most of the varied 4x3 and 16x9 programming promised for the next decade. ▲

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The Jimmy Hughes Experience

Does your hi-fi hide or exaggerate flawed recordings? Jimmy Hughes seeks a balanced solution.

Achieving great sound from a hi-fi system is akin to preparing a superb meal. It's not enough to just select the finest ingredients, how you use them is every bit as important. This also applies to the design of each individual component in the system. Take speakers, for example. Recently I was invited to meet Dick Shahinian at Grahams Hi-Fi in London, for a demonstration of his *Diapason* loudspeakers. Years ago, I reviewed Shahinian's *Arc* speaker, and consequently started using my Impulse *H1* horns in reverse, to try and create a more homogeneous, integrated tonal balance. I gather the *Arc* has been altered in a number of ways since, but at the time I was struck by its outstanding presence and immediacy.

ble, removing the damping resistors risks making this problem worse.

My own tests had led me to conclude that tweeter-damping resistors were a necessary evil, a battle that had to be lost in order for the war to be won. But after going to hear the *Diapasons*, I decided to experiment, reducing the 5.6 Ohm series resistor I had in my *H1*s to a mere 0.5 Ohms. The result was a noticeable increase in sharpness and attack, with extra treble detail and articulation. Dynamic range seemed broader, too, making the subjective swing between loud and soft noticeably wider. Against this, though, I felt the sound wasn't quite as comfortable to listen to. Massed violins could be raw and edgy, while voices sometimes suffered from sibilance. The system was more analytical

No matter how nasty your system is, you can nearly always find at least one recording that makes it sound good. Therefore (you think), it's clear where the problem lies: the standard of most recordings is simply not good enough — my hi-fi system is so revealing, it shows up all but the finest, cleanest sources. If only more care was taken over recording, I'd have fewer problems...

But is it really like that? I think not. In my view, that's putting the cart before the horse. If a system makes all but a tiny handful of recordings sound unacceptable, I'll lay odds there's something wrong with it. Shouldn't one judge a system's success by its ability to get the maximum musical information from the medium?

I'm not defending bland systems that hide

ILLUSTRATION BY BRETT RYDER



I wouldn't describe the *Arc* as an accurate speaker in the BBC monitor sense, but it certainly produced an authentic impression of real people making vibrant music. So guess how I felt when I learned that Dick Shahinian flouts what I believe to be a sacrosanct rule of loudspeaker design: he does not use a tweeter-damping resistor! Dick does not like resistors, believing they sap energy and life from the music, dulling transients, narrowing dynamic range and reducing contrasts.

Yet nearly all speakers use resistors in the tweeter crossover network to balance high frequencies with the middle and bass registers. Remove these resistors and the sound immediately perks up, with sharper transients, more 'snap' and greater 'bite'. The drawback is usually a loss of tonal warmth, smoothness, and integration. Since many systems already suffer from bright/edgy tre-

and detailed, but also much less tolerant of faults. Trying different recordings proved interesting, with some responding far more positively to the changes than others.

Here we hit a gritty philosophical point. If the purpose of hi-fi is to recreate music in the home with all the dynamic range, tonal splendour and fine detail one might experience live, is it really doing its job if it persistently reveals weaknesses in source material?

A good system should not hide flaws, but neither must it exaggerate them. You need to be very careful, talking about 'poor' recordings, as many can sound good if played on systems that highlight their strengths rather than weaknesses.

Twenty years ago I thought Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* was a bad recording; today I think it's good. It sounded bad because my system made such a mess of it!

faults and sound 'nice' on everything. But one that exaggerates faults, so all but the most flawless recordings sound horrid, is clearly not good, either. What's needed is a balance between these two extremes.

Interestingly, Dick Shahinian was critical of many recordings, pop especially. Inevitably we disagreed over whether it was the fault of the system or the source! I felt the *Diapasons* gave a fast but slightly bumpy ride, sounding impressively tactile, open, and sharp, yet too easily provoked into becoming aggressive. Percussion had superb impact and attack, and no matter how loud the music, the speakers seemed able to meet every demand. But it wasn't what I'd call a beguiling sound; rarely did the system charm the ear. Yet I don't think it would be impossible to reconcile the two extremes, although some degree of compromise would probably be unavoidable! ▲

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Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

So ya' reckon all digital tuners are the same, do ya'? Paul Miller begs to differ.

We've all become accustomed to the benefits of 'digital synthesiser' tuners, with stable, drift-free reception, station presets, last-station memory and a digital readout of the tuned frequency. All five tuners in this month's test (p. 82) are 'digital' in so far as they employ a quartz crystal reference to precisely synthesise the tuned frequency. Yet one of these five tuners is rather more 'digital' than its peers.

Look around the back of Micromega's tuner and you'll see a coaxial digital output alongside its conventional analogue L/R phono sockets. Inside this little black box of tricks, Micromega uses a bitstream ADC (Analogue-to-Digital Converter) to convert its demodulated audio into digital data. This digital signal is passed to the digital output where an external D/A converter (such as Micromega's DAC) can re-convert it back into recognisable analogue audio. There's even an internal DAC to reverse the process and supply the tuner's analogue outputs.

So why bother converting the audio signal into digital form if the next step is simply to re-convert it back into analogue music (or news, current affairs, weather and so forth)? The answer, quite simply, is that this provides a very novel way of scrubbing-out the 19kHz pilot and 38kHz subcarrier tones, which, otherwise, would typically be removed using a notch filter. And conventional filters of this sort are rarely good news for sound quality.

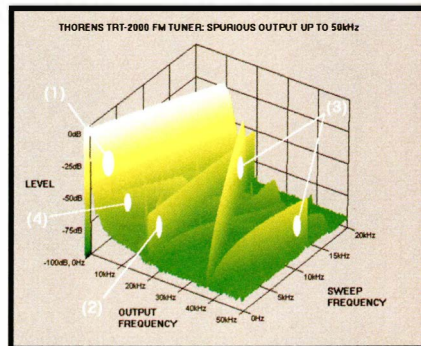
A brief guide to FM broadcasting

The 19kHz and 38kHz tones are a by-product of the FM broadcast itself. Transmissions from Capital Radio, for example, include a mix of signals, all 'Frequency Modulated' (such as FM) onto a 95.8MHz RF carrier. Rather than broadcast L and R stereo channels separately, a combination of mono (L+R) and difference (L-R) information is used. The mono component is directly modulated onto the carrier so that the broadcast will be compatible with mono receivers like portable radios.

By contrast, though, the L-R component is modulated onto a 38kHz subcarrier. Before broadcasting, this 38kHz tone is filtered

off and replaced by a 19kHz pilot (exactly half 38kHz), leaving a series of AM (Amplitude Modulated) sidebands to describe the L-R component. Therefore, the final FM broadcast contains a mix of mono L+R, 19kHz pilot and the L-R sidebands of the extinct 38kHz subcarrier.

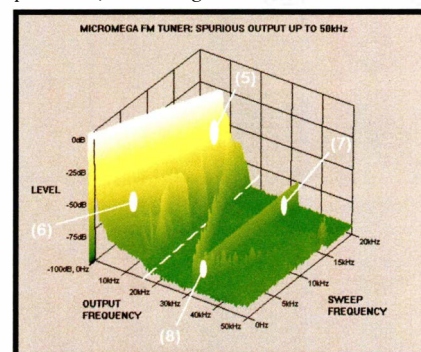
Upon reception by your FM tuner, the incoming 19kHz pilot is extracted, doubled to 38kHz and used to demodulate the L-R sidebands. Stereo L and R channels are obtained from the combination of L+R and L-R. However, those 19kHz pilot and 38kHz tones still need to be removed before they prompt unwanted distortion in the partnering amplifier and loudspeakers.



Here, possibly for the very first time, we can fully appreciate the 'muck' that pours out of the back of a traditional tuner as it 'receives' a stereo FM broadcast of an audio sweep from 20Hz to 20kHz (1). The bold 19kHz pilot tone (2) has been partially, but not wholly, removed by the tuner's output filter, leaving a residue that may modulate and distort the audio within an amp, or even interfere with the correct operation of Dolby NR if recorded onto cassette.

In this very typical example, the 38kHz subcarrier has been successfully erased, but not before it has already prompted a huge welt of second-order intermodulation

distortion within the tuner itself. This V-shape of IM distortion (3) results from a 'beating' of the audio signal with the 38kHz tone, creating the '38kHz+audio' and '38kHz-audio' sidebands visible here. Conventional harmonic distortion (4) is also clearly revealed, adding to a complex mix of products, colouring the sound of the tuner.



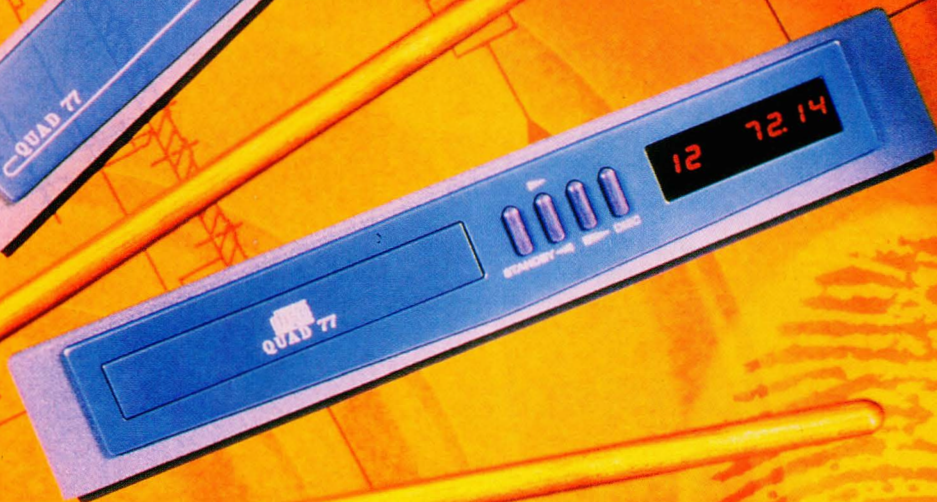
Micromega has adopted a different approach. Instead of notching-out the 19kHz and 38kHz tones, it samples the signal at 32kHz using a 1-bit ADC to leave a maximum audio bandwidth of 16kHz. Everything above 16kHz (to the right of the white dotted line) is rejected by the ADC's anti-aliasing filter, while everything below 16kHz (to the left of the dotted line) is retained in digital form. The ADC produces a sharper response cut-off (5), but stops all distortion (6) dead in its tracks beyond 16kHz. This includes the obliteration of both the 19kHz pilot and 38kHz subcarrier *without* the sonic penalty incurred by a conventional notch-type filter.

What remains beyond 16kHz may look like the subcarrier and V-shaped IM pattern from Fig. 1, but, in fact, it's not. This pattern is caused by the D/A converter used in Micromega's tuner to feed its final analogue output. So, the line (7) represents a leaky 32kHz sample tone, while the rippled V (8) is a stopband image — a 'digital' version of intermodulation distortion.

Importantly, Micromega's novel filtering technique cannot redress any sub-16kHz distortion already present *before* the audio is sampled into digital form, but it does substantially alter the nature and level of unwanted 'rubbish' above this frequency. And this, by inference, ensures Micromega's tuner has a sound all its own. ▲

Would you like Paul to tackle a technical topic? Contact him by e-mail at 100576.3021@compuserve.com





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LETTER OF THE MONTH

This is a great idea!

Your reply to Khalrul F. Mohammad's letter in the May issue, dismissing the possibility of a TV programme based on hi-fi, seems to me to miss the nub of the matter, with the angling 'red herring' reference thrown in as reasoned argument. Yes, there have been only a couple of fishing programmes on the television, but how often do anglers change their rods?

Angling may be the largest outdoor participant pastime in the UK, but when was the last time a national newspaper ran a spread about angling equipment on sale from High Street stores?

Granted, a TV programme on hi-fi would have to concentrate mainly on 'pseudo' hi-fi systems where the money is being made, and because of the limitations of reproducing decent sound quality on mediocre TV speakers.

But this shouldn't prevent the specialist aspects of hi-fi from being covered. Most of us started our hi-fi career at the budget end of sound reproduction, and worked our way up.

Considering the amount of dross on late-night TV, a 15 or 30-minute slot on hi-fi hardware, from respected critics, might be fiscally feasible if manufacturers considered advertising in the break.

Hi-fi shows around the world could be covered, giving those of us who are unable to travel those distances a peek at what is in development. And what about viewers' systems, tutorials, a look at multi-thousand-pound systems, viewers tests, nostalgia slot, digital re-mastering, LaserDiscs, sound engineers, CD/LP reviews? The list is endless.

Maybe you should offer a cover video with the magazine, covering some or all of these aspects (with a little advertising thrown in)...
Raymond Bryson, Merseyside

Format frolics

Having read quite a number of articles in the hi-fi press regarding the battle between Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc, I thought I would write to you with a layman's opinion of the situation in general and of MiniDisc in particular.

It seems a great shame that the two developers of the CD — Sony and Philips — could not get their heads together once again and create a universal format to replace the tape cassette. It seems inevitable that one of these formats will not succeed, so the effort so far seems like a massive waste of investment and manpower. But I appreciate that big

business does not always work in enlightened ways.

Despite all the uncertainties surrounding the launch of the two technologies, I actually decided to buy an MD player. My decision regarding which format to invest in was made largely as a result of my own perception of the technologies involved and their respective merits.

Having developed CD, it seemed quite odd that Philips should revert to a tape-based system as a means of replacing cassette. The usual drawbacks involved

with tape are still encountered — tape-winding speed, slow search and track access, editing problems and the delicate nature of the tape itself. On the plus side, however, I understand that the sound quality of many of these machines is excellent.

MiniDisc, on the other hand, offers something completely new, while retaining the convenience of CD. It is small, durable and very appealing. It may not be compatible with an existing format like DCC, but its recording and playback facilities are first-rate. Also, as it is tiny and resistant to shock, this system is ideal for music on the move.

MD should catch on — but even if it doesn't, I will remain glad that I purchased the format, simply because it makes such convenient and faithful copies of CD.

I hope HFC and other magazines will continue to give us regular reports on the development of new technology. After all, without the support of the hi-fi press, they don't stand a chance.
Mark Chandler, Nottingham

Is it all in your mind?

Like many discerning audiophiles, I hold the belief that a loudspeaker cable simply has to carry the output to the loudspeakers with the minimum of resistance. Similarly, I do not believe that mains cables have sonic qualities of their own.

But it would appear that you have moved on from there, as reviewers now begin to suggest that all digital interconnect cables have an effect on the sound. How can this be? All that digital interconnects have to do is transmit a serial stream of binary ones and noughts.

The only way the sound quality could change would be if there was a corruption of this data in

some way. Does this mean that if I changed the network cabling in my office from 75 Ohm coaxial Ethernet cable to 'audiophile' cable, transmitted files would arrive miraculously spell-checked? Of course not. Instead of subscribing to such theories, why not prove them? Using a computer, compare the raw digital outputs from a CD player using two different makes of cable. No change on the digital outputs would mean it is all in your mind.
Lee Shepherd, London

Sorry to disappoint you, but the way we assess digital interconnects in our formal tests is to connect them to a computer and see how the digital signal is affected. And you would be surprised how different two seemingly identical 75 Ohm coaxial cables can be — even before they are auditioned. AS

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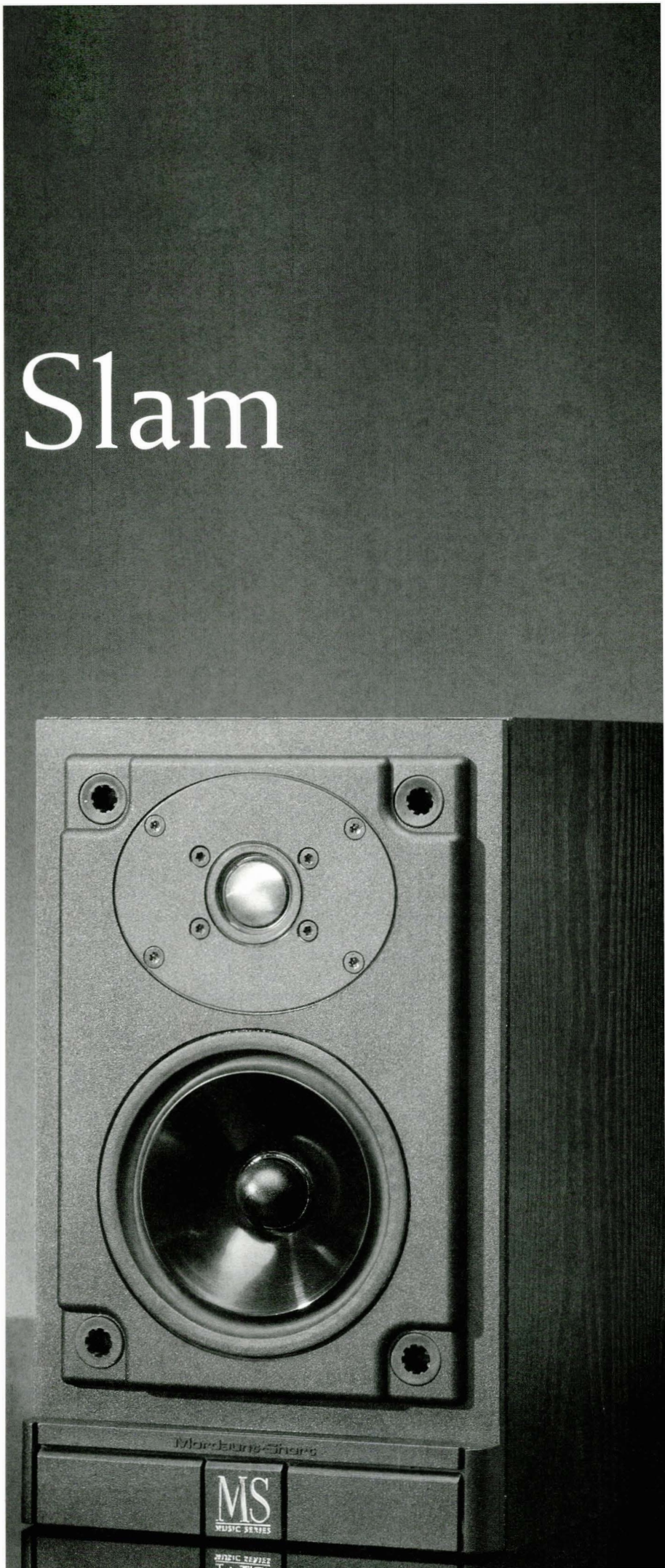
WHAT HI-FI? MARCH 1996

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The Decadence of Cadence

Electrostatic and dynamic drive units are not always comfortable bedfellows, but combine harmoniously, if not elegantly, in this Indian design. Alan Sircom reports.

India looks set to be an emergent economic force in the next millennium, and though few Indian products appear on Western shelves, the £3,500 Cadence *ES* loudspeakers are a welcome arrival. The company behind them is truly massive, with environmentally friendly interests in paper manufacture and the like, which may help us to understand the radical ideas underpinning the *ES*. Despite this, however, it remains obscure in the UK.

The *ES* is a hybrid design, combining a unique, 3.5mm-thick, PTFE-film electrostatic mid/treble unit, with a German-made Eton bass driver. The curved frame of the electrostatic tweeter has been manufactured to micron tolerances, which are considerably closer than those of most electrostatic panels. The stators sport vat-grown, electroformed nickel, and strangely, the insulator is on the inside of the panel, across which the nominal voltage is 12kV. These factors claim to improve efficiency, stability and ability to survive humidity and temperature extremes.

That Eton drive-unit, mounted in a bass-reflex enclosure, is rare, expensive and made of Kevlar. *ES* serves it with a twist, adding an extra magnet and replacing the dust-cap with a unique cork affair, chosen for superior stability and flexion properties. The enclosure itself is made and braced using 25mm MDF, hence the 37kg weight. Inside is *ES*'s 'acoustic sausage', where the damping material hangs in the middle of the speaker to soak up resonance. The crossover frequency is 950Hz, an octave lower than the usual 2kHz, and the network is a patent-pending, modified Linkwitz design.

The T-shaped cabinets were not well suited to my normal listening room, whose door, when opened, could easily have damaged an electrostatic panels. So the *ES* was tested in *HFC*'s in-house facility, on the end of a Micromega *Stage 4* CD player, ECA *Vista HD* line preamp and Lectern *HD* poweramp combination, and a selection of XLO cables. All electronics were given a weekend's warm-up before listening, but contrary to what Cadence claims, the stator panels did not seem to improve significantly after the first half hour.

Smooth operator

Take a conventional, square hi-fi loudspeaker and bolt on a curved electrostatic mid-range/tweeter unit, and you can't help but expect a number of bass/treble integration problems. In fact, although there is a difference in tone between tweeter and bass driver, overall integration was far better than I'd expected. Occasionally, there would be a wooden boxiness from a handful of instruments, such as Sam Jones's double bass in Cannonball Adderley's *Somethin' Else* line-up. For the most part, though, the smooth and open tonal character of the treble and mid-range was well-matched by the bass. As you'd expect from an electrostatic, these mid-range and high frequencies are remarkably open. With curved stator panels, *ES* lacks the absolute pin-point imagery of the Quad electrostatic, but on the other hand, it has considerably better dispersion properties, so that more than one person can hear it at its best.

The addition of the bass box gives the *ES* dynamics unmatched by any other plain electrostatic, except for the largest Martin-Logans and Sound-Labs. This makes for a spectacular sound on the analogue Decca/Solti version of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*, where the opening chorus is layered superbly, yet the energy of the orchestra is not diluted.

Perhaps as a consequence of the bass cone's need to keep up with the ultra-light treble panel, low frequencies seem a little curtailed. Bass lines are clear, but lack the sort of depth and intensity you'd expect from such a big box. This is not a fast, rockin' speaker, but it still makes sense of even polyrhythmic structures from trip-hop to Schoenberg.

Looks aren't everything...

The Cadence *ES* is an excellent speaker for classical music and information retrieval fans. In contrast to most hybrids, here the electrostatic benefits of superb imaging and detail are not destroyed by an inconsistent balance.

There is stiff competition in the hybrid speaker market, but few design balance the strengths of dynamic speakers and electrostatics with the aplomb of the *ES*. All the more pity it does not look as good as it sounds.

☎ Cadence UK (0171) 733 0301

The Cadence *ES*: combines electrostatic and dynamic drivers with skill, but aesthetics leave much to be desired.



The beat goes on

Alan Sircom visits suburban London to investigate a reported hi-fi incident...

Brian B could be mistaken for just another ordinary Joe, but in fact, he's Old Bill. He lives in London's commuter belt, keeps Koi carp, but beneath that normal exterior lurks a dark secret. He's hooked on hi-fi and home cinema.

Brian first got interested in hi-fi about 18 years ago, but admits he has been fascinated with sound since he was a teenager. However, unless you're at Chief Superintendent level, a copper's wage does not afford ultra-expensive gear. So Brian has made priorities, buying one product on interest-free credit, and only buying another when the last is paid for. Also, he buys wisely. Throughout the last 18 years, the only problem with his system has been a blown power amp light-bulb.

The first system

Brian's first real hi-fi system dates back about a decade. It comprised a Linn LP12 turntable, with a Naim NAC 32 preamp, SNAPS power supply, NAP 250 power amp and a pair of Heybrook HB1 loudspeakers. Soon after buying this system, the preamp was upgraded to 32.5 status and the power supply was improved to HI-CAP. The same Linn turntable is still in use now, although it has been modified so dramatically, it bears almost no resemblance to a mid-'80s deck. Today, the wall-mounted LP12 sports a Lingo power supply, Ekos tonearm, Arkiv cartridge and Trampolin baseboard.

The next addition to the system was a Nakamichi CD player and CR-7E cassette deck — arguably the best cassette recorder ever made. And a short while later, Brian swapped the Heybrook HB1s for the mighty Linn Isobariks. A single-stereo NAP 250 was barely enough to drive the 'Bariks, so it was substituted for a pair of NAP 135s. Active Isobariks would be the next logical step, so four more NAP 135s and an active crossover board were added. At about the same time, the Naim NAT 01 was slotted into the system in place of a pre-existing Sansui tuner, and naturally, when Naim introduced the superb NAP 52 preamp and the awesome CDS CD player, Brian bought one of each within one month of their launch dates. Naturally, funds came cour-

tesy of that nice Mr IF Credit...

About three years ago, Linn introduced the Keltik loudspeakers, which would eventually replace the Isobariks as Linn's flagship enclosure. As soon as Brian heard them, they had to replace the 'Bariks in his system: "I thought the Isobariks had bass, but that was nothing until I heard the Keltiks. They have real bass." To push the Keltiks to the max, another pair of NAP 135s was drafted in to serve the hidden bass driver. "You've never heard them until they're driven properly," Brian enthuses. "Most people hear them with Linn amps, but I'm not convinced. Although, admittedly, it would be a hard thing to change over, having gone this far down the 135 route."

AV awakenings

Brian B's hi-fi was complete, or so he thought. Then he had a Road to Damascus experience, at Musical Images' Monmouth St. store in Covent Garden, London. There, aided and abetted by AV expert Ash, Brian discovered a whole new world: home cinema. He began in earnest with a humble Denon AVC 3020 AV amp, a KEF 100 centre channel and a pair of Polk LS//x dipole surround speakers. The signal source for the AV system was a pro-saic stereo JVC VHS video recorder. But the AV bug had its mandibles in, and soon after that first surround sound encounter, the VHS video was ousted by a Pioneer CLD-2950 LaserDisc player. The preamp stage of the Denon was replaced by a Harman-Kardon AVP-2 preamp/processor, and then the Denon was replaced in its entirety by a pair of THX-friendly NAD 216 power amps.

Although Brian thoroughly enjoyed the sound of the AVP-2, less than eight months later he traded in for something altogether more special. By chance, he'd attended one of Ash's AC-3 Dolby Digital demonstrations: "It was like listening to stereo for the first time, all over again," comes the simple testimony.

Digital frenzy

It wasn't long before AV went Dolby Digital. Brian got the CLD-2950 modified for AC-3 with a Videotech conversion board, and at the

same time invested in a 34-inch Sony TV, making way for an upgrade to KEF's hefty model 200 centre channel speaker. And since AC-3 offers full-range stereo rear channels, a pair of Polk RT16s was rounded up to bolster the rear-wall identity parade. To keep tabs on that little lot, there was nothing for it but to purchase another NAD 216 power amp.

The H-K preamp was not AC-3 upgradeable, so it was replaced by the Meridian 562V preamp/controller, complete with a 565 AC-3 processor and the necessary what-the-hell-does-that-do? 519 demodulator. Deep bass, AC-3 and THX style, is now handed to a REL Stadium II, which is positioned on the same plane as and between the Keltiks, with the big Sony standing proud of the whole system.

Even as we were arriving to take photographs, a new Pioneer Elite CLD-99 AC-3 LaserDisc player was being installed. This NTSC-only US player, which will run in parallel with the modified '2950, was chosen for its superior picture and sound quality alone.

The system is simply awesome, whichever way Brian uses it. Music simply flows from the speakers, perfectly timed and balanced, with the clean dryness of the Linn speakers contrasting perfectly with the zest of the Naim kit. The AV side integrates with this hi-fi perfectly. Even the toughest AC-3 LaserDiscs have a sound quality to die for, with the stereo rear channels placing listeners in the midst of the action, and the KEF 200 lapping up the detail of AC-3's centre-channel feed.

Since Brian's AV discovery, his hi-fi system has not changed much. Indeed, the only improvements left to make are Naim's new Prefix phono stage and the latest upgrades to the NAP 52 preamp. Although Brian is planning to upgrade the '52 shortly, he has no plans to Prefix his LP12: "I hardly listen to LP anymore, so much time is taken up with watching LaserDiscs!" he says.

Brian B's system represents the pinnacle of hi-fi and home cinema. Few enthusiasts have such a great potential on tap. It's a fair cop, I'll come clean. I'm jealous! ▲

See this month's Home Entertainment magazine for exclusive reviews on the new breed of affordable AC-3 amps and receivers!



Linn's LP12 still takes the top slot (above left), but twin-LD players (right) are helping Brian with his AV enquiries.



Brian B's System – What It Cost

Hi-Fi:

Linn LP12 turntable, Linn Lingo power supply, Linn Ekos tonearm, Linn Arkiv cartridge, Linn Trampolin baseboard	£4,400
Naim CDS CD player	£3,750
Naim NAT 01 tuner	£1,650
Nakamichi CR-7E cassette recorder	£n/a
Naim NAP 52 preamplifier	£5,250
Naim NAP 135 monoblok power amplifier (x8)	£1,600 (ea)
Linn Keltik loudspeakers (inc. crossover)	£4,400
Total (hi-fi)	≈ £32,500

AV:

Pioneer CLD-2950 LaserDisc player, with Videotech AC-3 conversion	£900
Pioneer Elite CLD-99 AC-3 NTSC LaserDisc player	£1,899
Meridian 565 AC-3 processor	£2,650
Meridian 519 Demodulator	£425
Meridian 562V Controller	£925
NAD 216 power amplifiers (x3)	£470 (ea)
KEF 200 centre channel loudspeaker	£700
Polk LSi/x satellite loudspeakers	£449
Polk RT16 floor-standing rear speakers	£680
REL Stadium II subwoofer	£1,000
Sony 34" TV	£2,000
JVC VHS recorder	£n/a
Total (AV)	≈ £13,500
Total (complete system)	£46,000



Naim's full house (above) is one system that won't come quietly. 34" Sony TV (inset) is an essential complement to AC-3's big sound.

A systematic approach

Paul Messenger mixes 'n' matches three CD players, amps and speaker outfits, in search of the ultimate £1,500 system.

Reviewing and testing individual hi-fi components has always been the basis of *Hi-Fi Choice*, but in recent years it's become increasingly apparent that the performance of a single component in isolation tells only part of the story.

One particular component can only be properly assessed by putting it into a complete system, and while the experienced reviewer should be aware of the influence of the partnering equipment being used, there's no denying that its effect can never be predicted completely.

This is one reason why we've begun our Instant Systems feature, to look at complete systems in the hope of divining happy product combinations, and of learning more about the complex subtleties of system interaction.

Alan Sircom looked at upgrading a budget

system in June, Malcolm Steward examined the £1,000 package in July/August, so now it's time to go a little further upmarket, to a system price somewhere around £1,500.

We're still experimenting with various strategies to find the most useful approach, so this time I'm going to try a bit of juggling. I've picked an interesting selection of nine components priced around £500 each, and I'm going to try the various combinations to find out which ones work best together.

Three sources, three amps and three pairs of speakers doesn't sound too complicated, until you figure out that it adds up to 27 different combinations, even without fiddling

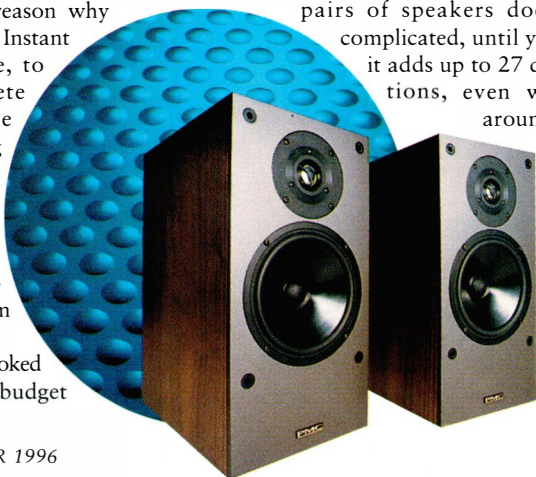
around with alternative speaker cables, stands and interconnects, (which, of course, I did not do, wishing to retain my

The PMC TB1 worked well with all three amps.

Marantz's 'ultimate' CD63, the KI Signature, incorporates numerous audiophile tweaks.

sanity). Therefore, I settled instead for familiar references like Slate Audio stands, Naim NACA5 speaker cable, and Chord Company interconnects. Consequently, there's barely space here to introduce the components themselves, before letting them return to their racks, plug themselves in, and let battle commence.

The three sources chosen include two CD players: the highly regarded Marantz CD63 in its top *KI Signature* guise (£500), the recently introduced Arcam *Alpha 6* (£600), and a comparable vinyl alternative, the venerable Rega *Planar 3* (£260), here equipped with the brand new *Exact* cartridge (£248).





Sendor's stylish 2020 speakers, with their oval drive units, liked the Alpha 6 CD player.

Duplicate software available on both compact and vinyl disc formats included Christy Moore's *Live at the Point*, Leftfield's *Leftism* and Laurie Anderson's *Strange Angels*.

Each amplifier, therefore, needed to handle direct pick-up cartridge connection (albeit of the conventional higher-output, moving-magnet variety) in addition to line-input switching and volume control. The chosen three were Naim's latest entry level *Nait 3* (£550 + £75 phono stage), the Densen *Beat* from Denmark (£600 + £149 phono stage), and the *MI 120* from British newcomer Myryad (£450 + £60 phono stage).

The speakers are no less interesting. Two compact stand-mounted two-ways, the Sendor 2020 (£399) and PMC *TB1* (£481), can both claim some BBC heritage, albeit from different generations. The £650 Tannoy *D100*'s dual-concentric driver comes from an even longer, and quite distinct, tradition.

Start with the speakers

Determinedly flouting convention, I'll begin by trying to pin down the speakers. At the end of the chain, these may be mere slaves at the mercy of the sources and amps, but they do have the strongest influence over the way the sound is eventually presented, as well as influencing how loud and deep down into the bass each system will go.

Since these three speakers are similar in box and main driver size, key differences between them are likely to be in balance and voicing. The Tannoy delivers a very flat in-room balance, extending well into the treble before roll-off, and will, therefore, sound significantly brighter and more forward than the norm (and most other Tannoys, for that

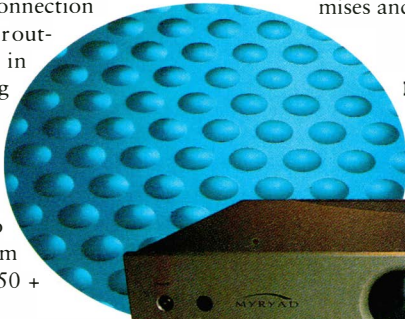
matter). The PMC and Sendor have surprisingly similar balances, and are both much more laid back.

Both Sendor and Tannoy are best kept away from nearby walls, while the PMC balances better with a little wall reinforcement.

The slightly larger transmission-line PMC has marginally better bass extension than the other two ported designs, and the highest sensitivity as well — a commendable 88-89dB/W alongside an easy 8 Ohm load.

The Tannoy rates 87dB with an impedance that drops just a little below 6 Ohms, while the Sendor has the easiest load of all, but a modest 85dB sensitivity.

All three speakers had a good warm up prior to listening, sufficient to convince me that all three are top-quality examples of the breed, albeit with rather different compromises and presentations.



Myryad's MI 120 is powerful and remote-controlled.



PMC permutations

Connecting up brought a few moments of angst. The case for powering only the components actually being auditioned (to avoid any possible mains interaction) conflicted with the need to get and keep everything properly warmed up. Tossing a coin, I opted for the latter.

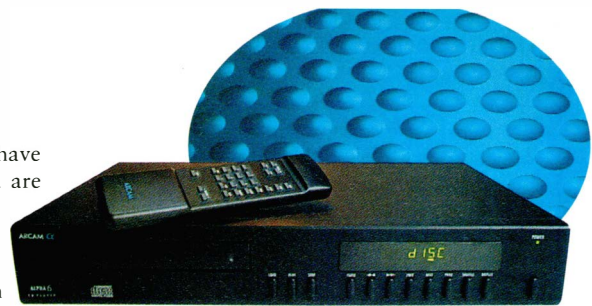
Starting the ball rolling randomly, I picked the PMC speakers and Myryad amp. With the Marantz CD player, this was not a happy combination, sounding rhythmically inept, rather thumpy and recessed, and with a sweet but slightly obvious top end.

Things were much happier with the Arcam *Alpha 6*. The bottom end still tends to thump a bit, and the sound is perhaps a little coarser, but it all hangs together better, and the music makes more sense in consequence, despite a slightly stodgy quality.

The Rega has a darker, duller balance, and it was difficult resisting the temptation to wind up the volume! Rhythmically the most adept of the three sources, it offers a delicate, dynamic transparency and freedom from congestion which gives much better insight into subtle tonal textures.

Changing from the Myryad to *Nait 3* resulted in a more vivid sound, but not necessarily a more pleasant experience. Frankly, neither CD player seemed that satisfactory here, while the superiority of the vinyl spinner was much more obvious, despite its richer, darker balance.

Moving on to the Densen, the sound



Arcam's Alpha 6 CD: classic example of a product that excels only in certain systems.

seemed to become bigger and more open, but tighter and tauter at the bottom end, too. Helping to get me well on to the road to confusion, this amp appeared better with the two CD players than the vinyl Rega, keeping the silver disc players nice and tight, while sounding a little thick and heavy with LP. The CD sound is quite forward and 'shiny', but free from coarseness and grain, while the extreme top end seemed a little over-restrained. The net result favoured the Marantz over the Arcam, and provided a measure of compensation for the laid back character of the PMC speakers.

The Tannoy selection

Changing over to the Tannoy *D100*s brought such a dramatic shift in perspectives, I had to suspend judgement for a while to allow time for my ears and brain to acclimatise.

Perhaps because the Densen was still connected at the time, the effect of going from the relaxed and spacious PMCs to the in-er-face Tannoys was all the more obvious.

And while I soon got into the pace, urgency and intimacy of the *D100*s, I was also conscious of a 'smaller', more congested sound.

However, if the *D100*s didn't have quite the expansive dynamic scale of the PMCs, they did offer a greater sense of intimacy, and could be played at very low levels without

HAPPY COMBINATIONS

So which of our 27 systems turned out to be the bee's knees, and which the bluebottle's backside? Happily, none of the components themselves were dogs, so there's something for everyone here.

I've no intention of naming a stand-out favourite, as such decisions would merely reflect my personal prejudices. Rather, I'm going to whittle the 27 down to my nine likeliest contenders; three for each of the speakers used, allowing plenty of options to suit a wide range of tastes.

■ The PMC *TB1* speakers worked well with all three amps and sources, the preferred combinations being the Myryad/Arcam, the Naim/Rega and the Densen/Marantz.

■ The Tannoy *D100*s seemed to suit the Naim best, with either Marantz or Rega front-ends, although the Myryad/Rega was another attractive combo.

■ Sendor's 2020 seemed rather laid back for our vinyl front end, and preferred the Arcam *Alpha 6* CD with either Densen or Naim amps, or the Marantz/Myryad combo.





naim audio

The Collection



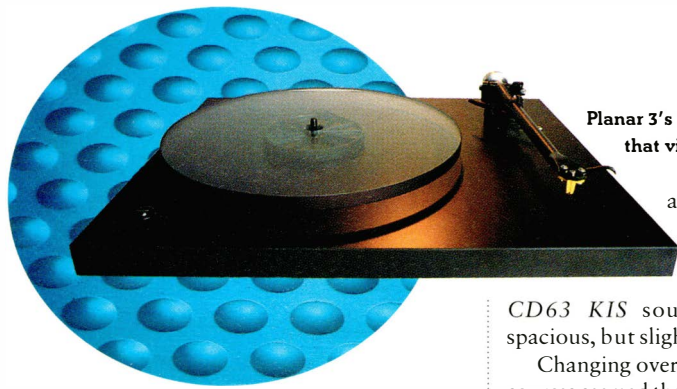
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Planar 3's enduring popularity proves that vinyl still cuts the mustard.

and Marantz CD players is harder to call. The *Alpha 6* is tighter and slightly more time-coherent; the

CD63 KIS sounds bigger and more spacious, but slightly less intelligible.

Changing over to the *Beat*, again the CD sources seemed the better match, but with the preference tilted towards the Arcam. The vinyl still seemed dull by comparison, but impressively urgent, busy and full of detail.

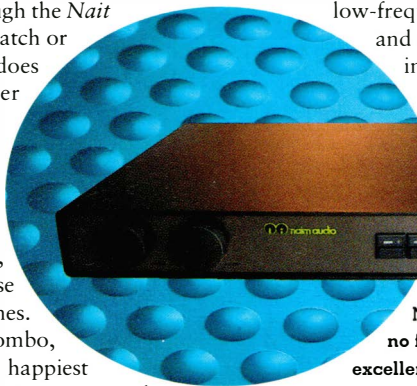
The Arcam CD was arguably the best match for the *Nait 3*/Spendor combo, in terms of tonal balance at least. However, the vinyl disc's considerable advantage in musical information retrieval more than made up for the slight lack of presence projection. Turning the wick up again revealed the *Nait 3*'s limited ultimate power delivery. Providing clipping was avoided, low-frequency detail, extension and control were very good indeed.

◀ sounding thick or losing intelligibility.

The Arcam seemed the least happy source on this occasion, while the Marantz again seemed to perform well with the Densen, despite the change of speakers.

The *Nait 3* proved a happier partner to the Tannoys with the CD sources, although again these speakers seemed to work better with the Marantz than the Arcam. The vinyl balance proved equally satisfactory, adding a greater sense of scale and space, but the temptation to wind up the volume brought the reminder that although the *Nait 3* has the authority to match or beat its rivals here, it does run out of sheer power delivery rather earlier.

The Myryad amp changed the system perspectives yet again, tending to focus on and sweeten up the midband, somewhat at the expense of the bandwidth extremes. With this amp/speaker combo, the Rega vinyl was the happiest match, followed by the Marantz and Arcam CD machines.



Naim's entry-level Nait 3: no frills, modest power, but excellent within its envelope.

Spendor variations

The warmer, richer Spendor 2020s seemed to suit the Myryad amp slightly better than the Tannoys. This pretty amplifier again demonstrated its fine versatility and even-handedness, as well as copious power delivery.

This particular speaker/amp combo seemed better suited to the CD players than the vinyl front end, the latter sounding a bit thick and dull. Preference between the Arcam



Tannoy's D100s found a soul brother in the Nait 3.

Individual elements

Of the speakers, the *PMC* is the most impressive all round, although none of the others disgraced themselves by any means. I enjoyed the Tannoy for low-level listening, while the Spendor retains that lovely 'hear through' mid-band that's made the company's reputation.

Myryad's *MI 120* amp proved a most capable newcomer — great styling, oodles of power, full remote control and the most even-handed sonic performance of our three. It doesn't push the performance envelope as far as the other two, but it's less likely to come a cropper through an unhappy combo.

I found the *Nait 3* well suited to my personal taste, particularly for its ability to resolve fine detail down into the deepest bass and up to the highest treble. The weight, feel and power delivery doesn't match that of the others, and there's no remote control, but the fact that Naim's been around for more than 20 years is a worthwhile reassurance.

The Densen is much more of an audiophile device: massive build and power, alongside hair-shirt, no-remote facilities, and superb styling for the price. The sound is very fast and dynamic, but distinctly more midband-oriented than the Naim.

As for the sources, the Rega was nearly as easy to set up and use as the CD players — except for the lack of remote control (and the need to turn vinyl records over and blow

fluff off the stylus!). It was also more musically literate, with superior high-frequency detail, delicacy and transparency. At the same time, the bottom end was a bit heavy, the presence a little restrained, and a trace of hum was audible when the amps were turned up to maximum power.

Obviously, the remote-control CD players were slicker to use, and both seemed very competent. I'd be hard pushed to say one was preferable to the other, if only because their individual characters are so distinct that opinions are likely to depend upon individual preference. The Marantz sounds bigger and less abrasive, while the Arcam is tighter, faster, more coherent and informative, across a narrower perceived bandwidth. ▲

Note: ☎ numbers for all manufacturers can be found on pages 127 and 129.

CONCLUSION

Trying to pull 27 threads together into a coherent whole is not easy. However, undertaking this exercise has served to emphasise that choosing the right combination of products is at least as important as the choice of products themselves.

The situation is further complicated in practice, because ancillaries (cables, stands) can introduce further shifts in perspective, while the characteristics of the room itself will always play an additional rôle. There's not much you can do about the room, but the selection of ancillaries does afford some opportunity for fine-tuning.

The perceived sound balance of a system does tend to dominate comparative listening, especially when different speakers are involved. Over the longer haul, one tends to adjust to the specific sonic 'signature' of a particular loudspeaker, so differences in balance are not all that important *per se*.

One factor highlighted by this system review is the rather obvious balance disparity between CD and vinyl sources. On the basis of this limited sample, there's no avoiding the conclusion that a system oriented primarily towards vinyl replay is going to sound rather edge-of-seat forward when fed from a CD player; one chosen to balance well with CD is likely to sound too 'shut in' and restrained with vinyl discs.

Of the three speakers included here, the Spendor was clearly happier with CD, the Tannoy with vinyl, while one of the *PMC*'s strengths was that it fell somewhere in between (albeit with CD-oriented tendencies). And if the speakers make this discrepancy most obvious, the amplifiers also exert their own additional influence.

On this topic, there is no space to expound further here, so a full discussion of the implications will have to wait for my monthly column. My gut feeling is that this CD/LP dichotomy undermines the very concept of high fidelity, and that some enterprising amp manufacturer might try to do something about making our various sources more compatible with one another.

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Totally wired

Alan Sircom listens to ten loudspeaker cables, while Paul Miller straps them to his test bench. Which metres are worth your fiver?

Many people spend too much on hi-fi cables because of the hype that surrounds them. At *Hi-Fi Choice*, we recommend that you allocate about ten per cent of your total system budget to cables, unless you are building a high-end (£10,000+) system, in which case 15 to 20 per cent may be more appropriate. Also, the advice of manufacturers, dealers, friends and magazines is worth taking on board, as you search for the perfect sound carrier...

Here we gathered ten speaker cables, and submitted them to a two-part test. First, they were slotted into Paul Miller's proven cable reference system, comprising a Sony *CDP-715E* CD player feeding a Deltec *100S* pre-amp and power amp and a pair of Audio Note *AN/E* loudspeakers. The Deltec, alas now defunct, is designed to use special balanced cables that, in practice, extend the feedback loop of the amplifier up to the speaker terminals. This permits any cable to be compared to the sound of 'no cable'. Following that, we did a 'double blind' assessment, undertaken by Roger Bachelor (of Hayden Laboratories) and myself (your old mate Alan).

As listeners took notes while Paul Miller (*Hi-Fi Choice's* Tech Ed) acted as operator. The brand names were only disclosed at the

conclusion of the test, to eliminate — God forbid! — any possible reviewer bias.

The cables were also inserted into a more informal, price-matched test system, using a Marantz *CD-63SE* CD player, Arcam *Alpha 6 Plus* amplifier and a pair of Mordaunt-Short *MS10i* loudspeakers, standing on Atacama *SE24* stands. Cable Talk's ubiquitous *Talk 3* cable was used as a reference point. In truth, there were no conflicts between the two systems, so the results are mostly taken from the formal test.

Our thanks to all involved for their time, co-operation and auricular prowess. (Cor!)

THE LISTENING TEST

Hi-Fi Choice's rigorous blind-listening tests have proved that differences of all sorts exist between various components. That goes for speaker cables too, whether they cost £100 a metre or, as in this case, less than £5.

The crucial point to communicate is this: speaker cables are not accessories, but an integral part of your system. You can make do without many little hi-fi luxuries, but no conventional system will function without loudspeaker cables!

So just how important is your choice of cable? At one extreme, picking the wrong type could smother the potential of your amplifier, or in some circumstances, even render it unstable. On the other hand, the 'right' cable will provide a wholly sympathetic link between amp and speaker. Just don't confuse high quality with high prices, for there are plenty of budget wonders to be discovered.

Also remember that no cable, not even a hallowed Best Buy, can retrieve or recreate lost musical information. And don't be swayed by elaborate marketing, for the very best wire will never transform a dog-eared system into one that sounds like the LSO in full flight. So if you're strapped for cash but want to tease a little bit extra from your system, read on. Buying one of these cables could represent the best £10 to £20 you'll ever spend on your hi-fi system!

THE CAST LIST

Cable	Price
Bandridge LC 7409	£3.85/m
Cable Talk 4	£4.25/m
Gale XL315	£1.99/m
Gale XL160-2	£2.49/m
Puresonic 7845	£1.95/m
Puresonic 7891	£2.85/m
QED Qudos	£2.50/m
QED Profile 8	£5.00/m
Sonic Link AST50	£1.95/m
Tech+Link OFC79	£0.99/m



BANDRIDGE LC7409 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £3.85 per metre



▲ Detailed and up-beat; great for up-market systems.
 ▼ A little steely for classical strings; unsuitable for bright systems.

✉ Bandridge Ltd., 18 Deer Park Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 3TU
 ☎ (0181) 543 3633

LAB REPORT

Previous cable supplements have included a variety of Bandridge designs which encompass conductor thicknesses from 1.5mm² to 6mm², and a profusion of insulation colours. All Bandridge cables employ very fine, multi-stranded copper conductors, in a rope-lay weave, and typically adopt a traditional figure-of-eight geometry.

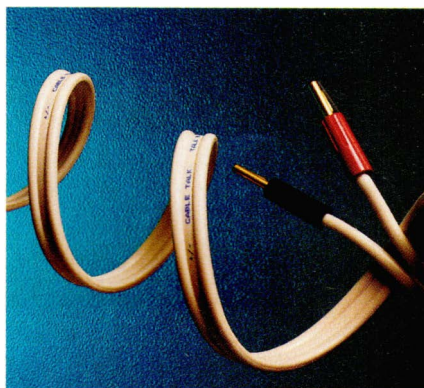
This example uses 1050x0.07mm OF-copper strands per conductor, to yield a 4mm² cross-sectional area and, at 43 mOhm per 5m loop, the lowest series resistance of any cable in this group. The *LC7409* is the white PVC-insulated version of the smoke-coloured *LC7401* reviewed and Recommended four years ago, in issue 109!

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Bandridge LC7409
Inductance	4.45µH
Capacitance	145pF
Resistance	43 mOhm
Leakage	29 MOhm
Q-Factor	28
Resonant Frequency	6.26MHz
Series Bandpass	1.54kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.047dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	186.1

LISTENING TEST

The Bandridge *LC7409* seemed more lively than Cable Talk 3's reference, and there was a clear emphasis on the organ at the opening of the Fugees' *Killing Me Softly*. Bass notes were softer and had less grunt, but *LC7409* kept a tidy sense of rhythm nonetheless. Upper bass notes and mid-band sounds were likewise very focused.

However, we noticed a distinct steely edge to strings on classical music, which helps to classify the *LC7409* as a 'rock' cable. With its focus on detail, the Bandridge *LC7409* will not be particularly suitable for abrasive-sounding kit. But for those seeking an insightful cable to partner smooth, mid-price equipment, the *LC7409* is excellent value for money.

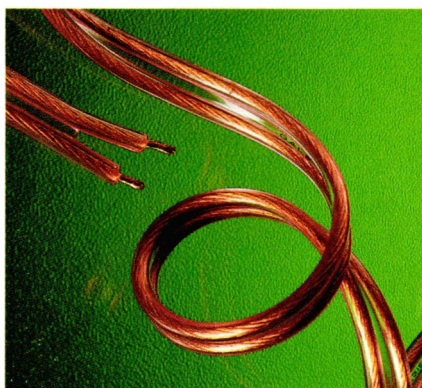


CABLE TALK 4 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £4.25 per metre: single
 £8.50 per metre: bi-wire

▲ Smooth and cultured.
 ▼ Too restrained and not the most detailed around.

✉ Cable Talk, Unit 12, Farnborough Business Centre, Eelmoor Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7XA
 Tel: (01252) 373434

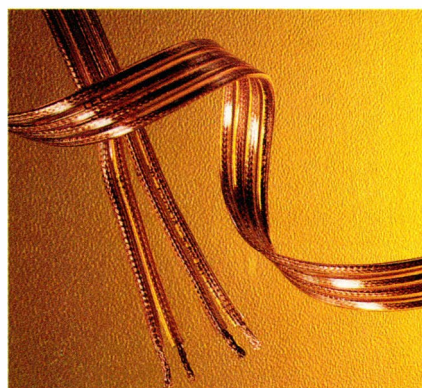


GALE XL315 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £2 per metre

▲ Top value; plenty of life; plenty of vibrancy. Slightly lacking in detail, but at two quid a metre, who's complaining?
 ▼ In FIDUCIANCE BEST BUY

✉ Audio Partnership, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB
 (0171) 827 9827



GALE XL160-2 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £2.50 per metre

▲ Rhythmic and bouncy; good value.
 ▼ Not especially revealing; manipulative on voices; materially lacking substance.
 IN FIDUCIANCE RECOMMENDED

✉ Richer Sounds, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB
 (0171) 827 9827

LAB REPORT

The most costly cable in our test is based on the popular Cable Talk 3 (Best Buy, issue 133), and it achieves the same 4mm² conductor area as, say, Bandridge's LC7409, by using just 42 strands of 0.3mm copper. The extra cost over Cable Talk 3 is justified by the upgrade to 6N-purity (99.9999 per cent) copper, and the use of a new cream-coloured, halogen-free dielectric in place of a cheaper PVC insulator.

As a result, Cable Talk 4 offers a slightly lower resistance than Talk 3, but features a huge improvement in leakage from 36 MOhm to >350 MOhm. All things being equal, this improved dielectric should have rewarded us with an improvement in sound quality.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Cable Talk 4
Inductance	5.2µH
Capacitance	110pF
Resistance	48 mOhm
Leakage	>350 MOhm
Q-Factor	>100
Resonant Frequency	6.66MHz
Series Bandpass	1.47kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.052dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	166.7

LISTENING TEST

One of the smoothest sounding cables in the group, Cable Talk 4 sounds rather more expensive and cultured than the price-tag might lead you to believe.

This refinement is born of the well-tempered tonal balance. It was pleasantly extended yet not too bright, while the bass was deep, if a little disjointed. There was, however, a subtle lack of detail and atmosphere with the Tilson Thomas *Giselle* cut, while both the Fugees and Johnny Cash tracks sounded just too close and shut-in.

If you seek a rich, lavish sounding cable, at the expense of some detail and atmosphere, then Cable Talk 4 is the one to go for. For the rest, Cable Talk 3 seems the more even-handed option.

LAB REPORT

Gale's XL315 is a very traditional, heavy-weight, multi-stranded design, complete with transparent insulation that shows off its shiny rope-lay weave of copper strands to great effect.

Because the XL315 adopts a widely spaced, parallel geometry, its series inductance is pretty high at 5.1µH (5m loop), increasing the overall impedance of the cable to 0.64 Ohm at high frequencies. With long cable lengths, some modification of the speaker's treble response is likely. In our blind listening tests, the outcome was entirely favourable, but in other situations the result could be a little less predictable. Yet at just £2/m, Gale's XL315 is surely worth the risk.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Gale XL315
Inductance	5.07µH
Capacitance	136pF
Resistance	69 mOhm
Leakage	17 MOhm
Q-Factor	21
Resonant Frequency	6.06MHz
Series Bandpass	2.17kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.075dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	115.9

LISTENING TEST

There was very little to fault about this cable, save for a slight lack of ultimate detail. Gale's XL315 was the only cable in the test to give a sense of image depth and layering, making the drum track of the Fugees sit behind the vocals and keyboards instead of resting on their laps.

Gale's XL315 also added a sense of being in a concert hall to the *Giselle* recording, with a bright, clean and open treble that perfectly portrayed the tone of the piccolo and woodwind. In addition, the Johnny Cash track was full of expression and vibrancy, even if there had been distinctly higher levels of detail in other cables. A great performer at any price, and at £2 per metre Gale's XL315 is a steal.

LAB REPORT

Thinner, flatter and more carpet-friendly than XL315, Gale's XL160-2 is also more versatile. Each cable comprises four woven multi-strand copper conductors, arranged in pairs and clearly marked for bi-wire speaker applications. The cable is just as easily used in conventional amp/speaker set-ups, where adjacent conductors are combined at both ends to halve the overall resistance. This geometry creates a slightly higher inductance and capacitance than superficially similar designs, although the XL160-2 is still likely to be less system-sensitive than XL315. A superior insulation would probably improve its treble quality, but XL160-2 remains good value for the budget bi-wire system.

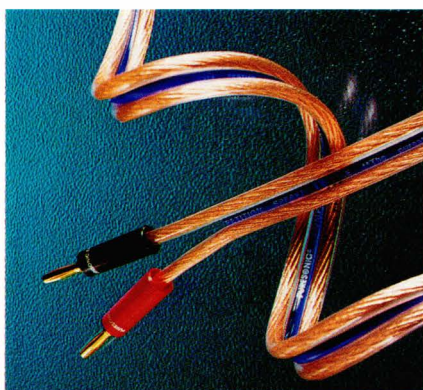
5m Loudspeaker Cable	Gale XL160-2
Inductance	3.3µH
Capacitance	274pF
Resistance	74 mOhm
Leakage	9.5 MOhm
Q-Factor	19.5
Resonant Frequency	5.29MHz
Series Bandpass	3.57kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.080dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	108.1

LISTENING TEST

Gale's XL160/2 had more bounce than Pamela Anderson Lee on a bungee rope, making the country drawl of Johnny Cash sound more like Dr John in full Cajun swing. That said, XL160/2 did smear and blur vocal intonation a bit. Paradoxically, however, it was a rather characterless performer overall. Despite its good sense of rhythm, a slight lack of expression was noticeable, which made the XL160/2 fairly soulless.

Nevertheless, this was a fine rhythmic performer, very much in the 'flat earth' mould — and at a low price (similar-sounding British cables cost upwards of £2 per metre or more). Given the minimised cost and that infectious bounciness, a Recommendation seems mandatory.

BUDGET SPEAKER CABLES



PURESONIC 7845 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £1.95 per metre

- ▲ Will suit those in search of big US sound; at least it's not harsh.
- ▼ Everything else.
- ✉ Tapehand Ltd., Unit 1/2, 76a Farnley Road, London SE25 6NX
- ☎ (0181) 771 8388

LAB REPORT

This Puresonic-branded cable, with its rope-like stranding, transparent insulation and blue-coloured central webbing, looks a lot like the cables previously marketed under the Monitor PC brand. Specific details were not forthcoming, although the OF-copper (typically 99.95 per cent pure) and likely 4mm² conductor area gives rise to a usefully low 53mOhm per 5m loop resistance.

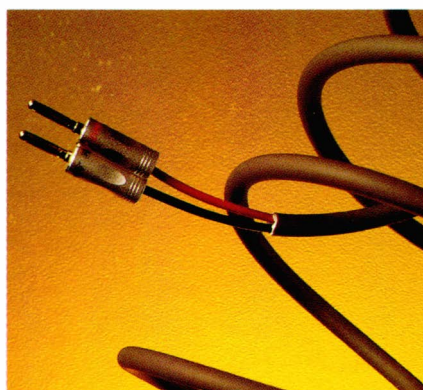
Like Gale's *XL315*, the spaced geometry of the 7845 pushes up its inductance and high frequency impedance to around 0.6 Ohm, which is sufficient to alter the treble response of some speakers. In this instance, the performance of 7845 is probably undermined by its dielectric quality and non-linear strand-to-strand conduction.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Puresonic 7845
Inductance	4.65µH
Capacitance	126pF
Resistance	53 mOhm
Leakage	44 MOhm
Q-Factor	40
Resonant Frequency	6.56MHz
Series Bandpass	1.81kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.057dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	150.9

LISTENING TEST

Puresonic 7845 was arguably the most manipulative cable in the bunch. The Fugees track sounded almost out of key, but not unpleasant — at least not until the bass kicked in. At this point, the sound became messy and seemingly random in accent.

Puresonic's 7845 bass was both ponderous and corpulent. Granted it was weighty, but more in the style of Billy Bunter than by adding any true muscle. There is similarity between this sound and that of some of AudioQuest's less successful ventures in the past. The 7845 is perfect if you are after that distinctive, manipulative, US high-end sound on the cheap — but that is not the sound we like.



PURESONIC 7891 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £2.85 per metre

- ▲ Hunky cable design; materially good value for money, as you could tow cars with this cable.
- ▼ The sound quality; physically unwieldy.
- ✉ Tapehand Ltd., Unit 1/2, 76a Farnley Road, London SE25 6NX
- ☎ (0181) 771 8388

LAB REPORT

This relatively stiff cable adopts a method of construction more common to far costlier designs. Here, symmetrical, multi-stranded signal and return conductors are sheathed in a stiff, colour-coded dielectric (either PVC or polyethylene) and then sealed within a further white layer of insulation. A brown-coloured jacket completes the package.

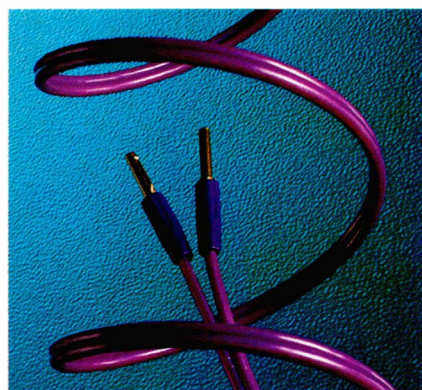
Because 7891's conductors have a smaller cross-sectional area than those on the 7845, it has a slightly higher resistance, although, because of their close proximity, the cable's inductance (and therefore its treble impedance) is better managed. On the flipside, 7891 has the highest capacitance in the group, even if, at 325pF/5m, this is unlikely to upset the most jittery of amplifiers.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Puresonic 7891
Inductance	3.2µH
Capacitance	325pF
Resistance	78 mOhm
Leakage	39 MOhm
Q-Factor	71
Resonant Frequency	4.94MHz
Series Bandpass	3.88kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.084dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	102.6

LISTENING TEST

Although it made a big and blowsy performance, the Puresonic 7891 was not the most involving of cables. It was dark-toned and moderately pacy, but the music — especially the treble — barely made it past the loudspeaker grilles. And what little atmosphere did get through, only served to soften an already dull performance. While lack of convictions may be a prerequisite for joining the police, it does not make for a good cable sound.

In addition, Puresonic 7891's bass was plummy and overpowering. It bordered on being warm and full, but soon became fat. Regrettably, Puresonic 7891 is not a cable that finds universal favour.



QED QUDOS - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £2.50 per metre

- ▲ Excellent solder-free Air-Loc plugs are a superb idea; the cable is cheap...
- ▼ ...but so is living in Scunthorpe.
- ✉ QED Audio Products Ltd., Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Close, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XU
- ☎ (01276) 451166

LAB REPORT

Now that QED's long-standing 79-strand has been put out to pasture, a more sophisticated cable has emerged to take its place. *Qudos* is costlier at £2.50/m, but benefits from a lower inductance by dint of its reduced conductor spacing and reduced capacitance, thanks to a superior choice of dielectric.

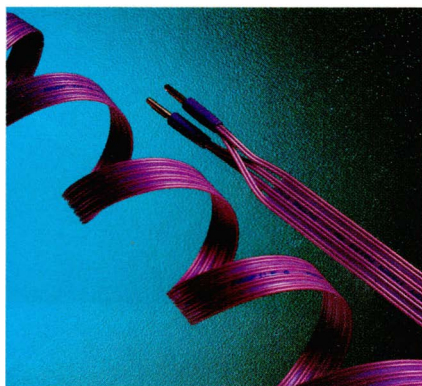
This is *Qudos*'s purple-coloured insulation, a hard polyethylene that also improves the cable's leakage to around 280 MOhm. Once again, 79 strands of higher-quality OF-copper are deployed in a figure-of-eight geometry, while gold-plated banana plugs are cold-welded into place to eliminate the need for conventional soldering. The result is a very compatible cable, albeit one that did not receive a sympathetic response from our listeners.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	QED Qudos
Inductance	3.35µH
Capacitance	188pF
Resistance	68 mOhm
Leakage	280 MOhm
Q-Factor	> 100
Resonant Frequency	6.34MHz
Series Bandpass	3.23kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.074dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	117.7

LISTENING TEST

What began as a well-measured performance soon deteriorated into a jumble of inconsistencies which seemed to alternate between the insubstantial and blurred. These inconsistencies didn't seem to be musically related, however, which is curious in the extreme.

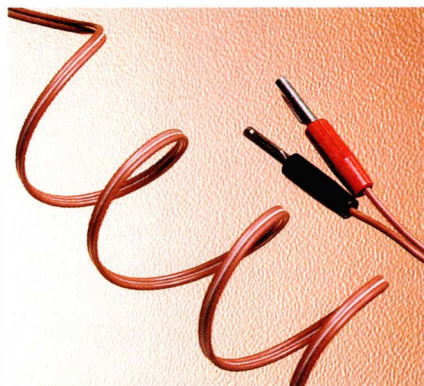
There were few benefits to this cable, aside from purple colour, solidly-welded plugs and low price. Sonically, the best that could be said of *Qudos* was that the music simply failed to gel. This could have been due to the lack of imagery, the ill-starred bass performance, or the sheer lack of detail. For numerous reasons, this cable's performance does not lead us to recommend it, despite a very reasonable price.



QED PROFILE 8 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £5 per metre

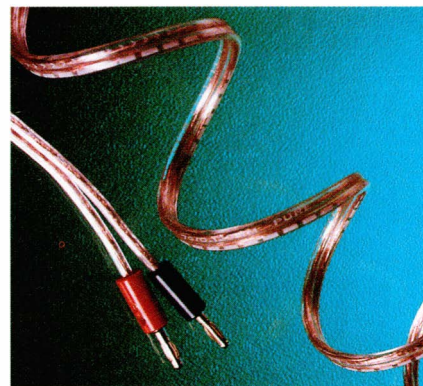
- ▲ Good value; top-class 4mm plugs.
- ▼ Lacks detail, a consistent bass and some much-needed get up and go.
- ✉ QED Audio Products Ltd., Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Close, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XU
- ☎ (01276) 451166



SONIC LINK AST50 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £5 per metre

- ▲ Plucky, up-beat and charming sounding cable, with a full-sounding bass...
- ▼ ...that's a bit detached.
- ✉ Sonic Link, Derwent Business Centre, Clark Street, Derby DE1 2BU
- ☎ (01332) 674929



TECH+LINK OFC79 - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £1 per metre

- ▲ An Andrex puppy of a cable, thanks to its sweet and cosy nature; low price.
- ▼ Wobbly bass; flat soundstaging.
- ✉ Tapehand Ltd., Unit 1/2, 76a Farnley Road London SE25 6NX
- ☎ (0181) 771 8388

LAB REPORT

Destined to compete with other super-flat cables from DNM and Audioquest, QED's *Profile 8* employs four pairs of 20-gauge conductors, yielding the same cross-sectional area (2.5mm²) and low resistance as *Qudos*, from a far slimmer package.

Both the DNM and QED cable designs were conceived to minimise any magnetic or electrostatic interaction between adjacent conductors. However, as the outer pairs are combined for signal and the inner pairs for return in *Profile 8*, QED's alternative geometry may also explain DNM's subjective superiority. A pity, because *Profile 8*'s lower 2.2µH inductance and far lower 0.28 Ohm HF impedance potentially makes it more compatible.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	QED <i>Profile 8</i>
Inductance	2.15µH
Capacitance	200pF
Resistance	73 mOhm
Leakage	> 350 MOhm
Q-Factor	> 100
Resonant Frequency	7.68MHz
Series Bandpass	5.40kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.079dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	109.6

LISTENING TEST

Like many cables, QED *Profile 8* sounded initially impressive, only to falter at the first sign of a bass note. On The Fugees track *Killing Me Softly*, the opening harmonies and organ sounded sufficiently distinct and sonorous to prove attractive, but as soon as the rest of the record swung into effect, the whole track collapsed.

On *Giselle*, there was a decent sense of scale, but no real insight or detail. This was also evident on the Johnny Cash track, which in addition highlighted the inconsistent bass. Despite the clever use of cold-welding crimpable plugs, which are completely solder-free, the sound of this cable is simply too light and slothful.

LAB REPORT

Sonic Link has a reputation for inventing some weird and wonderful cables, so you can be sure there's more to *AST50* than meets the eye. What looks like brown-coloured bell-wire is actually a pair of 16x0.2mm tinned-copper conductors, covered with a silicone rubber insulation. This has improved dielectric properties over ordinary PVC and, like the halogen-free insulators, offers a more chemically stable environment for the copper strands.

Resistance is high at 355 mOhm/5m, however, so runs should be kept as short as possible (preferably <3m) to optimise the (bass) damping factor and prevent the 0.61 Ohm HF impedance from adversely influencing the speaker's treble response.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Sonic Link <i>AST50</i>
Inductance	3.9µH
Capacitance	177pF
Resistance	355 mOhm
Leakage	> 350 MOhm
Q-Factor	> 100
Resonant Frequency	6.06MHz
Series Bandpass	13.7kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.377dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	22.5

LISTENING TEST

The plucky Sonic Link *AST50* showed delicacy of expression with whatever was played through it, and individual instruments within the ballet *Giselle* were conveyed with subtlety and conviction.

Detailed rather than deep, the *AST50* delineated the reverb from the female vocal in *Killing Me Softly*, but lacked the absolute soundstage layering that only money can ensure. There were a few shortcomings, including a detached if powerful bass, but these were largely overlooked because of the even-handed overall performance.

Ordered rhythm and balanced performance are rare, so the *AST50* comes highly Recommended.

LAB REPORT

To all intents and purposes, this cable is a generic version of the classic 79-strand that put and maintained QED on the map through the '80s. Once again, a combination of 79x0.129mm OF-copper strands, in a traditional figure-of-eight geometry, yields a mixture of high-ish inductance, capacitance and resistance.

The upshot is a power loss of some 0.2dB over 5m, and a reduction in the amplifier's damping factor to just 42 (re. 8 Ohm), no matter how low the original output impedance. This, in tandem with its 0.54 Ohm impedance at HF, is likely to encourage a rather restrained, if not soft and vaguely modified sound, with cable runs over a few metres or so.

5m Loudspeaker Cable	Tech+Link <i>OFC79</i>
Inductance	4.0µH
Capacitance	315pF
Resistance	190 mOhm
Leakage	6.0 MOhm
Q-Factor	11.9
Resonant Frequency	4.48MHz
Series Bandpass	7.56kHz
Power Loss (8 Ohm spkr)	0.204dB
Damping Factor (8 Ohm spkr)	42.1

LISTENING TEST

Tech-Link *OFC79*'s initial popularity was rapidly tempered by an all-pervading sibilance that seemed to dominate voices in the music we played.

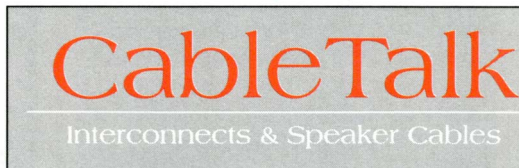
In addition, a soft, wobbly, plummy bass became noticeable. This made the Johnny Cash track sound pleasant but not particularly well-focused, and left the *Giselle* sounding more like a hoe-down than a ballet. Cannonball Adderley fared little better: bass notes mellowed out the already laid-back rhythm section.

When it came to soundstaging, the *OFC79* was fundamentally flat, especially on the classical track. So although this cable looks good value on paper, low cost alone does not a bargain make.

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Help!

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Send your hi-fi queries to "Help!" at the usual address (page 3) or 100433.1130@compuserve.com. We regret that we cannot answer individual queries on a personal basis.

Query of the month

I am looking to replace my ten-year-old and decidedly mid-fi system with a modest hi-fi outfit. When reading hi-fi magazines, I find many references to CD players and DACs with variable analogue outputs, presumably allowing direct connection to a power amp. Is there any reason, other than to accommodate other sources, to use a preamp?

Jim Rothwell, via the Internet

Yes, and then again, no. Running a CD-playing system with no preamp is very attractive in principle, and can work brilliantly in practice, but there can be problems. Some CD players use resistive ladder volume-control networks, or low-grade mechanical volume pots, which are not the last word in transparency. They may have a high output impedance in the key middle volume ranges, which — combined with a low-input impedance in the power amplifier, and a long interconnect in between — may result in audible frequency response errors and the possibility of noise pickup. The buffer stages of an active preamplifier can protect you from these problems. Therefore you should approach the idea with care, and consult a trustworthy dealer.

Variable outputs: caveat emptor.



Lardy bottom

Referring to loudspeakers — Mission 752s — you comment: "Bottom end lacks authority, weight, warmth and richness." After some month's use of these speakers, driving with an Audiolab 8000A, I heartily agree. What can I do?

Thomas J Maxwell, Exeter

In the end, the most effective measure (repositioning the speakers closer to the back wall) may impact on midrange transparency and stereo imagery. However, you may be able to improve the perceived bass quality, to an extent, with better speaker cables and/or amplification — adding an Audiolab 8000P (£700) power amp, for example.

What does it all mean?

What are the functions of a pre-

and power amp? Does a monoblok mean two are needed to maintain a stereo effect?

Mehmet Salgar, via Internet

Pre-amplifiers handle the low-level signals from hi-fi sources, allowing source selection, tonal or other modification, volume control, and usually a modest increase in signal level. The power amplifier is solely concerned with boosting the signal sufficiently to drive the loudspeakers. Monobloks are simply mono (single channel) amplifiers, which means two are needed for stereo.

Nasty dealer man

My quasi-American system includes a Harman-Kardon 3350 receiver and Yamaha

NSA-835 speakers. I have set my heart on the KEF Coda 8s, but the sales representative told me that my receiver couldn't drive a 6 Ohm speaker efficiently, or two pairs of speakers with different impedance values.

Dennis P Thomas, via Internet

Hogwash. Keep the volume levels to a reasonable setting, and there will be no problems. Tell your dealer to go take a hike.

Skint lad wants a NAD

I have some old JVC components and Mission 737R speakers, and would like to upgrade on a £400 budget. I am particularly interested in NAD, which is available locally.

Frank Mathison, Norway

Then go ahead. If you want a word of strictly confidential advice — everyone else should turn their eyes away now — go for the NAD models with a 1 in the name: the NAD 312 (£200 in the UK) amp and the 512 CD player (£250), for example. Unfortunately, even these two components will bust your budget handsomely. Next step: a word with the bank manager?

A winning combo?

On the basis of your Best Buy/Recommended lists, I have come up with the following combinations, which fit within my £1,750 budget out here in Dubai. Here goes:

Mission Cyrus III or Musical Fidelity E100 amplifier; Mission 753 or 733 speakers; Nakamichi DR3, Kenwood KX5060S or Aiwa AD590 cassette deck; Harman/Kardon HD7525 or Marantz 63SE mk II CD player.

I would appreciate any comments as to suitability and compatibility.

Tom Morton, Dubai, UAE

The Musical Fidelity E100, a big, vibrant, colourful amplifier, is the obvious choice in all but the smallest rooms, and the Mission 753 is a much, much better speaker than the 733. Stir in the Marantz CD player and Aiwa cassette deck, and you have the makings of a very fine system, no prob. Next...?

I'm a believer (well, was)

I am a late convert to CD, as I feel very few CD players convey emotion well. The Musical Fidelity FCD is one of the few exceptions. Even so, since a recent move, the lack of bottom end is now more apparent



Coda 8: no problem for a Yamaha receiver.

when compared to my Linn LP12. I intend to upgrade to the F15 amp, but would welcome any advice about achieving better bass from my FCD now. I use Castle Chester II speakers in a room of seven by three meters.

R Lewis, via the Internet

As turntable guru Max Townshend once pointed out, the lowliest, humblest CD player in creation has vastly superior (and indeed, deeper) bass capabilities than the best turntables, whose strengths lie elsewhere. Capabilities don't always translate into reality for a variety of reasons, but the fact remains that a system optimised for vinyl replay will always sound the way you have described with CD. This is for the most prosaic reasons, and listeners conditioned by records will inevitably hear CD-playing systems this way.

Dreary, smeary treble

Currently I am using a Teac/Audio Alchemy CD, Arcam Delta 290, and IPL transmission-line speakers which have a harsh, smeary treble, and are bass light, even when close to a wall.

Is there a floorstanding speaker for around £800, which combines the openness and smooth treble of the Castle Harlech with the bass drive and power of the Linn Keilidh? Steve Lester, Yoxall

No, but the evergreen Mission 753 (£700) is a gloriously well-balanced and articulate design, which is as sharp as a razor. It probably comes the closest to meeting your brief.

All good stuff, but...

I am about to buy my first separates system on an £800 budget. I am considering the Marantz CD63, which I have seen in mkI form for as little as £150. I have been told that a warm-sounding amp would be best, and have considered models from Rotel, Kenwood, Arcam and Denon. I also want a cassette deck (Sony, Yamaha and Aiwa shortlisted) and speakers like the Tannoy 632, Mordaunt-Short MS20i, B&W DM600I and Acoustic Energy AE100. Any comments? Umesh Pandit, Canterbury



E100: big, vibrant, colourful and black.

Sort of. You have listed a good cross-section of respectable brands in what appears to be a quite arbitrary way: there is nothing wrong with any of them, but there's nothing that obviously links them, either, which suggests you have yet to make some very basic decisions. Advice? Find a good dealer, arrange a dem, and listen to some of the choices and refine your options. Then drop us another line.

Bigger and better

My system consists of an Arcam Alpha 5+ amp, Marantz CD42 CD player, Sony ST-

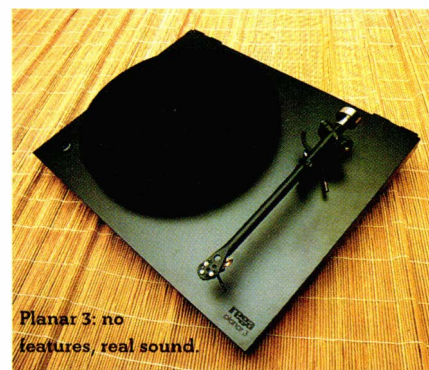
S311 tuner, Hitachi PS-48 turntable with Audio Technica AT-95E cartridge, Sansui D-90 cassette deck and Castle Kendal II loudspeakers on sand-filled stands.

The system is okay but lacks depth and 'presence'. Castle says that present-day alternatives to the Kendals would cost £500, so what should I improve? I like the facilities of the Hitachi.

John Hewett, Ponteland, Northumberland

Sorry. Facilities or no, the Hitachi is out of its depth here. You need a much better record deck, especially with wide-bandwidth loudspeakers like

the Kendals. The Rega Planar 3 is an absolute bare minimum, with a cartridge such as the Arcam P77MG (£77). A bigger, better amp should come next.



Planar 3: no features, real sound.

Big budget, big sound

I want floorstanding speakers that will work well with my equipment (Pioneer PD-S801 CD player, Arcam Delta 290 and Heybrook HB1), that are suited for use against a back wall in a small room, and that will be able to handle a future amplifier upgrade. I listen mainly to opera and progressive rock, and my goal is a big, detailed sound. I have a budget of £1,200 available.

José Santos, Vienna, Austria

The Linn Keilidh Aktiv (£1144) is one speaker that definitely should be on your shortlist, and the Heybrook Sextet (£1,129) — which, in the words of our review in issue 102, was 'coherent and highly analytical' — is the other.

Cyrus mad

I am a real Cyrus fan, and own a Cyrus DAD7 CD player, Cyrus III amp with PSX-R, and Mission 752 speakers. I am generally happy with the sound, but I could use just a little more separation and richness. Should I add a Cyrus Power amp and bi-amp, add a PSX-R to the DAD7 or instead, buy an off-board DAC for the DAD7?

Kenneth Wong, Singapore

For total Cyrus fanatics, Mission 752s are not enough.



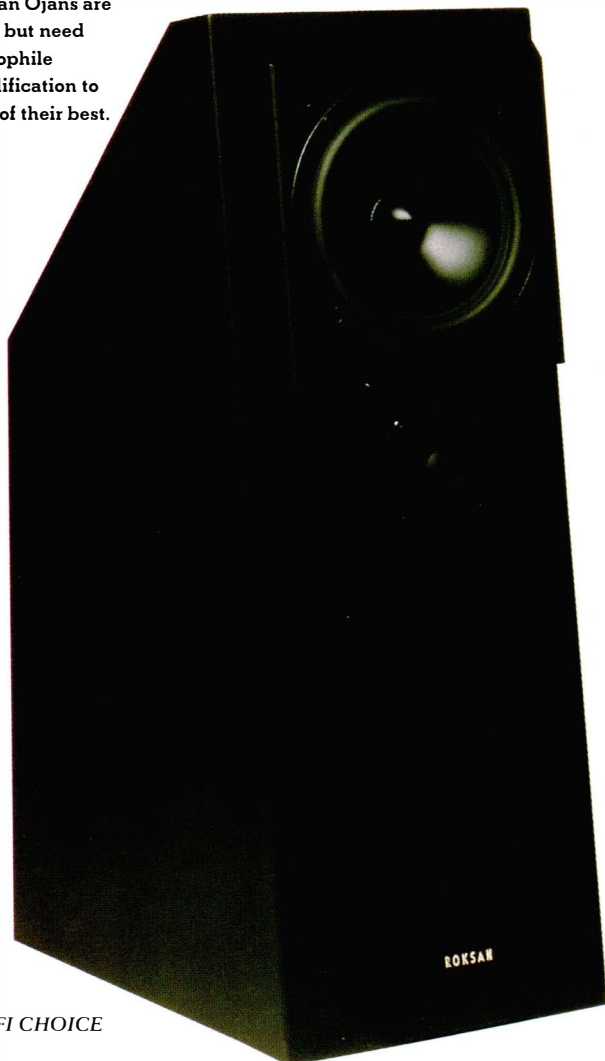
◀ All of your ideas are good, and should be followed up. You could even try disconnecting the PSX-R from the amplifier, and partnering it with the CD player right now. However, although you can expect lots from improvements of this kind, the kind of qualities you seek will probably be contingent on upgrading the loudspeakers, or at least increasing low-frequency bandwidth.

The Mission 753 would have been a better choice at the outset; so too, in my opinion, would have been a good sub-woofer, such as the REL Strata (£500), as long as it is adjusted for discretion.

The plug's been pulled

I would like to upgrade my Technics RS-TR355 cassette deck to something better. As someone who makes a lot of recordings (classical, rock and miscellaneous 'mixing it' type weirdness), should I consider something more expensive (and presumably, better built) such as the Nakamichi DR2 or 3? On a related point, how is it

Roksan Ojans are nice, but need audiophile amplification to give of their best.



that Nakamichi decks perform so well without such features as Dolby S or 3 heads?

Stephen Benwell, Sunderland, Wearside

Are you sitting down? I have some bad news. Nakamichi has pulled the plug on hi-fi, which is about as radical as Ferrari pulling out of cars. You're wrong about three heads: Nakamichi has been a fervent supporter from the beginning, and has produced some of the finest three-head designs of all time, eschewing combination heads in favour of discrete record and playback heads. You're right about Dolby

S, though, which only took shape as a seriously desirable system at about the time Nakamichi was pulling in its reins.

Buy a Nakamichi now — the DR3, if you can — while you can. It will probably be a financial investment. It will certainly be a sonic one.

Smart speakers, rank amp

I live in Hong Kong, and currently I am looking for some floorstanding speakers to serve in both home cinema and pure music set-up roles. My target price is £700 to £1200, and my amp is the Yamaha A2070.

Tim Earl, ICAP, Asia

There are several very fine loudspeakers in your price range that will do the job. Good examples include the Roksan Ojan 3X (£1195), the Rogers Studio 7 (£899) and the B&W 805V (£995). However, for purist hi-fi listening, they demand better amplification than the Yamaha can provide. The KEF Model One (£1,099) should be a little easier to drive, but have this proved by demonstration before committing yourself. However, better power amplifiers, which can be bolted on to the output sockets of your Yamaha to bypass the internal amps, should definitely be next on the shopping list.

I have the need

I have recently upgraded my system to include Mission 753s on heavy, custom-made stands. The speakers have been reinforced to reduce secondary radiation, and the cabinets don't move at all. The sound is much cleaner and has lost its bass bloom. However, now I feel the need to upgrade my Audiolab 8000A (which seems too cool, clinical and forward) and Marantz CD63SE. Would the Arcam

290 or Musical Fidelity E100 be suitable?

P Barnes, West Yorkshire

To make a truly worthwhile improvement, I think you need to go a little further. In the Electrocompaniet range, I would be looking at the ECI-2 (£990) for example, although I have just heard a prototype of a Copland solid state amp, the CSA8, which should cost around £900 to £1,000, and which should be a natural candidate for this application. The only snag is that you'll have to wait a month or two, and hope that the production model is as good as the prototype.

Silly salespeople

I have a Rega Planar 3, Nagaoka MP10 cartridge, NAD 3020 (as preamp), two Rotel RB970BXII power amps and a pair of locally produced speakers, similar to Mission 753s. I would like to upgrade the cartridge, perhaps to a moving coil, and am interested in the Sumiko Blue Point and Ortofon MC10. The problem is that very few salespeople can offer much sensible advice. I can't even find out if the NAD can handle the low output from the Ortofon.

Damian Flynn, New South Wales, Australia

Although the 3020 can be used with MC cartridges (there's a switch on the back), probably it will find itself a little out of its depth with the cartridges you mention. However, I'm not disputing that a better cartridge is in order — you need something with a great deal more presence, vitality and clarity than the smooth but lazy Nagaoka. It seems to me that the obvious choice is a Roksan Corus Black (£130), or if this is too expensive, the Rega Elys (£74).

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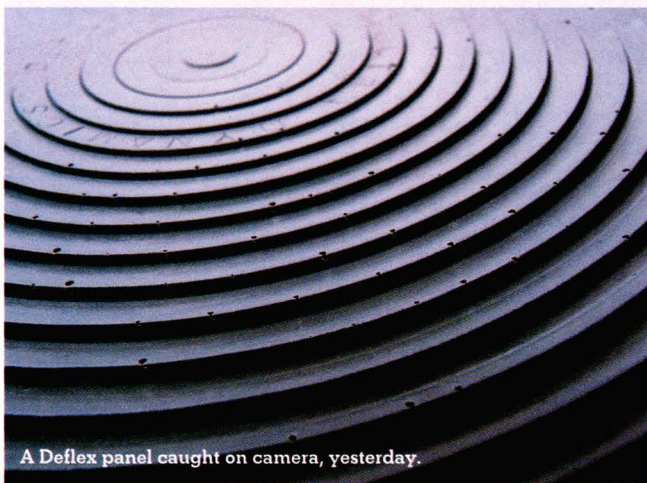
HINTS AND TIPS **SPEAKER TWEAKS**

**Jimmy Hughes says: "try this at home, kids!"
(But don't tell your parents it was his idea...)**

Loudspeakers are probably the easiest and safest sort of hi-fi equipment for the average enthusiast to modify. Of course, such work is likely to void the manufacturer's warranty, but how often do speakers need servicing, except perhaps when an amplifier blows up?

Perhaps modifying the crossover would be going a bit too far, but most people could successfully experiment with reducing and removing a speaker's internal damping, without coming to grief. If you'd like your system to sound keener and livelier, removing some or all of the internal damping wadding could be just the ticket.

For those wanting to go further, fitting some Deflex panels would be a worthwhile option. These retain the 'liveliness' of an undamped enclosure, while imparting a degree of control that would otherwise be sacrificed. Thus you get the best of both worlds. Indeed, looking through the latest Deflex catalogue (☎ 01745 570194), it's surprising to see how many uses have been devised for this material. In addition to the original damping panels, Deflex is available in many



A Deflex panel caught on camera, yesterday.

shapes and sizes, to damp speaker corners internally, support pieces of equipment, line (or extend) reflex ports, and so on. There's even a turntable mat made out of the stuff!

A series of Deflex gaskets is available for mounting under speaker drive units, to introduce a degree of decoupling between drivers and the cabinet. Although we're conditioned to believe that rigid coupling is a good thing, sometimes it's advantageous to introduce a little decoupling at key points. A bass unit, for instance, creates a lot of movement and vibration. In effect, its output is superimposed onto its partnering tweeter, which is trying to reproduce small, delicate high-frequency information. When you decouple drive units, the sound should retain tightness, clarity and definition, while imparting extra ease and freedom from strain.

If you do decide to modify your speakers, carry out work on just one enclosure first, so that you can compare it against the other. That way you can be pretty sure the changes are improvements. Just listen in mono and compare modified and unmodified speakers to see which sounds best. If you're convinced the changes have been worthwhile, it'll be safe to carry out the same mods to the other speaker. Until then, keep the unmodified speaker as a reference until you're sure the changes have had a beneficial effect.

Also, try to avoid making several alterations at once; ideally, each change should be evaluated on its own, to gauge the effect produced. In order to make before-and-after evaluation easier, try not to make your changes too permanent at first. That way, you should be able to put things back into their original state to evaluate the change that occurred.

DEALER DECISIONS

A trio of traders tangle and tussle with a teaser

After many years as a vinylophile, I have decided to buy a CD player. But should I replace the amplifier at the same time? My system currently comprises a Thorens *TD145MkII* turntable and Ortofon *VMS20E MkII* cartridge, coupled to a *JVC-JA5II* integrated amplifier and a pair of Wharfedale *Glendale* loudspeakers. The equipment sits upon steel-framed stands with heavy glass tops and multi-stranded oxygen-free copper cable. I have a budget of £250 to £300 for the CD player and £150 for the amp.

G Billinger, Hampshire

Solution #1

As you don't seem dissatisfied with your current set-up, when you visit your local dealer, take your amplifier and loudspeakers with you. This will allow you to compare your existing equipment with new products, while allowing the dealer to evaluate your equipment's condition.

As to recommendations, you could do a lot worse than to listen to Rotel's *RA-930AX* amplifier and *RCD-930AX* CD player. Combine these with your Thorens, a bit of budget stretching and a pair of *QLN 111 Qubic* loudspeakers, and you will have an excellent all-round system. Your new system should hopefully make you just as fond of CDs as you have been of vinyl. Happy listening.

John Carroll, Stirling Audio, Stirling, Scotland

Solution #2

Changing your amplifier to a Rotel *RA930AX-2* will improve the sound. Importantly, this amplifier boasts a good phono stage — something which is not present on many modern amplifiers at the same price. As you are used to vinyl, it is vital that the CD player must not sound harsh or fatiguing. I suggest that the Arcam *Alpha One* player would suit you, if you use a cable such as Arcam's own *Audioquest*, *Monster Interlink 300*, *Interlink 400* or *Ixos 104*. If possible, audition the new items with your present loudspeakers, preferably in your own listening room. It would also be a good idea to have your Thorens turntable and Ortofon stylus checked over. These replacements and updates should give you happy listening for years to come.

Ray Churchose, Unilet Sound & Vision, New Malden, Surrey

Solution #3

Your best bet would be a Denon *DCD-825* CD player, which produces a very detailed sound with an unusual warmth. This allows you to spend slightly more on the amplifier: the Arcam *Alpha 5+* is a great all-rounder and the phono stage will enhance your Thorens *TD145* and vinyl collection. Also, the Denon with a good interconnect cable would sound better than a more costly machine used with the standard lead. We would suggest *Cable Talk Advanced*. Finally, if your speakers are directly on top of glass shelves, then you ought to Blu-Tack them in place or use cones to stop them moving.

Graham Wells, Grange Hi-Fi Ltd, Burton upon Trent, Staffs

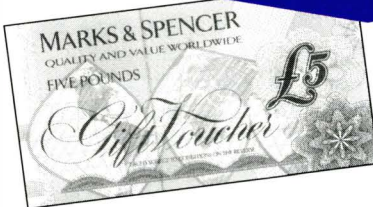
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Rotel's capable RA930AX-2 amplifier.



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heads you win

Alvin Gold tests ten hot headphones, in search of the ultimate brain-tickling, sense-massaging, personal listening experience.

This test takes a thorough look at ten pairs of hi-fi headphones. All are serious quality models costing between £50 and £160, from most of the major names in the market. The key division is between open-back and sealed models. Open-back headphones, which vent the sound from the back of the driver diaphragm to the outside world, will be heard more easily by those in the vicinity, and their openness allows more outside sounds to leak through to the listener. Sealed headphones, on the other hand, provide greater environmental isolation.

Most of the models we have chosen are meant for normal domestic applications. They come with 3.5mm minijacks (as used in most personal stereo equipment) on three metre leads, complete with a standard 6.3mm adaptor, except where indicated.

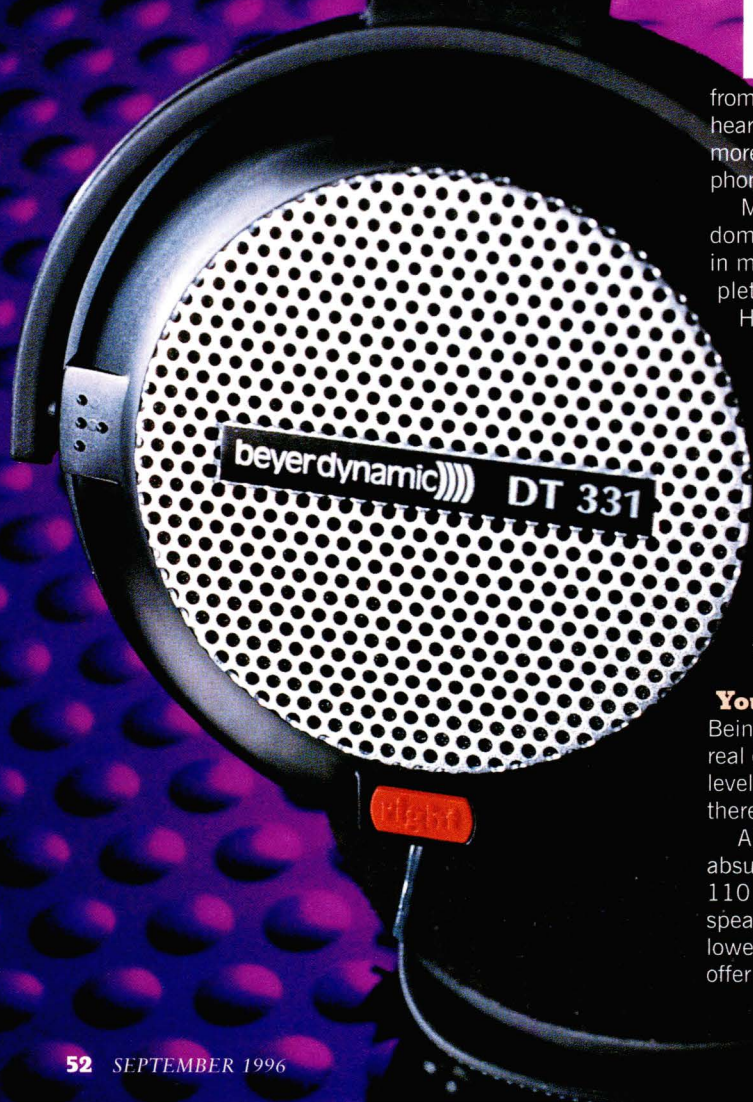
However, just for good measure, we have included a professional monitoring headphone, the famous Beyer *DT100*, which is used in almost every self-respecting broadcast and recording studio across the land. Making no concessions to trivia like personal stereos, the *DT100* is fitted with a 6.3mm plug only.

Common to all of these headphones is the dynamic principle on which they operate. This means some variant of the age-old moving-coil drive unit, often dressed up with exotic magnet and diaphragm materials. There are no isodynamics, electrets nor electrostatics here, but no matter. In 1996, the smart money is making the most of existing technologies, rather than pursuing wanton innovations.

You what? Pardon? Sorry? Say that again?

Being responsible folk here at *Choice Towers*, we will reinforce the real danger of incurring hearing loss by listening at excessive replay levels. Headphones are often used in noisy environments where there's a strong temptation to crank up the volume.

Also, because headphones can sound so clinically clean, even at absurdly high volume levels (most cans will motor along happily at 110 or 120dBA) they do not offer the natural loudness cues of loudspeakers. For this reason, well-sealed headphones, which allow a lower replay level without noise interference from the outside world, offer a significant advantage in loud surroundings.

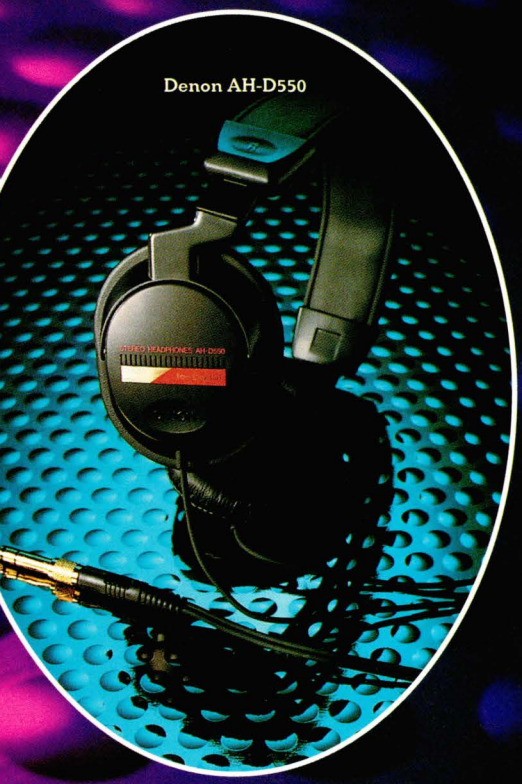




Beyer DT100



Beyer DT331



Denon AH-D550

BEYER DT100 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£151.58

▲ Rugged, modular construction, good isolation, and many variants make this a pro tool par excellence.

▼ The bass is woolly and ill-differentiated, and the treble is soft and lacking detail.

✉ Beyerdynamic (GB) Ltd, Unit 1, Albert Drive, Burgess Hill, Sussex RH15 9TN
(01444) 258258

BEYER DT331 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£81.99

▲ Exceptionally comfortable, articulate, detailed and refined, and attractively priced too.

▼ Tilted frequency response: tonally bright, and deficient in bass level but not extension.

✉ Beyerdynamic (GB) Ltd, Unit 1, Albert Drive, Burgess Hill, Sussex RH15 9TN
(01444) 258258

DENON AH-D550 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★☆☆
PRICE	£79.99

▲ A product of competence and integrity, although little charisma or panache.

▼ Hard-hoop headband and high inward pressure causes brain strain — literally.

✉ Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG
(01753) 888447

The 'ruggedised' *DT100* is less a headphone than an institution, and has been a staple of the studio world for decades. This is the basic model from a range that includes variants with boom microphones and single earcups.

A number of accessories and wiring options are available, and the *DT100* can be obtained in different impedance versions. The standard models are a high 400 Ohms, which ensures consistent sound with a wide range of amplifiers.

This sealed design weighs 350g, and pressure on the ears is moderately high. It is impeccably comfortable, however, thanks to deep, circumaural, vinyl-covered foam earpads, which also provide a solid air seal. The headband sports similar padding, and sound-proofing standards are in a class of their own. You can really shut yourself off from the rest of the world wearing these.

Once up and running, the Beyers do sound a little 'dead' dynamically, and detail, though not masked, is less accessible than with Beyer's *DT331*. While the midband is clear and uncoloured, the treble is muted, and the bass comes across as a pea-soup blur. Imagery is consistently small-scale, and speech sounds curiously phasy.

Alas, among many reasons to buy this model, sound quality isn't one of them.

The *DT331* is a consumer hi-fi model from the feet up, with a strong resemblance to previous Beyer consumer models. It is a large, open-back design, in which the earpieces accommodate speaker diaphragms of respectable size, and feature large, circular, felt-covered foam ear-cushions. The headband is a 'double' type, with a flexible inner band for location, and the result is an exceptionally comfortable headphone, although at 210g it is heavier than some competitors. Impedance is a moderate 40 Ohms, and the cable does not cause 'microphony' noise within the earcups. The 3.5mm plug has a 6.3mm adaptor.

Bright, light and agile, the *DT331* is rather thin and bass-shy, but this is purely a quantitative observation. The treble is of superb quality, with no hint of the resonances and colorations that mar several other contenders in this test. As a result, the sound is clear and incisive almost to a fault, but not appreciably fatiguing.

This is a highly articulate, clean and coherent headphone, which serves ultimately to make recordings sound believable, and sets them in a spacious, if slightly dry, acoustic. Only those who seek the leaden, plodding bass-lines associated with many sealed headphones will find the *DT331* inadequate. Pure class!

Only recently have Denon headphones become available in the UK. The subject of this review comes from the middle of a seven-strong range of closed-back designs.

The *AH-D550* is a compact design, with an impermeable, plastic-covered, oval ear-cushion, which sits firmly on, rather than around, the head. The operative word, by the way, is 'firmly'. The Denon exerts a vice-like grip on the head, which is neither adjustable (the headband is a barely padded plastic moulding) nor necessary for a model with a moderate 200g deadweight.

Generally low in colouration by closed-can standards, the midband is clean and accurate. Its character, however, seems slightly mechanical and plodding, being no match for the similarly sized Grado. The treble is well defined, though a little distant, and the bass, despite some loose texture, has a surprisingly potent and 'close' feel to it.

For the most part the Denon's sound quality meets with my approval, but it does lack the precision and transparency of a good 'hear-through' model at a similar price level. Even if you accepted its somewhat plodding musical qualities without question, the unyielding, thin earpads, and the crude headband design, would inevitably result in a thumbs down.

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HEADPHONES

GRADO SR80 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £109.95

▲ Clear, open and dynamic, if almost pedantically accurate midband.

▼ Crude physical design, lumpy bass, and a rather unsophisticated treble.

✉ Moth Marketing, 10 Dane Lane, Wilstead, Bedford MK35 3HT (01234) 741152

The SR80, an open-back compact, is a pukka professional design. Although not heavy, this Grado model goes all out to make itself unwelcome with undressed, reticulated foam earpads. These stay cool long enough to survive the obligatory 90-second shop demo — just. The yokes spin around on their monopole fixings (a feature that facilitates one-hand monitoring), which means they'll probably need to be unravelled every time they're used. The headband is a hard-padded, simple steel loop, and inward tension is higher than necessary, although this can be adjusted. Finally, the cable isn't microphonic, and at only two meters it feels a little short.

The treble is not very open or extended, and the bass feels clumsy and uneven. But you can forgive all these things for the supremely accurate midband. It is neutral, open and vivid, and instruments have real texture and 'bite'. Tonal colours are natural, even with difficult, early instruments. The level of detail is exemplary, and orchestral dynamics are faithfully rendered.

SENNHEISER HD 565 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £119.95

▲ A true wide-bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable.

▼ None.

✉ Sennheiser UK Ltd, 13 Century Point, Halifax Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SL (01494) 551551

The HD 565 is a superior design from the top of the *Ovation* series. Weighing in at 255g, it is another open-back design, which proves itself more acoustically transparent than many of the other headphones in this test. Construction is modular: the leads, for example, can be easily unplugged and replaced with different types if needed. Physically, the HD 565 has a very rugged design, which should survive tough duty with few scratches.

The HD 565's lead is less microphonic than most, while its earpieces include rare-earth magnets and a laminated Mylar diaphragm, with lightweight aluminium voice coils providing the motive force. Impedance is 150 Ohms.

Sound quality is exceptionally good. The system responds with alacrity to transient stimuli, and the midband is fluid and neutral. And if the treble sometimes seems slightly muted, its basic excellence extends seamlessly out to the frequency extremes.

All this adds up to make the HD 565 easily the best all-round model tested.

SENNHEISER HD 455 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £49.95

▲ Modular and serviceable, good comfort rating, with an inoffensive if nondescript sound.

▼ Can become dislodged; musically unrefined.

✉ Sennheiser UK Ltd, 13 Century Point, Halifax Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SL (01494) 551551

The Sennheiser HD 455 is a sharp dresser, with its defined lines and red foam inserts. It's an open-back design with a double headband, and the outer plastic hoop is all but indestructible. The design is modular, with a simple plug-in lead that can be replaced easily. Weight and inward pressure on the ears are moderate to low, and comfort is high. The ear pads do tend to get dislocated by sharp head movements, so don't choose this model for jogging.

The HD 455 makes an instructive contrast to the similarly priced Vivanco SR 650. Where the Vivanco goes all out for clarity, but is in danger of coming unstuck thanks to a sharp resonance, the Sennheiser is smoother, but less detailed.

Musically unexpressive to the point of sounding wooden, the overall sound balance lacks agility. However, the lack of obvious resonances means the HD 455 wears better than you might expect in extended use, and the low selling price and distinctly superior construction are attractive plus points.

SONY MDR-CD770 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £99.99

▲ Neutrality and comfortable build make the Sony easy to live with, even through extended listening sessions.

▼ Technically correct, but fails to dig to the music's heart.

✉ Sony UK Ltd, The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW (0181) 784 1144

This is a large, fully-sealed model, so the attenuation of sounds from the outside world is less than with, say, the Beyer DT100. In part, this is due to a less effective air seal around the ears, but the large, impermeable, vinyl-covered foam earpads are otherwise well designed. Comfort is enhanced by the inner spring-locating band, which automatically adjusts itself to the head size and shape. The cable and headphone structures are prone to handling noise, which excites a mild but identifiable resonance. The single-sided yoke fitting means this fixing is at a mechanical disadvantage.

Tonally, the Sony is totally neutral and accurate, but musical expression is handled in a coarse fashion, and dynamically it sounds a bit muted. A number of recordings from CD sounded overtly digital, with grainy treble, a lack of expression and deficient stereo layering conspiring to produce a rather flat result. Fine detail is not the Sony's strong point either. In many ways this model sounds similar to the Sennheiser HD565, with a couple of extra layers of blanket between the headphones and the ears.

Grado SR80



Sennheiser HD 455



Sennheiser HD 565



Sony MDR-CD770



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Vivanco SR 650

Vivanco SR 750

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TECHNICS RP-HT700 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £69.95

▲ Well finished — and that's it, really.

▼ Crassly designed structure; won't lay flat against sides of head; grubby sound.

✉ Panasonic (UK) Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4PF
 ☎ (01344) 862444

VIVANCO SR 650 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £49.99

▲ One of the most comfortable headphones in the test. Other strengths include excellent detail resolution.

▼ Aggressive, thanks to treble driver resonance.

✉ Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS
 ☎ (01442) 231616

VIVANCO SR 750 — OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £59.99

▲ Cossetting physical design, attractive sound and even more attractive pricing make this an obvious Best Buy.

▼ Not as sharp as some other models in the test.

✉ Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS
 ☎ (01442) 231616

The Technics *RP-HT700* is a sealed headphone, sporting a large-diameter drive unit fitted with light, rare-earth magnets, and weighing 255g. The self-adjusting inner headband and the high standard of fit and finish help make the *RP-HT700* look very plausible — but this is one case where appearances serve only to deceive.

When it comes to comfort, the Technics is a mess. The angles of the ear cushions are all wrong, and the lower lip of the casing on each side digs relentlessly into the side of the head. This is a crass piece of design, which could be cured with minor changes to the plastic moulded fork that carries the earpieces, or to the capsule back moulding. The cable is not microphonic, but the structure of the earpiece certainly is. And it is audible as a mild highlighting, or colouration, in the upper midband and lower treble.

Musically, the Technics is not much better. It is on the coarse, aggressive side of neutral, and although not as bright as, say, the Vivanco *SR 650*, it sounds muddled, especially with complex material. String tone is rough, and the sandpapery quality of the treble is apparent with voices as well as music.

The *SR 650*, a 175g lightweight, is described as a 'half-open' design. The drive capsule is sealed behind the diaphragm, but the pressure chamber formed between the ear and drive unit in a true sealed system is relieved by permeable ear cushions.

The *SR 650* is extremely comfortable, thanks in part to a twin-headband arrangement with a pliable inner hoop. It is joined near the headphone capsules via elasticised sections. Nominally circumaural, the oval ear cushion is too tight in dimensions to leave the ear completely unobstructed, but the soft and felted foam-covered cushion is light enough. The headphone weight is low and the clamping pressure is moderate.

The bass has an even and well-extended feel, and remains tuneful with a strong presence. There's plenty of treble, too, but it is less well endowed, with a sharp, aggressive edge, due to a drive unit resonance. The midband tends to be lost between the two, and although intelligible with speech, the Technics often comes out sharp and edgy. It tends to handle some material unevenly, and quite aggressively. As a result, this is a headphone that can sound uncomfortable in extended listening.

The *SR 750* takes its principal design cues from the *SR 650*. The two models look almost identical. Searching through the spec sheet gives few clues to further differences, although at 188g the *SR 750* is slightly heavier. A more sophisticated magnet structure is claimed, but both models use rare-earth neodymium magnets.

Although just £10 separates the *SR 650* and '750, the difference in sound is quite remarkable. The tweeter resonance of the *SR 650* has gone, and the headphone immediately appears more open, natural and attractive. Cable microphony is still a minor factor, but the enclosures are acoustically dead, despite being semi-sealed in construction.

The *SR 750* is not quite beyond reproach. Dynamically it is rather lazy, and there is more than a suggestion of overhang associated with the lower midband. As a result, the *SR 750* lacks the open quality of, say, the Grado, even though it is sweeter and has perceptibly quicker timing. However, the '750 does remain clean-sounding, with good detail resolution and a strong sense of acoustic scale and space.

For a headphone costing just £60, the *SR 750* is a steal.

Conclusions

The stereotypical sealed headphone is one that isolates the listener from the outside world, but historically, it is associated with high levels of colouration. Open-back headphones are quintessentially open to external noise, but are less coloured. And as there's no need for an airtight seal around the ear, open-back headphones are also more comfortable.

In practice, of course, all headphones leak sound. One model, however, was head and shoulders above the others in this respect: the *Beyer DT100*. It is the only one in this test that fulfils professional requirements, where high levels of sound spillage in either direction would render it unusable. The *DT100* is also as tough as nails and can be supplied or accessorised to suit any pro requirement, however specialised. In pure audio terms, however, it is unexceptional.

Turning to the hi-fi models, the Technics *RP-HT700* has a major design error that prevents it from fitting properly, and it is musically nondescript. The *Sony MDR-CD770* is better, but uninspiring, and the *Denon AH-D550* is severely lacking in creature comforts.

The *Grado SR80* is an interesting design, but the bass sounds as though it comes from a different planet to the midband, and the treble is raw in character. The *Vivanco SR 650* and *Sennheiser HD 455* do earn Recommended gongs: they're inexpensive and well built. Sound is satisfactory, although the former can sound edgy, and the latter is ultimately unrefined. However, the senior Vivanco, the *SR 750*, leaves the '650 standing in refinement and treble quality, and deserves its Best Buy brownie point. The *Beyer DT331* is better still, though its tonal balance will not be to everyone's taste. Best of all, though, is the *Sennheiser HD565* — our clear winner and a superb all-rounder.

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Rogers is one of the oldest names in British hi-fi. For almost 50 years this company has been producing classic speakers such as the ever-popular BBC-designed *LS3/5a* mini monitor, but lately, its range has expanded to include specialised subwoofers, budget speakers and even AV packages. Today, reprising '50s and '60s valve amplifiers like the *Cadet*, the Rogers range includes two superb valve integrated amplifiers, which combine excellent architectural style with first-rate sound.

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- b) LS3/5a
- c) LS22c
- d) Light Programme

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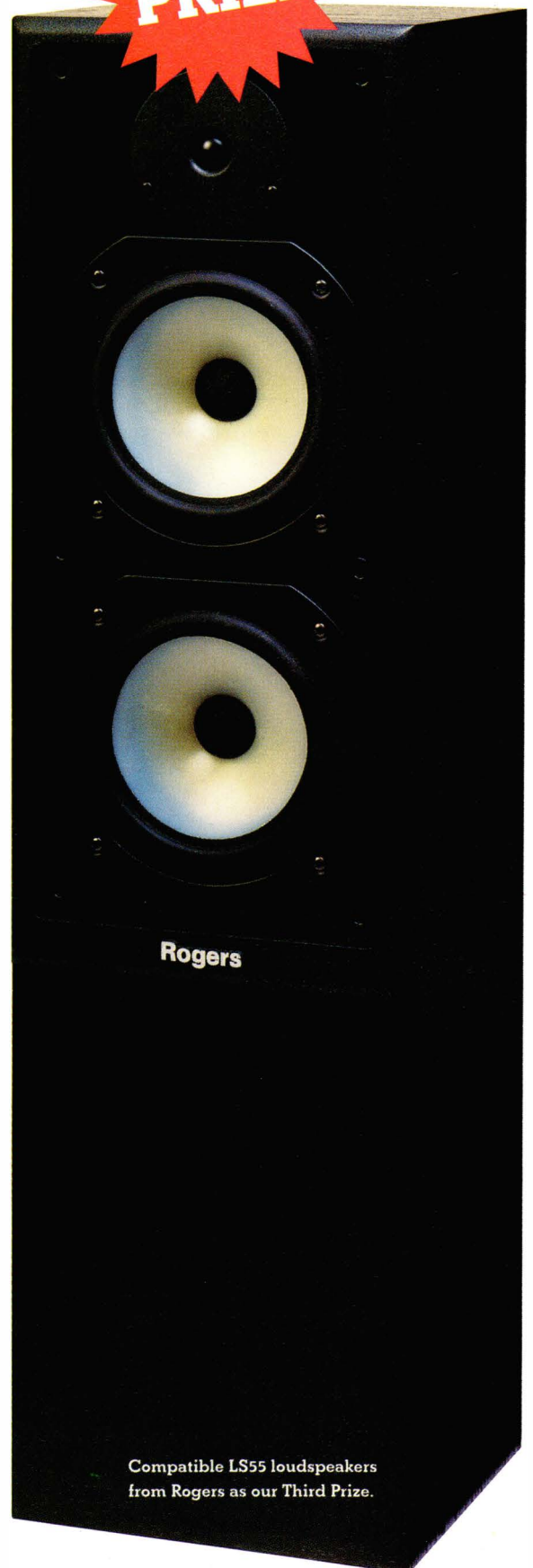
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- We regret that this competition is open to UK residents only.
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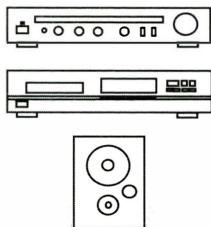
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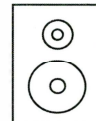
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Power rangers

Whether you seek raw, pulsing power for Megadeth CDs, or if you prefer something more sensitive for your "Natural Bird Sounds" album, **Malcolm Steward** has just the amplifier!

If you're shopping for an inexpensive amplifier, either for a starter system or to run a pair of speakers in a second room, the choice of models can be bewildering. There's a host of Far Eastern mainstream designs competing with UK-manufactured budget audiophile specials, and a smattering of big-name Japanese amplifiers that have been designed, specified or breathed upon by UK design teams determined to extract super-duper performances.

With such varied provenances, even this eight-strong group demonstrates a considerable divergence in design approaches. If your main concerns are features and facilities, then your choice is simple: probably any amplifier from one of the major Japanese builders will fit the bill. You'll easily find one that will be reliable, well built, and do most things bar make your toast at breakfast time. If, however, you're a dedicated music lover with sound quality as your prime concern, you need to take a little more care in choosing the heart of your system. And to complicate matters, you can't plump blindly for a minimalist offering from the UK or Europe,

expecting its performance to trounce Oriental competition. The prejudiced view of Far Eastern amplifiers being 'all show and no go' doesn't hold true any longer. Since Pioneer launched its A-400, there have been several merit-worthy amps — some still trying to disguise their audiophile potential with a mug's eyeful of features — that have followed in its wake.

This test doesn't actually contain any true Brits, although the NAD and Rotel models almost qualify if you stretch the rules: they're designed here but are built overseas. harman-kardon is an American outfit, while the Minium and Grundig offerings come from companies based in Europe. The Denon, JVC and Sony are all Japanese in origin, but who knows how much influence the UK subsidiary companies and market forces have exerted on the designs?

To see what these amplifiers had to offer, I assembled a panel of experienced listeners who auditioned all the models under strictly blind conditions — the amplifiers weren't even in the same room as the loudspeakers. To ensure an absolutely level playing field, I normalised the output of each amp using test tones and measuring equipment.

Small differences in volume can have a marked effect on perceived sound quality, so the level was set carefully in order not to drive the least powerful amp into clipping. Each listener was given a score sheet to record their reactions to every amp on test, then I rounded off proceedings with extended 'sighted' listening, and have appended any relevant comments to those supplied by the panel.

THE CAST LIST

Denon PMA-725R	£350
Grundig Fine Arts V-11	£160
harman-kardon HK1200	£300
JVC AX-V4	£200
Minium Amp	£350
NAD 314	£260
Rotel RA-920AX	£120
Sony TA-F448E	£250

THE LISTENING TEST

What hi-fi did we use for the test?

Our test system featured a Naim Audio CDS CD player, to feed each contender with plenty of musically coherent information. No doubt most people buying one of these amps would opt for a less costly front end, but we wanted to be certain that the source wasn't going to compromise the amps' potential in any way.

Speakers varied, but we listened predominantly through Mordaunt-Short's MS25i, a popular mid-price floor-stander that places no undue demands on partnering powerhouses. I also threw in a couple of 'difficult' loudspeakers during my extended tests to see how the amps coped under duress.

Chord Company interconnects hooked up the CD player and amplifier, while speaker cables were Cable Talk Talk 3 Bi-Wire. The amplifier under test and the CD player were sitting comfortably on individual Mana Acoustics support tables, and the MS25is were treated to a double helping of Mana speaker platforms.

The platters that mattered

Gregson & Collister

Love is a Strange Hotel

Los Lobos

KiKo

Iona Brown & The Norwegian

Chamber Orchestra

Grieg's "Cow Call"

Byther Smith

I'm A Mad Man

Des'ree

I Ain't Movin'

Joe Ely

Love and Danger

Thanks to our listening panel: Gary Mardell (Mordaunt-Short), Alan O'Rourke (Ruark Acoustics), Kevin Edwards (Cable Talk) and Alan Sircom (Hi-Fi Choice)



NAD 314 - page 75.



Rotel RA920AX - page 77.



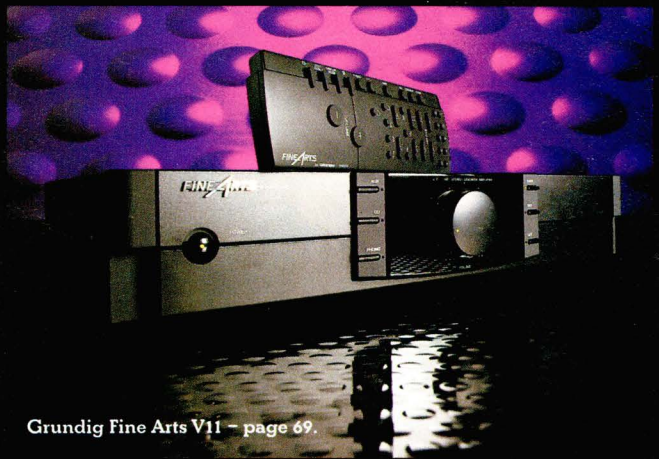
harman-kardon HK1200 - page 67.



Sony TA-F448E - page 79.



Minium Amp - page 73.



Grundig Fine Arts V11 - page 69.



JVC AX-V4 - page 71.



Denon PMA-725R - page 65.





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Denon PMA-725R

The 'R' in PMA-725R denotes that this amplifier from Denon includes a remote control in its generous line-up of features. This is no minimalist design: it provides a full quota of connections and facilities, which ought to satisfy the demands of most users and systems. There are inputs for CD, tuner, aux and two tape loops, along with a phono stage that's switchable between moving coil and moving magnet sensitivities. There are two sets of loudspeaker outputs, both using binding posts that will accept 4mm banana plugs.

On the ergonomic front, assuming you're using the front panel to drive it and not the remote handset, the Denon is par for the course. A large rotary volume control dominates the fascia, with small knobs for balance, bass and treble adjustment, next to a record-out selector. The headphone jack sits alongside push buttons for speaker selection and the loudness function, while on the right there's a bank of push buttons for input selection. Below these is a Source Direct control, which takes the balance and tone controls out of the signal path. This is useful, as I found the tone controls rather heavy-handed in effect.

Sound quality

Listening to CD on the Denon showed that the amplifier's sound was coloured but not unpleasantly so: the presentation had a likeable warmth and substance that put it on the safe side of neutral. This wasn't the sort of amp that was going to alienate listeners through being harsh or aggressive. However, an apparent unwillingness to take chances



did inhibit its ability to communicate. The listening panel found it robbed music of its soul and vigour, despite its generally powerful, driving demeanour. One observer commented that it played the tracks but not the music.

The amplifier delivered a decent amount of weight in the lower octaves, which was appreciated with simple acoustic music, because it added solidity to the performance. However, when the tempo went up a notch, or when the mix became busy or the arrangement complex, the Denon started to struggle. Detail and subtlety were the first casualties, with dynamic contrast also falling by the wayside. Playing Grieg's *Cow Call*, for instance, one comedian likened the amp to Pat from *Eastenders* — big and blowsy. Orchestral music sounded dark and overblown, with little variation shown in the musical or presentational dynamics. The same happened when Los Lobos or Byther Smith got stuck into a serious groove. The arrangements became murky, so that it wasn't easy to follow individual instruments or the lines they were playing. One listener described this as 'dynamic saturation': once the level went up it stayed there, with everything sounding loud. As he said, it was as

although the amp became overwhelmed by the excitement in the music.

Conclusion

All the listeners thought the Denon had several likeable qualities, but the general feeling was that the negative aspects of its performance pulled it down below the level they thought acceptable at this price. While they admired its bold delivery and powerful bass, they didn't feel these compensated for its lack of grip on musical lines, inadequate presentation of dynamic shading and failure to communicate emotional aspects of performances. My extended listening left me in agreement with the panel: the PMA-725R tries hard but doesn't make the grade.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £350

▲ Safe, secure balance. Won't strip your wallpaper.

▼ Soulless and lacking musical dynamics. Goes through the motions.

✉ Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire SL9 9UG (01753) 888447

THE LAB REPORT

This beefy amplifier might lack the dynamic power of NAD's 314 but it boasts a far higher 97W/155W 8/4 Ohm continuous delivery. This, together with its substantial 22A current reserve (equivalent to bursts of 488W into loads as low as 1 Ohm), ensures that the PMA-725R is the most speaker-tolerant amplifier in this test.

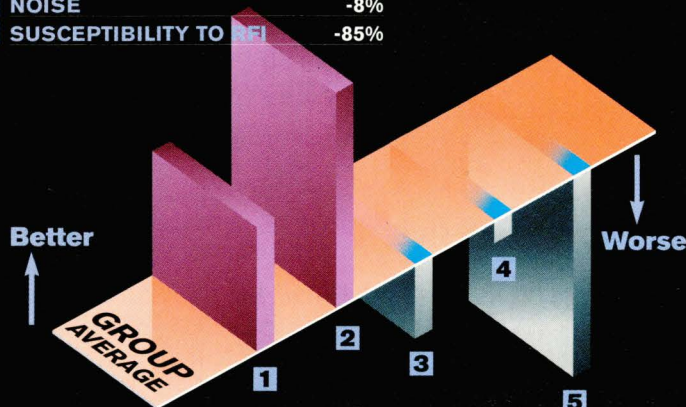
Of course, oodles of power does not necessarily imply oodles of sophistication. Distortion, for example, is very low at midrange frequencies (typically 0.0016 per cent) but is over ten times higher through the treble — a grating discontinuity that explains Denon's deficit on the distortion bar graph. The amp also benefits from a wide S/N ratio at medium power levels (up to 102dB, A-wtd), but this, in turn, may make the subjective effects of both the distortion and RF susceptibility that much more audible.

Otherwise, the PMA-725R is a very generous-looking package, which has clearly been designed to face the most demanding of 'real world' situations with a rugged determination. A little less grunt and a little more grace might still have been preferable, however.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	53%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	92%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-31%
4	NOISE	-8%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RF	-85%



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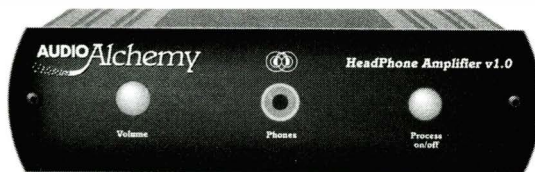
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Grundig Fine Arts V11

The V11 has very interesting styling. It's the Eurocurvaceous facia, the miniaturised Meridian-style push buttons, the use of plastics and the centrally mounted volume control that do it. Secondary controls, including the defeatable tone controls and a headphone jack, are concealed by a flip-down panel running along the bottom edge of the facia. The look is —



without wishing to appear non-PC — almost feminine, with a softness that makes a refreshing change from the agricultural, hard-edged angularity of most hi-fi. A distinctive system remote-control handset rounds off the pleasant and distinctive-looking package.

It was also refreshing to note that this amplifier, which is built in Portugal, uses 4mm binding-post speaker connections. Others in the test have shied away from them and the alternatives they've employed are nowhere near as convenient, nor do they give the impression of providing a secure connection for the cables. Interestingly, the Grundig just happens to be the only amp that also has mains outlets on its rear panel, whose female connectors will accept a 4mm banana plug.

Apart from the single set of loudspeaker connections, the V11 provides three line-level inputs, two tape loops and a moving-magnet phono stage. It also has connections for a remote control bus when used with other components from the same series. In keeping with its look-good ethos, you can order a cover to hide all the rear panel connections, if you're planning to position the system so that its rump is visible.

Sound quality

The panel and I felt that this would have been a better amplifier had its sense of adventure extended beyond its aesthetics into the music. As one listener remarked, it would be an ideal choice for a dentist's waiting room, because it would calm even the most nervous patients. The laid-back way it handled the vibrant rhythms and sheer dynamism of Los Lobos, made the same listener describe the amplifier as smooth and detailed but in dire need of a jump-start. Outwardly the V11's character was eminently pleasant, but once you delved into the music, you found that it simply didn't have a grip on timing or the song's dynamics. The temporal relaxation and dynamic softness made me want to rechristen Byther Smith's *I'm a Mad Man*; it sounded as though it should have been *I'm a Slightly Peeved Man*. As another panellist observed: "It sounds like the band is on the hundredth re-take."

The amplifier's lack of eagerness was matched by the panel when it came to orchestral music. After a tonally acceptable, but dynamically challenged, account of Grieg's *Cow Call*, the panel suggested that the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra had

nipped off for a quick cuppa and left an amateur band on stage to play during its absence. One listener noted that low strings lacked detail and showed suspect intonation, while another suggested that a general mushiness — the diminution of inter transient silences — contributed to the greyness and lack of involvement we perceived.

Conclusion

This was the first Grundig amplifier I've encountered, and despite its poor showing in the formal test I suspect that it could be tweaked to get closer to the mark. It does nothing horribly wrong but it definitely lacks spirit and animation, which I'm convinced is due to problems in the time domain. As it stands now, though, it's not in the running.

VERDICT

SOUND ★☆☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £160

▲ Inoffensive balance with a very high help-you-to-unwind factor.

▼ Timing is poor and presentation is boring.

✉ Grundig International Ltd, Mill Rd, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 1PR

☎ (01788) 577155

THE LAB REPORT

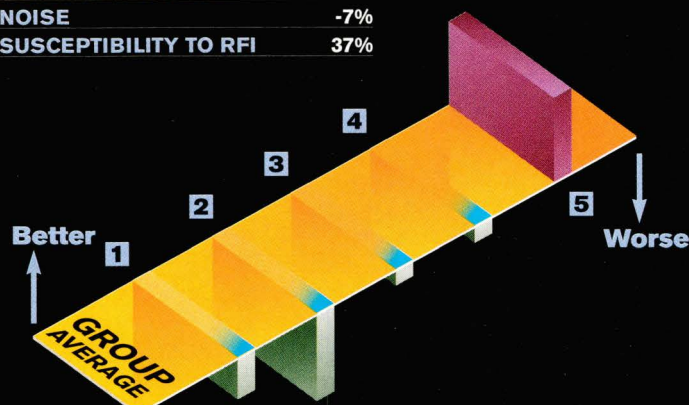
Possibly as a result of under-biasing at low signal levels, the pattern of distortion emerging from the V11 is significantly higher at low power/high frequency than when the amplifier is being driven harder. THD reaches 0.22 per cent at just 1W but falls to 0.07 per cent at 30W or so. In similar fashion, intermodulation distortion is dominated by a spray of odd-order components (typ. -65dB) at low power. Neither property is conducive to a sympathetic hearing. I might add, while the comparatively wide signal-to-noise ratio (85.5dB re. 1W/8 Ohm) only serves to expose this further.

Meanwhile, the amplifier's 55W/78W 8/4 Ohm power delivery is sufficient for undemanding loudspeakers, but its meagre 4.5A reserves of current suggest that low-impedance or low-sensitivity speakers are best avoided. Stereo separation and channel balance are okay, but the volume control has a 'dead spot' around 12 o'clock. The frequency response is also tailored with an upper bass/lower midband sag amounting to -0.8dB between 80Hz to 800Hz, while the upper mid and treble is emphasised by +0.4dB, further encouraging a lean but unexciting sound.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

- 1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT -17%
- 2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE -37%
- 3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION -6%
- 4 NOISE -7%
- 5 SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI 37%



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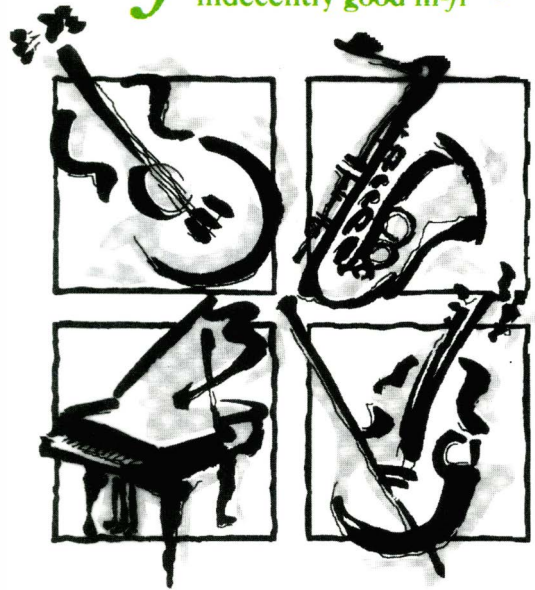


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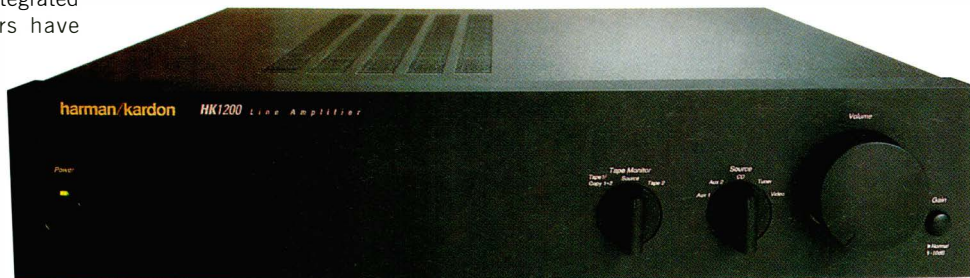
Harman-Kardon HK1200

Most of Harman-Kardon's integrated amplifiers in recent years have been outwardly mainstream designs, with tone controls, loudness buttons and all the paraphernalia expected in this market sector. But the company has always been keen to stress that its approach to circuit design has aimed to address the requirements of serious listeners. The trouble I've found with this — and I'm sure buyers suffer similarly — is that it's difficult to consider an amplifier as a serious audiophile contender when it's strewn with buttons. And make no mistake, some of HK's amps — the first *PM625*, for example — have been genuine, blow-your-socks-off contenders.

Perhaps with this state of affairs in mind, the *HK1200* now extends those notions of simplicity and purity from the circuit board to the external design. This is a straightforward, no-frills amplifier, both inwardly and outwardly. The knob count here is about as low as it goes: a volume control, selectors for input and tape monitoring, a gain reduction switch and an on/off button. With only line-level inputs for five sources plus two tape decks — there's no provision for your record player — and a single set of loudspeaker terminals, the *HK1200* stands resolutely in minimalist territory. Judged on its appearance, the HK looked promising.

Sound quality

Without the benefit of seeing this amplifier, the panel had to rely solely on what it heard to form an opinion. Without knowing that it was also one of the more expensive models in the group, they rated it as below average.



Listening to voice and guitar, one of the two guitar-playing panellists noted that the instrument sounded as if it needed a new set of strings. This tied in with the rest of the group's observations that the dynamics of the performance seemed muted. Both Collister's singing and Gregson's playing sounded half-hearted.

With the busier *Los Lobos* recording, the universal judgement was that the *HK1200* was becoming confused. Although its fundamental timing was okay, and it delivered a sturdy account of the acoustic bass line, the amplifier didn't engender much involvement in this fast-paced, foot-tapping track.

The classical selection produced a mix of pro and anti reactions. On the plus side, the HK's weighty bass was appreciated, but once discussion moved up the frequency band, the criticisms began. Soundstaging wasn't considered a major success, with listeners complaining about a presentation that was all left and right with little happening in the middle. Instrumental timbre wasn't well conveyed and, again, everyone felt the HK lost the plot progressively as the music became more intricate.

The Byther Smith album, which regularly proves the undoing of a component, didn't

— as I'd expected — bring out the best in this amp. Two listeners rated its performance as annoying and contradictory: "It screeches yet sounds flat, producing a sound that's big but doesn't have any real bite," said one. Subsequent listening helped me to figure precisely what he meant: the presentation in general had impact but the individual elements didn't. Smith's guitar didn't cut through properly and the hard-hitting drum kit lacked the snap that usually sets you back in your seat.

Conclusion

The *HK1200* tried hard but didn't impress the panel. It wouldn't be too bad if it cost around £150, they said. Sadly it's far more expensive, which makes it uncompetitive.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £300

▲ Big, bold presentation with reasonable bass weight.

▼ Sounds confused with energetic and large scale music.

✉ Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfield, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK12 6HR

☎ (01908) 317707

THE LAB REPORT

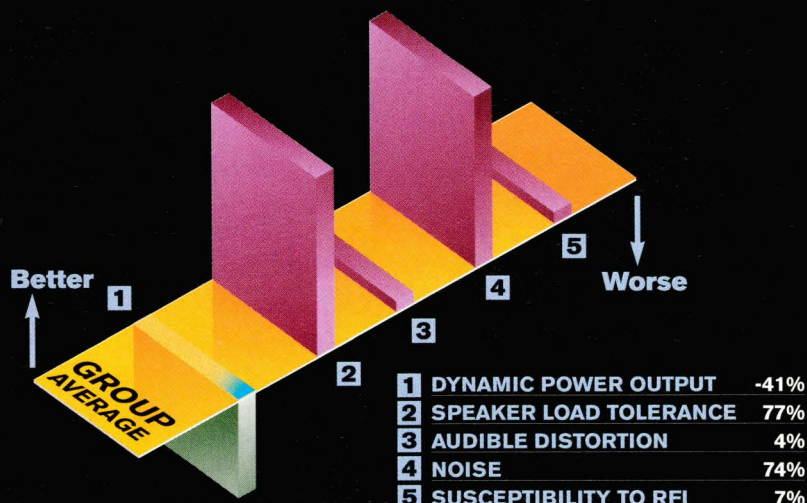
Despite being rated at just 25W, HK's *HK1200* actually delivers some 45W into 8 Ohm, which puts it very close indeed to the 'real life' specification of the costlier 52W *HK1400* reviewed in issue 129. The *HK1200* is equipped with full electronic protection yet still delivers sufficient current (13.2A at 1 per cent THD), to maintain a steady performance into tricky speakers.

Other similarities include an optional +10dB gain setting, providing a 3X boost to lower-level line inputs at the expense of distortion and compromised input overload margins. For most situations, the *HK1200* should be left in the '-10dB' position (no extra gain), even though there's a slight deterioration in its record-breaking 100dB S/N ratio to an only-slightly-less-amazing 97.7dB (A-wtd, re. 1W/8 Ohm).

Sadly, in this instance, HK's wide-open window seems only to have aggravated the listening panel with a view of distortions that, ordinarily, might well have been smothered. This sample also exhibited an unusually high +97mV DC offset — sufficient to compromise the bass performance of certain loudspeakers.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

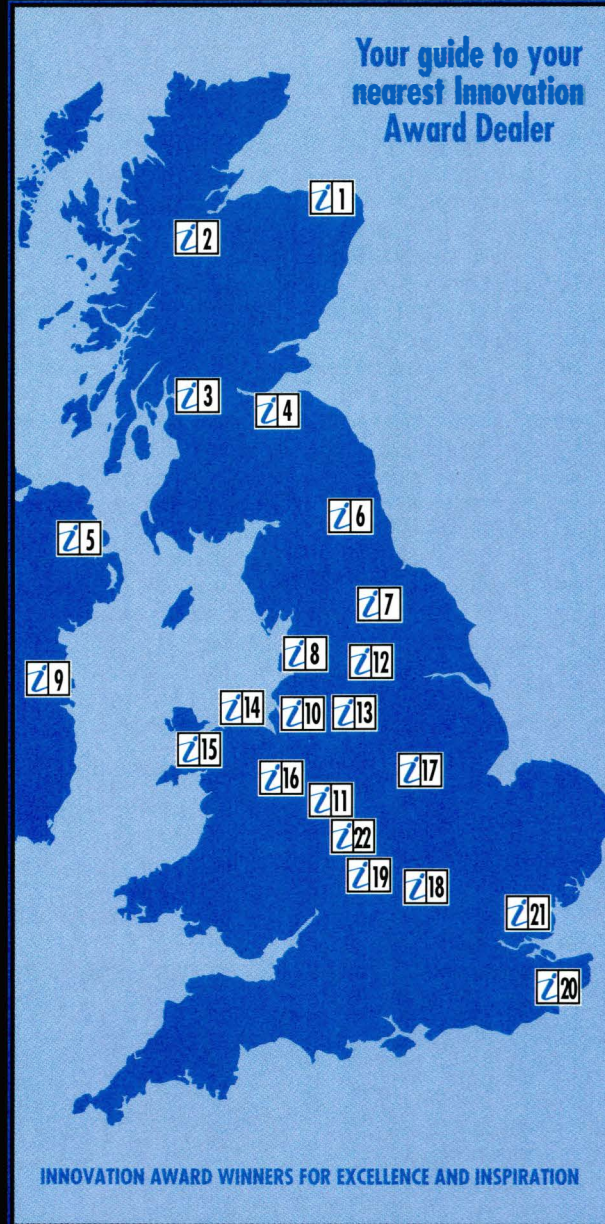




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JVC AX-V4

I felt concerned about the JVC AX-V4 as soon as I unboxed it. Here was an AV amplifier complete with Dolby Pro-Logic and all the usual non-audiophile trimmings expected of the genre. I wondered how on earth this £199, five channel offering, with its spring-clip speaker connections, could possibly compete with more purist contenders. But it turned out that my worries were unfounded, for while the AX-V4 didn't wipe the floor with its competitors, it delivered a credible performance.

In terms of appearance and features, this is a typical AV amplifier. It's a fully featured, remote-controlled audio design, on which has been bolted Dolby Pro-Logic processing and amplification for centre, rear and surround channels. It will drive two sets of main speakers and has inputs for three line-level sources, two tape loops, and moving-magnet phono. Along with the display panel on the fascia, there's a jack for headphones and the mid-market selection of tone, balance and loudness controls. These play second fiddle to a whole handful of volume knobs.

Sound quality

I didn't inform the hardened audiophile panel that this wasn't a straight audio design until after they'd heard all the amps, for fear that it might make them unduly critical or forgiving. As far as they were concerned, amp number eight was just like any other. To its credit, it gave no significant clues to betray its multi-purpose intent.

The AX-V4 performed well on the first track, Gregson and Collister's *How Men Are*, with most of the panel's comments being



along the lines of 'competent, not obviously coloured, pleasant, no real criticisms'. The worst they said was that it lacked a little in terms of dynamics and its presentation wasn't quite as vivid as that of the best they'd heard.

The AX-V4 seemed less comfortable with the fast-moving Los Lobos track and couldn't keep a truly tight grip on the music when things got busy in the mix. Nonetheless, it tried hard and that seemed to encourage the listeners to highlight what it did well rather than its failings. It also seemed to be out of its depth with the classical music.

Although it was praised for performing better than some that had gone before, the panel felt the JVC lacked resolution, and its performance had a sparkle deficit. "Monotonic; not just one-note bass but a one-note performance," said one listener. "It made the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra sound like ELO," he added, showing his age. (The rest of us haven't heard of ELO, but we're sure we wouldn't rate them, anyway.)

The final blast of high-energy blues from Byther Smith also gave the JVC a taxing time. It sounded rhythmically assertive but it didn't generate the required degree of

excitement or listener involvement. The impression was that the amp had the potential to be quite revealing but it never managed to tell the whole story. Its portrayal of Smith's guitar sounded outwardly dynamic and insightful, but as the track progressed, you realised that much of his playing's character and finesse weren't coming across.

Conclusion

The panel seemed to think that there was a good little amplifier in the AX-V4 just trying to get out. When I revealed that they'd been listening to a £200 AV amplifier, they were pleasantly surprised and reckoned it had put up a decent show. 'Nuff respect all round.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £200

▲ Highly respectable performance for an AV amplifier.

▼ Shows its limitations with complex music; prefers simple stuff.

✉ JVC UK Ltd., JVC House, JVC Business Park, Priestley Way, London NW2 7BA

☎ (0181) 450 3282

THE LAB REPORT

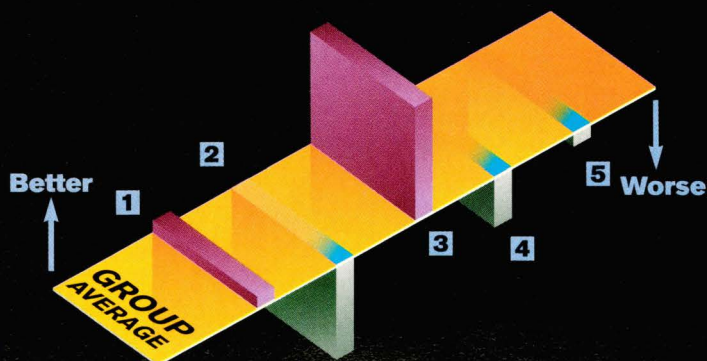
Distortion is very high by modern standards, at some 0.18 per cent across much of its 63W/8 Ohm range, while crossover effects actually increase this figure slightly at lower power. A strong but warm-sounding second harmonic dominates the midrange, while harder-sounding third and fifth harmonics populate treble octaves. This is exacerbated via MM disc, which labours under inadequate +15dB input headroom — beware high-output MM cartridges. Once again, this is another amp whose promising performance into easy-going 8 Ohm loads disguises a collapse into tricky sub-4 Ohm speakers, where its maximum 4.7A bursts of current are inadequate. RF is blocked by ceramic filters (which have little sonic merit), while the main amp suffers a high +79mV DC offset (see Rotel).

Still, unlike its immediate competition in this test, the AX-V4 also houses extra amplification to service a complete Dolby Pro-Logic surround system. To this end, it'll sustain a further 1x65W through the centre channel and 2x18W for the mono surrounds. The amp is phase-inverting, so remember to reverse the black/red speaker leads before conducting A/B listening comparisons of your own.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	5%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-40%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	48%
4	NOISE	-21%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	-4%



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Minium Amp

Small but beautifully formed in a minimalist fashion, the Minium brand comes from French *maître de CD*, Micromega. This range of slim-line, entry-level products includes a matching CD player and tuner, which, with this amplifier, provide a neat, remotely controllable alternative to features-before-performance life-style systems.



Despite its austere but quietly attractive appearance, the amplifier is reasonably well equipped. It has inputs for moving-magnet phono, CD, tuner, DAC, tape and two other line-level sources. There are binding-post connectors for one pair of speakers and a headphone jack, which lives on the rear panel. Clearly not designed to attract the mug's-eyeful category of customer, this amplifier does little to hide its purist origins.

You control this amp through a bank of push buttons and the centrally mounted rotary volume control, which doubles, with the help of the headphone button, as a balance control. A fluorescent display provides status information. It's not the most intuitive arrangement but you soon become acquainted with its operation. The design also shows some thoughtful touches, such as a headphone volume setting that's independent of the loudspeaker volume setting, and a standby mode that keeps the amplifier warmed up and ready for action.

Sound quality

It's worth noting that the instruction manual strongly recommends not using speakers with less than a nominal 4 Ohm impedance. The listening sessions showed that it didn't

clip very gracefully: pushed moderately hard even into the accommodating *MS25i*s its descent into distortion was unannounced, immediate and particularly ugly. When it was running sweetly — which one assumes it would as part of a full Minium system — it was a nice amp that hit the high scores regularly.

When it wasn't sailing close to the edge, it displayed an invigorating willingness to boogie with the rock and blues selections played. Above-average temporal control drove music along smartly and maintained the panel's interest. In particular, the amp made bass lines bouncy and tuneful, and its sense of purpose and drive elevated it comfortably above the 'clockwork' performances witnessed elsewhere. Drums showed a credible sense of vitality, although this was occasionally tainted by a bit of undue splash on hard-hit cymbals. However, the listeners agreed instruments sounded more believable and natural through this amplifier. Vocals, too, had an openness and authenticity that proved appealing.

The Minium's abundant *joie de vivre* paid dividends with classical music. It proved better than most at recreating the ambience and atmosphere of the live Iona Brown recording, and its ability to mark the starts

and stops of notes imbued the orchestra's performance with a fitting enthusiasm. It also kept the sections of the orchestra better separated than most. There was no need to delve through a soupy wall of sound to follow musical lines or catch nuances within them.

Conclusion

While the Minium was clearly one of the best musical performers in this group, it emerged during the hands-on testing that the occasional edginess noted on cymbal crashes, for instance, was a product of its odd behaviour when the going got tough. Although it wasn't going into full-blown clipping, it wasn't happy with transients. Sadly, despite its high scores, this precludes even a cautious Recommendation tag.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £350

▲ Excellent musical portrayal when it's coping properly with the input signal.

▼ Sails on the ragged edge, even with relatively undemanding speakers.

✉ Micromega Digital Audio Ltd, PO Box 13, London E18 1EG
(0181) 502 1416

THE LAB REPORT

In common with Linn's *Majik-1* (issue 129), Micromega seems to be employing integrated power modules from Philips. These are not the most rugged devices on the planet. This probably explains the manual's warnings about the amplifier's incompatibility with sub-4 Ohm loudspeakers and the imminent destruction and invalidation of your guarantee that they can wreak.

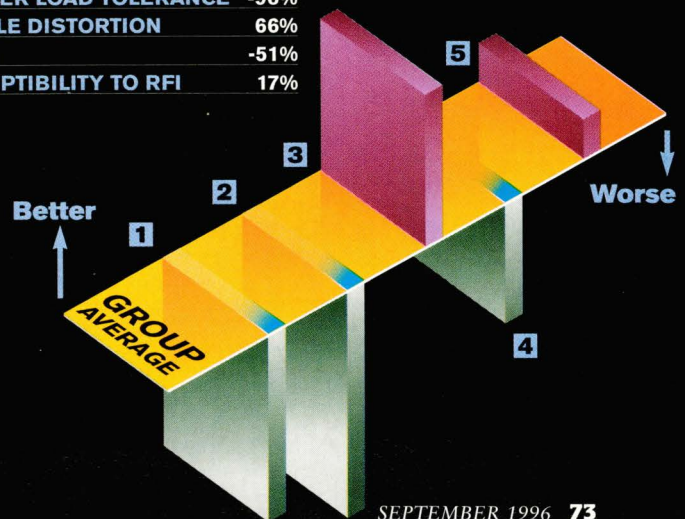
In practice, it only just achieves its 40W-rated specification, while offering a meagre +0.5dB headroom (equivalent to 45W under dynamic conditions) and a paltry 1.5A current burst into 1 Ohm loads before its electronic protection takes hold. Under ideal conditions, the Minium's distortion trend is very favourable, but it must only be used with very sensitive, easy-load loudspeakers if its performance is not to be compromised.

Otherwise, its digital volume control offers precise L/R channel balance, covering the uppermost 38dB of its dynamic range in 0.5dB steps before jumping in 1dB steps to a minimum volume of -66dB. The phono stage has a high-input sensitivity (1.8mV/full output) but limited +15.5dB (re. IHF) headroom, so it's better suited to high-output MC cartridges than ordinary MM's.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT | -79% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | -96% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 66% |
| 4 | NOISE | -51% |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI | 17% |



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Nad 314

Doggedly ploughing the stylistic furrow it established with the original budget audiophile amplifier, the 3020, NAD's 314 comes housed in the battleship-grey metalwork that's become the company's hallmark. I suspect that the no-fuss appearance is also designed to convey a subliminal message, telling buyers that the amplifier's circuit design is equally purposeful and free from unnecessary, no-value-added embellishments.

The feature count here isn't strictly minimalist. There's switching for a second set of loudspeakers and tone controls, which can be bypassed for listeners who don't like to adjust the balance of their music. There are inputs for moving-magnet phono, four line-level sources and two tape decks, plus outputs for headphones and two pairs of loudspeakers. Pre-out and main-in sockets allow the amplifier to be split for different system configurations, such as bi-amping or simply tacking on a bigger power amplifier.

Naturally, the 314 features NAD's proprietary Soft Clipping circuit, which is controlled by a rear-panel-mounted slider switch. This serves to protect speakers from clipping distortion, which usually results from driving a speaker too hard with a small amplifier getting out of its depth. I'm not a great fan of protection devices — they're never completely inaudible — but the NAD's delivery suggests it won't normally require taming. The 314 doesn't sound 'small', in fact it sounds decidedly muscular, and more likely to bottom out your bass drivers mechanically than clip and fry your tweeters.



Sound quality

After auditioning a couple of safe-sounding amps, the listening panel responded eagerly to the 314's willingness to flex its biceps and take a few risks. "Not exactly neutral, but more importantly, it isn't neutered," said one listener. The feeling was that recordings came across like enthusiastic first takes rather than prosaic, end-of-session performances.

Regardless of the type of music, the NAD seemed to focus on those performance aspects that make for listener involvement. Sometimes voices might have shown a tinge of coloration, but they never appeared anything but genuinely expressive. The sound of a band occasionally hardened a little when the playing was aggressive and the arrangement complex, but the music never seemed disjointed, confused or difficult to follow. In fact, all the panellists commented favourably on the NAD's temporal drive, its ability to maintain instrumental separation, and its control in low frequencies.

I'm not trying to suggest that the 314's performance was flawless — playing complex music at high volume levels showed that it could trip over — but it always attempted to offer a very sensibly balanced presentation. Even when its

limitations became evident, its strengths still encouraged our listeners to rate it highly.

Conclusion

Having accepted that no sub-£300 amp is going to be entirely vice-free, you need to decide what trade-offs you're prepared to accept. One panellist's notes best summed up the NAD's balance when he wrote that while the amp imposed a definite character upon music, he'd readily accept this, given its colourful view of recordings. The 314, basically, made listening to music fun. It managed to give a plausible insight into how bands and orchestras put feeling into whatever they were playing. The decision to award it Recommended status was unanimous.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆

VALUE ★★★★★☆

PRICE £260

▲ Sound is enthusiastic and involving. More music than hi-fi.

▼ Coloured tonally with some harshness evident when it's driving hard.

✉ Audio Club, Adastra House, 401-405 Nether Street, London N3 1QG

☎ (0181) 343 3240

THE LAB REPORT

In common with older NAD designs, the 314 will not sustain a high continuous power output before its supply sags under the strain, plummeting the 314 into clipping beyond 53W/8 Ohm or just 59W/4 Ohm. In this respect, the 314 also bears comparison with earlier amplifiers from Aura and Orelle which, while suffering a limited continuous output, succeeded in delivering far higher bursts of power under dynamic conditions.

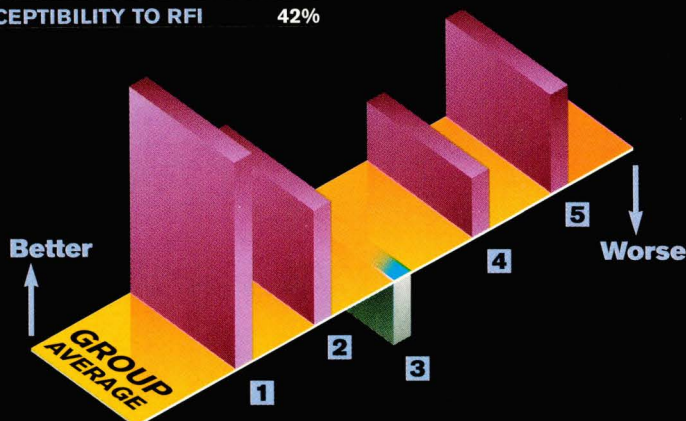
So, although the 314 may only sustain 53W continuously, it's still able to bang-out clean peaks of up to 180W under transient (musical) conditions into the same 8 Ohm speaker load. This represents a boost of some +5.3dB, a figure that compares favourably with the 1-2.5dB achieved by most conventional amplifier designs. Not bad for a budget amp that NAD rates at just 35W.

Yet such an advantage comes with a price, particularly with regards to distortion, which increases nearly 20-fold from 0.001-0.018 per cent across the audioband, almost regardless of power output. As a result, the 314 sounds rugged and powerful but also slightly coloured and lacking in subtlety.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT | 88% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | 49% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION | -27% |
| 4 | NOISE | 26% |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI | 42% |



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Rotel RA-920AX

Rotel has established a fine reputation for budget audiophile components, and the RA-920AX follows the company's traditional approach of using UK design, selected audiophile components in critical parts of the signal path, and employing techniques such as star earthing.



This amplifier isn't as minimalist as some Rotels, but neither is it overburdened with frills and features. Certainly, there's nothing truly superfluous to weigh it down and hamper performance. The RA has tone controls, but these, says the maker, are limited to give 'sensible' response tuning rather than the oompah band extremes found on many mainstream designs. Also sitting on the fascia are a headphone output, balance control and a tape monitor switch, along with the volume control and input selector. The input count includes three line-level connections, moving-magnet phono, and a tape loop. One set of binding posts is provided for loudspeaker connections.

Outwardly this amp seems sufficiently straightforward to appeal to nascent audiophiles, while not being so austere that it will scare off mainstream buyers. But does that mean that its musical performance will sit on the fence...?

Sound quality

...Not entirely, according to our panel. The initial reaction to the RA was warm but *luke-warm*, along the lines of 'good enough but safe'. When we revisited it later (unannounced), the panel's comments upon the specifics of

the performance were consistent with the first audition — they all identified it correctly — but their overall enthusiasm had climbed a notch or three.

What we seemed to have here was an amp that, in one panellist's words, did everything right but in a safe and sometimes unexciting manner. Nonetheless, it was one of the few models here that seemed able to tap into the emotional thrust of the classical music we played. Its tonal balance also brought out the range of instrumental colour present.

The RA fared equally well with the smaller-scale Gregson and Collister disc, giving an accurate and well-balanced portrayal of the voices and guitar accompaniment. Opinions divided a little when we played feisty rock. However, one listener who thought it didn't dig down deep enough into the music's emotional layers still judged it competent and said its performance had the potential for being endearing. There was also some concern about the RA's bass. While it was nicely 'fat', it wasn't always as taut or quick as it could have been. Nonetheless, it was tuneful and generally kept pace with the rest of the proceedings.

The RA certainly managed to sound coherent and reasonably well detailed most

of the time. Although it lost the plot slightly in some complex passages, and it could sound a little veiled compared to a top-flight amp, it soldiered on and maintained a good perspective on whatever music we played.

Conclusion

The conclusion was that the RA-920AX represented a good if somewhat safe bet. It isn't the sort of amplifier that will spark off thunderbolts and lightning every time you play a disc, but that's highly unlikely with any amplifier costing under £120. Okay, it can be a little staid at times, and occasionally it swims out of its depth, but that's true of many amplifiers.

"Go on," said the panel, "Do the right thing and give it a Best Buy." So I did.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆

VALUE ★★★★★★

PRICE £120

▲ Confidently tackles music that frightens many more expensive amplifiers.

▼ Can sound a little too safe with vivid material.

✉ Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfield, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK12 6HR

☎ (01908) 317707

THE LAB REPORT

Pitched at a very generous £120, this RA-920AX is a pared-down version of the classic RA-820AX (issue 80), which evolved into the equally classic RA-930AX (issue 104). While still sharing many of the design features of the current 900-series, it offers a lower 32W/8 Ohm than its forebears (which ran closer to 50W), but has sufficient current to maintain this level of performance with difficult speakers.

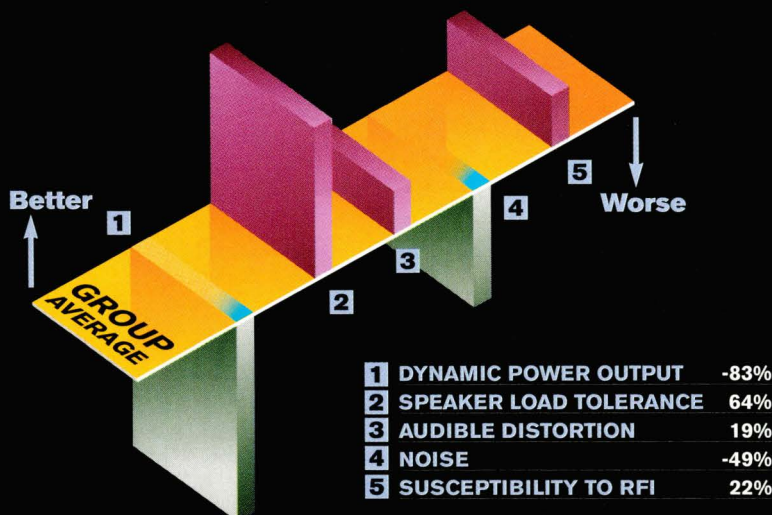
Distortion hovers around 0.025 per cent midband and climbs to 0.13 per cent through the treble (not a good thing), but at least this even-order characteristic remains independent of power output (a good thing). The amp's S/N ratio has also deteriorated slightly from typ. 86dB (re. 1W/8 Ohm) to 81dB. Then again, it is also slightly more sensitive, requiring 160mV instead of 200mV to achieve a 1W output.

The MM disc stage is largely unchanged and still features a warm-sounding +0.5dB bump at 40Hz. The +90mV DC offset (an old-time Rotel foible) is more than sufficient to bias the cones of some loudspeakers.

Overall, this is solid engineering at the price.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES



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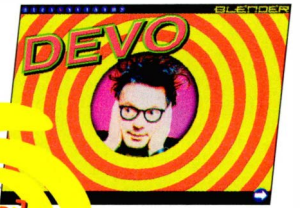
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Sony TA-F448E

This Mos Exclusive Design — honestly, that's what it says on the front panel — from Sony is housed in a typically proportioned mainstream amplifier cabinet, but with a fascia that reeks of pure minimalism. To play with there are only four controls: volume, input selection, tape monitor and speakers on/off. Apart from a power button and a headphone jack, that's all you get. Round at the rear you find sockets for two tape loops, three line-level inputs and a phono stage. Two sets of 4mm binding-post connections are provided and labelled 'Bi Wire Speakers System', suggesting that this amplifier has some serious intent.

That impression is reinforced by the photocopied literature that accompanied our serial-number-free test sample, both of which suggest this amplifier was hot off the production line. Talking of hot, I noticed that after playing the TA-F448E for about five minutes, it was unusually warm to the touch. I wondered whether, if we did have a very early sample here, amplifiers going into the shops would also be quite so hot-running.

The big question, though, was whether the panel would give a warm reception to the performance of the TA, with its MOS-FET power stage, twin-mono construction, symmetrical circuit architecture and revised power supply and wiring.

Sound quality

The short answer is no. One of the more polite observations was that the Sony sounded like a cheap amp with a billion Watts under its bonnet. On the Los Lobos track, for instance, bass drum had limited



leading-edge attack; the bass guitar was wayward, lacking grip; while the horn section showed a distinctly 'quacky' quality. The instrumental timbre was distinctly unlike anything we'd heard from the other amplifiers in this group.

Moving swiftly onto the classical recording, the panel still found little to commend. Every listener remarked upon the tonal coloration evident, and most commented upon the amplifier's lack of delicacy and inability to handle the more complex parts of the arrangement. This brisk, enthusiastically played piece sounded slow and overblown, losing all its temporal and emotional impact in the process.

For all its 'billion Watts' the Sony didn't come across as particularly dynamic. The voice and guitar of Gregson and Collister, which typically sound sharp and focused, were poorly resolved here. Gregson's guitar had no leading-edge attack, and the instrument's sharp treble and sonorous bass failed to project. Two panellists called it boxy.

Its performance on the final track, Byther Smith's *I Got So Much Love*, sealed the TA's fate as far as the panel was concerned. Not

pleased with its portrayal at the outset, they demanded the track was stopped when Byther and the boys began to play with a vengeance. It was clear that the Sony sounded worse when it was put under pressure. The track seemed more confused and coloured as the music hotted up.

Conclusion

The panel found little to like about the Sony. My extended listening didn't uncover anything to temper their decision. The amplifier tested was, quite simply, too heavy-handed and lacking in openness to provide a decent insight into music. I felt it made everything sound as though it was being played by a German oompah band.

VERDICT

SOUND ★☆☆☆☆

VALUE ★☆☆☆☆

PRICE £250

▲ Don't know where to begin.

▼ Where would you like to begin?

✉ Sony UK Ltd., National Operations Centre, Piper's Way, Thatcham, Newbury, Berks RG19 4LZ

☎ (0181) 784 1144

THE LAB REPORT

This hot little number would seem to have various aces tucked up its power supply but an Achilles heel left in its MOSFETs. For a start, the combination of a 63W/102W 8/4 Ohm power output and 13.6A current delivery (limited by protection) endows the TA-F448E with a broad tolerance of different loudspeakers. Distortion is very low too, at typically 0.001-0.006 per cent, while the TA-F448E as a whole demonstrates great immunity from RF interference.

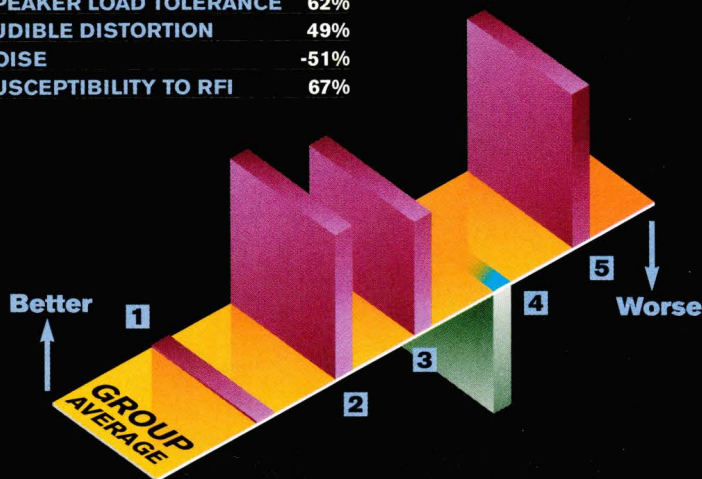
Yet there are a couple of bugs. Firstly, there's a gentle bass roll-off below 50Hz so don't expect much in the trouser-flapping department. Of greater concern, however, is that when this amplifier clips at high (treble) frequencies, it does so with frightening abruptness, hurtling from typically 0.005 per cent to 10 per cent distortion within one-thousandth of a Watt beyond 62.4W (re. 20kHz/8 Ohm).

If this were happening on a dynamic basis with treble-rich music (brassy jazz and the like), then its sound would be severely taxed. At very high levels, meanwhile, few treble units will survive such treatment, so go easy with the volume knob.

Paul Miller

HOW IT COMPARES

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT | 1% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | 62% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 49% |
| 4 | NOISE | -51% |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI | 67% |



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Conclusions

Best Buys & Recommendations



Rotel RA920AX — a great little amp at a bargain price.

If you expect that the performance of all amplifiers in a given price range will be much of a muchness, this test proves you're wrong. If you reckon that spending more money ensures better performance, you're equally incorrect. As you'll have discovered throughout the preceding pages, a cheap amplifier can sometimes run musical rings round one that's far more costly; an audiophile purist design can sound fine until you push it that fraction too hard; and a model from a big-name manufacturer who has produced some well-reviewed designs can fall before it reaches the first fence. In short, more doesn't necessarily equate with better in hi-fi, which is why a personal audition is mandatory when you're buying anything. So, in alphabetical order, here's the quick and dirty guide to this month's amp octet.

The **Denon PMA-725R** provided an up-front delivery and powerful bass that failed to compensate for a lack of grip on musical lines, inadequate presentation of dynamic shading, and inability to communicate the emotional aspects of musical performances. Pleasant but uninspiring sums up this well-equipped, remote-controlled offering.

Grundig's Fine Arts V-11 has interesting styling and offers remote-control operation. Its sound showed potential but the panel deemed it too safe and uninvolved to inspire. Given an injection of snappy timing, though, it could move from the dentist's waiting room into a music lover's lounge.

The **harman-kardon HK1200**, in spite of its minimalist design and audiophile intent, turned in a mixed performance which also failed to excite the panel. Prone to sounding confused and lacking true dynamic impact, the panel thought it below par for an amp

they assumed to be at the lower end of the group's price range. With a price that places it nearer the top, it fails to compete.

The test's only AV amplifier, the **JVC AX-V4**, fared rather better. Although it wasn't a front runner in the performance stakes, it nonetheless avoided the criticisms that had been unleashed on others here. It lacked resolution and sparkle, but the panel opined that within its case there was a good little amplifier trying to get out.

Probably the most musically rewarding amplifier in the group, yet sadly, as far as we were concerned, fatally flawed, the **Minium Amp** provided a talking point during the after-test tea and scones. Why, we wondered, would someone design an amp that really encourages you to turn up the wick, only to do something to it that prevents it playing loudly? Most listeners will tolerate a little mild clipping when the music is going for it, but we couldn't imagine anyone ignoring the *Amp's* behaviour when it reached its limit.

One minute it sounds fine, then bang!, it sounds disastrous. If its maker was to amend whichever circuits can't handle low impedances and transients, then it might have a winner on its hands. As it stands, though, and without having heard the *Amp* in the system designed around it, this one is for folks with accommodating speakers and no desire to rattle the neighbours.

The first swing-tag of the test went to the **NAD 314**. Admired by the panellists for its lively temporal drive, ability to maintain instrumental separation, and its control and grip in the low frequencies, the *314* received a unanimous Recommended rating. It wasn't perfect by any means — there was some coloration evident and it struggled occasionally with complex music — but its failings were significantly outweighed by its sheer verve and musical enthusiasm. Unlike some of its competitors, the *314* made performances sound tired or lacking in emotion.

The panel wasn't terribly impressed with **Sony's TA-F448E**, which sounded big and brutal. Perhaps, one listener ventured, it might appeal to rock music fans; that may be so... but only for rock fans who want that head-stuck-in-the-bass-bin presentation. Even Motorhead needs a dash of delicacy.

This test's sole Best Buy tag, then, went to the **Rotel RA920AX**. There was little argument, because its performance was as well liked as that of the NAD, yet it costs about half as much. Like the *314*, it wasn't perfect, but it was extremely well-balanced. What the Rotel was doing right tended to take precedence over its minor failings. Most importantly, there was nothing overt in its performance to distract listeners from the music being reproduced. ▲

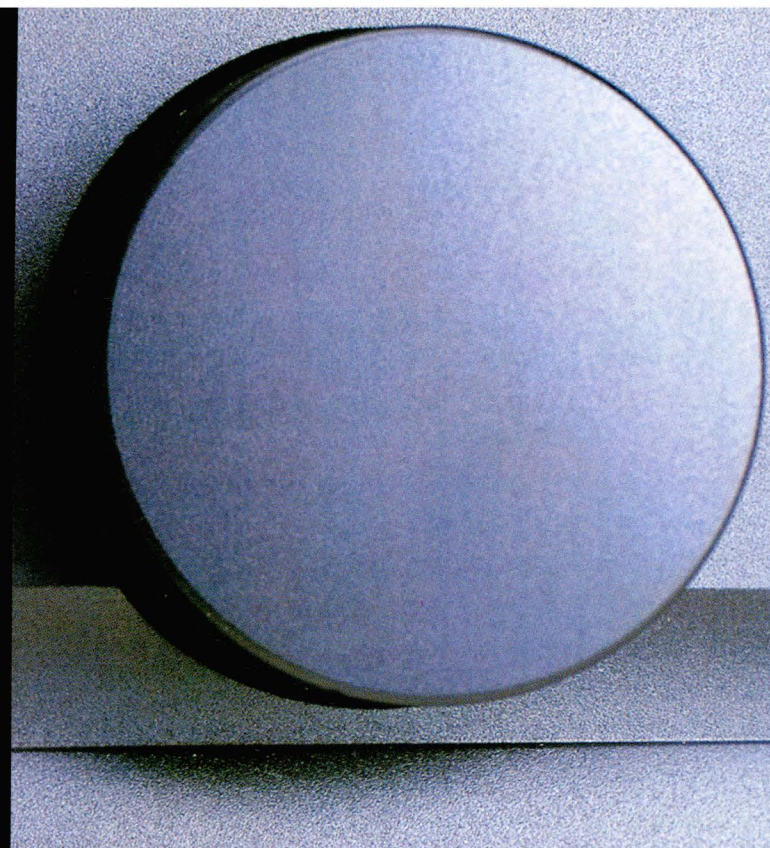


ANT B

PRESET

FM 102.60MHz B3

TUNE IN



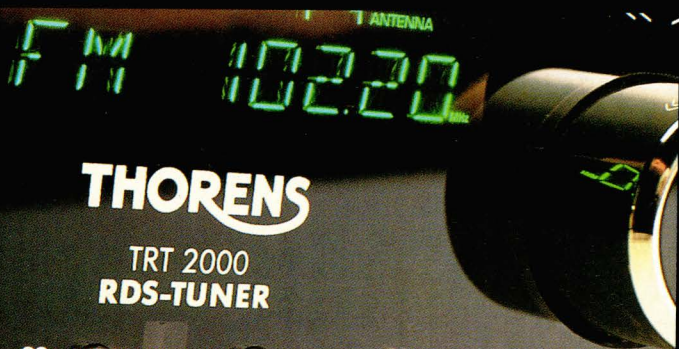
FM 100.00 MHz CH 1

CHILL OUT

▼ TUNE ▲ MANUAL/AUTO MONO/STEREO

Malcolm Steward flexes his ears and aerial, while Paul Miller flexes his laboratory test bench, to bring you the low-down on five premium tuners.

Auto/Man RF Mode FM Mode



Band IF Band Display Mode

HI-FI

If you're reading this review, then you're probably quite serious about your radio listening. If you were just looking for another box to fill a gap in your equipment rack, you'd have nipped out to buy a cheap, end-of-line sell-off, or a bargain wonder like the Denon TU-260L, thus securing a respectable level of performance but leaving you with enough change from £150 to buy some CDs as well.

However, there's more to getting serious about radio than simply investing in a more expensive tuner. That TU-260L will comfortably outperform more costly tuners if it's hooked up to a top-notch antenna. It's the old garbage-in-garbage-out syndrome: your tuner's sound quality and performance are wholly dependent upon the incoming signal. The unwanted noise, interference and distortion coming from a poor array — or down-lead — will drag the performance of a high-end tuner down to budget level.

So, before you consider any tuner, especially a model in a high price bracket, dive into the Yellow Pages, find an aerial specialist, and ask that he erects something appropriate for your needs upon your roof. If you're not sure of the best man for the job, contact the Confederation of Aerial Installers (☎ 0181-902 8998) and ask for a member in your area — local knowledge is a useful tool in the installer's armoury. If you're especially keen, hike to Luton and talk to the King of the Twigs, Mr Ron Smith (☎ 01582 36561), whose Galaxie models outperform anything else I've heard. Messrs Kennedy, Messenger and Julian Vereker (Naim Audio), as well as myself, are just some citizens of Highendville who endorse the Galaxie 17s perched on our chimneys.

Equipped with a Big Twig, you're in a position to meaningfully judge the quality of premium tuners such as the five appraised here. My resident Naim NATO2 tuner served

as the reference to which the models under test were compared. It's not digital, it doesn't provide remote control, and it doesn't have RDS, but it does sound better and reveal more about the incoming signal than any other tuner I've ever owned or tested — except for its big brother, the NATO1.

The acid test for any tuner, I'd aver, is to exploit the transmission quality from BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4. The best music and drama on these stations can rival any other source. I also looked for the tuner's ability to ameliorate compressed or over-modulated broadcasts, while not disguising their problems. Ham-o-raks take note: I didn't bother to go 'DXing', because I think weak, distant stations are best left to specialist communications receivers, not hi-fi tuners. Similarly, I don't judge AM performance to be crucial, since it's not a high fidelity medium. Although if a tuner makes AM sound respectable, it's a definite bonus!

HARMAN-KARDON - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £199.99

▲ Lively, detailed sound, with even tonal balance and decent 'boogie factor'.

▼ Auto-tuning system's enthusiasm caused it to miss some stations at the test site.

✉ Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfield, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK12 6HR (01908) 317707

INCLUDES BEST BUY

Harman-Kardon TU950

The TU950 is a digital synthesiser design that, despite its low cost, doesn't leave you short on features. It offers RDS facilities along with 30 presets on which to store stations from the FM, MW and LW bandwidths. The tuner's styling is mainstream, but it does have a dimmable display, which is more restful on the eyes than the usual ocular overload designs.

As befits a mainstream model it provides both manual and auto-tuning modes. I normally only listen to a couple of channels so I'm happy to use a tuner in full manual mode, but if you're a keen station-hopper, this model's scanning facilities and a preset-bank full of stations will prove useful. It's in this capacity, however, that the TU950 exhibited some differences to the other tuners in the test. For example, initially it refused to auto-tune into Capital Radio, although when I tuned the station manually the display indicated a healthy signal strength of 70dB. It also played silly beggars when I searched for Radio 2, tuning straight past 89.10MHz, which, when selected manually, showed a

signal strength of 60dB. In auto-mode, it locked onto the station at 88.10MHz, where it showed 37dB. Weird! Perhaps its tuning circuits were simply in too high a gear: the TU950 zoomed through the FM band much faster than any other tuner in this test.

Once properly locked onto to the test stations, the Harman quickly made up for its initial petulance. Inexpensive and mainstream it might be, but it refused to sound that way. It didn't have the rich tonal balance of the more refined models in the group, but neither did it exhibit the wasted, bleached texture often found in budget tuners. Voices, for instance, were articulate, free from sibilant emphasis and of reasonable depth.

A Radio 3 live recording of an orchestral work by Smetana revealed the tuner's ability to portray musical contrast with appropriate detail and muscle. It sounded less satisfying on a Classic FM broadcast where strings appeared steely and forward, but switching to the reference Naim showed that the Harman was merely reflecting the poor quality of the recording.

Nonetheless, the TU950 avoided sounding chronic on poor broadcasts: even third rate punk recordings sounded respectable. With better material the tuner mirrored the quality upgrade and proved to have a decent 'boogie' quotient. Rock was carried along on a weighty bass and lively but controlled treble, which conveyed the power of rhythm sections.

Like most inexpensive tuners, the Harman became less comfortable as the playback volume rose, but it managed better than most.

So, despite the limitations inherent in a sub-£200 tuner, its overall competence and easy-going sound quality merit a Best Buy. It's not the best in this test but it's certainly the leading value-for-money contender.

1	SENSITIVITY	85%
2	ULTIMATE SIGNAL-TO-NOISE	33%
3	SUPPRESSION OF ADJACENT FM IMAGES	8%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-71%
5	SUPPRESSION OF AM INTERFERENCE	54%

THE LAB REPORT

H-K's TU950 is the most sensitive in the test, requiring just 16µV for a 'listenable' 50dB stereo S/N ratio, and only 110µV (40.8dB/µV) for broadcast specification 65dB S/N. It provides a superb >105dB rejection of FM image stations, plus a good 65.5dB protection against adjacent channels (+/-400kHz, narrow IF).

It's well protected against interference (AM rejection = 60.5dB), and there's barely any deterioration in stereo separation (30dB to 27dB at 15kHz) with its narrow IF bandwidth engaged. On the debit side, there's a peak of +0.5dB in its response at 8kHz before a -1.4dB 'kink' at 13kHz.

A strong second harmonic contributes to an overall 1 per cent THD which is somewhat higher than the 0.35 per cent quoted by H-K. Fortunately the ultimate S/N ratio obtainable (77dB mono/72dB stereo) is very close to the specified 80dB/73dB.



MICROMEGA - OUR VERDICT

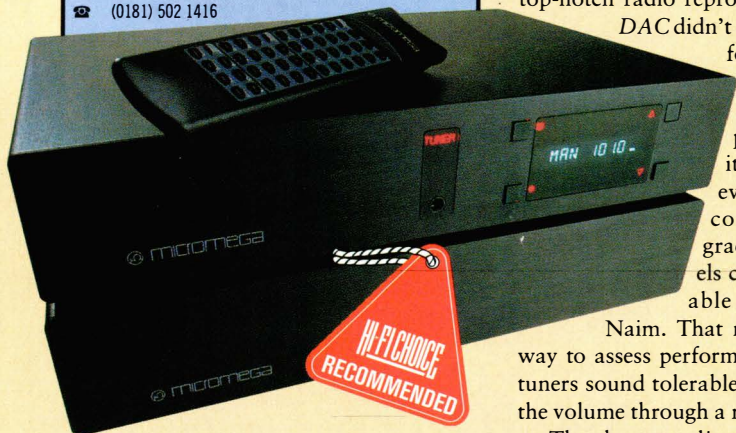
SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE ★★★★★

TUNER £699.99 DAC £699.99

▲ Terrific, un-tuner-like performance. Highly informative and credible sound.

▼ Nothing — it's way cool.

✉ Micromega DA Ltd, PO Box 13, London, E18 1EG
 ☎ (0181) 502 1416



Micromega Tuner/DAC

Here we have a tuner called *Tuner* and a DAC called *DAC*. Hardly inspiring nomenclature, but look beyond the prosaic names and you find an interesting concept. *Tuner* is a truly digital design using digital signal processing to remove the FM carrier signals and so avoid, claims Micromega, the degradation associated with conventional multiplex filters (see p. 25 for more details). There's an on-board DAC for analogue output, but you can also effect an upgrade by using *Tuner's* digital output to connect an external DAC — such as the *DAC*!

At a more mundane level, I was pleased to note that the *Tuner's* display can be turned off, which will come as a welcome relief to those who find tuner displays distracting. This FM-only design is operated by four fascia-mounted push-buttons or the remote control handset. Stations are stored in 39 preset locations. Operating the tuner is simple once you've spent five minutes or so digesting the concise contents of the slim instruction manual.

I started listening to the tuner *sans* *DAC*. Unlike most digitally driven tuners, its sound didn't have the mechanical patina or blanched spectral balance that all too often remind a listener that radio is the medium being auditioned. Just a brief listen to speech programming ably demonstrated that this tuner's balance was essentially even and noticeably more fulsome than most.

Classical music benefited from clarity and lack of coloration, with instrumental timbre and detail emerging cleanly and accurately. The *Tuner's* midband openness was especially appealing, providing insight into the music and the playing, and leaving no trace of ambiguity to cloud the performance. On rock music it sounded equally informative and, thanks to its positive, taut bass, it drove along rhythms with appreciable zeal. Its control and refined top end performance ensured that even compressed broadcasts of ener-

getic music didn't grate. Playing loud, even with Cher's exasperating *It's In His Kiss* blasting out from Capital Radio, didn't send me racing back the volume control.

Clearly in a different league to the other models in this test, *Tuner* in stand-alone guise ought to satisfy the listener looking for top-notch radio reproduction. Adding the *DAC* didn't deliver a massive performance jump, but it did refine and enhance the tuner's presentation, making its portrayal of music even less tuner-like. I could even play low grade broadcasts at levels close to those achievable with the reference Naim. That might sound a crass way to assess performance, but try it: few tuners sound tolerable when you crank up the volume through a revealing system.

The bottom line here is that the *Tuner/DAC* combination — or the *Tuner* alone — is a worthy contender if you want to make a serious investment in radio listening. Its lucid, exciting, notably clean and informative presentation puts it alongside that small band of tuners which warrant the attention of hard-core audiophiles who always seek the best. Only the high price debars it from an official Best Buy tag, but Recommendation is wholly justified.

1	SENSITIVITY	-23%
2	ULTIMATE SIGNAL-TO-NOISE	-20%
3	SUPPRESSION OF ADJACENT FM IMAGES	-27%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-6%
5	SUPPRESSION OF AM INTERFERENCE	-74%

THE LAB REPORT

Because Micromega uses an internal ADC (sampling at 32kHz), the tuner's response cuts off very sharply at 15kHz, but distortion in-band still remains moderately high at 0.3-0.4 per cent, even if its character is very, well, 'CD-like'. Stereo separation, meanwhile, is up to H-K standards: some 42dB at 1kHz.

The five-point signal strength meter lights up at 12µV, 55µV, 110µV, 170µV and 300µV respectively, and the tuner meets its 50dB S/N specification at some 45µV (33dB/µV RF), even though its optimum performance is only obtained at very high RF signal strengths. In real terms, there's still an improvement of approximately 5dB in S/N between 500µV and 3mV RF levels, which suggests that the lowest noise and optimum dynamics will only be achieved at RF levels +20dB above its final signal-strength beacon.

MUSICAL FIDELITY - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE ★★★★★

PRICE £300

▲ Bold, forthright delivery that presents music with great gusto.

▼ Some broadcasts might benefit from a less vivid, more neutral presentation.

✉ Musical Fidelity Ltd., 15 - 17 Olympic Trading Estate, Fulton Road, Wembley HA9 0BR
 ☎ (0181) 900 2866

Musical Fidelity E50

Styled to match the rest of the manufacturer's *E*-series components with a glossy black finish, in appearance the *E50* is one of the most restrained units in our test. Its blue fluorescent display, for example, is far more discreet than the typical garish green jobs that most tuner builders seem to fit. Other neat touches are the stereo, auto and tuned beacons, which have been designed to match the rest of the buttons on the fascia.

Simplicity and elegance are the watchwords here, and the tuner's whole concept seems very much in line with true high fidelity aims. It covers only the FM band, leaving AM fans to use another receiver when Amplitude Modulated fixes are required.

The *E50* can be used in fully manual mode, but it also provides auto-tuning and 20 presets for folks who can't — or can't be bothered — to remember station frequencies. A memory scan button steps through the programmed stations, stopping for five seconds on each, so that you can have a quick listen to remind yourself of what's stored where. Unfortunately, if you've only stored a handful of stations that means you'll hear whatever's on 87.5 in your location every time you hit a blank preset — which is nothing but a bit of mini-cab breakthrough where I live.

By virtue of its simplicity, the *E50* is easy to operate. Connect your aerial and amplifier, push a button or two, and you can listen to broadcasts without further set-up worries.

The sound is equally reassuring, with an easy-going, full-blooded quality that falls very easily on the ear. Voices, which frequently appear irritatingly thin and tonally bleached on tuners, came across with a pleasing sense of body and human warmth. I detected just the slightest touch of sibilant emphasis on some voices, but it was slight — not the uncontrolled splattering less capable designs inflict upon listeners. Voices projected from the speakers with gusto, which animated even rather dull broadcast material. Detailing also projected well, with studio clonks and broadcasters' breathing noises coming across very clearly.

The *E50* sounded equally forthright and dynamic with classical music, conveying the playing of every section in the orchestra with life and energy. Percussion and horns displayed a particularly rousing quality, and a piano concerto came across with a similar kind of vigour: the instrument sounded resonant and powerful but showed delicacy and lightness where appropriate. In comparison to our reference model, the Musical



Fidelity appeared a little too vigorous and contrasty at times, but there was no denying that it brought the music to life and involved the listener. Similarly, its bold tonal colour and dynamic urgency made for a pleasant change from the insipid sound delivered on classical music by many tuners at this price level.

The E50's spirited delivery didn't make for an overboard presentation of stations such as Capital - far from it. This tuner sounded balanced and in control, and its sturdy bass and splash-free treble allowed it to play at high levels without becoming wearing. Although the reference Naim sounded more open in the midrange and more strictly controlled at the extremes, the E50 put up a respectable performance for a much less expensive tuner.

Much like the Thorens TRT 2000, this tuner's presentation didn't strike me as wholly neutral or natural, but it was, more importantly, expressive and involving.



SONY - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £249.99

▲ Good performance with a high-quality feed from a decent station.
 ▼ Sounds distinctly less satisfying with an average aerial.
 ☒ Sony UK Ltd., The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge KT13 0XW
 ☎ (0181) 784 1144

Sony ST-SA3ES

If you're looking for a tuner that's loaded to the gunwales with features and facilities, you could do worse than eye up the ST-SA3ES, the first model in Sony's UK ES range. On offer here are RDS EON (Enhanced Other Networks), all three wavebands — FM, MW and LW — and 30 random presets. However, it aims to be more than a singing

and dancing box of tricks: Sony has fitted the ST-SA3ES with selected components to enhance its sonic performance, and these include 'off-centre insulation feet'. I'm not sure how much these contribute to the performance but I can unequivocally state that the screws that fix them to the chassis are off-centre!

One feature of which I thoroughly approve is the inclusion of two FM aerial inputs to feed the Sony's front end. I use two aerials — one directional and one omni-directional — and tune local stations that are outside the capture window of the directional aerial through the lower-gain omni. While most tuners let you suffer the inconvenience of unplugging one aerial to connect the other, the Sony simply stores the relevant aerial input with the station's preset data.

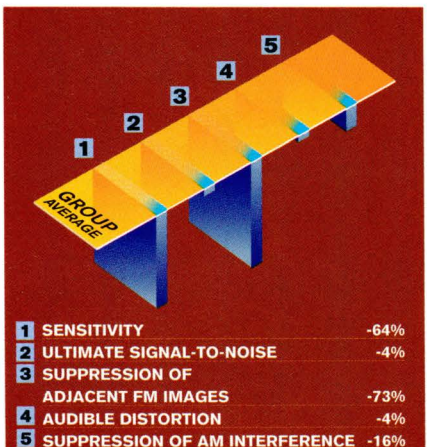
Given that it's so bounteously equipped I half expected a remote control to fall out of the box as well, but the Sony is driven solely from its front panel. This isn't at all difficult after you've spent a few moments with the instructions, which is worth the effort if you're not *au fait* with modern tuners or the RDS/EON system. Press the wrong button and you can find yourself subjected to traffic news in the middle of a music programme!

The ST-SA3ES sounded eminently pleasant. Its presentation seemed detailed and outwardly quite revealing but, regrettably, it didn't scavenge as much fine detail as the NAT02. On a Radio 3 broadcast of solo cello music, the Sony sounded incisive and captured the note shape well, even though the Naim revealed more note envelope information. Nonetheless, the ST-SA3ES put up

a highly commendable performance. Changing aerials demonstrated that the tuner responded to an improved signal. The performance opened out when the Galaxie 17 provided the feed, giving a better account of the acoustic of the recording venue and imbuing the playing with more vigour. Another reason for using a top-class aerial is that the Sony's top end can make vocal sibilants a little pronounced unless the incoming signal is in pristine nick.

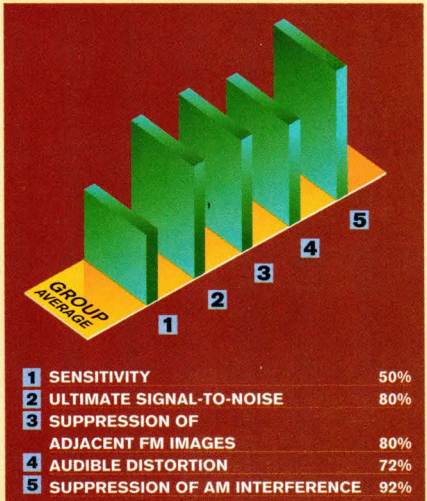
The Sony's tonal balance appeared even with good bass weight, which helped it handle poor-quality transmissions better. With Capital, however, a keen sense of pace and animation became a little aggressive and wearing at high volume levels. But that, it's worth noting, is not untypical for a mainstream tuner.

Although the Sony has its tinge of 'tuner-ness' — an occasional brittleness and tonal paucity — given a clean, strong signal it can deliver satisfying results. And, of course, it's unsurpassed within this group if you're looking for a full feature count.



THE LAB REPORT

It's possible to get a 'listenable' result from the E50 (30dB stereo S/N) with just 4µV (12dB/µV RF), leaving its performance to descend into noise at even lower signal strengths. Otherwise you are looking at RF levels around 52µV to achieve a 50dB stereo S/N and a full 350µV (51dB/µV RF) to make best use of a broadcast. It is more prone to interference from adjacent FM channels than, say, the Micromega, but better protected against AM interference when receiving FM. Intermodulation distortion is quite high, suggesting that treble signals are 'beating' with the 19kHz pilot and 38kHz subcarrier to produce directly audible signals (amounting to 2.5%) at lower frequencies. Its gently tailored FM response dies away beyond 7kHz, despite extending to a useful -3dB point of 16kHz.



THE LAB REPORT

Despite demonstrating a slight +0.4dB bump at 8.2kHz (due to the mpx filtering), this was the only FM tuner that showed a flat and 'clean' response when stimulated with a fully modulated (75kHz deviation) RF signal. The tuner provides a direct readout of signal strength (0dB = 1µV) but tends to under-read incoming RF, displaying 52dB when 60dB/µV would be more accurate for 1mV RF. Otherwise this is a technical *tour de force*. Sony quotes a stereo THD of 0.03 per cent, which is incredibly low. I managed to record some 0.063 per cent at 40kHz deviation, but this increased (as expected) to 0.088 per cent at the full 75kHz deviation used in my tests. Nevertheless, the ST-SA3ES is by far the most advanced and flexible tuner in our survey. It offers a wide 74dB stereo S/N, excellent selectivity (80dB, IF wide mode) and a minimum sensitivity of just 120µV RF, which matches the best FM broadcast S/N ratio you're likely to encounter. The question remains, however: is this specmanship at the expense of sound quality?



THORENS - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £449.99

▲ Involving presentation and a full-bodied, fast sound.
 ▼ A little larger than life, maybe, with slightly rich tonal colouring.

✉ Portfolio Marketing, 67 New Road, Little Kingshill, Great Missenden HP16 0EU
 ☎ (01494) 890277

Thorens TRT 2000

The TRT 2000 resembles the reference Naim, packaged in a half-width case that should be useful for space-saving — provided there's effective screening within the box. Radio frequencies (RF) and digital control signals tend to leap about inside cases and can cause audible degradation if they reach certain parts of a circuit.

Case proportions, however, are where similarities with the Naim end. Apart from its liberal sprinkling of gold on the controls, its gold logo and the gold screws attaching its perspex fascia, the Thorens provides RDS functionality and AM coverage in addition to FM. It also comes with a remote control for accessing functions which are not among the front-panel controls.

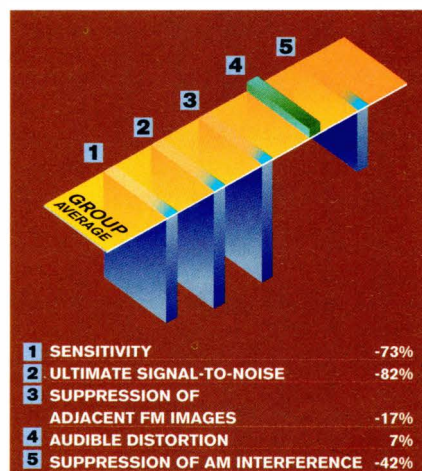
Setting up non-manual tuners can be a nightmare — especially if, like me, you appreciate simplicity and have an aversion to poring over instruction manuals. The TRT 2000 isn't too bad in this respect: five minutes with the instructions and you'll be away, storing stations in its 59 presets with gay abandon.

The TRT 2000 scores well in the usability stakes. For day-to-day listening two controls provide all you need. The leftmost knob on the fascia switches power on or off, and switches between Tuning and Station modes. When the unit is powered it automatically selects the last station you listened to. In Tuning mode the right-hand control steps through the frequency band to tune stations manually. In Station mode, the right-hand knob increments through the store of preset stations.

Suitably warmed up, having been left powered — as were all the tuners — for 72 hours, the TRT 2000 leapt into life sounding vibrant but extremely well controlled on Capital's less than wonderful signal. Sweet treble, a

detailed, open-sounding midband and weighty bass made the station's output really rather listenable — almost enjoyable — at high levels. A good start, that, and one which it followed by reflecting the greatly improved quality of Radio 3 and 4 transmissions.

Here the Thorens found plenty of depth and substance with which to work. Its portrayal of orchestral music was vivid if bathed in a tonal warmth that was appealing rather than cloying. It also created an appropriate sense of scale and acoustic dimension that made for a convincing presentation.



THE LAB REPORT

The first two signal-strength elements on the TRT-2000 light up at the merest whiff of RF, while the others pop into view at 5µV, 8µV (the tuner finally de-mutes at 10µV) followed by 25µV, 60µV and 90µV. In practice I'd be tempted to ignore all but the last LED. Indeed the performance of the tuner is optimised for (fully modulated) RF signals no greater than 500µV, beyond which distortion increases from 0.3 to 0.8 per cent at 3mV.

Thorens' subcarrier filter may suppress the 38kHz tone by a laudable 87dB, but the second-order IM distortion derived from this tone remains to clutter the spectrum at up to -22dB (equivalent to 4 per cent distortion). This, plus higher-order IM products, compromise the maximum S/N achievable in stereo mode to 65.6dB, whereas a magnificent 75.7dB is possible in mono mode. Like the MF E50 tuner, this is likely to encourage a coloured perspective of events, as will its FM treble emphasis, peaking at a mild but audible +0.8dB around 7kHz before falling gently towards its 16kHz cut-off.

Comparison with the reference tuner on Jazz FM suggested that the Thorens' portrayal of instrumental timbre — piano and acoustic bass, for example — was a little larger than life but not wildly exaggerated. More importantly, though, it sapped none of the music's energy and maintained timing information very well. Bands played together and with verve, which made for consistently entertaining listening. Detailing was fine, with different instrumental lines always easy to follow and dynamically in balance. If the TRT 2000 were a boxer it would be a couple of pounds over its weight limit but still fast on its feet and able to pack a punch.

This mixture of substance and agility was well suited to vocal broadcasts. Voices were detailed and free from sibilant emphasis. The tuner also proved adept at imbuing them with character and using nuances to reveal a wide range of expression. It made programmes compelling without being hectoring.

And that, perhaps, is the Thorens' finest quality: although it might not be strictly accurate in tonal terms, and even if it adds a little oomph to music compared to more neutral tuners, it's good fun. ▲

CONCLUSIONS, BEST BUYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Harman-Kardon TU950 is not the out-and-out top performer in this test, but it offers great value for money. Despite my slight problems getting it to tune itself, it's sonically better than average, and it gives access to all three bandwidths. While Medium and Long waves don't provide hi-fi performance they do let you hear material that's not broadcast on FM, which is bound to appeal to some users. The H-K deserves this test's sole Best Buy tag.

The Sony ST-SA3ES sounds very much like a Japanese tuner — technically spot-on but a bit sterile — although it's certainly better than average. The Thorens TRT 2000, on the other hand, has nothing clinical about it. Its sound reveals distinct richness and warmth, which is more appealing than cloying. In this respect the Thorens shares much with the bold, slightly larger-than-life Musical Fidelity E50.

The cream of the crop in sheer performance terms is the Micromega Tuner, with or without its DAC. In either guise it's not cheap, but it does provide a level of performance that far exceeds that of mundane tuners and the best of the rest here. Very few tuners sound 'real'. Very few can, for example, receive a speech broadcast and fool you into thinking there's a conversation going on in a room you've just entered: most simply sound like there's a radio playing. The Tuner/DAC combo, however, sounds plausible, plays bass lines persuasively and boogies — qualities rarely present in a tuner, but whose presence deserves a Recommended reward.

Reader classified

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AKAI AM-95 dig amp, 140wpc, black, rosewood sidepanels, mint, boxed, demo poss, £350. Croydon (0181) 251 8782

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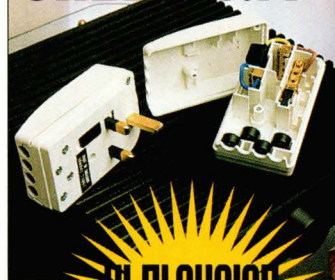
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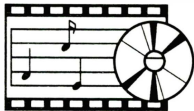
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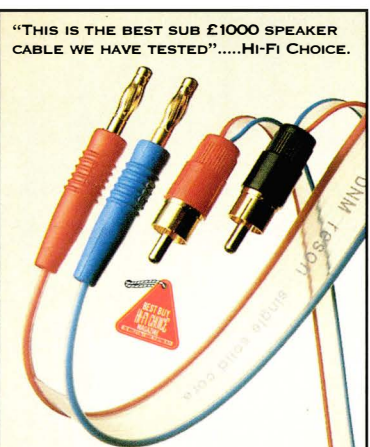
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Dealer Guide

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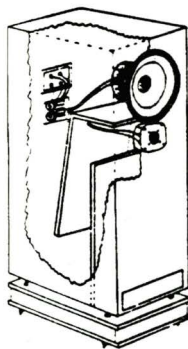
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Audionote M7 tube pre-amp (£14650).....	£5995	Stereo KT88 40 watt valve amp.....	£750	Teac VRDS 10 CD player.....	£450
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Sponsoring the Show, *Hi-Fi News & Record Review* magazine (currently celebrating 40 years of publication) will have a

stronger presence than ever this year, with a full range of events to attract the enthusiast. You have to be there. It's the hi-fi event of the year.

Public opening hours: Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th September, 10am-6pm.

Public admission: £3.50, but **FREE** to visitors who have the **FREE-ENTRY** coupon carried in the September issue (on sale Friday 2nd August)

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HI-FI NEWS & RECORD REVIEW

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Pioneer F91 Tuner (mint)	£399	£269
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Thorens TD180 MKV/Stanton 500	£399	£199
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THE DIRECTORY



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NEW READERS

YOU CAN BUY A HI-FI SYSTEM!

Editor-in-Chief **Stan Vincent** explains why everyone needs a good hi-fi – and how you can buy without tears.

Buying a great hi-fi system is not difficult. Anyone with a pair of ears can do it. A good hi-fi will continue to give pleasure for many years, and carefully-selected separate hi-fi components are among the few investments that will not devalue the moment they depart the dealer's showroom. Why is it, then, that the process of buying 'real' hi-fi can seem so fraught with complications? I think the answer is to be found in that immortal *Not The Nine O'Clock News* sketch, in which Griff Rhys-Jones's hapless hi-fi buyer is humiliated and confused by wise-cracking counter staff Rowan Atkinson and Mel Smith. Stores like that have long since gone out of business, but the stereotype crystallises the unnecessary mystique and jargon that, all too often, obscure the inviting portals of the hi-fi kingdom.

You do not need to be an 'audiophile' to buy hi-fi. You do not need a degree in electronics; you do not need to be an acoustic engineer; you will not need to stand on one leg with trousers rolled up in order to become a paid-up member of the global hi-fi fraternity. All it takes is a love of music, a desire to do better than second best, and a little bit of advice from us to help you on your way.

Let's face it: hi-fi is the tool that allows us to hear music as it was recorded. The better the hi-fi, the closer the approach to the master tape. Think of it this way and you'll soon see the wisdom of saving your cash for tools that are right for the job. It's also a matter of making the most of your investment in records and CDs.

Play your new £14 CD on even a good packaged mini or micro system, and at the very most you'll hear only £7 worth. Spend a little more on decent hi-fi and you'll soon get double-figure replay.

Lasting satisfaction

Once upon a time hi-fi was high on the average household's list of purchasing priorities. Now, myriad consumer durables take precedence on today's family shopping list. But how many modern-day baubles provide the lasting satisfaction promised

by even a modest system of hi-fi separates? And how many lifestyle fripperies can be supplemented and upgraded as the years go by, such that the pleasure they provide can only increase?

If you're still not convinced that hi-fi is the best investment you'll ever make (but also if you are), the next step is to take your courage in your hands, draw in a deep breath, and Visit A Hi-Fi Store.

You're not going to look stupid if you're a first-time buyer. You need only a little faith in your ability to recognise the difference between

a piece of music played on a packaged audio system, and the same piece played through a system of hi-fi separates; and between music played on a cheap system and the same tunes reproduced on costly components. And the good news is that you can put together an excellent first system for much less than you think!

Dive into dealerland

Where do you find a dealer? Maybe there's one down the High Street, but if not, your first stop is our Dealer Directory (page 123), which lists dealers all over the UK. Some of them belong to the British Audio Dealers Association, which means they offer a standardised set of services including extended guarantees and bonding to protect monies held on deposit. Call (0171) 226 4044 for more details. If all else fails there must be a friend of a friend who has bought some hi-fi gear recently — why not get him or her to recommend a supplier?

When you decide to visit a dealer, it's best to phone beforehand and book an appointment. Whether you're buying a complete system or just one component, an appointment ensures you'll have the benefit of one-to-one attention from sales staff. Take along a selec-



START HERE

Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The legendary **Hi-Fi Choice Directory** is now simpler to use than ever before, but contains all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system.

Step One: Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on page 98). This listing is updated monthly and includes all hi-fi products currently available in the UK. It is organised by product type, then by price band, and is sorted alphabetically. Products whose names are printed in **red** are those that we have reviewed. Which leads us to...

Step Two: Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts on page 106). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards that mark out products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

Step Three: Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 123) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.



tion of your own CDs (or records), chosen more for familiarity than for being stunning recordings.

Does the dealer make you welcome and relaxed? Successful hi-fi buying depends on taking your time to find equipment that suits you, with no pressure along the way. A truly helpful dealer will let you try out equipment at home on a no-obligation basis, which is really the only way to find out whether you like it. (A pukka purveyor will always offer to install equipment for you if you are at all unsure about how this should be done.)

Spot the differences

It's a commonly-held misconception that all hi-fi sounds the same: packaged audio systems may sound similar, but every piece of real hi-fi — and every system — has its own little sonic quirks and differences. In hi-fi as in life, one man's meat is another's poison, which is why that free home trial is so important. After all, it would be a sad and sorry person who chose his or her marital partner off the shelf on the basis of a half-hour demonstration... A hi-fi's sound can be dramatically different in your home and the showroom.

Don't forget that good-quality rigid supports for speakers and electronic components are vital links in the hi-fi chain, as are decent-quality cables. If you get bitten by the hi-fi bug, you'll soon find that these are just a few of the fascinating aspects to one of the world's most engrossing pursuits. Just remember: whatever your level of interest and expense, a good separates hi-fi system is likely to be the most rewarding investment you'll ever make. Happy listening! ▲

Best Buys and Recommendations

If you see a Best Buy (red) or Recommended (blue) flag at the beginning of an entry in our Directory of reviewed products, the item concerned is particularly deserving of your attention.

- B** This signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.
- R** Recommended products offer excellent quality and value, though not at the superlative level of a Best Buy.

Please note that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always perform better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi

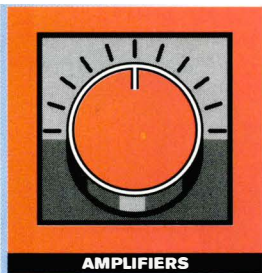
Do not commit the cardinal sin of dashing into your local dealer, magazine in hand, demanding to purchase Best Buy CD player A, Best Buy amplifier B and Best Buy speakers C. This is unlikely to result in your long-term satisfaction. Our policy at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that one must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not a collection of components. While a superb system might well contain Best Buy and Recommended components, one cannot lump together Best Buys and Recommendations in the hope that they will automatically perform superbly. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components worth trying, but only by hearing them for yourself can you draw meaningful conclusions about what suits your taste. Furthermore, don't panic if the dealer offers you equipment that we have not tested. At the end of the day, what matters most is that your hi-fi system fits your tastes like a glove, and it is the dealer's challenge to ensure your satisfaction by any means — and components — necessary!



Sessions and Statements

Products that have been reviewed in Sessions or Statements or any non comparative test are not eligible for the Best Buy and Recommended accolades. However, this does not mean that they are not of excellent quality, and many of them go on to prove as much in group tests. So do not discount products that aren't flagged — they may just be waiting for their chance to shine.





AMPLIFIERS

**Integrated Amps
Up to £250**

Aiwa XA-003	140
Alchemist Axiom	249
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240
Cambridge Audio A1	100
Denon PMA-250 III	160
Denon PMA-350 II	230
Denon PMA-480R	200
Grundig V11	160
Harman-Kardon HK610	200
JVC AX-R5BK	200
JVC AX-V6BK	230
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Luxman A-331	250
Magnum IA120	249
Marantz PM-34	150
Marantz PM-44 MkIIse	200
Marantz PM-43	200
Marantz PM-53	250
NAD 312	200
Nakamichi IA4s	200
Onkyo A-801	200
Pioneer A-103	130
Pioneer A-203	150
Pioneer A-303R	200
Pioneer A-300X	230
Rega Brio	229
Rotel RA935EX MkII	250
Sony TAF211B	150
Sony TAF244B	200
Sony TAF444E	250
Teac AR300	200
Teac AR500	250
Technics SU-V300	170
Technics SU-V500	200
Technics SU-V620	230
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230
Yamaha AX-490	239

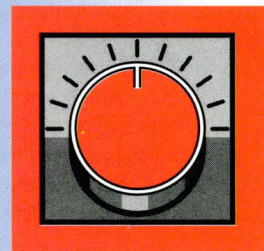
£251 to £500	
Alchemist Maxim	299
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399
Analogue Jupiter	330
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350
Arcam Delta 290	500
Arion Adonis (kit)	495
Audio Innovations Alto	329
Audiolab 8000A	500
Audiolink Sterling II	350
Aura YA100 II	330
CR Developments Kalypso	499
Credo IMP702	499
Creek 4240	279
Creek 4240SE	350
Denon PMA-4050E	280
Denon PMA-715	300
Denon AVC-1530	480
EMF Audio Sequel	349
Harman-Kardon HK620	280
Harman-Kardon HK1200	300
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400
Harman-Kardon HK640	450
Inca Tech Oberon	450
Kenwood KA-4060R	280
Kenwood KA-V3700	300
Kenwood KA-5050R	350
Lescon 380X	255
Lescon Stereo 383X	295
Lescon Quattro	420
LFD Integrated Zero	499
Luxman A-353R	350
Luxman A-373	400
Magnum Quartet	329
Marantz PM-63	300
Marantz PM-700AV	450
Mission Cyrus III	500
Moth 30 Integrated	320
Musical Fidelity E10	300
NAD 314	260
Onix OA30	300
Onix OA21S	430
Onix OA31	480
Onkyo A803	260
Onkyo A-911	350
Onkyo A850	370
Oralle SA-100	449
Pioneer A-400X	300
Pioneer A-503R	300
Pioneer A-602	350
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pro-ject Model 7	259
Rega Elex	398
Rotel RA970BX	300
Sony TAF542E	300
Sony TAF-A3ES	400
Sony TA-AV570B	280
Technics SU-A700 MkII	400
Technics SU-A800 Mk2	350
Technics SU-A800D	400

£501 to £700	
Alchemist Kraken A	549
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549
Alchemist Nemesis	650
AMC CVT3030	529
Audiolab 8000S	650
Credo IMP703	538
DPA Renaissance	595
Exposure XX Super	699
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699
Harman-Kardon HK660	650
Heybrook Integra	555
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Lescon Quatra Plus	655
LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	679
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	524
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	593
Lynwood Opal	685
Magnum Class A	599
Meridian 551	695
Micromega Tempo 1	700
Monrio MJ	695
Musical Fidelity E100	599
Myryad MI120	530
Naim NAIT	549
Nakamichi IA2	600
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600
Quad 771A	700
Rose Scion	545
Shearpe Phase 2	649
Stemfoort Audio SF60	549
Teac A-BX7R	700
Triangle TE60SE	650

£701 to £1000	
Alchemist Forseti	899
Arcam Xeta One	999
AVI S2000MI	799
Chimera X-80	800
CR Developments Romulus	998
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990
Exposure XV Super	799
Harman-Kardon HK680	1,000
LFD Int. Zero LE	799
Micromega Tempo 2	900
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900
Monrio MC-200S	895
Naim NAIT R	724
Rega Elicit	730
Sonic Link DM30	725
Stemfoort Audio SF100	849
Teac A-BX10	999
Thule IA100	949
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899
Woodside ISA230 Line	899
YBA Integre Line	999

£1001 to £2000	
Arion Elektra Export Mk	1,399
Arion Talos Line Mk II	1,450
Arion Talos Phono Mk II	1,650
Arion Tycho Int Mk II	1,999
Art Audio Integra	1,499
Audio Innovations Classic 25	1,099
Audio Innovations S500	1,199
Audio Innovations S700	1,199
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500
Chimera X-100	1,200
Copland CSA-14	1,099
Copland CTA-401	1,699
EAR 859	1,595
EAR 834	1,599
Electrocompaniet EC1-2SF	1,440
LFD Integrated 1	1,099
Meracus INTRARE	1,095
Minstrel Partridge	1,499
Monrio MC-205	1,500
Musical Fidelity A1000	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795
Triangle Nemo Allion 02	1,550
Tube Tech Unisis S'Line	1,399
Tube Tech Unisis	1,399
Unison Research Simply Two	1,148
Unison Research Simply Four P	1,495
Unison Research Simply Four T	1,545
YBA Integre	1,199

Over £2000	
Adyton OPERA	2,595
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	2,233
Electrocompaniet EC1-1 SF	2,485
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	2,499
McIntosh MA6800	3,735
Meracus ONESTA	2,595
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999
Unison Research Performance One	4,500



**Preamps
Up to £500**

AMC AV81 Control	289
AMC 1030	379
AMC S84	479
AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499
Analogue Saturn	75
Analogue Saturn MC	75
Art Audio Minuet	499
Audio Innovations P1	369
Audio Innovations L1	369
Audio Innovations T2	425
Audiolink P400	467
Credo PMP003	385
Credo HMP003	388
Credo MMP002	439
Creek OBM-8	99
Creek OBM-9	110
Creek P42	279
Crimson CS610C	450
Denon PMA-425R	230
DPA DSP200S	495
EAR 834P	399
EAR 834L	449
Grant CD10	482
Harman-Kardon AP2500	499
Inca Tech Oberon Pre	350
LFD Linestage LSO	499
Lumley Reference PP70	325
Lumley Reference PP40	325
Lumley Reference PP1	325
Michell Iso	420
Moth 30 Passive	149
Moth 30 RIAA	199
Moth 30 Active	249
Moth 30 RIAA 100VA	299
Moth 30 Active 100VA	349
NAD Monitor 1000	229
NAD Monitor 106	349
Naim NAC92	448
Onix OA24	400
QED Vector One	199
Rose RV-23	450
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175
Rotel RC980BX	350
Rotel RC990BX	500
Sentec PP9 RIAA MM	500
Technics SU-C1000	350
Thorens TTP2000	500
Unison Research Simply Phono	495

£501 to £2000	
Adyton CHORUS	1,995
Alchemist Forseti Pre	870
Arcam Delta 110	750
Arion Eros Line Mk II	1,150
Arion Eros Phono Mk II	1,350
Art Audio Headline	1,700
Art Audio VPL	741
Art Audio Conductor Phono	750
Art Audio VP1	952
Art Audio Conductor	1,250
Art Audio Conductor Export	2,000
Audio Innovations L2	749
Audio Innovations P2MM	749
Audio Innovations P2MC	949
Audio Research PH-3	1,550
Audio Research LS-3	1,845
Audiolab 8000C	500
Audiolab 8000PPA	950
Audiolab 8000Q	1,100
Aura CA200	700
AVI S2000MP	849
AVI S2000MP+P	1,049
Bryston 4	619
Bryston BP1	673
Bryston BP4	802
Bryston BP5	889
Bryston BP20	1,126
Chimera X-150C	800
Classe Audio Audio 3D	1,320
Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV10AL	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250
Copland CSA-303	1,155
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695
Credo CMP004	799
Credo CMP005	1,119
Dawn Audio Prelude +50	951
DNM 3 Start	950
DNM 3A Start	1,500
Dynavector L200	1,195
Dynavector P100	1,495
Dynavector L100	1,995
ECA Vista S	760
ECA Vista HD	880
ECA Prisma	880
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	580
Electrocompaniet ECP-1 SF	749
Electrocompaniet EC-4 Line	1,466
Electrocompaniet EC-4 SF Line	1,790
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953
Exposure XiX	799
Exposure XVII	849
Exposure XIV	1,400
Fullers Pre 1	599
Fullers Pre 1 +	649
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999
Graaf WFB Two	1,100
Grant G100P	764
Heybrook SIG CA	649
Heybrook SIG CAP	829
KAL Magician	550
KAL Harlequin	750
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	999
LFD PPS	999
LFD PhonoStage MC2	1,499
LFD Linestage LS2	1,599
LFD Linestage LS2P	1,750
LFD Linestage LSB	1,999
Linn Kairn Pro	998
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000
Lumley Reference L/R PV1.5	1,350
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500
Marantz AV-500	699
Marantz SC-22	900
Marantz PH-22	1,000
McIntosh C712	1,479
Meracus INGREDI	925
Meridian 501	625
Meridian 562	685
Meridian 501V	785
Meridian 562V	895
Michell Argo	730
Michell Iso HR	895
Michell Argo HR	1,339
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHQ-10	995
Michi RHA-10	995
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	595
Monrio PLUR1-L	950
Musical Fidelity E200	599
Musical Fidelity F22	999
Naim NAC92R	579
Naim NAC72	670
PS Audio 6.1	799

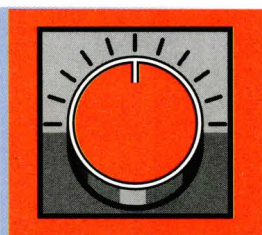


Holy powerkeys,
Batman! Look at the
Watts on that...

PS Audio 6.2	899
PS Audio Phono Link	899
Quad 77PR	850
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995
Rose RV-23S	525
Sentec PP9 RIAA MC	600
Sentec SC9	800
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre	895
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,095
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1	1,395
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,495
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1 Sig	1,795
Sumo Ulysses II	629
Sumo Athena II Line	767
Sumo Polaris III	898
Sumo Athena III	987
Sumo Artemis OP	1,695
Sumo AudioMedia III	1,810
Sumo Model Vee	1,830
Technics SU-C2000	700
Tesserac TAADA	1,500
Tesserac TALA	1,500
Tesserac TAHA	1,800
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thule PR200	699
Tube Tech Seer Line	575
Tube Tech Seer Phono	649
Tube Tech Prophet	1,199
Unison Research Mystery One	1,750
Unison Research Phono One	1,995
Woodside SC27 Line	705
Woodside SC27 MM	881
Woodside SC27 MC	999
Woodside SC25 Line	1,420
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931
XTC PRE-1	800
YBA 3 Pre	1,250
YBA 2 Pre	1,699

Over £2000

Adyton TEMPER	2,495
Adyton MODUS	2,895
Alchemist Alchemist Control	4,995
ATC SCA2	2,499
Audio Research LS-3b	2,250
Audio Research PH-2	2,895
Audio Research LS-2 II	2,997
Audio Research SP9 III	3,290
Audio Research LS-2b II	3,398
Audio Research LS-5 II	5,690
CAT SL1 Sig line	5,500
CAT SL1 Sig phono	6,000
Classe Audio Audio 5L II	2,395
Classe Audio Audio 5 II	2,657
Classe Audio Audio 6L II	3,469
Classe Audio Audio 6 II	3,817
Conrad-Johnson PV-12L	2,250
Conrad-Johnson PV-12	2,750
Conrad-Johnson Premier 10	3,900
Conrad-Johnson Evolution 20 SP ED	6,700
Counterpoint SA-3000E	2,195
Counterpoint SA-5000E	3,995
Counterpoint SA-9	3,995
DNM 3B Twin E	3,050
DNM 3B Primus E	3,630
DNM 3B Six E	4,780
EAR 802MC	2,599
EAR G88	6,999
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC SF	2,270
Gamma Acoustics Era Ref	3,999
Jadis DEFY-P60	3,774
Jadis JPL	4,720
Jadis JPP-200	4,998
Jadis JP-30MC	5,978
Jadis JP-S2	7,900
KAL Empress	3,660
Krell KSL-2	3,331
Krell KRC-2	4,190
Krell KRCs	6,949
LFD Disc Preamp	4,499
Lumley Reference L/R M100	2,250
Lumley Reference L/R LS2	3,250
Lumley Reference L/R PS2	3,550
Lumley Reference L/R M140	4,250
Lumley Reference ST150	4,350
Mark Levinson 38	3,995
Mark Levinson 38S	6,495
Matisse Fantasy	2,300
Matisse Reference	3,500
McIntosh C38	2,095
McIntosh C22	2,099
McIntosh C39	3,129
McIntosh C40	3,239
Meracur PRETARE	2,195
Meridian 601	2,750
Naim NAC82	2,058
Naim NAC52	3,190
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795
Sumo Model Ten/M	4,080
Tesserac TAP-A	5,300
YBA 1 Pre	3,750



**Power Amps
Up to £500**

Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380
Alchemist Kraken/mono	380
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr A	499
AMC 2445	299
AMC 2030	449
Arcam Delta 290P	400
Creek A42	279
Crimson CS620C	450
Denon PMA-725R	350
Harman-Kardon PA2100	400
Inca Tech Oberon Pwr	400
LFD Powerstage PA0	499
Marantz MA-500	250
Moth 30 Series Power	239
Moth 30 Mono/40	459
Naim NAP90/3	428
Onix OA401	400
Rotel RB970BX MkII	225
Rotel RB980BX	450
Technics SE-A1000	400

£501 to £2000

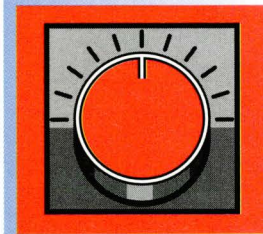
Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,250
Arion EOS Export Mk II	1,299
Arion Triton Mk II	1,399
Arion Tycho Pwr Mk II	1,850
Art Audio Quintet	1,393
Art Audio Quintet SE MB	1,500
Art Audio Concerto	1,669
Audio Innovations Ser 800	999
Audio Innovations First Audio	1,749
Audio Innovations Ser 1000	1,799
Audiolab 8000P	750
Audiolab 8000M	800
Audiolink PR401	583
Aura PA200	1,200
AVI S2000MA	849
AVI S2000MM	1,249
Bryston 2B-LP	750
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159
Bryston THX3B	1,262
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815
Bryston THX4B	1,858
Bryston THX7B	1,917
Chimera X-150P	1,200
Classe Audio Audio 70	1,399
Copland CTA-501	1,599
Copland CTA-504	1,999
Counterpoint Solid 1EM	995
Counterpoint SA100E	1,495
Counterpoint Solid 1E	1,495
Counterpoint NPS-100E	1,995
Credo PMP154	1,699
Credo PMP303	1,699
Crimson CS630C	800
Dawn Audio Cmd 2 by 200	890
DNM PA1	1,750
DPA 200S	750
ECA Lectern S	880
ECA Lectern HD	1,480
Exposure XVIII Super	849
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599
Fullers A10	1,200
Grant G50A	1,128
Grant G100AMS	1,528
Harman-Kardon PA2200	700
Harman-Kardon PA2400	1,000
Heybrook SIG MNEX	698
Heybrook SIG/SPX	922
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999
Linn LK100	549
Linn Klout	1,895
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250
Lumley Reference ST70	1,950
Lynwood Ruby	985
Magnum MF125	515
Magnum MF300	595
Magnum MA500	1,295
Marantz MA-22	1,600
McIntosh MC7100	1,259
Meracur CIERE	1,095
Meridian 555	625
Michell Alecto Stereo	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	1,989
Michi RHB-05	995
Michi RHB-10	1,650

Micromega Amp	1,250
Monrio MC-25	895
Monrio HP1	1,995
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549
Moth 30 Mono/100	879
Musical Fidelity E300	699
Musical Fidelity FX	1,099
Musical Fidelity F15	1,899
NAD Monitor 208	999
Naim NAP140	722
Naim NAP180	1,016
Naim NAP135	1,576
Naim NAP250	1,576
Onix OA601	699
Onix OA801	849
Papworth TVA50	1,425
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499
Quad 77SA	600
Quad 707	800
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550
Rotel RB990BX	750
Sentec PA9	1,000
Shearpe Phase 3	619
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	879
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695
Technics SE-A2000	1,100
Thorens TTA2000	550
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thule PA200	1,798
Tube Tech Unisig Pwr Amp	1,099
Woodside ISA 240	949
Woodside MA50 Class A	1,224
Woodside STA35	1,323
XTC POW-1	2,000
YBA 3 Power	1,199

Over £2000

Adyton CORDIS 1.6	3,495
Alchemist Alchemist Stereo	3,995
Alchemist Alchemist Mono	8,995
Art Audio Tempo	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	3,524
Audio Innovations Ser 1000SE	2,499
Audio Innovations Second Audio	3,299
Audio Research VT60	2,645
Audio Research D-200	3,248
Audio Research V35	3,355
Audio Research V70	4,480
Audio Research D-300	4,800
Audio Research VT130	5,994
Audio Research D-400II	6,600
Audio Research VT150	7,200
Audio Research V140	8,960
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195
Bryston THX8B	2,400
Classe Audio Audio 10	2,299
Classe Audio Audio 15	3,399
Classe Audio Audio 25	4,639
Classe Audio Audio M-700	7,690
Classe Audio Audio M-1000	9,968
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	7,000
Copland CTA-505	2,099
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995
Counterpoint SA4	3,575
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,125
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395
Counterpoint NPM-E	8,995
Credo PMP102	2,181
Credo PMP252	2,509
DNM PA2BE	4,250
DNM PA2BS	5,250
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650
Dynavector HK75	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499
EAR 519	4,699
EAR 549	6,999
Electrocompaniet AW1000MB	2,115
Electrocompaniet AW1000MB-SF	2,300
Electrocompaniet AW2500MB	3,983
Electrocompaniet AW2500MB-SF	4,195
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	4,673
Electrocompaniet AW180MB-SF	4,900
Exposure IV	2,199
Exposure XVI	4,000
Gamma Acoustics Space Ref	3,999
Graaf 5050	2,100
Grant G350A	3,455
Grant G200AMS	3,760
Jadis JA-30	2,880
Jadis JA-80	4,956
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290
Jadis JA-200	7,759
KAL Emperor	4,375
Krell KSA-50s	3,690
Krell KSA-100s	5,843
Krell KSA-200s	7,987
Krell KSA-300s	9,500
Lumley Reference M120	3,200

Marantz MA-24	2,400
Mark Levinson 29	3,450
Mark Levinson 331	4,495
Mark Levinson 27.5	5,399
Mark Levinson 332	6,495
Mark Levinson 23.5	7,399
Mark Levinson 333	8,495
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	7,800
McIntosh MC7108	2,249
McIntosh MC7150	722
McIntosh MC7104	2,295
McIntosh MC150	2,855
McIntosh MC7300	3,195
McIntosh MC7106	3,425
McIntosh MC275	3,595
McIntosh MC300	3,765
McIntosh MC2600	5,395
McIntosh MC500	6,265
Meracur TENTARE	2,245
Meracur CANTARE	8,995
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999
Papworth M100	2,645
Papworth M200	3,825
PS Audio 200 Delta	2,279
PS Audio 200b Delta	2,490
PS Audio 250 Delta	2,980
Roksan ROK-M1.5	4,500
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495
Tesserac TAMP-60	7,350
Tube Tech Genesis	2,599
Unison Research Smart 845	2,995
YBA 2 Power	2,150
YBA 1 Power	4,250



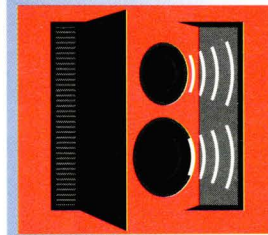
**AV Amplifiers
Integrated AV Amps**

Arcam Xeta One	1,000
Denon AVC-1530	480
Denon AVC-2800	800
Harman-Kardon AV1200	499
JVC AX-V6BK	330
Kenwood KA-V3700	200
Kenwood KM-V1000	400
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Marantz MA500THX	250
Marantz MM-500	400
Marantz PM-711AV	450
Marantz SR-73	600
NAD 912	200

NAD AV316	450
NAD AV216THX	470
NAD 916	500
NAD 208THX	1,000
Onkyo A-S620	700
Onkyo A-SV810PRO	900
Rotel RB956AX	400
Sony TA-AV590	399
Sony TA-AV570B	400
Technics SA-GX470L	400
Yamaha DSP-A590	349
Yamaha DSP-A780	599
Yamaha DSP-A2070	1,099

AV Receivers

Denon AVR-900	350
Denon AVR-1000	520
Harman-Kardon AVR-20	499
Harman-Kardon AVR-25	699
Harman-Kardon AVR-30	1,000
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-616RBK	350
Kenwood KA-V5570	350
Kenwood KR-V6070	350
Kenwood KR-V7070	400
Kenwood KR-V1000	1,300
Marantz AV600THX	900
Marantz SR-82	900
NAD AV713	480
NAD 917	550
NAD AV716	600
Onkyo TX-SV424PRO	450
Onkyo TX-SV525PRO	600
Onkyo TX-SV727PRO	900
Onkyo TX-SV919THX	2,000
Pioneer VSX-804RDS	399
Sony ST-AD54B	280
Sony STR-D615	300
Sony SMD611B	330
Technics SA-GX390L	300
Technics SA-GX470L	350
Technics SA-GX690L	450
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449



**AV Loudspeakers
Centre Channel Speakers**

B&W 2001FS	120
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W CC6	200
Boston Acoustics 404V	100

One day, all
Dansettes will
look like this.



Boston Acoustics CR1	100
Boston Acoustics Centre 6	130
Boston Acoustics S25V	150
Boston Acoustics Centre 7	200
Boston Acoustics VR12	300
Canon S-C10	129
Canon S-C20	199
Celestion CSC	129
Celestion Centre 2	189
Denon SC-H1C	130
Jamo Centre 50	80
Jamo Centre 100	140
Jamo Centre 200	200
Jamo Converta Light	200
JBL MR Centre	100
JBL TLX103	130
JBL SC305	150
JBL Centre	180
JPW Centre 160	170
KEF 80C	129
KEF 200C	699
Kenwood CS-6	150
Linn Centrik	298
Meridian DSP5000C	1,595
Meridian DSP6000C	4,500
Monitor Audio CC200	200
Monitor Audio CC900	400
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Dialogue	60
NAD 808CC	170
NAD CS200	170
Polk CS250	250
Polk CS350	450
TDL Nucleus CCS	150

Surround Speakers

Aiwa SX-R220	50
B&W SCM8	550
Boston Acoustics VRS	429
Boston Acoustics S75X	450
Canon V-100	210
Celestion Impact 25	99
Jamo Surround Rear	60
Jamo Surround 50	70
Jamo Surround 100	90
Jamo Surround 200	170
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decomatch	150
Polk M3 II	220
Polk M5	300
Polk LS f/x Surround	449

AV Speaker Packages

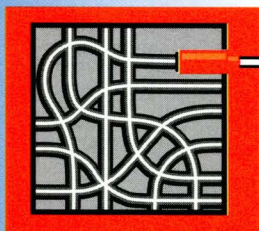
Aiwa TS-W5	150
Aiwa TS-W7	200
B&W Solid System	685
B&W THX System	4,395
Boston Acoustics THX System	2,500
Canon S-KT2	229
Canon S-KT1	279
Celestion CS2	149
Celestion Style Series	699
Dali Surround Sound Sys	1,240
GLL Arena AV	89
Harman-Kardon HT-1 System	2,500
Jamo SP50	140
Jamo Centre 18	150
Jamo System 4000II	230
Jamo System 4000SII	240
Jamo Art	250
Jamo THX System	2,500

JBL Control 1	119
JBL Control 4	249
JBL SAT2	299
JBL Control 25	599
JBL Music/Movies One	650
JBL / REL System	995
JBL Music/Movies Two	1,100
JBL HT-1 System	2,500
JBL Synthesis Three	15,000
JBL Synthesis Two	22,500
JBL Synthesis One	32,000
JPW Gold Monitors	80
JPW MM Package	199
JPW Gold Monitor	280
JPW AV2	300
JPW AV1	300
JPW AV4	400
JPW AV3	400
KEF 80C	129
Kenwood THX System	2,800
Linn Tulkan	449
Linn Keilidh	649
Mordaunt-Short CS-1	115
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 System Pack	400
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decomatch	465
Pioneer S-V201	250
Pioneer S-V401	700
Polk M Solution	999
Polk RM3000 II/M3/CS200	1,088
Polk SRT	9,500
REL REL/JBL System	1,000
Sony SA-VA1	599
Sony SA-VA3	799
Sony SA-V55	800
TDL Home Theatre Pk 1	500
Wharfedale Movies 4	349
Wharfedale Movies 7	459
Wharfedale Movies 9	489

Subwoofers

B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W AS6	500
B&W PCS8	750
B&W 800ASW	1,495
B&W 800ASW	1,500
B&W 800ASW	1,500
Boston Acoustics VR500	400
Boston Acoustics SW10	450
Boston Acoustics 595X	455
Canon S-B20	200
Jamo SW400e	330
Jamo SW300SYSII	350
Jamo SW505e	400
Jamo SW500 SYS	450
Jamo SW600e	530
JBL PS60	399
JPW Satellites	80
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
Kenwood CM-5ES	80
Kenwood RS-05	80
Kenwood CM-7ES	100
Kenwood OMNI-7	180
Kenwood SW500	250
Kenwood SW-500	250
Kenwood SW900	260
Kenwood SW-900	260

Linn Sekrit	298
Meridian Sub 1	1,500
Monitor Audio MA100/G	280
Mordaunt-Short SW-1	150
Polk PSW100	499
REL Strata	500
REL Storm	700
REL Stadium II	1,000
REL Stentor	1,495
REL Studio	2,995
TDL SBR	200
Wharfedale Modus Sub-Bass	18



CABLES

Analogue Interconnects

Arion SA0.5	75
Arion SA1	125
Arion SA2	199
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	25
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35
Cable Talk Improved 2/T	50
Cable Talk Studio 2	65
Cable Talk Professional 2	85
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	130
Cable Talk Reference 2	180
Chord Chrysalis	30
Chord Cobra	32
Chord Siren	65
Chord Chameleon	68
Chord Sile	99
DPA Slink	47
DPA White Slink	75
Ixos 104	20
Ixos 103	40
Ixos 102	60
Ixos 101	100
Kimber Cable Illuminati DV50	552
Kimber Cable Orchid	1,183
Kronos Konnekt 3	49
Kronos Konnekt 2	99
Kronos Konnekt 1	199
Nordost Magic 1	30
Nordost Black Knight	50
Nordost Blue Angel	80
Nordost Blue Heaven	120
Nordost Red Dawn	250
QED P2 Gold	20
QED Incon P2 Screened	23
QED Incon P1 Screened	26
Sonic Link Pink	35
Sonic Link Red	45
Sonic Link Derwent	50
Sonic Link Violet	85
Sonic Link Blue	115
Sonic Link Black	165

Trichord Pulsewire 75	150
Arion DAC1	99
Arion DAC2	199
Audioquest Video Z	50
Audioquest Digital PRO	90
Cable Talk Digital 2	75
Chord Codac	32
Chord Prodac	50
DPA Digi-link	28
Ixos 105	25
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	37
Kimber Cable KC-1 D'link	52
Kimber Cable KC-AG D'link	95
Kimber Cable D-60	513
Monster Datalink 100	45
Moth Layline Datalink	140
Nordost Moonglo Digital	135
QED Digiflex	20
Sonic Link Light Brown	30
Sonic Link Green	50
Trichord Pulsewire 75/D	64
van den Hul MV Videolink 75	30

Speaker Cables

Arion LS0.5	12
Arion LS1	30
Arion LS-2	50
Audio Note AN-B	165
Audio Note AN-SP	1,270
Audioquest F-14	45
Audioquest Type 4	75
Audioquest Midnight Hyperlitz	260
Cable Talk Theatre 2	1.50
Cable Talk The Flat One	2
Cable Talk Talk 3	2.25
Cable Talk Overture 2	4
Cable Talk Talk 4	4.25
Cable Talk Talk 3 Bi-wire	4.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7
Cable Talk Talk 4 Bi-wire	8.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Bi-wire	14
Chord Rumour	8
Chord Flatline Gold	75
Chord Flatline Twin	16
DNM LBC8500	170
DPA IS19	275
Heybrook Heywire	4
Ixos 603	2
Ixos 601	3
Ixos 604	5
Ixos 602	5
Ixos 603/10	20
Mission Quartet	9
Mission Stranded	20
Naim NAC05	5
Nordost 2-Flat	5
Nordost Flatline Gold	9
Nordost Super Flat Biwire	17
Nordost Blue Heaven	58
Nordost Red Dawn	99
QED 42 Strand	1
QED FI-4	2
QED 79 Strand	2
QED RI-4	3
QED Qudos	3
QED Qudos Profile 8	5
QED Qudos Terminated	33
Sonic Link AST150	40
Sonic Link AST75X2	50
Sonic Link AST150X2	80
Sonic Link Grey	90
Sonic Link Care Music	150
Sonic Link Blue	200
Sonic Link Derwent/spkr	200
Sonic Link Care Music BiWire	300
Tech + Link OFC79	1
Tech + Link OFC42	1
van den Hul The Clearwater	50
van den Hul The Magnum	265
van den Hul The Wind	330

Audio Technica AT-91	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	19
Audio Technica AT-110E	24
Denon DL110	70
Denon DL160	90
Denon DL103	100
Goldring Elan P	17
Goldring Elan	17
Goldring Elektra	25
Goldring 100G	50
Goldring 1012GX	65
Goldring 1022GX	85
Goldring Eroica LX	100
Goldring Eroica	100
Grado ZTE+1	27
Grado ZCE+1	37
Grado Z3E+1	47
Grado ZF1+	82
Linn K5	54

Nottingham Analogue Tracer I	98
Ortofon VMS2	10
Ortofon OM-5E	16
Ortofon OMP-5E	17
Ortofon OM Pro S	21
Ortofon OM10 Super	25
Ortofon OM Night Club S	32
Ortofon S10/P	32
Ortofon OM Night Club E	37
Ortofon Concord Pro S	40
Ortofon Concord NC S	55
Ortofon S20/P	55
Ortofon OM20 Super	60
Ortofon MCL1 Turbo	60
Ortofon Concord NC E	60
Ortofon OM30 Super	80
Ortofon MC10 Super	85
Ortofon S30/P	85
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	25
Pickering V15-DJ	28
Pickering TL-E	35
Pickering XV15-350C	40
Pickering TL-2E	45
Pickering XV15-625E	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50
Pickering TL-2-S	55
Pickering XV15-757S	55
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	70
Pickering TL3S	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	100
Pickering TL-4-S	100
Rega Bias	34
Rega RB78	34
Rega Super Bias	52
Rega Elys	74
Shure SC35C	28
Shure ME95ED	38
Stanton 500EL	34
Stanton 500AL II	34
Stanton 680AL/X	50
Stanton 680EL/X	56
Stanton 890AL/X	82
Sumiko Oyster	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	50
Sumiko Pearl	50
Sumiko Blue Point	100

Over £100

Audio Note lo HV	1,395
Audio Note lo Ltd V	2,950
Audio Technica AT-0C9	245
Audio Technica ART-1	944
Audioquest MC5	250
Audioquest 404L	599
Audioquest 404IMH	899
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495
Benz-Micro The Glider	600
Benz-Micro H200	700
Benz-Micro M090	700
Benz-Micro L040	700
Benz-Micro Wood Ref	1,100
Benz-Micro Ruby Ref	1,400
Denon DL304	200
DNM Reson Mica	150
DNM Reson Acioe	199
DNM Reson Recca	225
DNM Reson Etile	299
DNM Reson Lexa	899
Dynavector 50X	159
Dynavector 10X	189
Dynavector 23RS	375
Dynavector 17D2	450
Dynavector XX-1L	998
Dynavector XX-1	998
Dynavector TE-KAITORA	1,698
Goldring 1042	105
Goldring Elite	200
Grado Signature Junior	149
Grado Signature 8MZ	250
Grado Signature MCZ	375
Grado Signature TLZ	650

CARTRIDGES

Up to £100

Arcam C77	30
Arcam C77MG	40
Arcam E77	50
Arcam E77MG	60
Arcam P77	63
Arcam P77MG	73

Plug, wire, plug... er, wire, plug, wire... ummm, plug... wire... yup, it's definitely an interconnect.



Grado Signature XTZ	975
Kiseki Blue GS	499
Kiseki PHS	899
Koetsu Red T	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	2,297
Koetsu Signature	3,218
Linn K9	109
Linn K18/II	197
Linn Klyde	449
Linn Arkiv	998
London Decca Maroon	199
London Decca Gold	239
London Decca Maroon Dp	259
London Decca Gold Dpd	299
London Decca S Gold	339
London Decca S Gold Dp	399
London Decca Jubilee	999
Lyra Lydian	699
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069
Lyra Parnassus	2,295
Militek Aurora	299
Militek Olympia	399
Nottingham Analogue Tracer II	175
Nottingham Analogue Tracer III	350
Nottingham Analogue Tracer IV	550
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110
Ortofon 540/P	110
Ortofon MC25E	160
Ortofon MC25FL	210
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	250
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	350
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	450
Ortofon MC200II	650
Ortofon MC300II	950
Ortofon MC5000	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	150
Pickering TL-4004	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200
Roksan Corus Black	130
Roksan Shiraz	975
Sumiko BPS	250
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995
van den Hul MM-1	250
van den Hul MM-2	299
van den Hul DDT-II	699
van den Hul MC-10	799
van den Hul MC-One	999
van den Hul MC-One/Hi	1,149
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLN	2,200
van den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	2,750
van den Hul Grasshopper IIISLA	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLA	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	3,400
van den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	3,450

Sony TC-W445B	150
Sony TC-K461S	180
Sony TC-K415B	180
Sony TC-WR545B	200
Teac V395CHX	100
Teac V-610	129
Teac R-560	180
Teac W-760R	180
Technics RS-TR373	200
Technics RS-BX501	200

Over £200

Aiwa AD-F850	230
Aiwa AD-S950	300
Arcam Delta 100	899
Denon DRS-640	210
Denon DRW-760	260
Denon DRM-740	270
Denon DRS-810	310
Harman-Kardon TD420	280
Harman-Kardon TD450	350
Harman-Kardon TD470	450
JVC TD-W562BK	220
JVC TD-W718BK	250
JVC TD-V662BK	270
Kenwood KX-5060S	235
Kenwood KX-W8070S	280
Kenwood KX-7060S	329
Luxman K-373	400
Marantz SD-535	250
Marantz SD-63	270
Marantz CP-230	400
Marantz SD-635	400
Marantz DC-1010	450
Marantz CP-430	500
NAD 613	230
NAD 614	270
NAD 616	320
Nakamichi DR3	450
Nakamichi DR2	750
Nakamichi Dragon	2,350
Onkyo TA-RW311	320
Onkyo KR-609	350
Onkyo TA250	350
Onkyo K-W606	370
Onkyo K-611	430
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300
Pioneer CT-S630S	300
Pioneer CT-M601R	380
Pioneer CT-S830S	500
Pioneer CT-95	1,000
Sony TC-WR645S	250
Sony TC-K511S	250
Sony TC-K611S	300
Teac V-1030	250
Teac W-600OR	450
Teac V-8030S	650
Technics RS-TR474	220
Technics RS-BX601	250
Technics RS-TR575	280
Technics RS-BX701	300
Technics RS-BX747	350
Technics RS-TR979	400
Yamaha KX-W482	249
Yamaha KX-580	249
Yamaha KX-W952	599

Kenwood DP-R4070	200
Kenwood DP-3060	200
Kenwood DP-M5570	250
Kenwood DP-5060	250
Luxman D-322	200
Marantz CD-510	200
Marantz CC-45	250
NAD 510	189
NAD 502	239
NAD 512	250
Onkyo DX-710	200
Onkyo DX-703	240
Philips CD163	100
Philips CD711	120
Philips CD721	130
Philips CD740	170
Pioneer PD-77	100
Pioneer PD-103	140
Pioneer PD-203	160
Pioneer PD-S504	200
Pioneer PD-M603	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	200
Rotel RCD-940BX	250
Sony CPM2403	200
Sony CDP-M302	130
Sony CDP-312	150
Sony CDP-561E	200
Sony CDP-C325M	230
Sony CDP-C345	230
Sony CDP-761E	250
Teac CD-P1100	140
Teac CD-P3200	150
Teac CD-P3450	179
Teac CD-3	250
Teac PD-D2200	250
Technics SL-PG370	130
Technics SL-PG470AK	150
Technics SL-PG570AK	170
Technics SL-PS670AK	200
Technics 1278	250
Yamaha CDC-555	199
Yamaha CDC-655	249

£251 to £500

Aiwa DX-C100M	500
AMC CD6	349
Arcam Alpha One	300
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470
Audio Innovations Alto	399
Audio Innovations Alto Chr	449
Aura CD100	400
Creek CD42	500
Denon DCD-1015	300
Grundig CDC14	300
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299
Harman-Kardon FL8450	300
Harman-Kardon HD730	300
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400
JVC XL-Z674BK	300
JVC XL-M408BK	300
Kenwood DP-7060	380
Marantz CD-63MkII	270
Marantz CD-1010	300
Marantz CD-1020	334

Micromega Minium CD	350
Musical Fidelity E60	300
NAD 514	370
NAD 517	400
Nakamichi MB4s	350
Onkyo DX-7210	260
Onkyo FL8300	280
Onkyo DX-C711	290
Onkyo DX-7510	350
Onkyo DX-750	350
Orelle CD-100	350
Pioneer PD-S703	300
Pioneer PD-M703	300
Pioneer PD-S904	400
Pioneer PD-DM802	450
Pioneer PD-S901	499
Pioneer PD-TM3	500
Rotel RCD-965BX	300
Rotel RCD-970BX	375
Rotel RCD-965BX D	375
Rotel RCD-965BX LED	425
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400
Teac CD-5	350

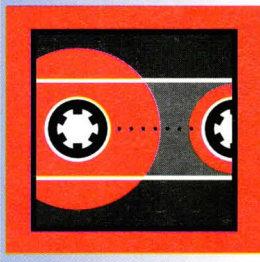
£501 to £1000

Arcam Alpha 6	600
Arcam Delta 250	750
Arcam Delta 270	800
DPA Renaissance	895
Harman-Kardon HD7625	550
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800
Kenwood DP-J2070	600
Linn Mimik	798
Luxman D-373	550
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	600
Meridian 563	750
Me idian 506	875
Meridian 200	895
Micromega Stage 1	550
Micromega Stage 2	700
Micromega Stage 3	900
Musical Fidelity E600	599
Naim CD3	977
Nakamichi MB2s	700
Onix CD33	999
Pioneer PD-F100	600
Quad 77B	700
Quad 77M	900
Sony CDP-CX100	800
Teac VRDS-10	770
Teac VRDS-10SE	850
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thule CD100	849

Over £1000

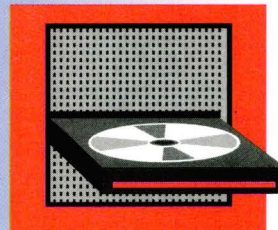
AVI S2000MC	1,249
Copland CDA-288	1,799
Jadis JS-1	8,068
Krell CD-DSP Mk II	5,000
Krell CD DSPII 5000	5,000
Krell KPS20i	9,990
Luxman D500XS	4,500
Marantz CD-10	1,200
Marantz CD-16	1,400
Marantz CD-15	3,000

Marantz CD-23	4,000
McIntosh MCD7008	2,195
McIntosh MCD7009	2,635
Meracus AURIGA	1,295
Meracus FLAGRARE	2,495
Meracus AMAGO	3,995
Meracus IMAGIO	4,495
Meridian 606	1,350
Meridian 508	1,475
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695
Micro-Seiki CDM2000X	4,689
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499
Naim CD2	1,977
Naim CD5	3,751
Pioneer PD-95	2,500
Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,495
Teac VRDS-20	1,299
YBA 2	2,999
ADT Drive 1	3,499
ADT Drive 1	3,499
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700
AudioLab 8000CDM	1,400
Audiomeca Damnation	950
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,199
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,250
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495
DPA Enlightenment	635
Jadis JCDT	8,000
Krell KSP20i/1	1,100
Krell MD-20	4,999
Krell MD-10	7,990
Krell KPS 20T	8,490
Krell DT-10	9,090
Linn Kark	1,497
Meridian 500	1,095
Meridian 602	1,750
Micromega Drive 1	700
Micromega Drive 2	1,000
Pink Triangle Cardinal	795
PS Audio Lambda tr	2,250
Roksan ATT-DP3	1,295
Teac VRDS-T1	550
Teac VRDS-7	599
Teac P-700	900
Teac P-2S	4,000
Theta Data Basic II	2,298
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879
Thorens TCD2000	900
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370
XTC CDT-1LE	1,250
Arcam Black Box 50	480
Arcam Black Box 500	750
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895
Linn Numerik	1,075
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCCD	2,650
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550



CASSETTE DECKS
Up to £200

Aiwa AD-F450	120
Aiwa AD-WX727	170
Denon DRM-540	160
Denon DRW-580	200
Dual CC8000 RS	200
Goodmans Delta 700W	100
Goodmans GSW650	130
Grundig CCF3	200
Grundig CCF3	200
JVC TD-W218BK	170
JVC TD-K372BK	170
JVC TD-R472BK	200
JVC TD-W318BK	200
Kenwood KX-W4070	170
Kenwood KX-3060	170
Kenwood KX-W6070	200
Luxman K-322	200
Marantz SD-53	200
Pioneer CT-S330	170
Pioneer CT-W503R	200
Pioneer CT-S430S	200
Sony TC-FX211B	100
Sony TC-K215B	130
Sony TC-K311B	130



CD PLAYERS
Up to £250

Aiwa XC-300	150
Cambridge Audio CD4	150
Denon DCD-315	150
Denon DCD-825	200
Denon DCD-625	200
Denon DCD-825	240
Dual CD1135RC	140
Dual CD1150RC	150
Dual CD1000RS	170
Dual CD1180RC	180
Eclipse CD101a	80
Goodmans Delta 700	110
Goodmans GCD360R	120
Grundig CDII	170
Harman-Kardon HD710	250
JVC XL-V184BK	120
JVC XL-V284BK	140
JVC XL-F116BK	180
JVC XL-F216BK	200
JVC XL-V574BK	250
Kenwood DP-2060	160



Retractable cup holders don't come much more snazzy than this.

Teac D-71	500
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395
DIGITAL RECORDERS	
JVC XM-D1BK	900
Meridian CDR	4,500
Philips DCC134	150
Philips DCC730	250
Philips DCC170	250
Philips DCC951	280
Pioneer D-05	800
Pioneer D-07	1,150
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300
Sharp MD-M11E	450
Sony MDA-JA3ES	799
Sony MBS501	800
Sony DTC80ES	800
Teac R-9	1,200



HEADPHONES
Up to £40

Aiwa HP-X201	13
Aiwa HP-A360	13
Aiwa HP-X301	20
Aiwa HP-VX303	25
Aiwa HP-X705	40
AKG K2	23
AKG K33	25
Audio Technica ATH-P1	10
Audio Technica ATH-P3	15
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20
Beyer DT111 Alpha	15
Beyer DT111 Beta	20
Beyer DT111 Gamma	25
Beyer DT211	33
Denon AH-C33	26
JVC HA-22	6
JVC HA-CD88	18
JVC HA-DS25	20
JVC HA-F65	20
JVC HA-D626	25
JVC HA-D610	25
Kenwood KH-535	15
Kenwood KH-757	20
Kenwood KH-1030	20
Kenwood KH-959	25
Kenwood KH-2020	40
Maxell EB-125	4
Maxell HP-200	5
Maxell EB-225	8
Maxell HBS-150	8
Maxell HP-300	8
Maxell EBS-325	9

Maxell EB-425	10
Maxell HP-700	10
Maxell HP-500	13
Maxell HP-1000	19
Maxell HP-2000	20
Maxell HP-3000	26
Pioneer SE-5	16
Pioneer SE-15	20
Pioneer SE-32	23
Pioneer SE-52	25
Pioneer SE-15V	30
Pioneer SE-330D	35
Pioneer SE-400D	37
Ross RE-233	5
Ross RIH-150	6
Ross RE-235	6
Ross RE-234	6
Ross RE-229	6
Ross RE-2030	6
Ross RMH-300	7
Ross RE-280	7
Ross RE-246	7
Ross RE-223	7
Ross RMH-500CD	9
Ross RIH-360CD	9
Ross RE-2060CD	9
Ross RMH-310TV	10
Ross RIH-550	10
Ross RIH-460CD	12
Ross RDH-200CD	13
Ross RDH-100CD	15
Ross RDH-300CD	17
Ross RDH-400CD	22
Sennheiser HD26	10
Sennheiser HD36	13
Sennheiser HD56	15
Sennheiser Vegas	28
Sennheiser Manhattan	28
Sennheiser HD60TV	38
Sennheiser HD445 II	40
Sony MDR-E505	8
Sony MDR-E515EX	8
Sony MDR-007 Mk II	8
Sony MDR-009	10
Sony MDR-W07L	11
Sony MDR-A009	12
Sony MDR-E515V	12
Sony MDR-V50	13
Sony MDR-E525	15
Sony MDR-24	15
Sony MDR-25	16
Sony MDR-W12L	16
Sony MDR-008TV	17
Sony MDR-E535	18
Sony MDR-44	18
Sony MDR-009TV	19
Sony MDR-35	20
Sony MDR-CD30	25
Sony MDR-E747MP	20
Sony MDR-CD50	20
Sony MDR-5747	20
Sony MDR-P1TV	22
Sony MDR-A22L	22
Sony MDR-CD250EX	28
Technics RP-HT77	30

Technics RP-HT300	40
Vivanco SR60	3
Vivanco SR12	3
Vivanco SR52	5
Vivanco SR54	7
Vivanco SR14	7
Vivanco SR16	8
Vivanco SR120	15
Vivanco SR250	19
Vivanco SR150	20
Vivanco SR200	25
Vivanco SR300	30
Vivanco SR606	40

Over £41

AKG K44	42
AKG K135	46
AKG K141	74
AKG K240 Monitor	82
AKG K222IR	100
AKG K270	112
AKG K280 Parabolic	117
AKG K400	118
AKG K270 Studio	121
AKG K500	138
AKG K333IR	150
AKG K444IR	180
AKG K340	191
AKG K1000	646
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90
Beyer DT311	49
Beyer DT331	59
Beyer DT411	69
Beyer DT431	89
Beyer DT511	99
Beyer DT531	129
Beyer IRS790	129
Beyer DT770 Pro	139
Beyer DT100	139
Beyer DT801	159
Beyer DT990 Pro	163
Beyer DT811	179
Beyer IRS890	199
Beyer DT901	199
Beyer DT911	219
Denon AH-D210	45
Denon AH-D350	65
Denon AH-D550	80
Denon AH-D650	95
Denon AH-D750	130
Denon AH-D950	150
Jacklin Float Model 1	75
Jacklin Float Model 2	99
Jacklin Float ELS	399
JVC HA-D727	43
JVC HA-D710	55
JVC HA-D910	65
JVC HA-D1000	250
JVC HA-F25	699
Kenwood KH-5000	70
Nakamichi SP7	70
Pioneer SE-500D	48
Pioneer SE-700D	60
Sennheiser HD414 Class	50
Sennheiser HD455	50
Sennheiser HD465	65
Sennheiser IS360/UK	75
Sennheiser HD475	75
Sennheiser HD25 SP	85
Sennheiser HD535	100
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	120
Sennheiser HD565 Ovate'n	140
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	140
Sennheiser IS450	150
Sennheiser HD25	160
Sennheiser IS550	180
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	200
Sennheiser IS850	860
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	9,652
Sony MDR-CD450	45
Sony MDR-IF210	50
Sony MDR-CD550	60
Sony MDR-D33	70
Sony MDR-IF210K	80
Sony MDR-D55	90
Sony MDR-CD750	90
Sony MDR-D77	120
Sony MDR-610K	190
Sony MDR-CD1000	200
Stax SR34	169
Stax SR Gamma	239
Stax SR84	259
Stax SR Lambda	349
Stax Gamma Pro	399
Stax Lambda Pro	449
Stax Lambda Sig	549
Stax Omega	1,695
Technics RP-HT400	50
Technics RP-HT600	60
Technics RP-HT700	70
Technics RP-F10	100
Technics RP-F30	180
Vivanco IR5700	50

Vivanco IR5000	50
Vivanco SR850	50
Vivanco IR6000	70
Vivanco SR909	70
Vivanco IR6500	90
Vivanco SR10001FL	110
Vivanco IR7100	120
Vivanco IR7600	140
Vivanco SR200FL	140



LOUDSPEAKERS
Up to £130

Advent Mini	99
Atkinson AL100	100
AMC WM50	120
B&W Solid HCM15	125
B&W DM302	130
B&W Solid HCM2	130
Bose XL1000	115
Canon SV-15	99
Canon S-C10	130
Celestion Little 1	99
Celestion 1	99
Celestion Impact 10	129
Celestion CSC	129
Denon SC-M2	80
Denon SCM2	80
Gale Ref Monitors	100
Genexa GX330	80
GLL Arena	89
GLL Arena HF	99
Goodmans Active 75	65
Goodmans M100	80
Goodmans HT100	100
Interaudio XL1000	100
Jamo Studio 80	70
Jamo Cornet 20.4	90
Jamo Studio 110	75
Jamo SAT160	110
Jamo D115	110
Jamo Cornet 30.4	110
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo SAT200 II	130
JBL Control One	115
JPW Minim SGL SHD	50
JPW Minim Pair Solid	89
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100
JPW Sonata	120
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X500BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Mission 73S	100
Mission 731L	130
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Realistic Minimus 3.5	30
Realistic Minimus 21	30
Realistic M' mus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-7	60
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
Sony SS-E300	50
Sony SS-V77	50
Sony SS-E500	80
Sony SS-J90AV	100
Sony SS85E	100
Sony SS125E	120
TDL Near Field Moni or	100
TDL NFM	100
Teac LS-X8	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Wharfedale Centre Cube	49
Wharfedale Valdis 100	79
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99
Wharfedale Valdis 200	109
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119
Yamaha NS-C80	99
Yamaha NS-E80	120

£131 to £200

Acoustic Energy AE100	200
Advent Baby 2	149
Atkinson AL105	170
AMC WM75	160
B&W CWM5	150
B&W DM601	199

B&W Solid Monitor	200
Bose XL2000	160
Bose XL3000	180
Bose 101 M'ble Monitor	190
Boston Acoustics HD5	139
Boston Acoustics 325	139
Boston Acoustics CR6	149
Boston Acoustics Runabout	169
Boston Acoustics 350	179
Boston Acoustics 335	179
Boston Acoustics Satellites	179
Boston Acoustics CR7	199
Canon S-25	150
Canon S-30	180
Canon S-B20	200
Celestion CS135	139
Celestion 3 MKII	139
Celestion MP1	149
Celestion CS2	149
Celestion CS4	169
Celestion Centre 2	189
Celestion 5 MkII	189
Celestion Impact 15	199
Cerwin Vega HED165	200
Denon SC-E313	160
Denon SC-E313	160
Gale Model 4	200
Genexa GX650	140
GLL Arena SW	139
GLL Imagio IC100	170
Goodmans HT170	150
Grundig BK1	160
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149
Harman-Kardon LS0300	199
Heybrook Prima	139
Heybrook Solo	199
Infinity SM65	150
Infinity Reference 1i	150
Infinity Reference 1ii	200
Interaudio XL2000	140
Interaudio XL3000	160
Interaudio XL4000	200
Genexa GX330	140
GLL Arena	89
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140
Jamo D135	160
Jamo Studio 180	170
Jamo SAT500	170
Jamo Converta	180
Jamo Converta Light	200
Jamo D165	200
Jamo Cornet 60.4	200
JBL TLX111	140
JBL TLX121	140
JPW P1 Vinyl	170
JPW P1	170
JPW AP2	180
KEF Coda 8	200
KEF 60S	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200
Mission 73C	150
Mission 73Z	200
Monitor Audio MA301	200
Monitor Audio Monitor 1 Gold	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decormatch	150
Mordaunt-Short HT30	150
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150
Mordaunt-Short MS20i	200
NAD 800	149
Philips Legend FB720H	200
Pioneer CS-5030	170
Polk RT3	200
QLN OuBic111	200
Rega Kyte	198
Revolver Colt	139
Revolver Purdey Mk II	199
Rogers LS1	149
Royd The Herald	198
Tannoy 631	149
Tannoy 632	189
TDL NFM2	180
TDL SBR	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
Visionik David 5001	132
Visionik Sub 4	150
Visionik David 6001	163
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139
Wharfedale Valdis 300	149
Wharfedale Modus One	159
Wharfedale Modus Sub-bass	179
Wharfedale Modus Three	199
Wharfedale Valdis 400	199
Yamaha NS-C110	149
ZYP AI	199

£201 to £300

Advent Graduate	219
Advent Prodigy	299
Allison MS200	220
Allison AL110	220
Allison AL115	280
Allison CD6	300



When the world must be your oyster, and your oyster alone... you need headphones.

AMC WM100	210	Jamo D265D	300
B&O Beovox CX50	300	Jamo 307A	300
B&W CWM6i	240	JBL TLX60	250
B&W Solid HCM1	249	JBL TLX60	300
B&W DM602	300	JPW AP3	230
B&W Solid Powerbass	300	JVC SP-K990BK	230
B&W CWM8i	300	JVC SX-SW10	300
Bose XL4000	220	KEF Q10	229
Bose VS100	250	KEF Coda 9	299
Bose 151 Environmental	270	KEF 70S	299
Bose 161 Freestyle	275	Kenwood LS-300G	300
Bose 201 Ser III	290	Keswick Audio Palermo	259
Bose C'puter RoomMate	300	Linn Sekrit On Passive	298
Bose Video RoomMate	300	Linn Sekrit In Passive	298
Bose Roomate II	300	Micromega Minium MS1	300
Boston Acoustics 360 Ser II	209	Mission 733	300
Boston Acoustics CR8	239	Mission 751	300
Boston Acoustics CR8	249	Monitor Audio Monitor 7 Gold II	245
Boston Acoustics 380	279	Monitor Audio MA100G	280
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299	Monitor Audio Sub JW/200/92	300
Canon V-100	210	Monitor Audio MA201	300
Canon S-35	250	Mordaunt-Short MS301	275
Castle ISIS	229	Mordaunt-Short HT50	275
Castle Durham 900	300	Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300
Celestion 7 MKII	239	NAD 802	249
Celestion 9	269	Pioneer CS-7030	230
Celestion Impact 20	279	Pioneer S-4UK	250
Celestion 11	299	Pioneer S-60	270
Celestion Impact 23	300	Pioneer CS-9030	280
Cerwin Vega HT120	250	Polk M3 II	220
Cerwin Vega V58	250	Polk RT5	250
Cerwin Vega HED265	300	Polk RT7	300
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300	Polk M5	300
Dali 102B	260	QLN Qubic 121	250
GLL Imagio IC110	300	Rega EL8	298
Heybrook HB1	269	Rogers LS33	249
Infinity SM85	250	Royd Minstrel	259
Infinity Inf IV Sat	300	Royd Merlin	298
Jamo Classic 4	250	System Audio 905	250
Jamo Art	250	Tannoy 633/II	300

TDL RTL2	300
Visonik David 8001	228
Wharfedale Modus Five	259
Wharfedale Valdius 500	299
Yamaha NS10M	250
ZYP A1T	219
ZYP A2S	275
ZYP A25T	295

£301 to £500

Advent Legacy 2	349
Advent Laureate	499
Allison CD7	380
Allison AL120	420
Audio Innovations Alto	329
Audio Note AN-KB	499
AVI Neutron	499
B&O Beovox CX100	400
B&O Beovox RL6000	450
B&O Beovox 4500	475
B&W CDM2	400
B&W Solid Verticale	400
B&W AS6	500
B&W DM603	500
B&W Signature 7	500
Bose 301 VM	380
Bose 305	430
Bose A'mass AM3 II	500
Bose 401	500
Boston Acoustics SW10	449
Boston Acoustics SubSat 6	449
Castle York	370
Castle Severn	500
Celestion 15	389
Celestion Impact 25	399
Celestion Impact 30	429
Celestion SL6Si	429
Celestion CS6i	449
Celestion CS8i	499
Cerwin Vega VS10	350
Clements 300si	395
Dali 104B	370
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482
Epos ES11	445
Faraday SG	345
Faraday Siren	445
Fullers Sultan	399
Fullers Sultan H.E.	439
GLL Imagio IC120	420
Grundig BX3 Mk II	350
Heybrook Trio	373
Heybrook Heylo	389
Heybrook Heystak	499
Infinity SM105	350
Infinity Inf Micro II	400
Infinity SM115	450
Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo BX100A	350
Jamo 407A	350
Jamo Graphic	380
Jamo Classic 8	400
Jamo D365D	400
Jamo Silhouette	450
Jamo Atmosphere	450
Jamo BX150A	450
Jamo BX200A	500
Jamo 477A	500
JBL TLX151	350
JBL TLX70	400
JBL TLX161	400
JBL TLX171	500
Jordan Watts JHFLG	420
JPW Ruby 1	500
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395
KEF Q30	379
Kenwood LS-500G	500
Keswick Audio Aria II	329
Linn Tukan	449
Lumley Reference LM4	375
Lumley Reference LM5	499
Manticoere Minaret	480
Mission 734	430
Mission 752	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 9 Gold II	350
Monitor Audio MA302	400
Monitor Audio MA202	450
Monitor Audio MA303	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 14 Gold II	500
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450
Musical Technology Harrier	400
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live OL-1A	399
Origin Live OL-2A	470
Origin Live OL-1	499
Pentachord A	469
Pioneer S-80	370
Polk RT8	400
Polk LS f/x Surround	449
Polk RT10	500
Prof Monitor Co TB1	481
QLN Qubic 222	375
Rega ELA Mk II	498

Rogers LS55	429
Rogers Studio 3	499
Rogers Roksan 1	495
Royd The Squire	349
Royd Doublet	449
Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329
Ruark Icon	359
Ruark Sabre II	449
Ruark Templar	499
SD Acoustics SD3R	399
Sony SA-W90	359
Sony SSA1L	450
Spendor 2020	399
Tannoy Subsat3	399
Tannoy 636	419
Tannoy 637	499
TDL RTL3	400
TDL Studio 0.5	499
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
Triangle Titus T2e	325
Triangle Comete T2e	475
UKD-Opera Prima	450
Wharfedale Modus Seven	339
Wharfedale Modus One-Three	439

£501 to £800

Acoustic Energy AE1	764
Advent Heritage	579
Allison CD8	550
Allison AL125	650
Allison AL130	600
Audio Note AN-K/SP	899
Audio Note AN-L/B	799
B&W CDM1	600
B&W P4	675
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760
Bose A'mass AM511	760
Boston Acoustics SubSat 7	549
Castle Chester	700
Castle Harlech	799
Celestion Impact 35	529
Celestion 100	539
Celestion Impact 40	629
Cerwin Vega VS12	550
Cerwin Vega DC10	550
Cerwin Vega DC12	650
Cerwin Vega VS15	700
Clements 600si	595
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698
Epos ES14	675
Faraday FS10	795
Fullers Pharaoh 1	649
GLL Imagio IC130	530
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Quartet	575
Jamo 707A	900
JBL L20	850
JBL L40	1,100
JBL L60	1,200
JBL L80	1,300
JBL L90	1,300
JBL L90	1,500
Jordan Watts JH400	820
Jordan Watts JH400M	970
JPW Ruby 3	1,000
JPW Ruby 4	1,300
KAL Trans-double	1,500
KEF Model One	1,099
KEF Model Two	1,499
Kenwood LS-700G	1,200
Keswick Audio Figaro Evolution	899
Keswick Audio Milano	999
Keswick Audio Alto	1,299
Keswick Audio Amber	1,349
Lineaum LSII	991
Lineaum LFX Conan	1,399
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,144
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389
Lowther Fidelio	1,465
Lumley Reference LM3	895
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Manticoere Matisse	1,390
Meridian DSP6000	850
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300
Morel 704/2	1,000
Origin Live PIZZAZZ	975
Philips DSS830S	1,300
Pink Triangle Ventrical	896
Pioneer S-400	950
Polk LS70	1,200
Proac Response 1S	999
Proac Studio 150	1,399
Prof Monitor Co LBL1	998
QLN Signature	1,000
QLN Prestige	1,500
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500
Rega XEL	1,040
Rogers Studio 7	899
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995

Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Royd Abbot	665
Ruark Talisman II	749
Shahinian Super Elf	790
Spendor 2030	599
Spendor LS3/5A	630
Spendor S20	760
Spendor SP3/1	795
Tannoy 625	595
Tannoy 638	599
Tannoy D100	649
TDL Studio 1	699
UKD-Opera Seconda	550
UKD-Opera Riferimento	595
UKD-Opera Operetta	660

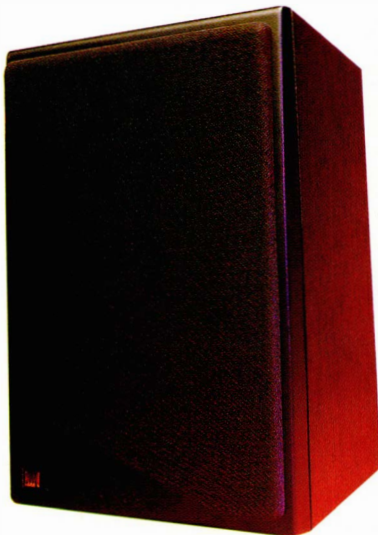
£801 to £1500

Acoustic Energy AE2	950
Apogee Centaur Minor	1,345
ATC SCM10	995
ATC SCM20	1,499
Audio Note AN-J/SP	999
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector 2X	850
Audiovector 3X	1,500
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450
B&W P5	875
B&W Matrix 805 V	995
B&W DM604	1,000
B&W P6	1,095
B&W Solid 800ASW	1,500
Bose A'mass AM7	830
Bose 601 MKIII	880
Canon S-75	899
Castle Howard S2	1,100
Celestion SL600si	820
Celestion 300	1,099
Celestion 700SE	1,435
Cerwin Vega DC15	850
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300
Chord SysAudio Sig	850
Clements Reference 1	995
Electrocompaniet The Oube	1,396
Epos ES32	1,185
Fullers Sphinx	839
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,200
Harbeth HL-KG	975
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329
Heybrook Sextet	1,129
Impulse Kora	1,095
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195
Jamo 707A	900
JBL L20	850
JBL L40	1,100
JBL L60	1,200
JBL L80	1,300
JBL L90	1,300
JBL L90	1,500
Jordan Watts JH400	820
Jordan Watts JH400M	970
JPW Ruby 3	1,000
JPW Ruby 4	1,300
KAL Trans-double	1,500
KEF Model One	1,099
KEF Model Two	1,499
Kenwood LS-700G	1,200
Keswick Audio Figaro Evolution	899
Keswick Audio Milano	999
Keswick Audio Alto	1,299
Keswick Audio Amber	1,349
Lineaum LSII	991
Lineaum LFX Conan	1,399
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,144
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389
Lowther Fidelio	1,465
Lumley Reference LM3	895
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Manticoere Matisse	1,390
Meridian DSP6000	850
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300
Morel 704/2	1,000
Origin Live PIZZAZZ	975
Philips DSS830S	1,300
Pink Triangle Ventrical	896
Pioneer S-400	950
Polk LS70	1,200
Proac Response 1S	999
Proac Studio 150	1,399
Prof Monitor Co LBL1	998
QLN Signature	1,000
QLN Prestige	1,500
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500
Rega XEL	1,040
Rogers Studio 7	899
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995



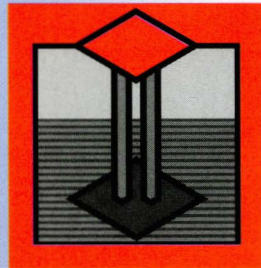
Whereof one cannot speak, thereon one must be silent...





Speak softly and carry a big stick...

Martin-Logan Quest Z	5,350	Audiophile Furniture Base	480
Martin-Logan Monolith IIP	8,730	Deadrock 701	40
Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000	Fi-Rax R4	250
Naim DBL Active	7,414	Ixos 800	35
Proac Response 3.5	4,250	Ixos 701	40
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681	Ixos 711	60
Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754	Ixos 802	70
QLN Artec 1600	4,500	Ixos 803	90
Quad ESL63	3,450	Ixos 802P	100
Rehdeko RK145	4,250	Ixos 703	100
Rehdeko RK175	7,750	Ixos 803P	110
Shahinian Hawk	4,950	Ixos 804	110
Shahinian Diapason	8,350	Ixos 713	130
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500	Ixos 804P	140
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991	Ixos 704	140
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790	Ixos 705	170
Sound-Lab Pristine II	6,990	Ixos 714	190
Spendor SP9/1	3,400	Ixos 715	230
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500	JPW Add-on	50
Tannoy Canterbury 12	5,500	JPW 3 tier	80
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	JPW 5 tier	100
Tannoy Canterbury 15	7,000	Mana Acoustics Sound Frame	125
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999	Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150
Thiel CS3.6	3,899	Mana Acoustics Sound Table	235
Triangle Octant Tx6	3,950	Mana Acoustics 2 Tier Amp stand	325
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600	Mana Acoustics Reference Table	350
Wilson Puppy 5	7,290	Mana Acoustics 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Wilson WATT 5	8,800	Mana Acoustics 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
		Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
		Mana Acoustics 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
		Projekt A3	125
		Projekt A4	165
		Projekt A5	205
		Projekt A6	245
		QLN Modulux	125
		Quadraspire Q4	200
		Sound Organisation Z22	60
		Sound Organisation Z230	70
		Sound Organisation Z021	75
		Sound Organisation Z030	95
		Sound Organisation Z060	115
		Sound Organisation Z550	125
		Sound Organisation Z038	130
		SoundStyle X300	170
		SoundStyle X305	200
		SoundStyle X053	200
		SoundStyle X050	200
		SoundStyle X100	210
		SoundStyle X058	230
		SoundStyle X310	240
		SoundStyle X120	240
		SoundStyle X105	240
		SoundStyle Select 6105	280
		Stands Unique Sound Tower	249
		Target B5	175



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Alphason R24/24	100
Alphason R17/17	100
Alphason R12/12	100
Alphason GR24/24	130
Alphason GR17/17	130
Alphason GR12/12	130
Alphason VR24/24	160
Alphason VR17/17	160
Alphason VR12/12	160

If your components need cossetting, you should invest in one of today's chipper hi-fi stands.



Roksan Ojan 3X Black	1,195
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395
Ruark Broadsword II	899
Ruark Paladin	1,099
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898
Sonus-Faber M Amator	1,498
Spendor 2040	899
Spendor SP2/3	930
Spendor SP1/2	1,330
Tannoy D500	1,470
TDL Studio 1m	899
Thiel SCS	1,379
Thiel 2	1,499
Thiel CS-5	1,499
Totem Model One	995
Triangle Antal	975
Triangle Zays	1,399
UKD-Opera Super Pavarotti	875
UKD-Opera Callas II	895
UKD-Opera Callas Gold	995
UKD-Opera Divina	1,390
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395

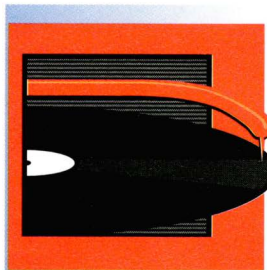
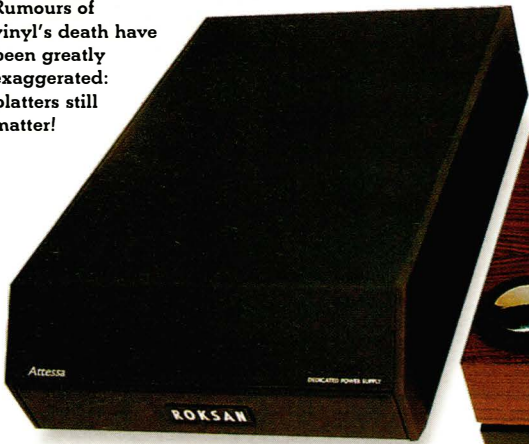
Kenwood LS-1000G	1,700
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,135
Lowther Academy	1,805
Lowther Bel Canto	2,035
Lowther Delphic	2,525
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500
Magnepan MG-10 SE	1,650
Magnepan MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magnepan MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Martin-Logan Aerius	2,288
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993
Mendian DSP5000	2,995
Monitor Audio Studio Z05E	2,200
Mordaunt-Short Performance 860	1,695
Naim SBL Active	1,743
Naim SBL Passive	1,876
Origin Live Conqueror	1,600
Pentachord P column	1,649
Polk LS90	1,700
Posselt Albatros	2,200
Proac Studio 200	1,850
Proac Response 2S	2,000
Proac Response 2.5	2,700
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598
QLN Reference	2,000
QLN Ref HDII	2,500
Rehdeko RK115	1,550
Rehdeko RK125	2,750
Rogers LS5/9	1,531
Rogers Studio 9	1,549
Ruark Crusader II	1,599
Ruark Equinox	1,849
Ruark Acolade	2,699
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,695
Shahinian Arc	1,675
Shahinian Obelisk	2,490
Sonus-Faber Electa	1,790
Sonus-Faber Amator	2,992
Spendor SP7/1	1,990
Spendor SP100	2,030
Tannoy Sterling TW	1,750
Tannoy D700	2,100
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	2,700
TDL Studio Monitor m	2,449
Thiel CS2.2	2,749
Triangle Aitinis	1,950
Triangle Altair	2,850
UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250

Bravura Accelerando	5,500
Definitive BP2000	3,600
Electrocompaniet Ellipse	3,760
Genelec Triamp S30	3,055
Genelec Triamp 1037A	4,982
Horning Agathon	3,570
Infinity ARS Epsilon	9,995
JBL S2600	3,500
JBL Ti 5000	3,700
Jordan Watts JH2K	3,230
Jordan Watts Classic JH2KM	4,250
Jordan Watts Classic JH5K	4,875
Jordan Watts Classic JH5KM	5,860
Jordan Watts Classic JH10K	9,340
KEF 107/2 REC	3,999
Linn Keltik Aktiv	4,400
Lumley Reference LM1	8,500
MAG Audio Audio A90	3,600
Magnepan MG-3.5 SE	3,800
Martin-Logan Sequel II	3,399
Martin-Logan Cael IIz	4,555

£1501 to £3000	
Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995
Allison I.C. 10	2,500
Apogee Ribbon Wall	1,750
Apogee Centaur	2,300
Apogee Centarus Slant 6	2,400
ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999
Audio Note AN-E/SP	1,599
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999
Audiovector 5	2,500
B&O Beolab 8000	1,999
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,500
B&W Matrix 804	1,595
B&W Matrix 803s2	1,995
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,795
Bose 901 VI	1,650
Bo ton Acoustics Lynfield 300L	2,000
Castle Winchester	1,650
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Clements Reference 7	1,995
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450
Epos ES25	1,655
Fullers Pharaoh 3	2,499
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Five	1,999
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Genelec 1019A	1,572
Genelec Blamp 1031A	2,068
Harbeth HL-5ES	1,799
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Impulse Lali	1,595
Impulse Ta'us	2,695
JBL Ti 1000	1,600
JBL L100	1,800
JBL Ti 2000	2,000
JBL Ti 3000	2,700
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 Aspect	1,730
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 Aspect K	2,310
Jordan Watts Aspect JH1 +1	2,745
KAL Warlock	1,600
KEF 104/2 REC	1,799
KEF Model Three	1,999
KEF Model Four	2,999

Over £3000	
Allison I.C. 20	5,500
Apogee CDD Subwoofer	3,490
Apogee Stage Sub	3,645
Apogee Centarus Slant 8	3,700
Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998
Apogee Stage 1 GS	4,100
Apogee Centaur Major	4,980
ATC SCM50	3,499
ATC SCM100	4,149
ATC SCM50A	4,999
ATC SCM100A	5,699
Audio Physic Virgo	3,399
Audio Physic Terra	3,499
Audio Physic Avanti	5,599
Audio Physic Caldera	9,999
Audiovector 6	4,600
B&W Matrix 801s3	3,795
B&W Silver Signature	5,000
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 500L	4,449
Bravura Brio	4,750

Rumours of vinyl's death have been greatly exaggerated: platters still matter!



TONEARMS

Air Tangent Tangent 10B	7,777
Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	11,000
Alphason Xenon	286
Alphason Xenon MCS	370
Alphason HR100S	490
Alphason HR100S MCS	550
Audiomeca SL5	1,999
Decca LI Arm	49
Decca LIR Arm	99
Dynavector 507	2,175
Graham 1.5T	2,550
Helius Orion 4 Copper	549
Helius Orion 4 Silver	725
Helius Cyalene 2	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	600
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000
Linn Akito	209
Linn Ekos	1,297
Manticore Musician	425
Manticore Xenon	750
Manticore Magician1	850
Moth Arm	95
Moth Mk III	146
Naim ARO	992
Nottingham Analogue Space	350
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	750
Nottingham Analogue Alien	1,200
Rega RB250	95

Rega RB300	139
Roksan Tabriz Basic	275
Roksan Tabriz Zi	395
Roksan Artemiz	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	294
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	321
SME Series II 3009-R	490
SME Series II 3010-R	501
SME Series II 3012-R	538
SME Series 300-309	657
SME Series 300-310	672
SME Series 300-312	763
SME Series IV	936
SME Series V	1,391
Townshend Excalibur	799
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4	2,750
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4C	3,000
Wilson Benesch ACT1	975
Zeta as	469

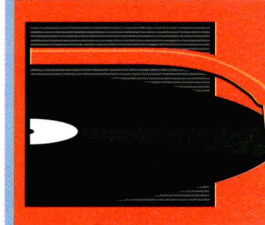


TUNERS

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220
Arcam Delta 280	399
Audiolab 8000T	800
Aura TU80	350
AVI S2000MT	599
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon	14,640
Denon TU-260L	120
Denon TU-215RD	150

Denon TU-380RD	200
Goodmans GST650	90
Goodmans Delta 700	100
Grundig T12	170
Harman-Kardon TU930	180
Harman-Kardon TU950	200
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299
JVC FX362BK	130
Kenwood KT-1060L	120
Kenwood KT-2060L	140
Kenwood KT-3050L	170
Kenwood KT-6050	300
Linn Kremlin	1,995
Luxman T-353	200
Magnum Dynalab FT11	550
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825
Magnum FT101 Etude	1,250
Marantz ST-55	150
Marantz ST-72	300
McIntosh MR7084	1,550
Meridian 504	625
Meridian 604	1,350
Michi RHT-10	895
Micromega Minium FM	300
Micromega Tuner	700
Mission Cyrus FM7	400
Musical Fidelity E50	300
Musical Fidelity E500	499
Musical Fidelity FT	899
NAD 412	190
Naim NATO3	566
Naim NATO2	1,028
Naim NATO1	1,645
Nakamichi ST3s	350
Onix BWD1	420
Onkyo T-401	160
Onkyo T-430RDS	190
Onkyo T-409	230
Onkyo T-450RDS	260
Onkyo T-411RDS	280
Onkyo R-811RDS	420
Pioneer F-203RDS	130
Pioneer F-303RDS	180
Pioneer F-502RDS	250

Quad FM66	554
Rotel RT-950EX	220
Rotel RT-990BX	500
Sony STS211LB	130
Sony STS311LB	200
Sony STS505ES	250
Teac T-R400	120
Teac T-R450	140
Technics ST-GT350L	150
Technics ST-GT550L	200
Technics ST-GT650L	250
Thorens TRT2000	450
Yamaha TX-480L	120



TURNTABLES

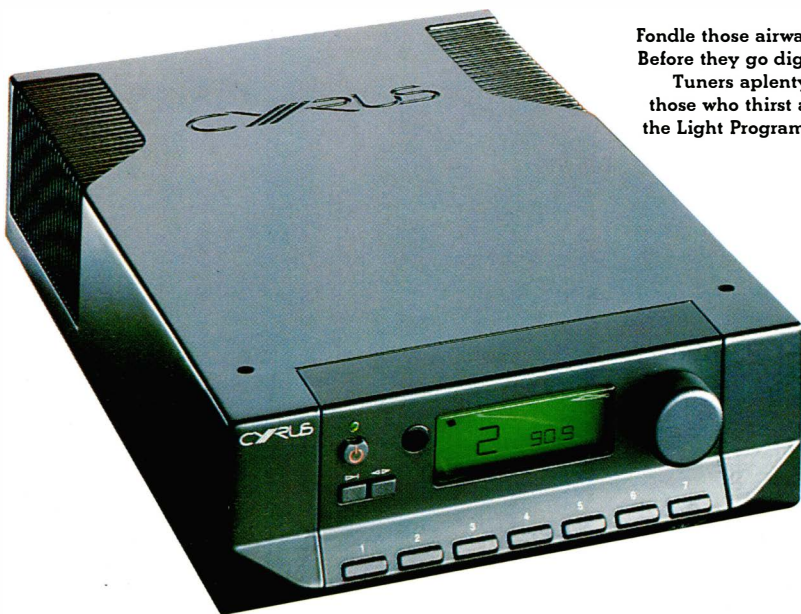
Up to £500

Akai AP A950	179
Ariston Pro-1200	160
Dual CS3700/3701	85
Dual CS435	130
Dual CS503-2	170
Dual 505-4 UK	200
Dual CS750-1	350
Dual Golden II	500
Genexa Lab-710	60
Genexa Lab-810	70
Goodmans Delta 700	55
Grundig TT1	180
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Linn Basik	349
Michell Mycro	435
Moth Alamo	175
Moth Turntable	199
Moth Kanoot Mk I Arm	249
Moth Kanoot Mk III Arm	299
NAD 5120	129
Pioneer PL-225	120
Pioneer PL-335	150
Pro-ject 0.5	145
Pro-ject 1	185
Pro-ject 1 (E)	209
Pro-ject 2	249
Pro-ject 2/Ortofon	275
Pro-ject 6	379
Pro-ject 6/Ortofon	435
Rega Planar 78	198
Rega Planar 2	198
Rega Planar 3	260
Roksan Radius	460
Sony PSLX150H	90
Sony PSLX431B	150
Systemdek I/920	136
Systemdek IX/900	230
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235
Systemdek IXE/900Ap	388
Technics SL-BD20	160
Technics SL-BD22	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	500
Technics SL-1200MkII	500
Thorens TD180/AT91	180
Thorens TD180/S500	200
Thorens TD280 IV/UK	200
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/BC	200
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/AT	270

Thorens TD166 VI/UK/BC	300
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Over £500

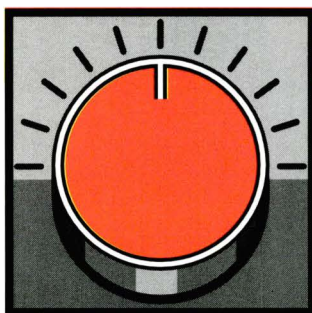
Alphason Sonata	835
Alphason Sonata/Atlas	1,235
Alphason Symphony	1,860
Audiomeca Romance	1,675
Audiomeca J1	2,500
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250
Basis Ovation II	4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250
DNM Rota 2	4,800
DNM Reson Rota 1	3,500
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200
Kuzma Stabi Ref/PS	3,000
Linn LP12 Basik	745
Linn LP12 Valhalla	894
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345
Manticore Mantra	950
Manticore Magister	3,990
Michell Mycro/arm	577
Michell Gyrodek	825
Michell Gyrodek/arm	967
Michell Orbe	1,950
Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck	600
Nottingham Analogue Illusion	600
Nottingham Analogue HyperSpacedeck	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Graphic	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	2,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor Ref	4,800
Origin Live Oasis-S	899
Pink Triangle Export	948
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699
Roksan Radius/Tabriz	735
Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	855
Roksan Xerxes 10	1,295
Roksan TMS	2,750
SME Model 20	3,240
SME Model 20A	4,631
Thorens TD3001BC	630
Thorens TD2001	700
Thorens TD3001/UK	770
Thorens TD520	900
Townshend MkIII Rock	799
Voyd 0.5	3,940
Voyd Reference	6,962
Well Tempered Record Player	1,800
Well Tempered Classic	2,800
Well Tempered Super	3,500
Well Tempered Reference	5,000
Wilson Benesch	1,550



Fondle those airwaves!
Before they go digital!
Tuners aplenty for those who thirst after the Light Programme.

Remember that all entries printed in **RED** refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 110 for a full summary of test results!





Amplifiers

The amplifier sits at the heart of the system, processing the outputs from the various music sources as necessary and then driving the loudspeakers. These two (quite separate) functions are integrated into a single box at the low-to-middle price points; but become separated into preamps and power amplifiers. Even separate power supplies become increasingly common as one moves upmarket. Bear in mind that output power and sound quality are not necessarily

related. Some of the finest amplifiers available have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Power output is equally no indication of sound quality.



KEY

LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.

MC PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: If amp is couch potato ready.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.

POWER OUTPUT (W): Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.
RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback

information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim APD30A	299	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy.	5	●				30		1737	154
AMC 3050	220	Low-price NAD-alike amplifier that is polite and modest but rather wooden. Phono better than line.	4	●				45		1738	154
AMC CVT3030	529	Attempt to mix transistors with valves only shines with simple musical styles.	6	●				30			116
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240	Detailed improvement on predecessor, but lacks 'air'	5	●				40		1109	149
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350	Very mid-band oriented sound that was bright, yet lacks detail. Good for smaller speakers.	6	●	●	●	●	50		1739	154
Arcam Delta 290	500	Combines dry restraint with detail, dynamics and musical colour.	6	●	●	●	●	75			116
Audio Innovations Alto	329	Despite a lack of bass, it still sounds open, natural and relaxed.	6	●				35		1540	138
Audio Innovations S700	1,199	Turns the roughest of digital sounds into understated and graceful music.	5					25			116
Audio Note Ongaku	56,000	A single ended, zero negative feedback triode, line-level amplifier and a half. Probably the best amplifier in the world.	3					26			C91
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but limited power.	4					24			126
Audiolab 8000A	500	The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature sounding amp.	5	●	●		●	60		1581	140
Audiolab 8000S	650	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Perhaps Audiolab's best yet!	6	●			●	60		1740	154
Aura VA100 II	330	Big, smooth yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar.	5	●				70		1541	138
Cambridge Audio A1	100	Dull musically - but at this price, Hobson's choice	4	●				35		1463	149
Chimera X-80	800	Stonking looks, powerful, but ultimately lacking in dynamics. Tested in Sessions	5					80			138
Copland CSA-14	1,099	Great sound and looks, but watch out for high capacitance cables	4	●				60		1416	148
Creek 4240	279	Bearing no relation to earlier Creek designs, this radical rethink is more successful via MM than CD.	4	●				40		1127	134
Creek 4240SE	350	At best, bland and plodding, at worst grainy, shouty and honky. Best on simple rock.	5					35		1741	154
Denon PMA-250 III	160	High resolution amp, can lose its grip but is engaging and enjoyable.	4	●			●	30			121
Denon PMA-350 II	230	Modifications give this amp a powerful up-front and compelling performance.	5	●			●	50		1128	134
Denon PMA-450SE	280	Based on the original '450 and offers a fast, furious and entertaining sound.	5	●				60		1258	142
Densen Beat B100	600	Seriously well controlled amp that does everything well. Very slightly shut-in sounding.	6					60		1742	154
DPA Renaissance	595	DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes.	5	●				40		1582	140
EMF Audio Sequel	349	Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek.	5	●				50			109
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud.	6					55		1743	154
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12		1416	148
Harman-Kardon HK610	200	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●				30		1465	149
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400	Relaxed, confident sound is only troubled by the most dense of recordings.	5	●	●			40		1011	129
Harman-Kardon HK640	450	Breezy, nimble sounding amp lacks grip and fortitude - it can sound artificial and insubstantial	6					55		1542	138
John Shearne Phase 2	649	Either a natural-sounding superstar or nasal and hard to listen to — make up your own mind!	5					50		1744	154
JVC AX-R5BK	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45		1466	149
JVC AX-A472BK	250	Unpredictable performer that is initially impressive but often ends up sounding starchy and tiring.	5	●				65		1259	142
JVC AX-A662	329	Huge, tidy and ordered sounding behemoth of an amp. Now discontinued so hunt around.	6	●	●		●	90		1745	154
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200	Not a brilliant phono stage, but this is a lively, exuberant sounding amp via CD	5	●			●	50		1130	134
Kenwood KA-3060R	230	Classy engineering, but sound is over-dry, often frustratingly restrained and rather unsophisticated.	5	●			●	45		1260	142
Kenwood KA-5050R	350	A listenable but neither particularly communicative nor captivating amplifier.	5	●			●	95		1012	129
LFD Integrated Zero	499	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50		1584	140
Linn Majik-I (Phono)	593	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused.	5	●	●			33		1013	129
Magnum IA170	270	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic, preserves colour & dynamics well	6				●	96		1260	142
Magnum Quartet	329	An integrated model that incorporates four monoblocks optimised for bi-wiring, but sound is sandy in the treble.	5	●				36			121
Magnum Class A	599	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy.	4	●	●			60			116
Marantz PM-44 MkIIse	200	Two generations on from the PM-40SE, this new model gives a disappointingly grey view of music	5	●				40		1131	134
Mission Cyrus III	500	The classic Cyrus II sounds convincing, masterful and musical.	6	●		●		50		1585	140
Musical Fidelity E10	300	Smooth and high-endish sound that is marred by a lack of dynamics and a touch of grain.	5	●				40		1746	154
Musical Fidelity E100	599	Beautifully crafted with a vibrantly colourful, almost dramatic sound.	5	●			●	70		1586	140
Myryad MI 120	530	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound.	5				●	60		1747	154
Naim Nait 3	550	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes.	5					30		1748	154
Onix OA21S	430	CD input sounds dead, but via MM disc, this amplifier has a fresh, vibrant sound.	4	●	●			50			97
Onix OA31	480	Eager to please, dynamic and fresh sounding, but it's grip is wafer thin	5	●	●			60		1587	140
Onkyo A803	260	This amp sounds lifeless, vague and disinterested in the music at hand.	5	●	●	●		60		1261	142
Orelle SA-100	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble.	5					50		1749	154
Pioneer A-303R	200	Fresh and uncomplicated sound bests much of the audiophile competition.	5	●			●	45		1129	134
Pioneer A-300X	230	This revamped version of the A300 sounds more confident via CD than MM, yet our panel was unmoved.	5	●				40			116

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
▶ Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling	6	●	●	●	50	1545	138
Pioneer A-503R	300	Best via MM disc, the dull and claustrophobic sound is otherwise deeply uninspiring.	5	●	●	●	70	1544	138
Pro-ject Model 7	259	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC.	5	●	●	●	40	1264	142
Quad 77	650	Stylish remote driven amp, bright and lively. Tested in Sessions	4	●	●	●	50		139
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier sounds forward, hard and unforgiving.	4	●	●	●	50		116
▶ Rotel RA970BX	300	Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings.	6	●	●	●	60	1546	138
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795	Smooth, sophisticated Canadian valve amp with a decent direct input and more features than average.	6	●	●	●	50		126
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230	An amplifier that's great fun to be with, but a little untidy from time to time	5	●	●	●	37	1472	149
▶ Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450	Jeckyl and Hyde amplifier with a dismal-sounding phono stage but transparent CD input.	5	●	●	●	90	1547	138
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound.	3	●	●	●	30		116
Yamaha AX-490	250	Widgets aplenty, but unemotional sound evoked an uncertain response from panel	5	●	●	●	85	1473	149
YBA Integre	1,199	Audiophile spec French integrated with good resolution and nice phono stage.	5	●	●	●	45		121

PREAMPLIFIERS

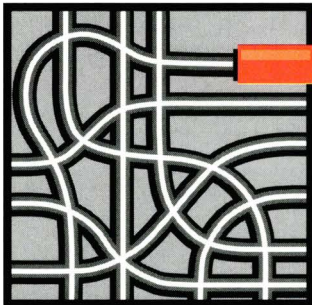
Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
▶ Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound.	4	●	●	●			124
▶ Audio Innovations L1	369	Reviewed with S800 Anniversary — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	4	●	●	●			1300 145
Audiolab 8000C	520	Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering.	5	●	●	●			97
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000	Tested with 8000M monoblocks	6	●	●	●			1301 145
▶ Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250	Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build too. Tested in Sessions	4	●	●	●			1560 139
▶ Conrad-Johnson Premier 7	11,000	The 7 is designed without compromise, and is clearly one of the finest (valve) preamplifiers money can buy.	5	●	●	●			C91
▶ Copland CTA-301MKII	1,349	Sweet sounding - but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●	●	●			1630 151
▶ Creek P42	279	Tested with bridged A42 power amps, an articulate and open combo with tight tuneful bass (optional phono stage & remote)	6	●	●	●			155
▶ Cyrus Pre	650	Tested with Cyrus Power. High tech design Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth	5	●	●	●			155
▶ DPA DSP200S	495	Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S).	6	●	●	●			124
▶ EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with £3499 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●	●			63
▶ ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern).	5	●	●	●			1302 145
Exposure XVII	849	Superbly rhythmical; maybe a tad overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●	●			142
▶ Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30).	5	●	●	●			60
Krell KRC-2s	4,190	This is an exquisitely refined and transparent design (tested with KSA-50S in Statements)	6	●	●	●			141
Meridian 501	625	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●	●	●			1303 145
Meridian 562V	895	Transparent and capable preamp, also features 6 digital inputs	9	●	●	●			140
▶ Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60).	4	●	●	●			109
▶ Moth 30 Active	249	Tested with 100W monoblocks. While demonstrating solid, even balance it proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	4	●	●	●			155
Musical Fidelity E200	599	Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating. Tested with MF E300	7	●	●	●			1304 145
NAD Monitor 1000S	349	Sounds a little restrained.	5	●	●	●			124
Quad 34	414	Good filtering and above average tone controls, but lacks detail and dynamics	3	●	●	●			44
Quad 66	897	Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 606).	6	●	●	●			124
▶ Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price.	3	●	●	●			77
Rotel RC970BX MKII	175	Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BXMkII power amps	5	●	●	●			144
Rotel RC980BX	375	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RB980BX).	5	●	●	●			155
▶ Sumo Athena IIB	767	Tested with Polaris III. Big, natural and tidy sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6	●	●	●			1305 145
Thorens TTP2000	500	Minimalist shoebox preamp, rhythmical, warm balance. Tested in Sessions with TTA2000	4	●	●	●			139
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35).	5	●	●	●			100
YBA 3 Pre	1,250	See-through, ethereal stereo images, but more convincing towards centre of soundstage (tested with £1199 3 Pwr).	4	●	●	●			72
▶ YBA 2 Pre	1,699	Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with £2150 2 Pwr).	4	●	●	●			56
▶ YBA 1 Pre	3,750	Tested with £4250 1 Pwr - see power amp section for comments.	5	●	●	●			62

POWER AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Acurus A150	1400	Price includes RL11 preamp with which it was tested. Powerfull remote control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1	●	●	●	150		151
▶ Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.	1	●	●	●	60		124
▶ Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy.	1	●	●	●	15		109
▶ Audio Innovations S800	1300	Reviewed with L1 — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole remarkably well	1	●	●	●	25	1300	145
Audiolab 8000M	750	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Tested with 8000Q	1	●	●	●	125	1301	145
Audio Research VT60	2,645	Ranks as 'must try' American cultural item (tested in Statements). Tube design	1	●	●	●	35	1179	136
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1	●	●	●	67	1630	151
▶ Creek A42	279	Tested with bridged P42 pre in bridged mode. Articulate and open combo with tight tuneful bass	1	●	●	●	100		155
▶ Cyrus Power	450	Tested with Cyrus Pre. Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth (bridgeable)	1	●	●	●	50		155
▶ DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S).	1	●	●	●	60		124
▶ EAR 509 Mk II	3,499	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802).	1	●	●	●	100		63
▶ ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1	●	●	●	50	1302	145
Exposure XVIII Super	849	Slight dullness and hardness, but great 'boogie factor'	1	●	●	●	70		142
▶ Jadis JA-30	2,880	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5978 JP30).	1	●	●	●	30		60
Krell KSA-50s	3,690	Stretches the performance margins of difficult speakers - state of the art at the price	1	●	●	●	50		141
Meridian 555	625	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1	●	●	●	60	1303	145
▶ Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	Tested with 30 Passive. Modular system gives cracking results	1	●	●	●	60		109

POWER AMPLIFIERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Moth 30 Series Monobloks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. While demonstrating solid, even balance it proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1				100		155
Musical Fidelity E300	699	Tested with E200. Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating	1				100	1304	145
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999	Belongs to the rarified group of refined, high resolution amplifiers	1				220	1508	133
NAD Monitor 208	999	Truly a beefy amplifier, but no mad cow!	1				250		124
Rotel RB-970BX MkII	225	Tested with RC970BX MkII in Sessions (see preamp section)	1				60		144
Rotel RB-980BX	475	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RC980BX).	1				120		155
Sumo Polaris III	898	Tested with Athena IIB. Big, natural and tidy sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	1				164	1305	145
Thorens TTA2000	550	Tested with TTP2000 (see preamp section) in Sessions	1				35		139
Woodside STA35	1,323	Synergistic with SC26, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. More poise than grunt (tested with SC26).	1				35		100
YBA 3 Power	1,199	Tested with £1250 3 Pre - see preamp section for comments.	1				45		72
YBA 2 Power	2,150	Superbly finished, but with slightly softened bass (tested with YBA 2 Preamp).	1				70		56
YBA 1 Power	4,250	Well finished pre/power amp with front rank imaging and transparency (tested with YBA 1 Preamp).	1				85		62



Cables

Cables are not accessories, but an integral part of a system. Inevitably some cables are better than others. The best cable for your system will only be found through trial and error, but by combining our recommendations with those of a dealer, you will end up with something suitable. Generally speaking, budget to spend about ten per cent of the total system cost on cables.

- Analogue interconnects are the leads that connect source components to amplifiers and pre to power amps. The cables in this section are priced for a one-metre terminated pair.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs, and are

traditionally coaxial with a 75 Ohm impedance. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.

■ Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary with brands.

Best buy

Recommended

KEY

SYMMETRICAL: A twisted pair of conductors.
COAXIAL: A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
STRANDED: Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.

SOLID CORE: single or multiple individually insulated strands.
COPPER: Material used for conductor.
SILVER: Material used for conductor.
DIG CABLE TYPE: O - optical digital, E - electrical digital.

FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.


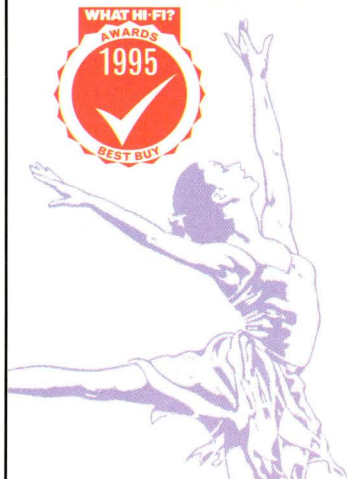
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Analogue Interconnects											
Audio Note AN-A	29.50	Not especially impressive, warm but well rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is not unclear	●			●				108	
Audio Note AN-C	59.50	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●		1687 131	
Audio Note AN-S	139	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●				●	●		1687 131	
Audio Note AN-V	219	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●			●		●		1687 131	
Bandridge AL421	5	Light and airy sound lacks authority, splashy treble			●	●		●		1688 131	
Bandridge AL426G	10	Gold plated plug OFC version of AL421 with same ineffectual sound quality			●	●		●		1688 131	
Bandridge SG AL4720	13	4N OF copper, full smooth balance but a little plodding and relentless, lacks panache			●	●		●		1688 131	
Bandridge SG+ AL4820	25	4N OF copper, distinctly teutonic, thrusting detail forward but still plodding and relentless			●	●		●		1688 131	
Chord Chameleon	68	Anomalous treble with a dry but vaguely sibilant quality, sometimes sounds smooth, sometimes harsh!				●		●		108	
Chord Solid	99	Thin but very stiff with excellent resolution of subtle timbral detail and fine dynamics			●		●	●		108	
DNM TCC75	34	Price for 0.75m length. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance					●	●		1690 131	
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy sound with flat soundstaging and hollow sounding bass, vocals and strings sound convincing though					●	●		1690 131	
DPA White Slink	75	Highly expressive, very easy on the ear and attractively detailed though not entirely characterless at high frequencies					●	●		1691 131	
DPA Black Slink	220	Initially dark and meaty but becoming liquid and transparent with running in. Quad geometry, Gore-tex dielectric	●				●	●		1691 131	
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble				●	●	●		1692 131	
Ixos 103	40	Even handed and generous sound, bass has a well rounded, bouncy quality				●	●	●		1692 131	
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality, its veiled and shut in quality brings an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike				●	●	●		1693 131	
LFD Spirolink I	35	Price for 0.7m length. Dynamic but smoothly detailed performance, but gives the impression of looking down on the music					●	●		1694 131	
LFD Spirolink II	70	Price for 0.7m length. Strong and confident sound enhancing bass depth and subtlety, concentrates of the meat of the music	●				●	●		1694 131	
LFD Trilink	150	Price for 0.7m length. Warm and luxurious sound but a little too fruity in balance, treble is a little subdued, bass detached	●				●	●		1695 131	
Linn Phono to Phono	47	Encourages a delicate performance underpinned by a strong and authoritative bass			●	●		●		1695 131	
Monster Interlink 200	20	Colourful in an appealing rather than contrived sense, bass is slightly over-blown, large and ingratiating sound stage	●				●	●		1696 131	
Monster Interlink 300	30	Richer, smoother more civilised sound than 200 with improved articulation and reduced sibilance	●				●	●		1696 131	
Monster Interlink 400	40	Compromised by a grainy top end, treble and vocal range sound particularly sharp and untidy	●				●	●		1697 131	
Monster Interlink 500	50	Sounds rather good, providing a livelier and more interesting account of music than most sub £100 cables	●				●	●		108	
Monster Interlink 800	80	Not as bright or aggressive as the 400 but treble is strangely lumpy, muted and manipulated - odd cable	●				●	●		1697 131	
Monster Interlink Reference 2	100	Easy on the ear but rather contrived, slightly clanky treble fails to integrate with the smoother but splodgy midband	●				●	●		1697 131	
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full and big sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●				●	●		108	
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed enough but there's a sense of distance between the music and the listener, vox are course rather than liquid	●				●	●		108	
Panasonic RP-CA910	50	Uncongested and even handed balance if slightly flat imagewise, retains impact but has a vaguely untransparent quality			●	●		●		108	
SonicLink Crimson	55	Using PTFE insulated nickel conductors this is a rather matter of fact cable that can inject a little bit of mirth	●				●			1698 131	
SonicLink Blue HPMC	115	Flat and matter of fact, but grasps music firmly and remains in control. Not very 'hear through'. Nickel conductors					●			1698 131	
SonicLink Black	165	Encourages an upbeat and snappy sound that's driven by leading edges, full and rumbustious bass maintains an even tempo					●	●		1699 131	


CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL		COAXIAL		STRANDED		SOLID CORE		COPPER		SILVER		ISSUE NUMBER
			▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	
4 Tara Labs Prism 11	45	Very compatible cable that wins through with a naturally balanced and realistically dynamic sound. 6N purity copper	●							●	●			1699	131
4 Tara Labs Prism 22	56	Delivers a fresh and detailed sound with clear and bright treble giving it a free, quick and dynamic character						●		●	●			1700	131
6 Tara Labs Quantum CD	75	Lacking in obvious vices, neutral and transparent, there's also a good solid bass. Vox are not always as intimate as possible	●							●	●				108
Tara Labs Prism 33	90	A pedestrian cable that sounds lively but muddled. Quite dynamic, quite rich, quite smooth but also quite indistinct						●		●	●			1700	131
Transparent Audio Music Link	119	No aggressive nasties to tax the ears, neither does it sparkle with inspirational detail. Only suited to low output impedances						●	●		●			1701	131
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m length. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off, however there's plenty of drive and high frequencies are clean						●		●	●			1701	131
4 van den Hul The Source	50	Price for 0.8m length. Good foot tapping sound that accurately reflects the life of the music without throwing detail at you						●	●		●	●			108
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information but lacks dynamic punch						●	●					1702	131
van den Hul The Second	225	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●					●		●	●			1702	131
XLO Type 150	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity						●	●		●			1703	131
4 XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals								●	●			1703	131
Digital Interconnects															
4 Audio Note AN-V	110	Ostensibly an analogue cable but gives a meaty and natural performance when used for digital duty	●							●		●	E	1704	131
4 Audioquest Video X	40	A decent level of detail, imparts a gentle lift from vocal to high treble that can sound a little splashy						●		●	●		E	1705	131
6 Audioquest Video Z	60	The very best available, with an expressive sound, but generously priced.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		E		108
Audioquest Optilink Z	120	Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension.											O		108
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency.						●	●				E		108
Bandridge AL4900G	40	Lacks deep rounded bass and treble is coloured with a spittiness, a little rough and ready							●		●		E	1705	131
Chord Codac	32	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration.						●	●			●	E		108
4 Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz						●		●	●		E	1706	131
DPA Opti-link	20	Very similar to Bandridge AL560; sound is lacklustre											O		108
6 DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		E		108
4 Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox						●		●	●		E	1707	131
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	39	Priced for 0.5metre. Analogue cable inappropriately pressed into digital service. A visible deterioration in the signal results.						●	●		●		E		108
Kimber Cable KC-1 D'link	55	This cable adopts a woven construction with the addition of a conductive screen. Music lacks detail and spirit.						●	●				E		108
4 Kimber Cable Opti-link	70	Hardly cheap for what appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet it sounds a little brighter and livelier than most.											O		108
Kimber Cable KC-AG D'link	136	Priced for 0.5metre. Asymmetric cable that deviates from the 75ohm standard. Not ideal for digital applications.						●	●			●	E		108
4 LFD Digilink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality						●		●	●		E	1708	131
4 Monster Interlink LS100	45	Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends and connectors. Lean, fuzzy, engaging performance.											O		108
4 Monster Datalink 100	45	Price for 0.5m. A colourful coaxial interconnect with an equally colourful and up-beat sound. Very compatible.						●	●		●		E		108
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive.						●	●	●	●		E		108
6 QED Digiflex	20	A top performance, low-loss 75ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		E		108
Siltech HF-6	150	Sounds detailed, very clean and very extended, but bass is less well resolved - a treat for high end systems						●	●	●		●	E	1709	131
SonicLink Light Brown 75	30	Hampers life like dynamics, stripping out vigour but will never sound harsh						●	●		●		E	1709	131
4 SonicLink Green	50	Spacious, positive and engaging if a tad over crisp at times, very compelling however						●		●	●	●	E	1709	131
4 van den Hul MC Videolink 75	48	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's Digiflex, but emphasises sibilants.								●			E		108
6 van den Hul The First	120	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly dark or cautious compared to some, plenty of subtle information and beautiful integration	●	●									E	1710	131
Loudspeaker Cables															
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward.								●	●				109
4 Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical							●		●			1711	133
4 Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel which was happy to accept its foibles	●							●		●		1712	133
4 Audio Note AN-SP	125	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●							●		●			109
4 Audioquest F-14	1.95	Ideal for laying under carpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound								●	●				109
Audioquest Type 4	4.95	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'.	●					●	●		●				109
Audioquest Cobalt 2	45	A rather polite and anemic sound that bubbles gently with detail and is largely uncoloured and cautiously spacious	●					●	●		●				133
Bandridge SF LC1070	42p	Basic figure 8 bellwire, lightweight balance and a softness that dilutes even the strongest bass	●					●	●		●			1713	133
6 Bandridge SF LC1259	1	Fresh and open, bubbly and naturally colourful soundstage that's neither forced or unduly edgy. Treble is slightly messy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		1713	133	
Bandridge Highflex LC2604	3.50	Substantial 6mm ² conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●					●	●		●			1714	133
4 Cable Talk 3	3	Easy on the ear but far from lazy, should yield a round, smooth yet colourful sound in most systems							●		●		1714	133	
6 DNM LSC8500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire								●	●		1716	133	
4 DPA Black Sixteen	90	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics simply oodles of taut information	●							●	●	●		1717	133
Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven.								●	●				109
4 Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality								●	●		1718	133	

Qudos[™], The Perfect Balance

The speaker cable forms a vital interface between your amplifier and loudspeaker system. The properties of the speaker cable you use will determine how well your amplifier can communicate with your speakers. Use the wrong cable and your speakers could be missing the message. To minimise the signal degrading properties present in all cable, QED's own research programme has established that a Balanced Design Concept is essential for optimal performance.




QED's Qudos speaker cable lowers all the cable's degrading Characteristic Properties in proportion and with the correct balance thereby delivering a superior and more accurate all round performance.

WHAT HI-FI?
 ★★★★★

"Sensational sound... You won't find a better cable at this price."

MAY 1995

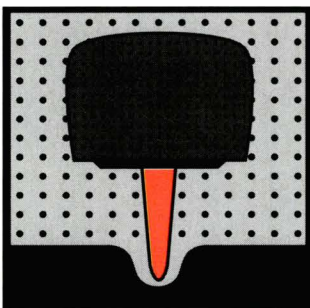


Qudos, The Perfect Balance, The Perfect Choice.

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 Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Close,
 Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XU
 Telephone: (01276) 451166

CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments						ISSUE NUMBER	FAXBACK NUMBER
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER		
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better				●	●	1719	133
Mission Quartet	7.90	Mixed, inoffensive sound, adds guttural resonance to vocals and could be generally more coherent. Bi-wire.					●	1722	133
Monster Cable XP	1.50	XP offers plenty of slightly soft bass and a slightly rounded treble, a relaxed cable whose indiscretions are not bothersome			●	●	●	1723	133
Naim NACA 5	4.96	Described as a 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems. But it works a treat in them				●	●		109
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey sounding and strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance, a bit bass shy too				●	●		133
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric with robust full blooded bass, and dynamic too if slightly bright at times				●	●		133
QED Qudos	3	Excellent dynamics, midrange and transparency, almost equalling some fine and costly designs (tested in Sessions)				●	●		145
SonicLink Grey	9	A spaghetti-thin silver plated cable lacks bass impact and treble 'air'					●	●	109
SonicLink Care Music	15	Lack of conviction and integration through treble and relatively shallow bass but waffle free and open at high frequencies				●	●	●	1724
SonicLink Blue Bi-wire	20	Small sounding and bass light with limited subtle detail and a dirtiness to percussion					●		1724
Tara Labs Rectangular SCM	725	Price for terminated 2m pair. Dynamics are exquisite, luxurious smooth sound, brimming with unforced detail					●	●	1725
Transparent Audio Musicchord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can sound slightly lackadaisical				●	●	●	1728
Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail	●			●	●	●	1728
van den Hul The Clearwater	6	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky sounding cable.				●	●	●	109
van den Hul CS122	19	Smooth and articulate with superb focus and control, its sheer coherence makes it a winner (tested in Sessions)				●	●	●	153
van den Hul The Magnum	31	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twinlead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned.				●	●	●	109
van den Hul The Wind	35	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!				●	●	●	109
van den Hul Revolution	64	Silver plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble				●	●	●	1726
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed sounding but a hint of congestion at frequency extremes				●	●	●	1726



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage

is necessary. Phono input equipped valve designs need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

Cartridge/amplifier interfacing can be very subtle, but even basic high output MM designs benefit in overall balance from optimised amplifier capacitance loading.



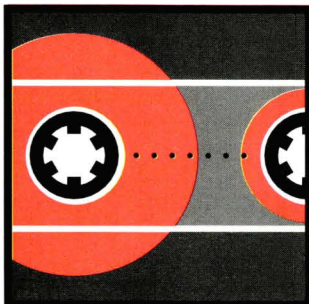
KEY			
MM: Moving magnet cartridge with a normal output suitable for all vinyl disc amplifier inputs.	sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.	OUTPUT (MV): Cartridge output in millivolts.	copy of the review.
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high	REPLACEABLE STYLUS: Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced	MASS (g): Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
		FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	

CARTRIDGES

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS		OUTPUT (MV)	MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER	FAXBACK NUMBER
			MM	MC				
Arcam C77	30	A sensible moving magnet package with good bounce at a competitive price.	●	●	4.0	6	48	
Arcam C77MG	40	Punchy, with plenty of energy to liven things up. The solid body is well worth the extra £10.	●	●	4.0	6	67	
Arcam E77MG	60	Our sample had a disappointing stylus, but gave a coherent, rich and laid back sound.	●	●	4.0	6	48	
Arcam P77MG	73	Preferred to its cheaper partner thanks to a better tip. Channel balance poor	●	●	4.0	6	48	
Audio Note Io IIV	1,395	One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer.		●	0.1		100	
Audio Technica AT-95E	19	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced.		●	2.8		48	
Audio Technica ART-1	944	This is a delicate and very fluid-sounding MC that tracks well.		●	0.4	9	72	
Audioquest 404L	599	Slight harshness detracted from the performance of this otherwise clear-sounding and detailed cartridge.		●	0.5	6	84	
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495	Stunning stereo imaging and detail spoiled by poor tracking and high sensitivity to arms.		●	0.4	6	91	
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well		●	1.0	6	48	
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'.		●	0.1	6	43	
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life' is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail.		●	0.1	6	103	
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether and a top notch bargain too.		●			103	
Dynavector 17D2	450	Clear, detailed, neutral and generally informative - excellent.		●	0.15	5	91	
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm.		●	0.25	12	84	
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version.		●	2.0	12	84	
Goldring Elan	17	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●		5.0	7	67	
Goldring 1012GX	65	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent.	●		6.5	7	85	
Goldring 1022GX	85	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●		6.5	7	85	
Goldring Eroica LX	100	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative.	●	●	0.5	8	84	
Goldring 1042	105	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though.		●	6.5	6	91	
Goldring Elite	200	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound has a certain dirtiness.		●	0.5	8	103	
Linn K5	54	Not as crisply focussed as the other Linn magnetics, but the K5 is smoother.	●		4.5	6	67	
Linn K9	109	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus.	●	●	4.5	5	Col	
London Decca Maroon	199	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconic as ever.		●	5.0	6	67	
London Decca S Gold	339	Immediate and detailed, but coloured, nonlinear with a questionable effect on records.		●	5.0	6	84	
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard		●	0.1	7	143	
Milltek Aurora	299	An overall feeling of relaxed ease characterised this clear and atmospheric Kiseki-built cartridge.		●	2.0	0.1	299	
Ortofon 510/P	32	For the price, a good blend of virtues - weight, clarity and neutrality	●	●	3.0	5	85	

CARTRIDGES

Product	Price (£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS MM	OUTPUT MC	FACTSBACK NUMBER MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER
Ortofon 520/P	55	Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound.	●	●	3.0 5	6
Ortofon MC10 Super	85	'What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is...' we said.	●	●	0.3 7	48
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but subtle - take it as it comes.	●	●	3.3 4	103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and clos up.	●	●	0.35 7	103
Ortofon MC25E	160	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●	●	0.5 11	139
Ortofon MC25FL	210	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●	●	0.5 11	139
Ortofon MC3000II	950	A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best.	●	●	0.12 10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●	●	0.12 10	91
Rega Bias	34	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound.	●	●	5 4	67
Rega Elys	74	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and convincing.	●	●	5.0 5	67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.	●	●	6.5 5	91
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	●	5.5 6	103
van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer gives, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	●	0.4 6	60
van den Hul MC-One	999	This extended all the positive qualities of the '10, but added greater authority and scale - worth all the extra money.	●	●	0.4 6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.	●	●	0.4 6	72
van den Hul G' hopper III GLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.	●	●	0.4 6	122



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but they all use it.

There should be no problems in connecting a cassette deck to any normal amplifier, but some care needs to be taken in choosing the best tapes for a specific machine. (Trial and error is one effective technique, but many decks have manual bias adjustment and some match up to the tape automatically.)

Twin decks offer the option to dub tapes and play two cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but usually implies some mechanical compromise. The sort of facilities that are useful include tape monitor switching and Dolby S.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.
DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise reduction system.
DOLBY HX PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom

for cassette recording.
3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording whilst you are making it a third head is essential.
TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play, in most instances only one deck will record.

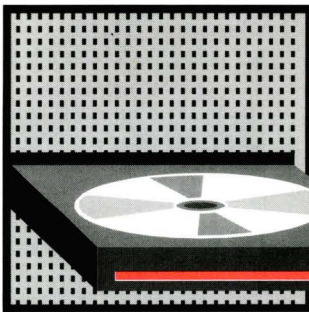
AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.

FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTOREVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1513	136
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1377	146
Aiwa AD-S950	300	High-value, high-spec package is both well set up and musically well sorted.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1590	140
Arcam Delta 100	899	Superb transport and a ripe, spacious sound. Dolby S is more successful than some.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	111	
Denon DRM-540	160	Exceptionally stable and well focussed sound quality and a bargain price.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1378	146
Denon DRS-640	210	Drawer loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well adjusted sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1591	140
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment offers good, if somewhat detached sonics.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Drawer loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	127	
Goodmans Delta 700W	100	Compact and ultra-basic twin deck which is rough and bass shy, with a less than stable tape path.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	123	
Grundig CCF3	200	Simple, sensible and well built twin, but lack of pitch stability compromises performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1379	146
Harman-Kardon TD420	280	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well conceived, minimum features design	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1592	140
JVC TD-V562BK	220	Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	123	
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
Kenwood KX-5060S	235	Well engineered transport and Dolby S star in this refined and detailed design.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1593	140
Kenwood KX-7060S	329	Although slightly dull sounding with prerecorded tapes, this is a well equipped and fine sounding deck.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1381	146
Luxman K-322	140	Gives best value results with lower bias tapes, helped by a successful Dolby C installation.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1382	146
Marantz SD-53	200	Modestly equipped player is short-changed by a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1383	146
NAD 602	199	Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	127	
NAD 616	320	Double deck whose music sounded shut in and prosaic, as though its energy content had been ironed flat	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1648	152
Onkyo K-611	430	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-S430S	200	Against the odds - a 2-head Dolby S deck that works. Well set up and fully equipped.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1515	136
Pioneer CT-S630S	300	3 heads and Dolby S feature in an excellent deck that is underbiased with Type IV tapes.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1595	140
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
Sony TC-K611S	300	Good Dolby S deck - slightly let down by lack of attention to detail.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	127	
Technics RS-BX501	200	A real rarity - an auto reverse model that can hold its head up with the single-siders	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1597	140
Technics RS-BX601	250	Remarkably fast cassette wind means it will suit those with large collections. Good all-round sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1517	146
Technics RS-BX701	300	Costly, but well built, this decks is a pleasure to operate and listen to.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1517	136
Yamaha KX-580	250	Stable and clean, if bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1388	146

CD Players



All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical persuasion; sonically the former is preferable.

A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which turns the digital bitstream coming off the disc into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue convertor, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

B **Best buy**
R **Recommended**

KEY

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT: Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For optical connection to an outboard DAC.

AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT: High speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT: Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: For can users.
VARIABLE OUTPUT: Remotely adjustable volume controlled

output.
MULTI-DISC: Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bit-stream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH,

bitstream, PWM etc
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CD PLAYERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC CD6	349	Based on Rotel's RCD-965BX, but has a raunchier, beefier but less transparent sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	124
Arcam Alpha One	300	The first UK-built player under £300 is hampered by a tidy but rather grey and uninspiring sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	1530 137
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470	Upbeat, dynamic sound disguises lack of transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1634 151
Arcam Alpha 6	600	Alarming uneven player treats music inconsistently, thanks to harsh mid/top	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
Arcam Delta 250	750	Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	1491 130
Arcam Delta 270	800	Dry, tightly-focussed sound will either beguile or aggravate, depending on taste!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	124
Audio Innovations Alto	399	Refreshing piece of audio sculpture belies inconsistent audio behaviour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1635 151
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1268 147
Denon DCD-825	200	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269 147
Denon DCD-825	240	Not the subtlest of players, but this model will bolster the weediest of systems with its colourful sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-1015	300	Excellent, middle range player - fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1599 141
Dual CD1000RS	170	Old fashioned sound and appearance, though well suited to light classical music	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1562 139
Eclipse CD101a	80	If you want to know the sound of high order distortion, this is probably as good a place to start as any	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	144
Goodmans Delta 700	110	A 16-bit alternative to the CD650II that furnishes a colourful and animated sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	128
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349	Needs a touch of Oxy-10 to clean up its complexion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1600 141
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400	Glorious sounding player, if slightly inconsistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1636 151
Harman-Kardon HD7625	450	Crisply styled, well equipped and slick, sound quality is fast and assured, if slightly 'obvious'	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800	This flagship implementation of RLS sounds impressively bold and dynamic.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	124
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined, if occasionally unpredictable sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1270 147
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1637 151
Kenwood DP-2060	160	A player that bears no relation to the DP-3060, despite appearances. Sounds vague and thoroughly uninteresting.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1271 147
Kenwood DP-3060	200	Based on the same filter/DAC as Marantz's CD-53, but with a more transparent, sober and highly insightful sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1564 139
Kenwood DP-7060	380	Fleet-footed, but will appear bright in lightweight systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1601 141
Krell KPS 20i	10,000	Forthright, edge of the seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1734 154
Linn Mimik	798	Useful multiroom features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
Luxman D-322	200	Well bred player sounds smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1272 147
Marantz CD-53	200	Looks identical to CD-63, but internal costs are cut, exposing a slightly ragged performer.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1565 139
Marantz CD-63MKII	270	Smooth sounding and highly satisfying player	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1638 151
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Meridian 506	950	Crisp, clean and detailed player now seems a little flat and mechanical: a dated balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
Mission DAD7	900	Pleasant but not particularly exciting, but this remains a classy, sharply etched performer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	145
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499	Remarkably coherent and three-dimensional performer, and an inspiring piece of audiophilia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1051 131
NAD 512	250	Capable of exposing the minutest detail while avoiding excessive emphasis (tested in Sessions)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1732 154
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1639 151
Naim Audio CD3	949	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
Nakamichi MB4s	300	Entry level Music-Bank player has plenty of dynamics and detail but little stereo depth.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1074 132
Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter is smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1273 147
Onkyo DX-7510	350	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1640 151
Onkyo DX-750	350	Exuberant, highly communicative player, brims with confidence, though unpredictable with some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1603 141
Orelle CD-100	500	Excellent information retrieval and convincing with a wide range of music. HF could be more natural though	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1628 151
Orelle CD-100SE	549	Articulate and solid performer, with a simple, purposeful, interface and attractive pricing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
Philips CD740	170	One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1567 139
Pioneer PD-S504	200	More consistent than the old PD-S503 and capable strong atmosphere and 'occasion'.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1274 147
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato - literally - in sound, but a very smooth performer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1641 151
Quad 77	850	This player knows how to sing. Pity the control system is so buggy.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
Quad 67	875	Powerful, fluid and captivating sound reminiscent of Meridian's 206.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	124
Rotel RCD-940BX	250	A sea change in transport and DAC technology lies behind this untidy-sounding and irritating player.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1535 137
Rotel RCD-975	£849	Bright and superficially detailed, this deck can sound coarse and inarticulate	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Sony CDP-361	150	Bantamweight it capable and resolute machine with no serious shortcomings at the price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	151
Sony CDP-761E	250	Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked but nonetheless fine performance.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1267 147
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	Strong-willed, heavyweight sound; not for the feint-hearted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1642 151

OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT
AT&T OPT DIG OUT
HEADPHONE OUTPUT
VARIABLE OUTPUT
MULTI-DISC
FACTSBACK NUMBER
DAC TYPE
ISSUE NUMBER

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)											
Product	Price(£)	Comments	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Teac CD-P3200	150	A primitive looking CD player, housing 16-bit electronics delivering an equally primitive and uninspiring sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB 1277	147
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat - but short in the trouser department	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS 1643	151
Teac VRDS-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking fine detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Teac VRDS-10	770	A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	119
Technics SL-PG480A	150	Competent if not exactly inspiring budget model that has all the features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	153
Technics SL-PS770A	250	A mellow sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS 1278	147
Thorens TCD 2000	900	Lacks midband separation and clarity and is short on dynamics but looks great (tested in Sessions)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS 1729	154
Thule CD100	849	A little muddled via single ended output, but the sound comes alive when balanced connections are used	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Trichord Genesis	549	Modified Pioneer PD-S504 that's a bit like a Williams Renualt Clio — astonishing at the price (tested in Sessions)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	155
TRANSPORTS											
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450	Superb combo for those who like the sound of valves (tested with Elixir DAC in Sessions)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	141
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100	Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provides a highly composed and tactile sound.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1320	144
Linn Karik	1,497	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1323	144
Meridian 200	895	Light, fresh and very bubbly sound that is natural, engaging and unfatiguing.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	96
Meridian 500	1,095	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1103	133
Meridian 602	1,750	With matching 606 DAC, Meridian's top player sounds distinctive and elegant.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	120
Mission Discmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Dacmaster)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1104	133
Pink Triangle Cardinal	795	Sound quality is warm but over-polished compared to PT Ordinal (tested with DaCapo and DC PSU).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1324	144
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1106	133
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1325	144
Teac P-700	900	Tested with D-700, low resolution sound is warm, bubbly and entertaining.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	120
Teac P-2S	4,000	The latest version of Teac's luxury P-2 transport sounds as over-engineered as it looks.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1493	130
Theta Data Basic II	2,298	Uses a Philips CDM-9 Pro mechanism a works a treat with more lively DACs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1494	130
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	- 1495	130
DACs											
Arcam Black Box 50	480	Measured and sophisticated sound from a DAC that leaves plenty in reserve for future upgrades.								Hyb 1506	133
Arcam Black Box 500	750	Sophisticated unit with Sync Lock and discrete DAC. Early samples sounded grubby and restrained.								BS 1519	136
Audio Alchemy DAC-in-a-Box	230	This giveaway DAC may still rescue the oldest of players from obsolescence.								MB	127
Audio Note DAC1	600	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer.								MB	127
Audiolab 8000DAC	800	Just as smooth and refined as its predecessor yet, sadly, still manages to obscure the passion or fire of music.								BS	127
Audiomeca Elixir	745	DAC was tested with Kreatura SE - see below								BS	141
Cambridge Audio DACMagic 2	200	Superb value DAC that makes the jump from good to outstanding if balanced outputs are used (tested in Sessions)						●		Hyb 1521	136
DPA PDM256	2,995	Highly advanced, with adjustable dither. but the different settings only lead to compromise.								BS	133
Linn Numerik	1,075	A new 20 bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a tad dry and humourless.								MB 1323	144
Meridian 563	750	Warmer but no less detailed than the earlier 200-series, the 563 flies with a top rate transport.								DS 1103	127
Meridian 508	1,475	Excellent partner for Meridian digital systems, and one of the best neo-high end systems								DS	140
Mission Dacmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Discmaster)								MB 1104	133
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837	The cheapest dual-differential DAC7 converter available offers top-flight sound quality.								BS 1524	136
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536	With Cardinal and DC PSU, the DaCapo is best with its 22bit option. It is warm but over-polished.								BS 1324	144
Pink Triangle DC Supply	1,590	Battery power supply for Cardinal and DaCapo								- 1324	144
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HCCD	2,650	With Lambda transport, the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.								MB 1106	133
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics						●		MB 1069	132
QED Digit Plus	139	Bearing in mind its expensive but very forgiving performance, the Digit is almost embarrassingly cheap.								BS	113
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed.								BS 1325	144
Teac D-700	600	With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining.								MB	120
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Richly detailed and honest sound from a very capable and natural DAC. Switchable phase, dither etc								Hyb 1320	144
Woodside DAC2	509	Sharp, dynamic sound is captivating for its lack of grain and 'tizz'.								MB	101
Woodside DAC1	909	Fine but slightly dated and costly package in performance terms - but flexible, musical and well built.								MB	87



Digital Recorders

Digital recorders come in a variety of different guises, but have yet to make much of an impact on the domestic market. At present there are four types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (Mini Disc), and DCC (digital compact cassette) and CD-R (CD Recordable). DCC is backwards compatible inasmuch as the machines can play regular audio cassette. MD's claim to fame is its optical disc format, which offers instant track access and can't be worn out like a tape. DAT has been on the market for quite some time now, but has never

really 'made it' as a consumer medium due to the dearth of pre-recorded material. However it has begun to carve itself a niche in the top end of the market, replacing reel-to-reel as the audiophile's tape based medium. Home CD-R is coming into its own with Pioneer's PD-R05 machine attempting to set a trend.

Best buy

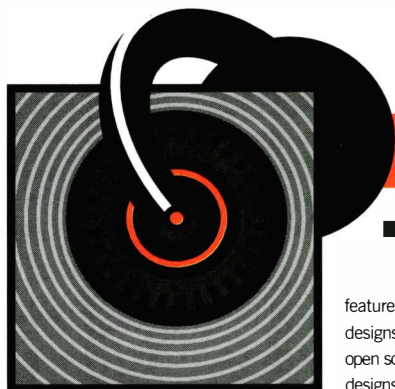
Recommended

KEY										
FORMAT: Type of recorder, see above for descriptions.		ADC TYPE: Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.		ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for electrical cable.		BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.				
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc.		PORTABLE: Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.		FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.						
		OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for optical cable.								

DIGITAL RECORDERS										
Product	Price(£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Philips DCC170	250	Good sound quality for a portable that records as well, beating competition from MD in its group	DCC	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	1237 141
Philips DCC951	280	Offering 18-bit record and replay this does an impressive job in many ways but PASC is still a limitation	DCC	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	139
Pioneer D-05	800	Second generation 96kHz DAT recorder can offer startling realism with the right software - ie first generation	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	152

DIGITAL RECORDERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DAC TYPE			ADC TYPE			ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS			ISSUE NUMBER	
			FORMAT	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS
Pioneer D-07	1,150	96kHz double sampling mode gives this deck a sense of naturalness missing from most DAT recorders	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	●	●	1089	133
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300	CD recorder that uses domestic blanks only (limited to 62 minutes), write once but excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	●	●	1652	152
Pioneer D-C88	2,000	State of the art portable 96kHz DAT recorder, the size of a lap-top computer this Nagra country on the cheap	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	●	●	1431	150
Sharp MD-M11	450	Slick MD personal with recording capabilities and rapid track access but less stunning sound quality	MD	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	●	●		139
Sony MDA-JA3ES	800	Full width MD recorder that makes a decent job of recordings but is less impressive with pre-recorded material	MD	BS	BS	●	●	●	●	●	●	1216	152



Headphones

There are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. Most models feature dynamic (moving coil) drivers in circular, open or closed-back designs. The advantage of open backs seems to be a correspondingly open sound, but one can also hear external noise, of course. Closed-back designs are useful in situations where it is necessary to block out noise.

There are three styles of headphone: circumaural models enclose the ear; supra-aural designs feature a flat pad which presses on the outer ear; and intra-aurals (in-ear) rest inside the ear itself, à la personal stereos. For best results a separate headphone amplifier is recommended.



KEY

TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.
SUPRA-AURAL: Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
CIRCUMAURAL: Style which encloses the ear.
OPEN BACK: Offers an open sound but lets in noise.

CLOSED BACK: Keeps out external noise.
WEIGHT (G): Mass in grams
IMPEDANCE (Ω): Load offered to the headphone amplifier. The higher the impedance the louder the sound for a given amplifier output.

3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR: Can be used with mini-jack-equipped components such as personal stereos.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page

to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

HEADPHONES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	CIRCUMAURAL TYPE			OPEN BACK			CLOSED BACK			3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR		FACTSBACK NUMBER		ISSUE NUMBER	
			BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS	BS
AKG K44	42	Good quality personal oriented phone, could have a better sense of space but is musically quite communicative.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	90	50	●	●	99		
AKG K135	46	The K135s doesn't live up to the usual AKG standards, though it does have the ability to convey rhythm well.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	160	150	●	●	63		
▲ AKG K240 Monitor	82	Something of a classic, these AKGs are very user-friendly in all respects; sonically on the warm side of normal.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	240	600	●	●	63		
▲ AKG K280 Parabolic	117	Revealing twin-driver design uses the same design principles as a satellite dish to beam sound into ear.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	250	75	●	●	63		
▲ AKG K400	118	Comfortable over long sessions. Sound is exquisitely detailed, dynamic and uncoloured.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	250	120	●	●	121		
▲ AKG K500	138	K500 offers impressive definition. Balance is on the light side but transparency is high.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	250	120	●	●	111		
▲ AKG K340	191	Heavyweight cans in most respects, the K340 with its electrostatic tweeter is a very revealing headphone.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	380	400	●	●	75		
▲ AKG K1000	646	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	270	120	●	●	99		
▲ Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	280	40	●	●	55		
Beyer DT311	49	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	124	40	●	●	1098	133	
Beyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	120	250	●	●	111		
▲ Beyer DT531	129	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	245	250	●	●	144		
▲ Beyer DT911	219	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	275	250	●	●	111		
▲ Jeklin Float Model 1	75	Whilst very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	400	200	●	●	55		
▲ Jeklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	400	200	●	●	63		
▲ Jeklin Float ELS	399	These electrostatics have an openness of sound that is rarely found in the breed, with good dynamic range to boot.	E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	600	8	●	●	55		
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.	D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	220	32	●	●	121		

BEST BUY VIVANCO - THE NAME BEHIND THE BEST BUYS

SR 606



"It sounds open and clean, with a warmth and graciousness denied most of its competitors"
Hi-Fi Choice
 August 1994

"An excellent buy"
WHAT HI-FI
 December 1993



IR 7600



"Clear sound; controlled bass; comfortable cordless"
WHAT HI-FI
 June 1995

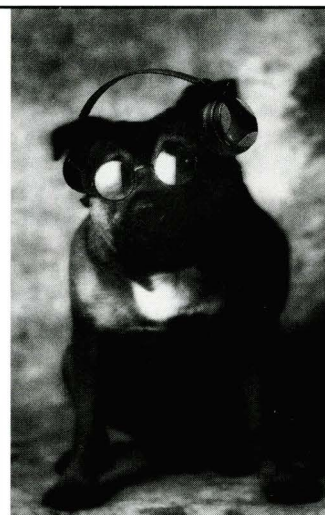
SR 250



"A real bargain and an obvious Best Buy to boot"
Hi-Fi Choice
 March 1995

"All round giant-killer"
Hi-Fi Choice
 March 1995

SR 850

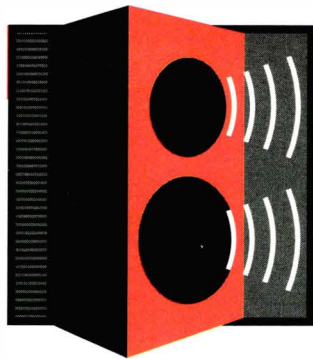


Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS
 Tel: 01442 231616 Fax: 01442 2355421

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

CIRCUM-AURAL TYPE SUPRA-AURAL OPEN BACK CLOSED BACK 3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR FACTSBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	WEIGHT(g)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Kenwood KH-1000	20	First step up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive	D ● ● ●	30	32	●	121	
Maxell HP-3000	30	Solid, smooth sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls.	D ● ● ●	120	32	●	1099	133
Pioneer SE-400D	37	Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.	D ● ● ●	185	35	●	1099	133
Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.	D ● ● ●	155	8	●		133
Sennheiser HD445 II	40	Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble	D ● ● ●	125	52	●	121	
Sennheiser HD565	140	Warm balanced design that lacks the speed of cheaper Sennheisers but is seriously accomplished (tested in Sessions)	D ● ● ●	255	150	●	1733	154
Stax SR Gamma	239	One down from the Lambda, the Gamma is an excellent headphone with little to criticise bar the price.	E ● ● ●	300	-			55
Stax Gamma Pro	399	With SRD-X Pro, like a stethoscope for your hi-fi, revealing subtleties that many loudspeakers fail to resolve.	E ● ● ●	300	-			63
Stax Lambda Pro	449	Tested with SRD-7B PSU, this is an industry reference, and is frighteningly revealing.	E ● ● ●	325	-			55
Stax Lambda Sig	549	With SRM-TI. Electrostatic - the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.	E ● ● ●	325	-			72
Vivanco SR606	40	Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable	D ● ● ●	225	32	●	1101	133
Vivanco IR7100	120	Infra-red phones that work well but suffer from the limitations of the medium ie compression and hiss(Sessions)	D ● ● ●	265	-			149



Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

As the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is only as good as the signal it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure plus a couple of drive units behind a removable grille. Inside the box lurks a simple electrical circuit known as a crossover, which divides the incoming (full range) signal into the right bits for the drivers to handle. The designer's primary

task is to balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against the bass extension (how low it goes), for the given box size.

Subwoofers augment the bass and come in passive and amplified active form, they are less sensitive to placement than regular speakers.

B
Best Buy
R
Recommended

KEY

SIZE WxHxD (cm): Width by height by depth in centimetres.

FLOORSTANDER: As opposed to requiring a dedicated stand.

SENSITIVITY (dB/W): Efficiency: how much volume you get for a given input; the higher the louder.

IMPEDANCE (Ω): Measured in Ohms impedance it is a measure of how hard a loudspeaker is to drive: the lower the number the more powerful the amplifier needs to be.

BASS FROM (Hz): The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce, based on in-room measurements.

FREE SPACE: Speakers should be placed away from walls.

CLOSE TO WALL: It is recommended that these speakers be placed close (between 3 and 12cm) to the rear wall.

FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback page.

BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

SIZE WxHxD(CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY(dB/W) IMPEDANCE(Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FACTSBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	WEIGHT(g)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Energy AE1	764	Exceptional mid focus and coherence, but it is pricey and could be more agile.		26,30,18	88	8 48	●	102
Allison AL100	100	Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement		24,33,19	90	4 30	●	94
Allison AL105	170	Pretty enough in appearance; sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price.		24,37,21	90	4 45	●	78
Allison AL110	220	Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid.		24,40,23	90	4 28	●	102
Allison AL120	420	Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price.		28,61,29	90	4 30	●	98
Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998	Remarkable transparency and delicacy; loudness and 'grunt' are a bit lacking.		58,127	87	4 30	●	81
ATC SCM20	1,499	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable.		24,44,31	83	8 28	●	86
Audio Innovations Alto	329	Styling makes competition look old-fashioned, but sound is thin and cold		20,38,26	88	6 45	●	1653 152
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness adds some colouration, but doesn't spoil the very speaker.		38,58,25	93	8 25	●	110
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!		36,84,28	94	8 20	●	106
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning.		22,107,47	88	8 28	●	1344 143
Audiovector 3X	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance.		19,32,98	89	8 20	●	1345 143
B&W DM302	130	highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure		19,32,22	88	4 45	●	156
B&W DM601	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics		20,5,35,5,23	88	6 30	●	156
B&W DM602	280	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension		24,49,31	90	8 30	●	1654 152
B&W Matrix 805 V	995	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration.		33,33,21	87	8 30	●	98
B&W Matrix 801S3	3,795	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force.		44,100,56	87	8 20	●	81
Bose 305	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble.		23,45,28	-	8 40	●	78
Bose 401	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband.		30,30,76	●	- 4 28	●	110
Boston Acoustics HD5	139	Pretty miniature lacks boxiness, but is short of drama and dynamic drive.		16,25,18	89	8 30	●	110
Canon S-30	180	Moulded design has lively coherence, with 'wide imaging stereo'.		23,27,24	90	6 50	●	114
Castle Isis	230	Expressive with a full upper bass, tonally colourful with a big, dynamic sound (tested in Sessions)		17,35,19,5	87	8 60	●	1729 154
Castle Durham 900	300	Lovely veneer and lots of engineering create a very upfront, coherent and exciting sound.		22,40,23	90	8 60	●	1162 135
Castle York	370	Real wood compact has an engaging transparency: fine balance and timing, but could use some authority.		26,43,22	89	8 50	●	110
Castle Severn	500	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too.		23,77,20	88	8 47	●	1655 152
Castle Chester	700	A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.		23,91,25	90	8 44	●	98
Castle Howard S2	1,100	Ably fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid back balance.		26,104,41	90	8 40	●	1078 132
Castle Winchester	1,650	Large for its bass extension but engagingly agile, open and airy.		42,108,23	90	8 35	●	90
Celestion 1	99	It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.		16,27,21	86	8 50	●	114
Celestion 3 MKII	139	Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes.		21,31,18	88	8 45	●	1036 130
Celestion 9	269	Nicely presented and fair material value, with impressively flat mid to bass balance.		21,50,25	89	8 30	●	102
Celestion Impact 23	300	Big, cheap and loud. Sounds coloured and old fashioned, lacks subtlety		28,82,29	89	8 30	●	1656 152
Celestion 15	389	Big box and but short on subtlety and control though long on both enthusiasm		21,100,25	89	8 28	●	114
Celestion Impact 25	400	Both capable and enjoyable these rock boxes are real contenders in the bang-for-the-buck stakes		27,82,29	90	8 43	●	155
Celestion SL6Si	429	This stereotype luxury compact can sound a bit dull and congested; favours CD.		20,38,27	84	8 30	●	94

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

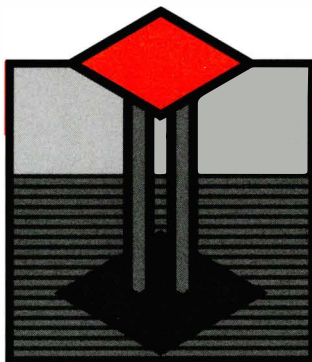
Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WHXHD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(DB/W/M)	FLOORSTANDER	IMPEDANCE(O)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
							CLOSE TO WALL		
Celestion SL600si	820	Some will find this speaker irresistible, but it needs careful system and room matching.	20,37,24	82	8	52	●		68
Celestion 300	1,099	Splendid bass extension and fine panel-like openness, but dynamics and timing are suspect.	21,97,33	●	84	8	20	●	118
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not all that refined but ballsy as heck, these rock boxes have no shortage of gung ho	33,70,29	●	95	6	37	●	155
Dali 104B	370	Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance.	22,86,27	●	93	4	28	●	1657 152
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698	Compact floorstander with superb coherence but rather forward midband. Would suit smaller rooms best.	26,88,21	●	89	8	30	●	114
Epos ES11	445	Integral baffle/driver gives remarkable colouration, transparency and speed.	20,38,25	●	87	8	45	●	94
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control.	23,49,29	●	87	8	25	●	98
Epos ES22	1,185	Elegant floorstander with 'safe' balance that can be enlivened with the right cable and energetic material (Sessions)	21,88,25	●	87	6	58	●	1629 151
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance.	24,90,35	●	88	6	22	●	1346 143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination.	25,27,46	●	90	4	48	●	94
Gale Model 4	200	Low cost floorstander; sounds a bit edgy, with detached bass	19,79,22	●	87	8	28	●	156
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update.	19,30,18	●	82	10	80	●	66
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149	Laid back to a fault but entertaining nevertheless, and a big box for the price.	21,35,30	●	87	8	30	●	1037 130
Heybrook Prima	139	Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight.	20,29,18	●	87	6	50	●	110
Heybrook Solo	199	Untidy bass and treble, but handles complex rhythmic material well.	23,36,23	●	89	6	28	●	90
Heybrook Trio	373	HBS1 drivers in real wood enclosure give a sweeter and more forgiving sound.	24,47,25	●	89	8	45	●	118
Heybrook Heylo	389	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought.	23,73,19	●	88	8	30	●	1658 152
Heybrook Heystack	499	Elegant, highly detailed and level-headed sound, but could use injection of life	22,98,28	●	89	8	38	●	141
Heybrook Quartet	575	Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound.	24,41,22	●	90	8	48	●	122
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness.	27,90,20	●	88	8	25	●	102
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20	●	89	6	50	●	1403 148
Infinit Kappa 6.1i	995	Good extension, but bass is fat and slow, and dynamics are unconvincing.	31,95,25	●	89	6	25	●	1080 132
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140	Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.	20,32,22	●	89	8	48	●	1038 130
Jamo BX100A	350	A cracking output for their size these rock boxes can be a tad bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28	●	91	8	40	●	155
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●	1659 152
Jamo 477	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price.	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	1549 138
Jamo 707A	900	Superb styling and cosmetics and decent balance apart from detached bass.	26,38,104	●	90	4	25	●	1085 132
JBL Control One	115	Sub-miniature with forward midrange and real bass; price justified by build	24,156,14	●	87	4	100	●	90
JBL TLX70	400	Startling bass weight from party animal that is let down by rather bland high frequencies	27,88,28	●	88.5	8	50	●	155
JBL L20J	850	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock'n'roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	●	86	8	30	●	1550 138
JBL L90	1,300	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a tad crude	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●	143
JBL Ti 1000	1,600	Performance compromised by over enthusiastic midbass output from port.	20,30,13	●	89	4	45	●	118
Jordan Watts JH400	820	Piano finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid.	28,38,21	●	86	8	50	●	106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,17.5	●	86	8	50	●	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17.5	●	86	8	50	●	156
JPW Sonata	120	Fine sound if limited bass and dynamic range, wood veneered at a silly price.	23,32,22	●	87	8	70	●	71
JPW P1 Vinyl	150	Competent loudspeaker for the price, with a safe sound that won't disappoint.	26,44,25	●	89	8	65	●	102
JPW P1	170	Longstanding design is remarkable material value (real wood etc) and sounds pretty too.	26,44,25	●	89	8	65	●	1611 141
JPW AP2	200	Real wood finish, and performance is cleaner but similar to P1 Vinyl overall.	26,44,25	●	89	8	65	●	106
JPW AP3	230	Good stereo and well balanced overall; character is well suited to vinyl replay.	26,52,29	●	88	8	55	●	46
JPW Ruby 1	500	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance.	19,32,21	●	87	6	55	●	1572 139
KEF Coda 7	130	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23	●	88	6	50	●	156
KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5.29	●	86	6	28	●	156
KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●	156
KEF Q30	379	Fine focus from Uni-Q driver, but lacks drive and time coherence.	19,73,30	●	88	6	44	●	126
KEF Q50	529	Compact twin-driver floorstander with Uni-Q treble and a rather midbass, heavy overall balance.	19,83,30	●	89	6	50	●	1573 139
KEF 104/2	1,799	A reference point for dynamics, best without KUBE, suited to many rooms.	28,90,41	●	92	4	50	●	60
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24	●	89	8	20	●	1405 148
Linn Koilidh Passive	649	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive.	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	1552 138
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving.	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●	118
Living Voice Air Partner S	27,000	Outstanding transparency and dynamics from remarkably solid and fast mega horn	64,160,90	●	108	8	40	●	138
Lumley Reference LM4	375	Metal diaphragm and wood veneer; balance uneven upper and has suspect timing.	18,36,22	●	86	6	44	●	126
Lumley Reference LM3	895	Despite indifferent bass alignment, LM3 is fast, coherent, solid and informative	27,87,28	●	90	8	30	●	106
Meridian DSP6000	8,500	Sophisticated digital design, with a wide ranging, refined and detailed sound. Has onboard amplification	28,133,43	●	-	-	35	●	1226 140
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	State of the active loudspeaker art, a high grade design with unique capabilities. Has onboard amplification	21,90,30	●	-	-	35	●	1226 140
Mission 731	130	Much improved bass but dull top; likes to play loud	17,5,31,18	●	87	6	45	●	156
Mission 732	200	Attractive presentation but a rather dull and thick sounding speaker, and a tad pricey too.	20,41,30	●	89	8	45	●	1613 141
Mission 733	300	Duller than before, though still an honest all-round package	20,5,87,30	●	87	8	45	●	156
Mission 751	300	Gorgeous looking, very petite; boogies with a sting at the top	17,5,32,26	●	87	8	45	●	156
Mission 734	430	Fine all rounder, and good value, but dynamically a bit lazy, and tweeter quality limited.	21,84,33	●	90	8	43	●	1660 152
Mission 752	500	Brilliant style, engineering and sound	20,88,26	●	90	8	50	●	1553 138
Mission 753	700	Gorgeous presentation and potential for open transparency.	21,88,32	●	90	6	45	●	114
Monitor Audio MA201	300	Lively and coherent with good power handling, but also a bit shut in and coloured.	22,41,40	●	90	8	40	●	1164 135
Monitor Audio MA202	450	Uneven, informative and easy-listening floorstander delivers decent scale.	22,89,27	●	90	8	50	●	1575 139
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500	Good looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms, lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26	●	89	8	45	●	1661 152
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900	Metal diaphragm compact has transparent midband but lacks vigour and drive.	22,35,25	●	88	8	45	●	118
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price.	17,92,20	●	90	8	28	●	1349 143
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun	18,5,30,5,20	●	86	8	50	●	156
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Prettily finished and inexpensive passive subwoofer is only really useful with sub-miniature speakers	24,58,26	●	90	8	40	●	128
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut in and coloured quality is compensated by fine bass and impressive communication.	25,43,28	●	90	8	28	●	1662 152
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,695	Although a very neutral loudspeaker it can, with the right ancillaries, pack a serious punch (Statements)	26,86,35	●	90	6	35	●	1367 146
Morel 704/2	1,000	There's real potential here, but it's not fully realised	23,80,21	●	88	8	20	●	1350 143

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER	
									1	2
▲ Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	25,80,23	● 86	8	25	●	●	1663	152
▲ Naim SBL Passive	1,821	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before.	27,89,27	● 88	6	25	●	●	1352	143
▲ Neat Petite	595	Among the most entertaining and enjoyable, despite colourations	20,30,18	● 87	6	33	●	●		102
▲ Origin Live OL-2A	470	Fine dynamics and a good looking, well engineered package, though presence bland and treble restrained.	19,80,19	● 86	8	45	●	●	1664	152
▲ Origin Live OL-1	499	Luxury miniature has very good overall balance, sacrificing sensitivity for bass.	20,30,19	● 86	8	25	●	●		106
▲ Philips Legend FB720II	200	Liveliness, coherence and fine information retrieval justifies the odd looking baffle.	21,37,31	● 90	6	50	●	●	122	
▲ Pink Triangle Ventrical	896	If you are after Quad Electrostatic type transparency but can't afford the price... (Sessions)	15,80,32	● 86	11		●	●		142
▲ Pioneer S-4UK	250	Latest version now balances pretty well, with a coherent lightweight bass.	21,37,28	● 88	6	50	●	●	1157	139
▲ Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	● 89	8	25	●	●	1155	138
▲ Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back.	31,94,37	● 90	8	22	●	●	1084	132
▲ Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good conventional boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	● 86	8	30	●	●	1457	149
▲ Prof Monitor Co LB1	998	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.	18,53,25	● 89	4	33	●	●		110
▲ Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room.	26,79,43	● 89	6	22	●	●		114
▲ Quad ESL-63	2,860	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without.	66,93,27	● 86	8	34	●	●		60
▲ Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative.	19,31,19	● 87	8	50	●	●		114
▲ Rega EL8	298	Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence.	17,72,20	● 86	8	55	●	●		122
▲ Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	● 87	8	40	●	●	1578	139
▲ Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing.	20,82,30	● 89	6	40	●	●	1083	132
▲ Revolver Beretta	100	Great bass for the price, a bit crude further up	19,35,22	● 87	8	45	●	●	156	
▲ Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22	● 88	6	48	●	●	1407	148
▲ Revolver 260	350	A no nonsense presenter of rock with plenty of dynamics, not too refined (tested in Sessions)	21,5,91,6,30	● 89	6	40	●	●		154
▲ Rogers LS1	149	High grade miniature	20,20,30	● 87	6		●	●	1408	143
▲ Rogers AB1	499	Designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	● 82	8		●	●	1354	143
▲ Rogers Studio 3	499	Pricey LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if lightweight, can't go loud.	19,30,16	● 85	8	30	●	●		118
▲ Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot.	19,31,17	● 82	12	45	●	●	1354	143
▲ Rogers Studio 5	699	Luxury finish bookshelf size model has genuine monitoring capabilities.	25,25,48	● 89	8	40	●	●	1556	138
▲ Rogers Studio 7	899	Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid back sound.	30,63,30	● 90	8	30	●	●		122
▲ Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.	28,76,46	● 88	8	20	●	●	1082	132
▲ Royd Minstrel	249	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing, a bit bright.	18,69,12	● 86	8	30	●	●	1167	135
▲ Royd Merlin	298	Invigorating and exciting design with plenty of upfront detail, but balance lacks warmth and a tad overpriced	20,31,18	● 86	8	33	●	●	1409	148
▲ Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that fun to listen to. Aesthetics could use improving though	20,31,18	● 86	8	35	●	●		139
▲ Royd Abbot	665	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance.	20,81,30	● 90	8	43	●	●		118
▲ Ruark Templar	499	Striking baffle gives decent bass/mid but dull treble; could tame over-bright system.	19,70,27	● 87	8	25	●	●		122
▲ Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence.	23,84,32	● 88	8	30	●	●		118
▲ Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to remove itself from the picture	25,88,34	● 88	6	45	●	●	1227	140
▲ SD Acoustics SD3R	399	New SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity.	20,38,30	● 87	8	25	●	●		106
▲ SD Acoustics SD5	1,235	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter.	20,110,30	● 88	8	30	●	●	1081	132
▲ Shahinian Arc	1,675	Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing.	35,69,25	● 88	6	24	●	●		110
▲ Spendor 2020	399	Utilising an oval drive unit in a stylish cabinet this is a neutral design with AV inclinations (tested in Sessions)	18,34,26	● 87	8		●	●		155
▲ Spendor S20	760	Maintains Spendor's tradition for peerless mid-to-treble coherence and perspectives..	22,38,26	● 84	8	25	●	●		102
▲ System Audio 905	250	Fine coherence and remarkable dynamic freedom some something so small, though there's little real weight	15,27,21	● 89	8	60	●	●	1410	148
▲ Tannoy 631	149	Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle.	19,34,15	● 87	6	60	●	●	1616	141
▲ Tannoy 631SE	170	Very refined midband; maybe too laid back for some	13-19,34,16	● 86	7	45	●	●		156
▲ Tannoy 632	189	Clever cabinet avoids boxiness and promotes focus imaging and bass	43,51,27	● 88	20	25	●	●	1168	135
▲ Tannoy 633/II	300	Impressive bass and balance from very compact floorstander. Upper midband could be cleaner.	29,75,28	● 89	85	20	●	●	1665	152
▲ Tannoy 638	599	Big value vinyl big box has good balance and lots of loudness, but needs a good amp.	33,96,32	● 91	6	25	●	●	1558	138
▲ Tannoy D500	1,470	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps.	31,93,34	● 91	6	20	●	●	1355	143
▲ Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	These awesome horn loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive.	large	● 99	8	38	●	●		C93
▲ TDL Near Field Monitor	100	Despite low price, this is an unimpressive performer, poor low frequency resolution and analysis being main flaws	18,30,17	● 87	8	50	●	●	1043	130
▲ TDL RTL2	300	Spacious, weighty and enveloping sound if you can accept the laid back balance	20,73,22	● 87	8	25	●	●	1412	148
▲ TDL RTL3	400	Bargain price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale.	20,90,37	● 90	8	25	●	●		126
▲ TDL Studio 0.5	499	Tiny floorstanding transmission line lacks coherence or the balance of Studio 1.	20,62,30	● 85	8	40	●	●		94
▲ TDL Studio 1	699	Genuinely extended bass from a compact enclosure, very detailed but a shade clinical.	23,77,33	● 86	8	25	●	●		78
▲ TDL Studio 1m	899	Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver.	23,77,34	● 86	8	20	●	●		118
▲ Technics SB-M20	200	Well balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,32,23	● 70	8	50	●	●	1413	148
▲ Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass heavy balance and low sensitivity.	25,78,37	● 100	8	25	●	●	1666	152
▲ Thiel SCS	1,379	Class leading coherence and communication, but can sound shut-in and dark	23,92,41	● 87	4	45	●	●		114
▲ Totem Model One	995	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size.	17,31,23	● 87	4	28	●	●		122
▲ Triangle Octant TXe	3,950	Errs on side of extremism. High sensitivity and beguiling midband make a persuasive case for valve partnership	42,150,19	● 94	4	50	●	●	1539	137
▲ Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness.	41,101,27	● 88	7	23	●	●		86
▲ Visonik David 6001	163	Sharp styling, but the complex grillwork worsens a sound which starts off with too much top and not enough bottom.	13,20,12	● 87	8	130	●	●		74
▲ Wharfedale Valdus 400	199	Goes very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is very thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	● 91	8	30	●	●	1414	148
▲ Wharfedale Valdus 500	299	Offering a large version of events these rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	● 91	4	40	●	●	155	
▲ ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun.	14,22,12	● 88	8	30	●	●		110
Subwoofers										
▲ B&W AS6	500	Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W active design	45,51,45,5	●		30				154
▲ Boston Acoustics SW10	450	A little thumpy but transparent with good timing and goes loud (active)	28,5,50,42	●		33				128
▲ Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass: for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	● 86	8	45	●	●		128
▲ Infinity RS10	500	A very cute cube of an active sub but midbass is boomy with no real extension	34,34,34	●		38				128
▲ Jamo SW600	500	Has some neat styling touches and remote control but deep bass is limited (active)	38,41,53	●		30				154
▲ KEF Model 30B	530	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38,5,37,43	●		45				154
▲ KEF AV1	2500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45				128

SUBWOOFERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	FLOORSTANDER	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
M&K VX-7B	450	Baby of a big range this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass albeit lacking in transparency		35,25,37	●		40		154
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Fair value, can help sensitive small speakers but no serious extension to match upper bass		58,24,25	●	85	45		128
REL Q-Bass	350	Smashes the price barrier for deep bass performance		40,41,5,40	●		20		1670 154



Stands & Supports

Hi-fi furniture is more important than you might imagine. The effect it can have on the sound of your system is far from subtle. Hi-fi furniture can be split up into two categories — equipment supports and loudspeaker stands. It is not entirely clear what makes a great equipment support, but some are definitely more equal than others. There's a variety of approaches and materials used, including particle board, glass and all

manner of steel tube and section. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice, but as a rule you want the tweeter at ear height.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

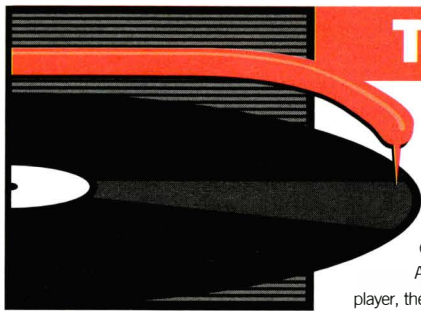
HEIGHT (CM): Height of stand or equipment shelf.
TOP PLATE SIZE (CM): Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.
FILLABLE: Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or lead to increase mass, which affects sound.
WELDED: The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.
NUMBER OF SHELVES: The amount of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
SHELF TYPE: Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TOP PLATE SIZE(CM)	HEIGHT(CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Equipment Supports										
Audiophile Furniture Base	480	Easy to set up, well ordered sound		40			4	Wood		151
Fi-Rax R4	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass					5	Glass		151
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type, angle iron, chipboard and glass combined to make a significant difference to sound quality				●	1	Glass		147
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600	Infinitely upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle iron design that adds speed and bandwidth to components upon it				●	5	Glass		151
Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral					4	MDF		151
Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order - but cheap		50	40,84	●	5	Wood		151
SoundStyle Select 6105	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart					5	Glass		151
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249	Adds colouration, and lacks weight. Optional Isolation Platform		81	72,42		5	Glass		151
Target B5	175	Free of colourations, fine grip and good value				●	5	Wood		151
Speaker Stands										
Alphason NC I	45	Filled single column design without threaded spike holes that's appropriate for non-critical applications		40-60	16,16	● ●				146
Alphason NC II	80	Twin column version of the above with a rather lively mid and treble dominated presentation		40-60	16,16	● ●				146
Alphason Titan	120	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion		40-60	16,16	● ●				146
Atacama SE24	70	Stand out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance		61	19,5,17	● ●				146
Ixos Deadrock 903	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing		60						146
Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers					● ●			146
Kudos S50	100	Robust, clean and tidy in appearance and sound, it has the substance, slam and control of a properly balanced design		46/60			● ●			146
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect		5			●			146
Partington New Merlin	60	Although light in weight, the stands performance seemed remarkably muscular but musical rendering lacked a little precision					● ●			146
Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal					● ●			146
Partington Trophy	100	Four column design with damped top and base plates, sound is tight and cogent with smoothly integrated detail					● ●			146
Sound Style Z024	100	Three pillar triangular based design with high gloss finish. Enthusiastic sound suited to better systems		61			● ●			146
Sound Organisation Z124	80	Atacama style big pillar. A pleasantly balanced performer, tonally even with good timing and dynamics, but leaks sand!		61			●			146
Sound Organisation Z129	110	Heavy four pillar design, extracts detail well and very little colouration together with an excellent sense of timing		74			●			146
Target R1	280	Truly high mass four pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack and outstanding imagery		53	15,21		● ●			146
Target TR60	67.50	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less than audiophile oriented twin column design		60	15,15		●			146

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Tonearms



Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components.

Although the turntable is the most important part of a record player, the tonearm is the second most important, and the quality of

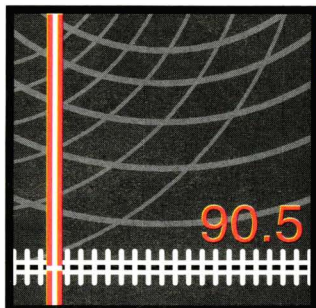
its construction and design have a significant bearing on sound quality. There are three basic types of arms listed in the key and each has its strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, for reasons both practical and economical.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY	
EFFECTIVE MASS: This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	PARALLEL TRACKING: An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
PIVOTED: Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.	UNI-PIVOT: Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm): Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT: Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
A Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack.	Medium	●	229	●	●	●	229	86
A Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness.	High	●	●	●	●	●	●	79
A Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths.	Medium	●	229	●	●	●	229	6
A Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.	Low	●	237	●	●	●	237	60
A Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.	Low	●	237	●	●	●	237	60
A Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targetted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases - a touch bright though.	Low	●	240	●	●	●	240	91
A SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer.	Low	●	238	●	●	●	238	79
A SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration.	Low	●	233	●	●	●	233	60
A SME Series V	1,391	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price.	Low	●	233	●	●	●	233	60



Tuners

The radio medium operates at a lower profile than TV, but in areas outside pop music the BBC service is the envy of the world. Live concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective. Though tuners might seem something of a hi-fi afterthought, the task they discharge is far from simple, since it requires the skills of RF (reception) and audio (signal processing) engineering. The importance of the former will depend on reception conditions, but a high-quality aerial system is

well worth having. Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories.

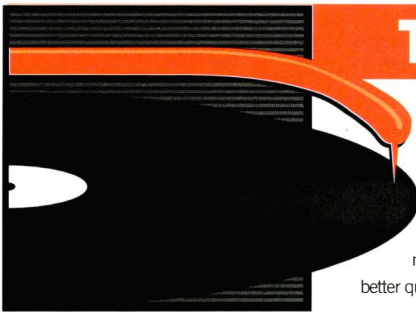
B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY	
WAVEBANDS: Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for receiving certain transmissions in the UK.	PRESETS: Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
RDS: (radio data system) was originally designed for in-car applications. Basically RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, but they offer a variety of other features as well.	REMOTE CONTROL: Couch-potato friendly.
SIGNAL STRENGTH METER: Indicates strength of signal from aerial, useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.	ROTARY TUNING KNOB: The ergonomically attractive approach to dial-surfing.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	REMOTE CONTROL	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220	Selectivity modest and there is some susceptibility to front end overload, though basic sound quality is pretty good	FM,M,L	24	●	●	●	●	24	142
Arcam Delta 280	399	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	●	20	120
A Audiolab 8000T	750	Unusually combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics	FM,M,L	39	●	●	●	●	39	142
A Demon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound.	FM,M,L	20	●	●	●	●	20	93
A Harman-Kardon TU9400	299	This striking tuner exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet	FM,M	24	●	●	●	●	24	142
JVC FX362BX	130	Disappointing all-round performance - watch out for aerial overload in strong signal areas. Tuning knob unspecial	FM,M,L	40	●	●	●	●	40	1017 129
Kenwood KT-3050L	170	Excellent RF performance and plenty of features including RDS, but ordinary sound.	FM,M,L	39	●	●	●	●	39	1018 120
A Linn Kremlin	1,995	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.	FM	80	●	●	●	●	80	142
A Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.	FM	30	●	●	●	●	30	72
A Meridian 604	1,350	Unique digital converter makes most sense in Meridian system context: smooth, sweet sound with fine front end.	FM	30	●	●	●	●	30	120
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	●	29	142
A Naim NAT01	1,599	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.	FM	●	●	●	●	●	●	142
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	Pleasingly neutral, but rather undynamic and congested	FM/MW	30	●	●	●	●	30	142
Quad FM66	554	Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.	FM	19	●	●	●	●	19	142
Sherwood TX3010C	120	Lots of features and fine FM discrimination for price. Sound is communicative but inconsistently tacky.	FM,M	30	●	●	●	●	30	120
Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●	30	142

Turntables



Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backgrounds and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units

and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components, but many so-called 'sympathetic' combinations exist.

Because turntables are mechanical devices that are designed to retrieve modulations as small as a micron, engineering quality is of paramount importance. It is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require high quality support systems.



Best buy



Recommended

KEY			
MANUAL: You do it all: put the needle on the record and take it off.	EXTERNAL PSU: Outboard power supply; generally it indicates high quality.	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE: Most turntables do not come supplied with a needle.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
AUTO: The record player does it all.	SUPPLIED WITH ARM: Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted; if not, this tells you so.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	
SEMI-AUTO: You share the work: you put it on, it takes it off.			
SPEEDS: In RPM to correspond with your platters.			
SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS: Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.			

TURNTABLES

Product	Price (£)	Comments	MANUAL	SEMI-AUTO	AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Alphason Sonata	835	Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS).	●	●	●	33	●	●	●	●	79		
Clearaudio Reference	2,500	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail with a fizzy character but is quite bold	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●	1328	144	
DNM Rota 2	4,800	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on own table	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●	1328	144	
Dual CS503-2	170	Coarse and woolly sound - not inoffensive, but bettered by the CS-505-3.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Dual 505-4 UK	200	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	(Tested with Stugi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Linn Basik	349	Strong midband analysis and imagery; clean if sharp treble is matched to a good if occasionally wooden bass.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Linn LP12 Basik	745	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●	●	●	33	●	●	●	●		103	
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Michell Gyrodek	765	Sweet and natural sounding player, well matched with the Rega RB300	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		55	
Pink Triangle Export	948	The PT100 with built-in PS. Transparent and neutral, but review sample had high motor noise.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797	Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	Don't think of this as a mid price deck with a good arm, but as a scaled down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		138	
Rega Planar 2	198	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		48	
Rega Planar 3	260	The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		48	
Rivelin Eclipse	1,100	Tested with SME 309. Tends to simply things and add a slightly ragged edge to the proceedings	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		1328	144
Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	855	Musically it offers exceptional performance with a minimum of fuss.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
SME Model 20A	4,631	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval.	●	●	●	33/45/78	●	●	●	●		118	
Systemdek IIX/900	230	A high performance budget turntable that is particularly strong at fine detail resolution and imagery.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Uptempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		115	
Systemdek IIXE/900AP	388	The acrylic platter IIXE is one of the most capable budget decks on the market: good resolution, dynamics and timing.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300	Refined and solid sound with well focussed imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Thorens TD2001	700	Similar to TD320 but much dearer - why? Sound is comfortable but not very detailed.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Thorens TD3001/UK	770	Excellent middle ranking esoterica, with strong all-round abilities rather than excellence in particular areas.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		103	
Voyd 0.5	3,940	Cross between standard and Reference Voyds. Superb finish, colourful and dynamic.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		1328	144
Voyd Reference	6,500	Voyd's flagship, equipped with three substantial motors, is a strong contender for world's best.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		91	
Well Tempered Record Player	1,800	Intriguing and challenging. Musically it is not ideal, but has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●	●		1180	136

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AUDIBLE DIFFERENCE, Near Diss, Norfolk - see main entry under Norfolk.

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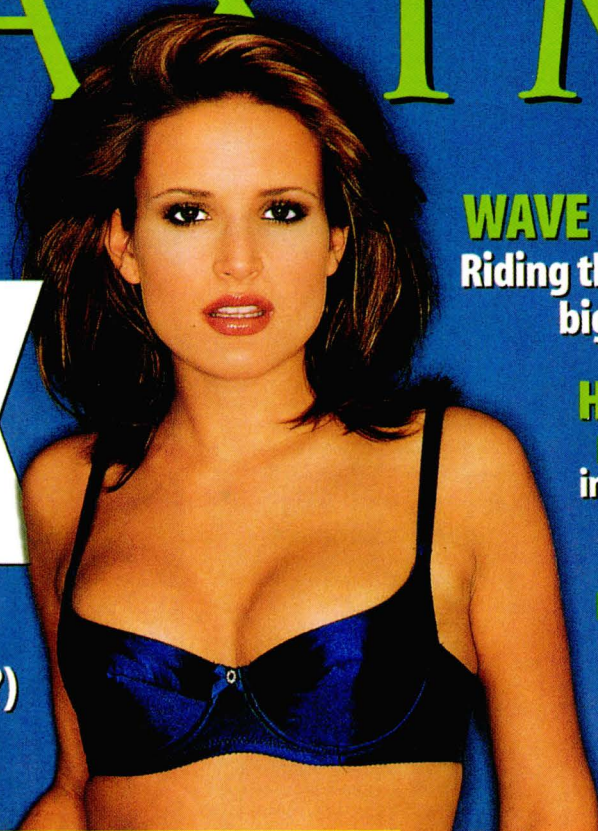
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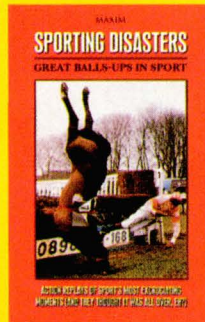
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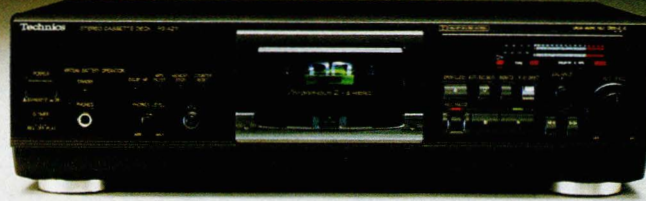
RELIVE YOUR CHILDHOOD IN NEXT MONTH'S HI-FI CHOICE

This Year's European Awards

One day, Floppity-Wopsy the fluffy-tailed bunny-wunny was bouncing along the lane. Bouncy, bouncy, bounce, bounce. All of a sudden, Floppity-Wopsy spied 15 of the finest European hi-fi products in the field. "Yummy," thought Floppity-Wopsy, and jumped through a hole in the hedge into the field. As Floppity-Wopsy the fluffy-tailed bunny-wunny sniffed the air around the latest, ripest and most ready-to-eat Award Winners, she was completely unaware of the anti-personnel mines all around, and the red-faced Farmer Giles creeping up behind her, his LAWS rocket-launcher armed and poised for action...



Get lashings of ginger beer, your new Nelly the Elephant CD, and try out this super Technics RS-AZ7 cassette deck!



Cassette Decks On Test

"Crikey!" exclaimed Bunty, "that was a close one."

Dick nodded in agreement. "You're absolutely right, Bunty. And it's jolly clever of you to notice, what with you only being a girl and stuff."

"Who'd have thought that Uncle Tony would have kept so many mid-price cassette decks under lock and key?" said Jimbo.

"Yes," said Charles, gulping down his ginger beer. "I had him pegged as a Cluedo enthusiast and a badger-strangler at the very least."

"At least he had the good sense to check out the super new Technics, the Yamaha and many more," barked Patch the dog.

We Pick Cartridges For Vinyl Fans

Janet is happy. John has got a red satchel. Janet and John are in the playground. Malcolm has many cartridges.

"Look at the cartridges," says Janet.

"They are from different companies," says John.

"They are all up-market cartridges, from companies like Ortofon, Wilson benesch and Lyra," Malcolm says to Janet and John.

Malcolm, Janet and John all smile. Now they have good VTA.



"Look, a cartridge. Isn't it nice?"

Plus

Mary, Mungo and Midge in three-in-a-bed shocker • We mix'n'match another crop of the finest hi-fi systems • What Katy REALLY did next • Win big toys from Epos • Plus loads, loads more...

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Ultra

David Vivian's low-budget guide to hi-fi heaven has eight steps, starts at your local pub and requires a considerable amount of Blu-tac . . .

Vivian Scene

The working title for this month's column was 'eight things to make your system sound like a million bucks that won't cost you a dime'. You just have to read something like that, don't you? A friend of mine was at the airport the other day and saw a book entitled *How To Crap In The Woods (and other forgotten outdoor skills)*. Essential purchase — didn't even bother to scan the flyleaf.

I don't know if the book is any good. I actually doubt it's even been read; he wanted it mainly for his bookshelf. You can be sure of one thing, though. Nothing I'm about to tell you will make your system sound like a million bucks. Not all the fixes are free, either. But, hey, I have your attention.

Now the bitter truth. The easiest and most reliable way to improve the sound of your system is to throw money at it. That's just the way it is. The fact remains, however, that if you don't like spending more than you absolutely have to on satisfying your audio aspirations hardware-wise — I'm tempted to say "who does?" — then there are certain things you can do for yourself. Common sense is optional, of course. If you want to buy a £1,000 cartridge and attach it to a £2,000 tonearm with an elastic band, that's entirely up to you.

Incidentally, I've never quite understood what hi-fi agony aunts are going on about when they refer to a 'tight budget'. What other sort of budget is there — a wilfully wasteful one? However much you're spending, you still want to get the most for your money. Surely, the object must be to end up with a sizeable pile of cash to blow on CDs, vinyl and, of course, a few jars down the local.

I suppose we're talking about tweaking. But I don't like tweaking. It smacks of time wasting, of having nothing better to do, of being a hobby in itself. If you like tweaking, go to it. I don't want to spoil anyone's fun. And if there are any Peter Belt disciples out there, please be patient with me. I know full well that the door to sonic satisfaction can be opened by writing the name of your cat on the back of a family reunion photo, slip-



Cyrano goes for the Blu-tac solution.

ping it inside a discarded sock with a 50p coin and depositing it in the safe box of a three star hotel, but that doesn't fill a column, does it?

So it isn't tweaking and it isn't black magic. All I can say is what follows tends to work. At least, it works for me.

Fuses

Go to Tandy's and buy a few packets of the biggest, sod-off internal fuses you can find. Slot them into whatever items of internally-fused gear you have and hear the difference. Decide whether the improvement is worth the risk.

Bi-wiring, through-wiring

If you own speakers with two sets of terminals, bi-wiring works. No ifs or buts — it improves clarity and intelligibility. It's simply a matter of finding the right cable. Something cheap and cheerful like Heybrook *Heywire* (about £2.20/metre) is a good start. If you don't want to bi-wire just yet, through-wire: that is, thread your single cable runs from the bass to the treble terminals. Never use the cheapo terminal links supplied with the speakers.

Solid core

Jimmy Hughes is right — pound for pound, solid core speaker cable sounds better than its stranded equivalent. Cleaner, more detailed, and natural rather than artificially warm. I wouldn't recommend anyone actually uses solid core mains cable but, for a few pence, it's a good way to sample something of the solid core magic.

Air guitar

Easy, this one. Get out of your chair, whack up the volume to '11', strut round the room and thrash that axe. Be involved. Your system will sound great.

Blu-tac

Don't be afraid of Blu-tac. Little itty-bitty squidges of the stuff are no good to anyone. Get a sharp pair of scissors and cut slabs straight from the packaging. Get that speaker anchored. If, after a few weeks when the tac has hardened slightly, you can easily peel the speaker from the stand, you haven't used enough.

Unplugged

If there's another CD player in the house, unplug it. Daft, but the one you're listening to will sound better.

Polish plugs

Don't let anyone see you doing it (in fact, don't even mention I told you) but go to the cupboard under the sink, whip out a proprietary metal polish and give you hi-fi's mains plugs the sort of shine you can see your face in; the appropriate mains fuses, too. You'll be amazed.

Turn down the volume

And finally, the best fix of all. Nail the point on the volume scale where the question of loudness disappears and it just seems right — you'll find there is always one G-spot where things sound truly sweet. Wind up the volume until you're playing as loud as your amp will reasonably go. Not party loud (who listens critically at parties?) but loud enough to impress a friend. Then back it off a scintilla, a couple of notches at most. Unsurprisingly, the music won't sound any less loud, but it will sound a whole lot better with more, not less, impact, crisper leading edges and less congested dynamics. An over-driven amp never sounds quite right. ▲

ILLUSTRATION: BRETT RYDER



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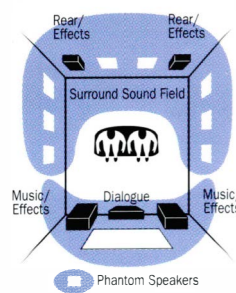
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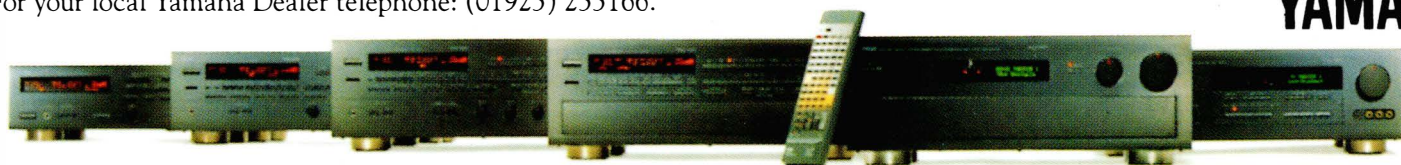
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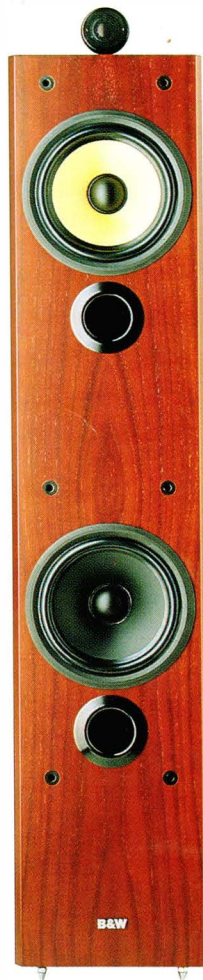
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